

# Annual Report

2019-2020

The Women's  
Resource Centre



729



We would like to begin by acknowledging that we do our work on Treaty 2 Territory. The land on which we gather is the traditional territories of Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Ojibwe, Dakota, and Dene Peoples. It is the homeland of the Métis Nation where people Indigenous to Turtle Island have walked, gathered and lived since time immemorial.

## OUR MISSION

The Women's Resource Centre mission is to provide programs, services, and counselling on issues affecting women, including family violence while encouraging respect, diversity, and equality with a feminist perspective. The Women's Resource Centre's vision is to be an organization dedicated to providing support, empowerment, and mentoring for all women and their families.

Our goals are:

- To provide the women of Western Manitoba with counselling and education on domestic violence;
- To provide Brandon and rural women access to information on cultural, economic, educational, health, legal and social services;
- To coordinate and/or support projects that promote women's equality;
- To create a space for women to meet in a place of their own to network and share information.

## OUR OBJECTIVES

- The Women's Resource Centre incorporates a feminist philosophy, i.e. supporting the right of women to be full and equal members of society
- The Women's Resource Centre promotes tolerance within its sphere of operation. Discrimination based on employment status, ancestry, citizenship, age, race, creed, socio-economic status, religious or political affiliation, marital status, family status, physical or mental capacity, or sexual orientation is prohibited.
- All women share an equal opportunity to access services.
- The Women's Resource Centre will design and deliver services and programs in a manner that promotes self-esteem, independence, individual decision-making, and will recognize the individual's own declarations of needs and preferences.
- The people who use The Women's Resource Centre have the right to confidentiality and privacy with regard to any type of contact with the Centre. The Centre has written policies and procedures in place to ensure that the confidentiality and privacy of people is respected.

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MEGHAN LAMONTAGNE, CHAIR

The Board of Directors had another active year in 2019-20 which included efforts to strengthen the organization while focusing on the theme of sustainability. This included attention towards board governance. The TWRC board and staff continue to acknowledge and understand the importance of good governance for organizational sustainability and we endeavoured to strengthen this over the past year as part of our strategic planning efforts.

Action was taken in this area in a few key areas, including but not limited to: the establishment of a governance committee, providing board roles and responsibilities training, and entering into a new project –“ Transforming Together”: A Gender-based violence system change project, which will include elements of board governance and strategic planning for the Centre. This work has been and will continue to be crucial to ensure the sustainability of the board and the organization as a whole. This strategic work of the board, in partnership with staff, is central to supporting the staff of the Centre, and to further support the Brandon and greater Westman community in supporting women facing issues related to gender-based marginality. We have made progress in this area, while recognizing that there continues to be much more work to be done in order to achieve the right balance for the organization on a holistic level and to set future boards up for success.

It is well known that a sustainable non-profit organization also requires a steady stream of fundraising dollars. These funds are vital to the Centre’s budget to ensure continuation of essential programs and services for clients and the community. I am happy to report that \$23,500 was fundraised in the 2019-20 and we consider this a great success. Funds raised were made possible with the help of two larger fundraisers including the Team Challenge and the WestJet Gift of Flight raffle, in conjunction with Canadian Tire Week. We are grateful for the generosity of those who sponsored these initiatives and for all who contributed to help us raise these important funds for the Centre.

While there were many positives over the past year, we cannot ignore the major challenges that presented themselves in March 2020 when the global pandemic was declared. This posed new challenges for the organization that we could never have anticipated, and that we will continue to face in the upcoming year and beyond. I am extremely proud of the adaptability and resilience that both the staff and board have shown through these very uncertain times. The pandemic will no doubt impact our ability to plan and pursue regular in-person events. As well, the full economic reach of the pandemic remains unknown at this time. Economic hardship could, in the coming year, affect the ability of donors to contribute to the organization. Having acknowledged these uncertainties, I am hopeful that, with creative planning, we can develop alternative fundraising solutions to help achieve our goals, focused not only on sustaining the organization but also on progressing with the growing and changing needs of our community.

