



West Kootenay Women's Association (WKWA)

Annual Report 2022/2023

The West Kootenay Women's Association gratefully acknowledges that the land on which we gather is the traditional unceded territory of the Ktunaxa, the Syilx, and the Sinixt peoples, and is home to the Métis and many diverse Indigenous persons.

WKWA Vision:

Equality in a world free of oppression.

WKWA Mission:

The Nelson & District Women's Centre promotes the equality and empowerment of women and their children through advocacy, education, and the provision of services and supports that meet their needs. While working for societal change, we endeavour to provide support to all women on their personal journeys, including support for transwomen and gender diverse individuals who may benefit from the unique services offered by the Women's Centre.

WKWA Purposes (from our Constitution):

- To promote and advocate for equitable treatment of all women and gender diverse individuals, in the belief that they have the right to control their social, economic and physical circumstances, including freedom from violence and all forms of discrimination.
- To welcome and collaborate with women and gender diverse individuals of every race, class, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, age and spiritual or political belief.
- To establish resources and to supply services of a charitable and educational nature to those who use the Women's Centre.
- To cooperate with other organizations that have objectives similar to the objectives as the West Kootenay Women's 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 and gender diverse individuals.
- To receive, acquire and hold gifts, including donations, legacies and devices, to support the work of the Nelson & District Women's Centre.

Nelson & District Women's Centre Staff (as of September 2023)

Malia Joy, Executive Director

Anna Jauncey, Programs Manager

WKWA Board of Directors (as of September 2023)

Suzannee Chappell, Director (to AGM 2023)

Kerry Marsland, Director & Treasurer (to AGM 2024)

Vanessa Deverell, Director & Secretary (to AGM 2024)

Kai Kafrissen (to AGM 2025)

Zoe McCabe (to AGM 2025)

Christine Deynaka (to AGM 2025)

Megan Southam (to AGM 2025)

Please Note: This annual report covers activities of the Nelson & District Women's Centre from April 1st, 2022 to March 31st, 2023, corresponding to our past fiscal year. However, we will also report on important events and happenings from April 1 to the date of this AGM.

Overview of the Year

At our last AGM, our membership voted to adopt a constitution that is inclusive of women and gender diverse individuals. Over the last year we have been adapting our policies and practices to create a safe and inclusive space for all of our service users, volunteers, staff, and board members. We have made steady progress and are excited to be moving into this next year with gratitude to all the people that dedicated their time and hard work to our vision.

In November 2022 Terri-Lynn stepped down as our Executive Director. We are grateful to the time that Terri dedicated to our organization and are pleased to announce that she has moved on to become the manager of the Nelson & District Youth Centre. We are looking forward to future collaboration with Terri in her new role.

Malia Joy stepped into the Executive Director role in January 2023. Malia worked at the centre as the Environmental Program Coordinator in 2021 and served on the Board of Directors from 2022-2023. Malia is a passionate feminist and human rights activist and is committed to dismantling the systems of oppression that impact our community. As a member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, Malia is looking forward to bringing their perspective to the role and the Coordinating Collective. Malia has been successful in building relationships with community organizations and securing funding through grants that will help us continue to meet the needs of our service users and the greater community.

Malia has established a strong team with Anna Jauncey as the Programs Manager. Anna is passionate about helping others and brings, energy, and compassion to her role. She is committed to providing care to our service users and improving upon systems and programs when necessary. She has established a great team of volunteers to assist with various roles and is facilitating an updated version of the Rooted in Community volunteer Training Program to ensure everyone is equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to represent the centre and provide support for others.

In January 2023 after experiencing challenges in hiring a new Executive Director we voted to increase the position from 30 hours per week to 40 hours per week. We acknowledge the high rate of turn over in staffing at the women's centre in the past and want to create positions that will allow for staff and board retention and create resiliency within the organization. It was for this reason that we chose to merge the Drop-in Coordinator position with the Volunteer Coordinator position to create the role of Programs Manager. This year we also developed a Social Media and Marketing Coordinator position. Public outreach is integral to growing our membership and volunteers as well as advertising our programs and events. We want to ensure

that the people who could benefit from our services are kept informed and know how to access them. We will be looking into hiring another parttime staff member moving forward as funding allows.

