

Annual Report 2015 - 2016



Empowered Women. Healthy Community.

"Continuity gives us roots; change gives us branches, letting us stretch & grow & reach new heights."

-Pauline R. Kezer

Update From the Co-Chairs

The Coordinating Collective (CC) has witnessed much change this year at the Women's Centre. Our Drop-in continues to provide a safe, nurturing environment, but we have expanded its offerings, such as peer support, yoga, increased use of the communal kitchen etc. New, very successful staff programs include a Girls Empowerment Movement, coordinated by Rania Gardner, and My Grandmother's Kitchen run by Jen Gawne.

One of our biggest challenges has been staff turnover with the Program Coordinator position being the most fluid. The rapid turnover of this position gave us pause; we realized we needed to rethink the nature of the position. As a result, the EDs in consultation with the CC split the position into two jobs. We are very fortunate to have hired Andrea Hernandez as our Drop-in Coordinator and Shannon Dikkema as our new Volunteer and Events Coordinator. We are already seeing very positive results of this reorganization with Andrea and Shannon each having more time to fulfill their responsibilities and expand services with non-profits.

Another major shift occurred in the spring when Karoline Kemp, one of our co-Executive Directors, accepted a job in Ottawa. Karoline's knowledge of nonprofits and her organizational skills were much appreciated. We are, however, very fortunate to have had Lisa McGeady, who is multi-skilled and has much experience with nonprofits, apply for the job. Lisa had only been with us a short time when Tasha Bassingthwaighe, our long-term ED, resigned. Tasha and her family have moved to England! We will miss her expertise, innovativeness, and dedication.

Adequate funding is an ongoing issue. The CC along with staff has been discussing ways we can increase our visibility and links to the Nelson and District community, which in turn can generate more understanding of our work and more funding. Donor support is essential to the running of the Centre.

The CC itself has seen the departure of some members and the welcoming of others. We always learn from each other and work hard to make our Collective enriching. We strive to be conscious of sensitive, evolving issues, such as transgender inclusivity and the needs of people who are marginalized. The Collective remains dedicated to increasing the wellbeing of self-identified women and children and to ensuring that our staff has meaningful support and resources.



Bobbi Ogletree



Erin Rooney

Meet the Staff of the Nelson & District Women's Centre

Lisa McGeady,
Executive Director



Andrea Hernandez,
Drop-In Coordinator



Shannon Dikkema,
Volunteer & Event
Coordinator



Raina Garder,
GEM Coordinator



Jen Gawne,
My Grandmother's
Kitchen Facilitator



Highlights

- We now have a large sign with our name & logo on the front of the building helping to identify us.
- Renovations & refreshing were completed upstairs, including new paint & flooring in the offices.
- The Rooted in Community marketing materials were updated.
- Girls Empowerment Movement program started & two sessions were completed.
- The Women's Centre brochure was revised & updated.
- Trans 101 workshops were held and the CC began looking at an inclusion policy to include the Trans community.
- Our connection/collaboration with the food bank has been growing. Jen, through My Grandmother's Kitchen, has been working to create links with other community groups & farms.

Events

Womaginarium: We had another fantastic event this year, one of our best ever! Womaginarium is our annual major fundraising event. It has been held at the Lakeside Prestige for the last several years. This event is always well supported by local businesses and always a packed house. Last year we raised just under \$9000.

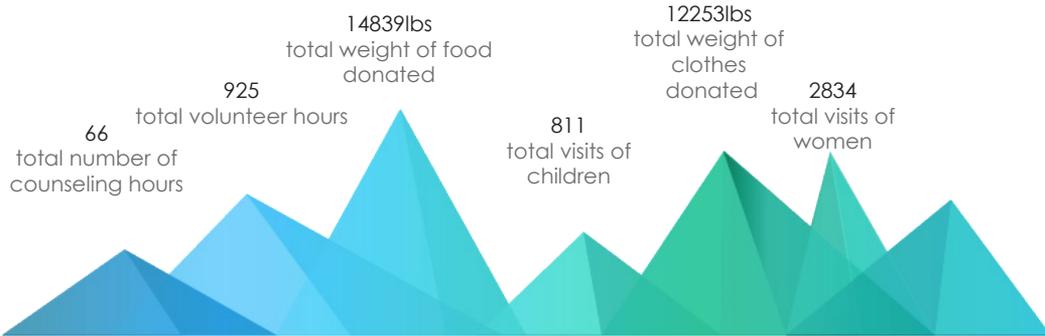
International Women's Day event: Jenny Robinson, Bessie Wapp, Lyndi Lush, Sydney Black, & Clinton Swanson performed at the Spirit Bar in support of International Women's Day. The Hume donated the space for the evening. We raised \$1000 at this event!

