



West Kootenay Women's Association Annual Report 2019/2020

WKWA Vision

"Women's equality in a world free of oppression"

Purposes of the Society

- To promote equitable treatment of women, in the belief that every woman has the right to control over her social, economic and physical circumstances;
- To work together with women of every race, class, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, age, size, spiritual or political belief;
- To supply and render service of a charitable and educational nature to women;
- To establish resources for women;
- To co-operate with other organizations which have objectives similar to the objectives of the Association;
- To operate as a non-profit organization to administer and employ its property, assets, and rights, for the purpose of promoting, or aiding in the promotion of, the welfare of all women;
- To receive, acquire, and hold gifts, donations, legacies and devices.

Current Nelson & District Women's Centre (NDWC)

Staff

Michelle Bachman Drop-in and Volunteer Coordinator

Current West Kootenay Women's Association (WKWA) Coordinating Collective

Vita Luthmers Board Member

Yvette Janzen Chair

Mary Whitlock Board Member

Shonna Hayes Treasurer

Donna Macdonald Board Member

Sarah Albertson Secretary

This annual report covers activities of the Nelson & District Women's Centre from April 1st, 2019 to March 31st, 2020 corresponding to our past fiscal year. Activities that take place beyond March 31st, 2020 will be included in an annual report for the 2020/2021 AGM to be held in the fall of 2021.

Overview of the Year

The year covered by this report was a challenging one and it was also a productive one. Many activities and programs occurred, and successful fundraising was accomplished.

Most of the challenges arose due to disagreements among members about the Women's Centre's mandate to serve women, and how that focus was being altered by the Board without members' approval. A Petition to the Court was launched by two members, asking for direction to the WKWA Board to operate in accordance with its Constitution and Bylaws. This challenge was successful and provided direction for an appointed interim board to organize the 2019 AGM in early December.

Eleven Board members were elected at that meeting and five resolutions proposed by members were passed giving direction to the Board (see below under Members' Proposals Update). The new Board took on the work of supporting existing staff, managing a significant budget shortfall, reporting to funders, maintaining the society's charity status, and keeping financial records in order. In April 2020, four Board members resigned, and the Board carried on with seven remaining directors.

Unfortunately, the uncertainty and conflict throughout the year resulted in high staff turnover. Over the course of the year there were four different executive directors, three bookkeepers, and a new accountant. Although this was unsettling and difficult, the work of the Women's Centre continued until March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. At that time, two staff members were laid off and a temporary drop-in staff position was not renewed. On March 17th, the Women's Centre Drop-in Program was ended until the Women's Centre could safely reopen, following safety protocols.

Programs

The Drop-In Resource and Referral Program at the Nelson and District Women's Centre is a core project of WKWA. The Women's Centre provides a safe space for women to receive a number of critical services including: free access to basic supplies such as food, clothing, child care and personal hygiene supplies; kitchen and community gardening opportunities, and referrals to critical community resources including crisis intervention, shelter, health care and income assistance; opportunities for educational and personal skills building; peer counselling and social inclusion activities, a feminist library, and access to computers. A monthly average of about 168 women and children used this service. This program is funded through our major funder, the BC Gaming Commission.

Rooted in Community is an ongoing free 10-week volunteer training program that ran this year from February to March. This program is the backbone of developing and training our volunteers who play such an important role in the ongoing work of the Centre. We maintain a list of dedicated volunteers who do everything from picking up food donations, organizing the free store, working in the garden, preparing food, shoveling snow and many other essential chores at the Centre.

Highlights

Crowdfunding Campaign

A successful crowdfunding campaign, "Grounding and Healing", was launched by former board member Avery Alder in March 2020 to deal with the budget shortfall that the new Board faced. This online fundraiser raised just over \$15,000 with 231 contributors and a matched donation of \$15,000. Thank you to Avery for such a successful fundraiser and for the contribution of your designed digital bundle as a reward and thank you to local artist Kiala Loytomaki for designing the art postcards.

Columbia Basin Trust Non-Profit Advisor Program

In December 2019, the Operations Manager and three board members met with Columbia Basin Trust Non-profit Advisor Zoë Creighton to engage in an assessment of the organization resulting in a draft organizational assessment report. This report included assessments of various aspects of the organization, planning and direction, governance, human resources, financial management, fund development, material resources, legal/risk management, and communications/community relationships. The final outcomes in the report were a set of three recommendations in order of priority for action: Governance (Board Orientation and Training); Planning and Direction (Clarifying vision and strategic planning); and Fund Development (Fundraising planning).