We were also pleased to welcome practicum student Vanessa Deverell in who began her practicum at the centre in December 2022 and completed her program in August 2023. We were able to provide access to free counselling with the help of the Red Cross Mental Health and Wellbeing Grant. Vanessa was a welcoming presence at the centre and was able to create relationships with our service users, volunteers, and staff when she was not providing counselling. Vanessa joined the Board of Directors in April 2023, and we continue to be grateful for her valuable perspective at our monthly Coordinating Collective meetings. We wish her the best in her new role as a Registered Clinical Counsellor. After seeing the benefits of partnering with counselling students, we welcomed Mikyla Bergman to offer counselling services at the centre and we look forward to maintaining this resource for service users.

Our Board of Directors experienced some fluctuations since the last AGM. We have had several directors step down due to personal reasons which left us with minimal support for several months. We are grateful that five new directors stepped up to serve on our board and we are excited with the new energy and expertise that they are bringing to our monthly Coordinating Collective meetings and committees. We would like to see more diversity on our board in the future and are grateful to have the representation from our current directors.

We are currently recruiting board members and will be appointing a new chair from our active directors after the AGM.

Board Committees and Community Relations

Throughout the year the work of community members who participated on committee projects assisted the Coordinating Collective immensely. Their time and expertise continue to add value to our projects, and we appreciate their commitment and dedication. As a small organization we are dependant on the support of our committees and over the last year they have been quite small. We are committed to recruiting more community members to serve on our committees to accurately represent the diversity of our membership and the surrounding community. Our committees allow us to effectively and quickly complete projects and tasks.

This year we formed a Diversity, Inclusion, and Reconciliation Committee that currently has six members. We are committed to our work in gender inclusion, anti-racism, decolonization, reconciliation, intersectionality, and dismantling systems of oppression. We are grateful to the individuals volunteering on this committee and hope more folks join us.

In addition to our committees, we are a part of the Kootenay Boundary Community Service Cooperative (KBCSC) and are active participants on the Nelson Committee on Homelessness (NCOH) and Together Nelson Poverty Reduction. We look forward to supporting our community as we navigate upcoming challenges together.

Programs

The **Drop-In Resource and Referral Program** is the core project of the WKWA. The Women's Centre provides a safe space for women, gender diverse individuals, and their children to receive critical services including free access to food, clothing, personal hygiene supplies, counselling, referrals to other community resources, education, skill-building opportunities, access to a feminist library and access to computers and printing. This program is funded through the BC Community Gaming Grant and there continues to be no cost to access or participate in the Women's Centre's services or programming.

We have been serving women and their families for almost 50 years and at our last AGM we voted as a membership to expand our purposes to serving gender diverse individuals as well. We recognize that oppression and gender-based violence impacts all marginalized and targeted genders. As an organization we are committed to helping people affected by bias, oppression and gender-based violence and we will continue to strive to create a healthy community through increased access to resources, services, education, and safe space. We know that having members of our community live in poverty, isolation, or as victims of oppression means our whole community is weakened.

We want to express gratitude for the 5,923 lbs. of food and the 5,034 lbs. of gently used clothing that were donated to the Centre this past fiscal year. To protect privacy, we did not count individuals, but we did count how many folks walked through our doors. 1,471 service users visited our Centre during drop-in in the 2022 fiscal year. 153 of these folks were first time visitors of the centre and we are incredibly happy to see our community continue to grow. The community members visiting our drop-in program benefited greatly from the generosity of everyone who donated food and clothing. Since our last AGM 1954 people have visited the centre's drop-in program.