Our Annual Take Back the Night event

First ever Garden Party & Bake Sale: We had a treasure hunt, calligraphy & origami workshop, baked goods & lemonade.

Lots of fun for families to visit the Centre, meet the staff & volunteers & learn about the array of opportunities the Centre provides.

Drop- In



average volunteer hours per month



average food donations per month



average clothes donations per month



average number of meals made per week



average number of snacks provided per week

The Drop-In at the Women's Centre has been serving the Kootenay community since 1972, making it the longest standing rural women's Drop-in space in all of Canada. The Drop-in is a welcoming space located at 420 Mill St, offering a variety of free resources and support for women in the Kootenay community. The Drop-in is currently open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM, and offers:

- A free clothing store for women and children
- Free coffee, tea and snacks
- Free nutritious food to take home
- Access to computers and internet and library
- Information about health, financial assistance, employment, housing and abuse
- Compassionate peer counseling
- Volunteer Opportunities
- A children's play area

The Drop-in is open to all women. It is a place to relax, nourish yourself and build a community with other women.

Rooted In Community

Facilitated by Shannon Dikkema

Rooted in Community is our free comprehensive training for volunteers to learn about important resources in our community, develop peer counseling and listening skills, explore their relationship to feminism and self-care, and build strong bonds in a group of diverse women. There were two Rooted In Community Volunteer Trainings this year. Leah ran one in October with 12 participants. Keri ran one in April that had 12 participants. Shannon Dikkema, who was hired in April as the volunteer coordinator, will be taking over the volunteer training program. Look for upcoming sessions starting in October.



Girls Empowerment Movement

Facilitated by Raina Gardner

In the spring of 2016, the Girls' Empowerment Movement (GEM) was created as a new youth program. Through a series of arts-based workshops, girls aged 10 to 13 explored themes of body image, the beauty myth, relationships, holistic health, and growing up. The girls loved talking with each and engaging in the many activities, which included dance, pottery, collage art, herbal medicine making, and drama.



We had 25 girls attend from 8 different schools as well as a few homeschoolers, and each time the girls met with a new woman mentor from their community, who came to share activities and wisdom. The "tween" years are a pivotal time for girls, as their identity and self-esteem are changing alongside their development into young women.

Giving girls the opportunity to talk about their experiences and learn supportive ways of being themselves can make the difference in helping them thrive through this transition. We are excited to be offering this program in several different locations around the West Kootenays in the 2016/2017 school year. Watch for dates and locations on the Nelson & District Women's Centre web site!

My Grandmother's Kitchen

Facilitated by Jen Gawne

There is an exciting project underway at the Centre called My Grandmother's Kitchen. The goals are to bring generations of women together to cook, to learn about food preservation and canning, to share information about gardening, to learn to grow our own food & to create community and understanding of each other across the generations.

This project, currently sponsored by Kootenay Savings Credit Union and the Osprey Foundation, has already seen the renovation of a lovely kitchen space and ongoing food focused workshops including ethnic food classes, a butchery course, food fermenting classes and a container gardening workshop. We have enjoyed learning about composting tips for soil building, Japanese cooking, exploring

Kale and tofu recipes, and nutritious cooking on a budget. Some of the favorite classes so far were Indian food, secrets to Pho Soup and a pie making class. The low or no cost of the workshops ensures a barrier free opportunity for all. The classes are set at \$5 per person but no one is turned away.



Upcoming classes will include lessons on transitioning to a vegan diet with yummy vegetable based recipes, a tomato sauce making and canning workshop and a re-visiting of food fermenting practices.

Curious? Want to be involved? We are always looking for senior women volunteers who would like to share their kitchen

knowledge and cooking skills, as well as, young women who desire to learn these kitchen and gardening skills in order to ensure food security for themselves and their families.

Testimonial

"My experience at the Nelson Women's Centre as a practicum student for Social Service Work was incredible. I was able to work on some projects that interested me personally while receiving guidance and support. I researched and completed an interactive map of pregnancy options locally in the West Kootenays so people can explore all their options and the limitations of our rural area. My experience was enriched by the opportunity to attend varying programs (Rooted in Community workshops, Girl's Empowerment Movement sessions, etc.), operational meetings (coordinator job review meeting, VAWIR meetings, etc.) as well as, community events i.e The Memorial March for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. Out of some of these community events I was able to network and learn more about women's issues in our community. From there I was able to collaborate and help complete the Comfort Kits with guidance from Ernie Wood at Community Services. The everyday functioning of the Drop-in and organizational needs of the house and garden also gave me opportunity to step in and out of roles when needed. Meeting and supporting women in the Drop-in became the thread holding all my experiences together. I constantly asked for advice and checked in with my supervisors to make sure I was holding myself and the space appropriately and the feedback was always sincere and constructive. The rich history of the Centre is contagious and I still volunteer weekly. The atmosphere of support and wisdom at the Centre has been nothing short of an empowering experience and the connections I have made are invaluable. When I leave the Centre I often feel lifted up and on the right path. Thank you to everyone at the NWC!"