Overall, I am very proud of the accomplishments of the amazing board and staff who contribute to the essential work of the Centre. With this next year being foreseeably challenging on many levels, I am confident that this will not impede our ability to set measurable goals to carry us into the future and ensure the organization remains sustainable and stronger than ever before.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
2019 - 2020

MEGHAN LAMONTAGNE

DANIELLE STAM

CARA PFEFFER

SANDY SMITH

DEANNA THEANDER

LAURA THOMPSON

MICHELLE BEDARD

SKYLAR HARDY

ILCE PINEDA

MORGANNA MALYON

DENISE COUSINS

ALLISON MCCULLOCH

JENNIFER LEE

MIA BASTIEN

# DIRECTOR OF COUNSELLING & ADVOCACY

KIM IWASIUK

The annual general meeting offers a time of reflection and acknowledgement of change, successes and challenges over the past year. I continue to feel such a sense of honour to walk along side so many resilient and courageous individuals who access our counselling program and services.

Our commitment to our mission statement remains at the forefront of the work we do. The Women's Resource Centre maintains the highest of standards and best practices in counselling and advocacy services. We support women and their families in their diverse and unique circumstances by ensuring that safety nets exist and are in place. Collaborative practices with partner agencies in the community can establish and offer wrap around services that further support families in their journeys.

One of the many highlights of this past year is that the centre has been identified as one of the advocate agencies in Westman to be able to support individuals that self-identify as women to complete an anonymous third-party report when a sexual assault has occurred. The Women's Resource Centre and the John Howard Society of Brandon have partnered to implement this important resource and work as a bridge between law enforcement and survivors. Third-party reporting protects anonymity while still providing police or RCMP with information that could lead to an arrest.

Responding to gender-based violence during the COVID-19 epidemic has brought challenges and revealed even more barriers for women and their children. The effects of COVID-19 have intersected with a range of other systemic oppressions that make safety even more precarious. The counselling program has quickly adapted to find ways to stay connected, reach out and continue to offer services. Through phone calls, virtual counselling sessions and social distancing, we continue to provide the best care possible in such unprecedented times.

We continue to have long-term staff members who are committed to the work that is being done and have also been able to expand our staff to nine individuals. I began my journey here in 2006 and we were a staff of two. With a few faithful volunteers to assist, we kept the centre open a few hours each day and offered counselling and drop-in services. I am inspired to see the development and growth of the agency and how we continue to do the heart work in our community. I am incredibly proud to be a staff member and my connections with women and my coworkers will forever define me.

# DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMING & DEVELOPMENT

**BOBI STUPACK**

I am incredibly proud of the work we accomplished in the 2019-2020 year for The Women's Resource Centre. The theme of sustainability was priority in nearly every significant decision we made as an organization, particularly as it pertains to funding and staffing/programming. Overall, a year of steady funding allowed our organization to catch our breath and implement practices and decisions that are best for the long term, rather than simply surviving. This breath can certainly be attributed to the significant increase in Family Violence Prevention Program funding that was announced in April 2019.

This year marked the final year of our three-year strategic plan and the final year of our Department of Justice grant for sexual assault services. We have achieved several goals we set out for ourselves with both of these projects. Specifically, we have expanded services to be more inclusive of Indigenous women, sexual assault survivors, and families who require childcare to access our services.

This year, we were invited to participate in a research project in collaboration with RESOLVE at University of Manitoba exploring Women Who Experience Intimate Partner Violence in Rural Municipalities Across the Prairies. The findings of this research will guide our advocacy for enhancing services in rural Manitoba which we presume to be an underserved population/geographic area. Furthermore, the research findings have potential to inform policy and programming decisions across Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba – the areas of focus for the project.

Of course, our fiscal year ended with the developing pandemic related to COVID-19. We quickly pivoted our counselling and drop-in services to ensure the health and well-being of staff and clients was maintained whilst also offering key services critical to community and clients' livelihoods. The pandemic caused an ongoing delay on a funding renewal application we submitted to the federal Department of Justice to continue and grow our sexual assault services in southwestern Manitoba. We are still awaiting a decision but have benefitted from various federal COVID-19 related funding opportunities to bridge this gap in funding for now. To our disappointment, we have not been offered any provincial COVID-19 response funding.

As we look towards planning another year, we maintain our focus on diversifying and increasing funding that is permanent and/or on multi-year agreements which provide stability for staff and programming, remaining a low-barrier centre for clients, adapting to the dynamic of COVID-19 protocols, and engaging with our membership in a way that is meaningful and routine to ensure our community is informed and we have a strong base of folks committed to our mission and organization.