This past year, our **Food Hamper Program** was funded by the Colombia Power Community Sponsorship Program. This \$1000 grant along with a food drive organized by SERVE youth in August 2022 helped us provide supplies for our pantry to distribute to the community. We constantly see the need for barrier free access to food for the families and individuals that access our services, and we are incredibly grateful to be partnered with the Kootenay Coop, Silver King Soya Foods, the Kootenay Bakery, and Oso Negro who help provide the centre with food for our program participants. The demand for reliable access to food increased in 2023 in response to the Nelson Community Food Centre navigating funding challenges, but as we move into fall 2023 they are recovering and back to offering a weekly food bank program.

The **Volunteer Program** is an essential part of our success, and we maintain a list of dedicated volunteers who assist with picking up food donations, organizing the free store, gardening, preparing food, assisting with snow removal, providing peer counselling and many other essential tasks. We spent 2023 developing a new version of the historic **Rooted in Community (RIC) Volunteer Training Program**. We have added some extra elements on intersectional

feminism, inclusion and diversity, truth and reconciliation, decolonization and more. The new version of RIC was developed by our Programs Manager to ensure we can meet the needs of all our service users. The modifications of the program are in response to our changes in constitution and will help create safe space. RIC empowers and educates participants to do crisis support and volunteer at our Centre, as well as preparing them to work within the greater community. All drop-in volunteers are required to take RIC. This 8-week program will be delivered in person with online elements and is beginning September 21, 2023. As part of RIC, we have begun creating resources that can be shared and viewed online. Our most recent project has been a film on feminism with RCC Deirdre Mclaughlin. Deirdre contextualizes the waves of feminism and speaks to their experiences in relation to gender bias, sexism, and the need for inclusion and intersectional feminism.

We require our core drop-in volunteers to complete a police information check and we are happy to announce that we were accepted into the **Criminal Records Review Program** for non-profits that allows us to facilitate this process for free online. This program has eliminated one barrier to volunteering at the centre while ensuring the safety of the people that access our services.

In May 2022 we were pleased to offer our **Girls Empowerment Movement (GEM) Program**, with funding from Columbia Basin Trust—Social Grants, which was also co-facilitated by Melanie and Megan. The GEM program ended with a beautiful coming-of-age ceremony for a circle of 12 young girls and their mothers. As we move towards our new vision of inclusivity at the Centre, we are transitioning the GEM Program into a **Youth Empowerment Series (YES)**. The focus of this program will be to provide a safe space for youth to explore concepts of identity, ideologies, intersectional feminism, inclusion, consent and boundaries, skills-based learning, and more. This program is funded by Telus and will be delivered in the fall of 2023 by our Programs Manager, Anna Jauncey.

We were grateful to have the opportunity to facilitate the **BC Farmers Market Coupon Program (BCFMCP)** in 2022 and 2023. We received 30 spots in the 16-week program and were able to give each participant \$27.00 worth of coupons to spend at the farmers market. This was a great program that helped to increase food literacy and security within our community. In addition to the 30 spots for program participants we also received a transportation grant as well coupons for the centre to spend on a food literacy workshop.

In 2022 we received a grant from **Canada Summer Jobs** to use towards a garden coordinator as well as an events coordinator. We were unable to find candidates for these positions that met the requirements of the funder so unfortunately forfeited this grant. Despite not using this grant we were able to secure alternative funding and hire Michelle Oakley as our environmental program coordinator. Michelle did an amazing job organizing the garden program and we were able to grow food to help support our Drop-in Resource and Referral Program. Michelle was successful in creating connections with our volunteers and service users and involved the community in the garden project. In 2023 we did not receive the necessary funds to hire a

garden coordinator, but a group of dedicated volunteers worked together to plant a successful garden full of food, flowers, and medicine.

We began an **Intentional Movement Series (IMS)** in the spring of 2023. This Programs goal was to provide barrier free access to movement classes at the centre. We partnered with local yoga instructors, who volunteered their time, to facilitate these afternoon and morning classes. Thank you to all the amazing instructors who helped make this program possible.