This report was refined to accurately reflect the goals of the organization and finalized into a working document and resource to guide the Coordinating Collective in its board work, strategic planning, and fundraising.

International Women's Day

In celebration of International Women's Day (IWD), on March 8th, 2020, the Women's Centre hosted a community event at the Royal on Baker. This event celebrated the progress made for equity and women's rights while recognizing the power and struggles of all women. Over 100 people gathered in celebration of women from all walks of life. We remembered the work of our sisters, mothers, elders and daughters in the protests and movements that pressed for the rights we have today. We honored the women and girls around the world who break the social, economic, cultural, and political barriers.

The Royal offered delicious food and drinks to enjoy as we were serenaded by local musicians, dancers, and poets. The performers were Hailey Jill, Shonna and Ellie, Ashley Lafromboise, Alissa Arnason, Flora Borealis, La Llamada Del Flamenco, and Lyne and Bella Cat. We raised over \$1000 that night! A portion of the donations were gifted to the artists, and the NDWC received \$825.

Throughout the year: Events and Offerings

- December Solstice Party
- The Women's Centre partnered with the Nelson Squash Club as a social and fundraiser for IWD in April 2019.
- Women's Centre staff collaborated in organizing the Women's March for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Castlegar February 14, 2020.
- The Women's Centre was designated Kootenay Coop's organization of the month in March of 2020.
- Volunteer potluck
- Yoga
- Drop-in art therapy group
- Counselling



Funding and Projects

The Centre was successful in obtaining the following grants:

B.C Gaming Commission Grant for the Drop-in Resource and Referral Program and capital expenses to repair the sewer line and replace the hot water tank

BC Civil Forfeiture grant - WKWA was the umbrella organization in a third-party partnership agreement on a project with Four Nations Coalition of Indigenous Medicines "Heal Ourselves/Heal the Earth"

BC Multicultural grant for Intercultural Conversations Project

Columbia Basin Trust and Osprey Community Foundation for the Girls Empowerment Movement Project (Gem)

Columbia Kootenay Cultural Alliance, Sinixt Curriculum

Slocan Valley Community Legacy Society grant for the Sinixt Education Project “Not Extinct Teachers Resource” delivered through the Blood of Life Collective

Nelson and District Credit Union grant for Rooted in Community program

RDCK grant for Community Development Counselling

Members’ Proposals Update

At the 2018 and 2019 AGMs, several proposals submitted by members were approved. This is a progress update on these resolutions.