- Meagan Zunti,

Social Work Practicum Student

Other Things Happening

Volunteer Potluck and Skills Training is a monthly volunteer meeting, during which the second half is a facilitated discussion and learning opportunity for volunteers to deepen their understanding and skills in self-care, peer counseling, harm reduction, anti-oppression and feminism, and other important areas.

Healthy Women, Healthy Communities is a once a month health-based workshop beginning in September that will be offered at the Centre for a minimal fee to all self-identified women. The facilitators change each month and are volunteers who donate their time to the Centre.



Peer Counseling is offered at the Centre during dedicated times twice a week. There are designated Drop-in times or by appointment. Women can access a friendly listening ear and resource referral from some of our dedicated and trained volunteers.

Cranial Sacral Therapy and Pre-natal massage. There are increasing numbers of gifted healers who are willing to donate time so that any self-identified women can access services that support better health and wellness. Cranial Sacral is offered once a month, and prenatal massage will be available twice a month.

Book Club. The book club meets once a month. Reading material alternates between fiction and non fiction. The club meets alternating Monday or Tuesday at the Centre from 6:00-8:00. It is organized by Axel McGown. Thanks Axel!

West Kootenay Women's Association Archival

Project. The Nelson Women's Centre (1972) is the oldest rural Women's Centre in Canada. West Kootenay Women's Association was formed in 1974 and became the mother organization of the Nelson Women's Centre which created many social & economic spin-offs throughout the Kootenays. The Women's Centre received a grant to sort through the 105 boxes of material that has been collected over the years which are filled with the unique history of rural feminism in B.C. Once the material is properly archived, the goal is to move the completed archives to a permanent home where they can

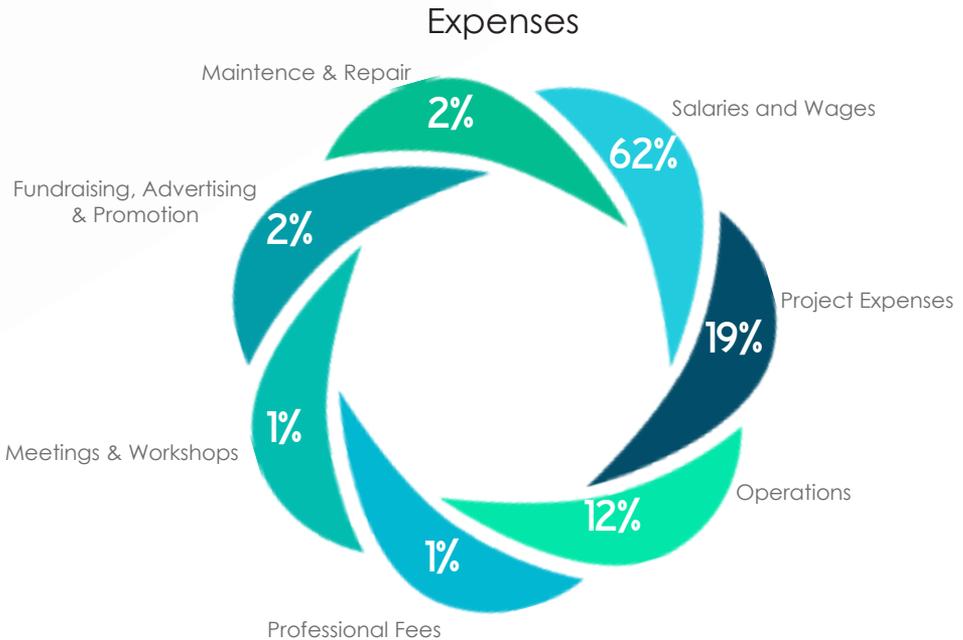
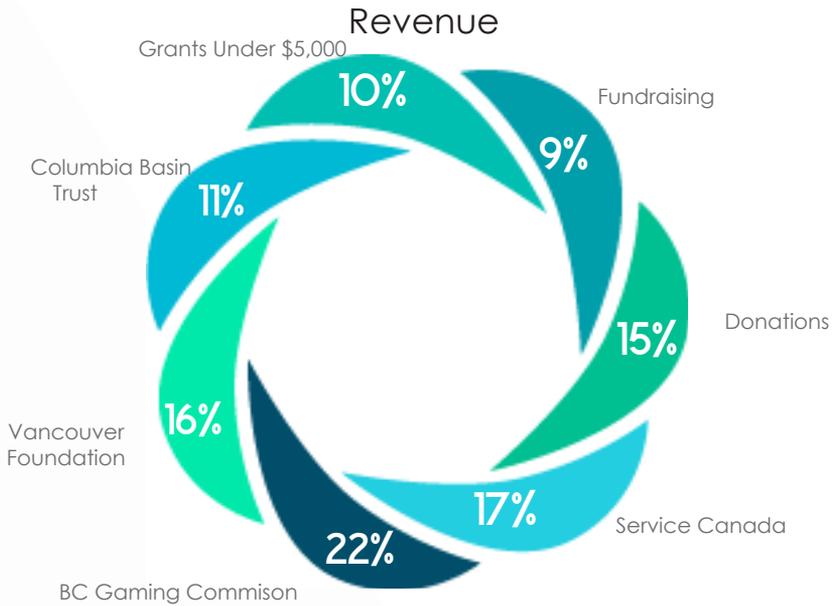
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be accessed by scholars and the public for research and for historical interest. The proper archival preservation of these heritage files will ensure that future generations will have access to our important local history spanning forty-four years. Preserving the stories, letters, documents, reports & women's newspapers are essential to educate & inspire a new generation of feminists, as well as, to honour the feminist struggles in the Kootenays.