We have begun facilitating **Service User Round Table** sessions. These meetings are happening once per month and are a designated space for service users and volunteers to share their comments, thoughts, and feelings about our programs and the centre. The staff have found that program participants have information to share, and we recognized the necessity of creating a platform for these conversations. These meetings are facilitated by a staff member as well as a board member. Concerns that can be addressed immediately are handled by the staff team, and more complex matters are passed on to the Coordinating Collective and discussed at our monthly meetings.

Our House

In February 2023 we underwent a fire and building inspection to ensure the safety of our building. As a result, we built a new emergency exit door to the basement, serviced all the fire extinguishers, installed emergency lighting and carbon monoxide detectors.

We continue to make progress regarding the necessary upgrades of our house. With the Help of the Columbia Basin Trust's non-profit sustainability program, we were able to complete multiple upgrades to the property in the summer of 2023. We installed 3 mini-split heat pumps upstairs to provide air conditioning in the summer and heat in the winter as well as insulating the basement walls. With the remaining funding we are considering installing solar panels on the roof. These additions will improve the efficiency of our house and demonstrate a positive return on investment, reducing our utility costs moving forward.

We requested additional wheelchair parking on Mill street and Ward street and are pleased to see the two new spots available to our service users.

An upcoming priority for our facilities committee is to plan to address the garden shed in the back yard. The shed has seen better days and needs significant repairs or to be removed.

Events

On September 30 our Centre honored **National Day for Truth and Reconciliation**. This day honors the Indigenous children who never returned home from residential schools as well as the survivors who did. As an organization we are deeply committed to learning and reconciliation. We acknowledged **Red Dress Day** on May 5th to honor the Missing and Murdered Indigenous

Women, Girls, and Two Spirit People. We celebrated **Indigenous Peoples Day**, and our staff attended the celebration in Castlegar hosted by Circle of Indigenous Nations (COINS) on June 21, 2023. We continue to consider our place on this land as uninvited guests and acknowledge the importance of our continued work towards reconciliation and decolonization.

AGM 2021-2022 – October 6, 2022

We successfully held an online AGM via Zoom with 31 attendees participating in learning about our organization and voting to pass three special resolutions, including updating our constitution and purposes as a society. Our membership voted to include women, gender diverse individuals and their children among the folks we serve through our programs.

International Women’s Day – March 8, 2023

In celebration of International Women’s Day, the Women’s Centre invited folks to gather, bringing a poem, song, quote, or story to share with the group. This year’s theme was ‘Embrace Equity’. While this event was low key it created a beautiful space of sharing and joy in which we learned and grew together. We talked about our favorite feminist books, songs, articles, and had a thought-provoking discussion about the film “Women Talking” that was playing at the Civic Theater.

RIFT: Renewing Intersectional Feminism Together Fundraiser

Intersectional feminism is integral to our vision moving forward and we were excited to showcase this at our fundraiser on June 30, 2023. We have so much gratitude to the Royal for volunteering their space for this event as well as all the talented artists who performed. Catbird, Anna Jauncey, Zoubie, Guns ‘n’ Brose, Paris Pick and the Pricks, thank you. Thank you to all the amazing businesses and individuals who donated the prizes to our raffle and a huge thank you to everyone that came to our event to celebrate intersectional feminism, inclusion, and diversity at the women’s centre. We raised approximately \$2400.

Traveling Speaker Series

We were lucky enough to facilitate Simon Fraser University’s Traveling Speaker Series in September 2023. We rented the Oxygen Art Centre for PhD Candidate Reema Faris to deliver her presentation ‘It’s a Fact! Or is it? The Turbulence of Gender.’ We had a great turnout for this free event, and we are looking forward to hosting more education-based events to further the conversation of gender equality.

Cross Country Skiing Program

Lousie Pool, an instructor from Apex, took the initiative to apply for a grant to run 3 days of cross-country ski/snowshoe programming for our centre participants. We were excited to be able to offer this event to our community free of charge.

Other Events

We were happy to host the Harvest Festival/ Equinox celebration, Herbal Healing workshop with Althaea Herbals, Giving Tuesday, a series of beading workshops with Suzzannee, Valentines Day cookie making, we sponsored Find your Divine with guest speaker Phyllis Webstad, we began

crafternoons on Thursdays with Anna, Claire Allen hosted a Dahlia workshop, and we entered a float in the Pride Parade.