From 2018

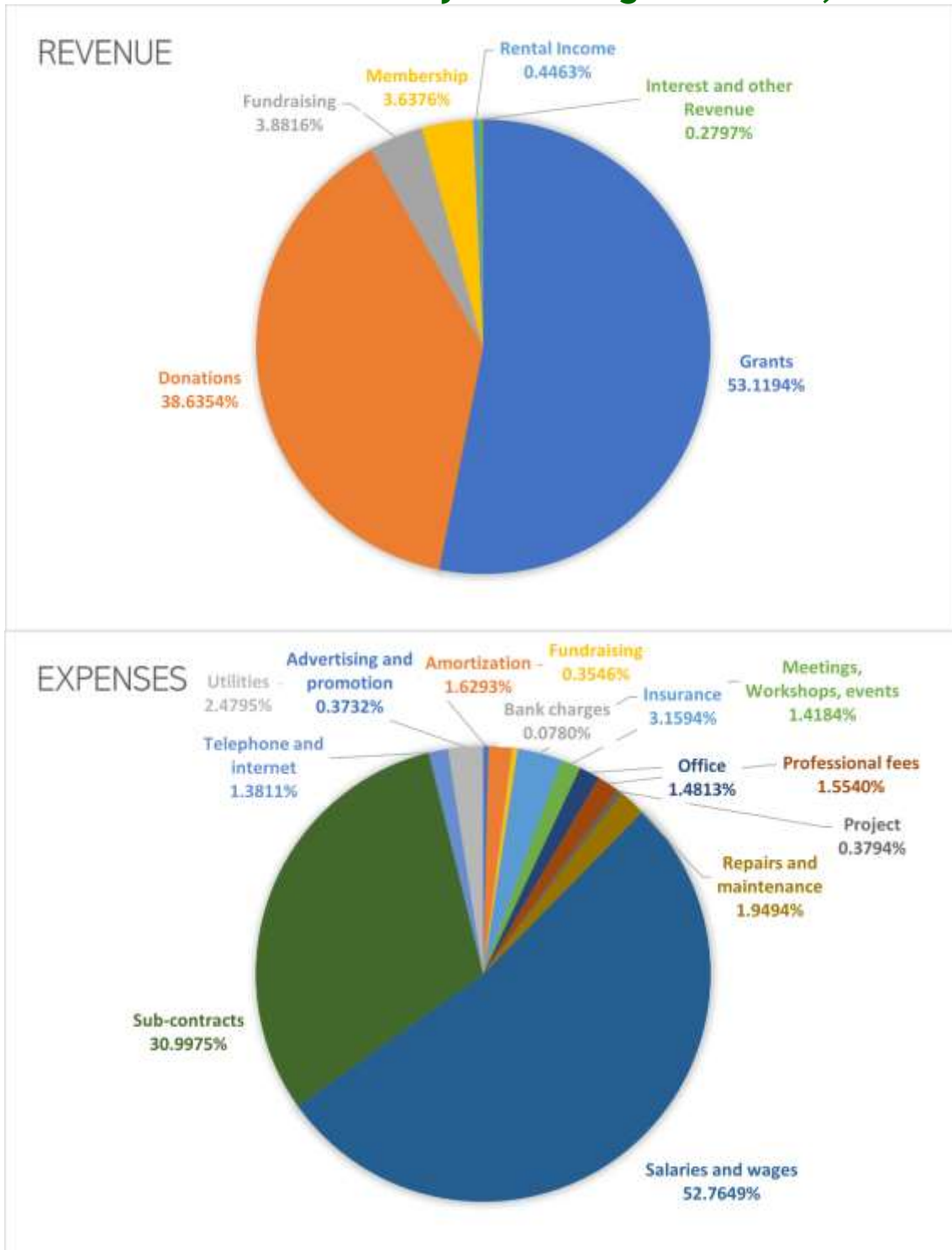
1. A bylaw and policy review of WKWA documents. This remains a priority and will occur after the community engagement process (see below).
2. Development and implementation of a communication policy. This is a high priority for the Community Relations Committee and is in process.

From 2019

1. Bylaw changes regarding election of the Coordinating Collective and regarding member discipline. The Board intends to include these in the comprehensive review of WKWA bylaws. The Code of Conduct will also be reviewed. In the meantime, the yellow card system has been terminated. Currently in process.
2. Amendment of the Board Governance Policy to permit an open nomination and election process. Completed.
3. Development of policy and procedure to track how funds are being used and make this information available to funders and members. Completed.
4. Approved operating budgets be made available to any member. Completed.

5. Conduct of a well-planned and facilitated engagement process to discuss WKWA's mandate, such as who it serves (for example, marginalized genders), what programs and activities are priorities, potential partnerships with other community groups, etc. The results of these discussions were to be discussed at this AGM. However, the goal of a comprehensive process has been complicated by pandemic rules. We are developing a plan for moving forward with the process using on-line tools and communications.
6. A further resolution, from the floor, asked the CC to engage in a process of investigation regarding member bans, in the spirit of transparency and understanding. The members who were banned have been reinstated and have indicated they have no interest in further investigation. Completed.

Financials for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2020



For the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, revenues were \$117,632, expenses were \$112,805, with a remaining surplus of \$4827.

Financial statements prepared by Virtual Heights Accounting can be found on our website at <http://www.nelsonwomenscentre.com>

Appreciations

We are grateful to all our previous and current volunteers, staff and board members who have devoted hours of their time to keep the Nelson and District Women's Centre viable through all the challenges we have faced during the year.

Thank you to our former Board members: Shamim Pourfarshomi, Avery Alder, Devon Brown, Amanda Phoenix, and Sawah Danniels.

Special appreciation goes out to our former staff, Axel McGown, Ali Christie, and Farah Shawaf, for their dedication to continuing to keep the Drop-in services running as long possible under difficult circumstances.

Huge gratitude goes to all our funders and donors for providing the financial support that allows the Nelson & District Women's Centre to continue to provide necessary services. We are fortunate in this community to have such generous organizations and businesses that donate gifts, money, food, toiletries, to support our programming needs.

Thank you to the local businesses that donate to the Women's Centre: Silverking Soya Foods, Kootenay Co-op, Kootenay Bakery, Organic Matters, and Oso Negro.

To the many supporters who have stood by the Women's Centre during the past year, thank you dearly for remaining steadfast in your conviction that the Women's Centre is an important resource continuing to fill a need in our community.