Library: The West Kootenay Women's Association (WKWA) Library is still part of the Nelson Women's Centre, and you can still check books out. The fiction section is downstairs, and the rest of our now small collection is upstairs in the multipurpose room. We still have our Herstory, Feminist Analysis, Biographies, Family/Child Care, Youth and Lesbian sections and a bit of Violence, Native Studies, Peace, Sewing and handcrafts. Almost all books are authored by women. Nobody knows exactly when the WKWA Library began, but it was probably in the early 1980s when the Nelson Women's Centre was located in the old jam factory building. We have had annual book sales, a literary tea and readings in the past, and may have another sale in 2017. You can check out books for 3 weeks from the checkout date. Come and have a look! You'll find a comfy chair both upstairs and down. Sandra is generally in the upstairs library on Thursday afternoons, 12ish to 2ish.

Company Of Older Women is a feminist social group that has been meeting monthly for some years, at the Women's Centre on the first Monday of the month in the fall and winter, and often in other locations in spring and summer. We occasionally go to Castlegar for a show at the Kootenay Gallery, or to Lakeside Park to enjoy summer days. We enjoy a good discussion about a timely topics, or talk about the merits of a favorite book, or celebrate our birthdays. Anyone who considers herself an older woman can join us!

Financials



This year our revenues were **\$147,370**. Our fiscal year expenses were **\$144,759** leaving a surplus of **\$2,611**. For more information, please see our financial statements which can be found on our website at www.nelsonwomenscentre.com

Upcoming Events

AGM – September 27th

Join us for our annual general meeting at 6:30 pm at the Seniors Centre next to the Civic Theatre



Womaginarium – November 18th

At the Lakeside Prestige join Amy Bohigian & others for a carnival of wonders & curiosities

École Polytechnique Massacre Memorial
December 6th

International Women's Day

in conjunction with Centennial celebration of women getting the vote– dates & info to follow, Check in on our Facebook page or at nelsonwomenscentre.com

Be part of the Women's Centre Ways to Get Involved

Become a board member

Become a part of our fundraising committee

Volunteer in Drop-in or other programming and events

Experience Rooted In Community training

Become a monthly donor

Thank You to Our Major Donors

Vancouver Foundation
AgriSpirit
RDCK
BC Gaming Commison
Health Sciences
Canadian Counseling Foundation
Canadian Women's Foundation
Columbia Basin Trust
HMA
HSA-CESA
JAG
Kootenay Co-op Country Store
Lions Club
Lobstick Foundation
Nelson & District Credit Union
Service Canada: New Horizons for Seniors
Kootenay Savings

As well as all the local businesses, service groups & individuals who have helped the Women's Centre continue to operate the Drop-in centre & to provide all the amazing opportunities for women to grow and thrive in our community.

A special thanks to the Nelson Food Cupboard, Kootenay Co-op, Sliverking Tofu, Local Farmers, SEEDS, and Our Daily Bread for weekly food donations that allow us to provide a nourishing meal to women who attend the Drop-in and suppliment their family food budget.

And to the over 60 volunteers who donated 925 volunteers hours to serve the community of women here. We could not run

"Great things are brought about and burdens are lightened through the efforts of many hands anxiously engaged in a good cause." Elder M. Russel Ballard



YES! I want to support and empower women in this community with a gift of:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other: \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

Yes, please add me to the monthly email!

How would you like to make your donation? Cash Cheque Credit Card

Credit Card Type: Visa Mastercard American Express

Monthly Donation One-time Donation

Cardholder Name: _____

Credit Card Number: _____

Expiry Date: _____ Security Code: _____

Please return this form with your payment. Thank you!
If you prefer to talk to us about this donation, please call 250-352-9949 or email
info@nelsonwomenscentre.com