Funding and Projects

The Centre was successful in obtaining the following grants:

- **A B.C Community Gaming Grant** of \$30,000 for the Drop-in Resource and Referral Program.
- **Canada Summer Jobs** did award us funding, but we were forced to forfeit the funding due to lack of job applicants that fit the requirements of the funder.
- **TELUS Community Boards:** \$5658.00 for the Girls Empowerment programming (GEM) Program. We were approved to modify this program to the Youth Empowerment Series (YES) and for an extension until March 2024.
- We received four Grants from **Columbia Basin Trust** including:
 - Social Grants: \$5000 for the GEM Program
 - Community Initiatives Programs: \$6844, revitalization of our garden space
 - Non-Profit Sustainability Program: \$33,750
 - Non-Profit Advisory Program: \$2,760
 - Community Technology upgrades: \$5057.13, for the purchase of computer technology devices including a new printer, laptops and tablets to be utilized by service users.
 - Non-Profit Tech Grant: \$6700
- **Columbia Power Community Sponsorship Program** awarded us \$1000.00 to be used to help purchase food items for our food hamper program.
- **United Way Food Infrastructure Grant** program provided \$5,000 for our 2022 garden project.
- **Kootenay Co-operative Grocery Store** donated \$500. All in the name of food security and a beautiful yard!
- **Canadian Women's Foundation Shockproofing Communities:** \$34,785.00 as mostly unrestricted funds to support our operations.
- **Red Cross Mental Health and Wellbeing:** \$10,900 to facilitate Vanessa Deverell's Practicum counselling and provide fee counselling services.
- **BC Farmers Market Coupon Program:** 30 participant spots

We're pleased to tell you about other significant grants we received beyond the fiscal year end:

- **BC Community Gaming:** \$26,075 (drop-in program)
- **City of Nelson Covid Recovery:** \$19,000
- **Canadian Women's Foundation Shockproofing:** \$20,000
- **Regional District of Central Kootenay ReDi:** \$6995.00 (queer drop-in)
- **Strategic Giving Foundation:** \$6,687.50

- **BC Farmers Market Coupon Program:** 30 Participant Spots, \$600 admin, \$200 transportation grant, \$80 worth of coupons for centre use

Deep gratitude to:

- The Kootenay Bakery Café Cooperative, Kootenay Co-op Grocery Store, and Silverking Soya Foods for ongoing weekly donations of food for our Food Hamper Program
- Oso Negro Café for their continuous support of refreshments for special events and Drop-in Program
- Cantina, thank you for donating a meal of Beans and rice every second Thursday
- KBCSC donated a desk for service users to use downstairs
- Home Hardware for your continued support and donations throughout the year
- Scout Clothing for their cash and clothing donations
- Canadian tire for the shiny new coffee pot
- Black Cauldren/Black Press Media/Nelson Star for donating their burger month winnings
- Tru earth for donating ecofriendly laundry strips
- Winnow Seed Co. for donating so many amazing seeds for our garden
- Thank you to Kootenay Coop Radio and the Bridge for giving us a platform
- And the many individuals, organizations, and local businesses for their cash and in-kind donations.
- To the many supporters, volunteers and staff who continue to stand by the Women's Centre – thank you dearly for remaining steadfast in your conviction that the Women's Centre is an important resource that continues to fill many needs in our community.

Unfinished and In-Process Business

There is still a lot of work ahead, to ensure a respectful process for changes at the Centre, to build partnerships with other organizations, to revise WKWA's bylaws and policies and to create welcoming space for everyone. We will continue to cultivate respect and safety within our organization and move towards securing equality for everyone in a world free of oppression. This work, based on members' approval and direction, will ensure a strong and vibrant future for the Women's Centre.

Additional thanks,



Government of Canada Gouvernement du Canada



Working with communities in BC's Interior, Lower Mainland, Central & Northern Vancouver Island