I am proud to stand alongside our Board of Directors, staff members, and committed funders and donors who strive to provide and develop adequate services for women and families in our community, and respond to the ever-changing needs of the communities and populations we are here to serve. Thank you for your contributions.

# STRATEGIC PLAN IN REVIEW

2018-2020

The Women's Resource Centre developed a three year strategic plan in early 2018 that paved the path for future developments for both staff and Board of Directors. This strategic plan expired in March 2020, thus we now share the successes and future opportunities for strategic planning in this annual report.

## Priority A

Upon receiving an increase to core funding through the Family Violence Prevention Program to fund the equivalent of an Executive Director position, our organization became immediately able to dedicate efforts to pursuing grants and funding for other operating expenses including programming. The multi-year funding model of United Way and the federal Department of Justice allows our staff to plan with more certainty and longevity. We continue to seek funding opportunities that offer multi-year funding however we cannot rely on these funds alone. We continue to pursue opportunities that are <1 year agreements too. Our Grants Committee plays a pivotal role in researching opportunities, building programs and plans for applications, and assisting the Director of Programming and Development with the same process. TWRC is seeking funding opportunities to maintain or make permanent the sexual assault counselling services we have undertaken in the past three years.

## Priority B

In 2019, our working relationship with Brandon Police Services and Klinik Community Health was nurtured through working together on the development and implementation of third-party reporting of sexual assaults in Brandon. Additionally, our position as a member of the Steering Committee of Community Mobilization positions our organization well amongst other community agencies, including Brandon Police Services. A project, *Transforming Together*, in partnership with the Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters and the Westman Women's Shelter will continue to provide a platform and opportunities for growth in community agencies serving those affected by gender-based violence through to 2021. TWRC desires inter-agency protocols that recognize harm reduction practices and client-centered services with a variety of organizations serving mutual clients. Additionally, training opportunities funded by the Department of Justice grant created platforms for several multi-agency meetings to discuss best practices and gaps in services in our communities. These training events also raised the profile of our organization in a positive manner, and led to us becoming the go-to agency for sexual assault services in southwestern Manitoba.

## Priority C

In 2018, a Cultural Safety Committee was formed and the importance of bringing cultural safety training to staff and the Board of Directors was immediately noted. Additionally, an expansion of programming to include an Indigenous Knowledge Keeper became our priority. In late 2019, we realized our goal of bringing an Indigenous Knowledge Keeper onto our counselling team as a women's counsellor and advocate for women in need. We continue to seek new ways for this position to grow to ensure TWRC is leading the way in reducing barriers for Indigenous women and families in Brandon and area. The Cultural Safety Committee is seeking an active committee chair that can continue pursuing the vision of this strategic plan outcome, including a cultural safety audit of programs and physical space, and developing an Indigenous Counsellor position with secure funding.

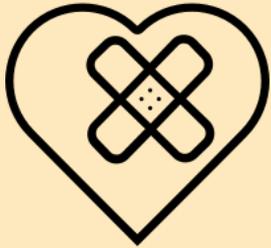
## Strategic Priority Outcomes

A. TWRC has created and implemented a revenue model that prioritizes multi-year funding opportunities. Revenue sources are consistent with the vision and mission of the organization, and allow the organization to attract and maintain appropriate staffing.

B. TWRC has close working relationships with strategically identified community agencies in order to coordinate services, identify needs, and address service gaps.

C. TWRC recognizes that our clients come from a diverse number of backgrounds and effectively removes barriers for women attempting to access services. Develop and implement a Cultural Safety Plan that acknowledges the contributions and needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ women, Indigenous, Hispanic, and other ethno-cultural communities. Pursue opportunities that reflect cultural practices, including drop in counselling services, elder in residence, and continue to work collaboratively with community agencies.

# OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS



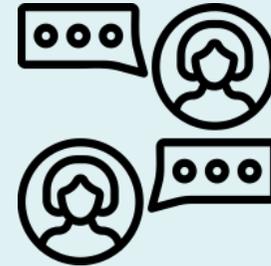
**202**

sessions with children and youth exposed to family violence



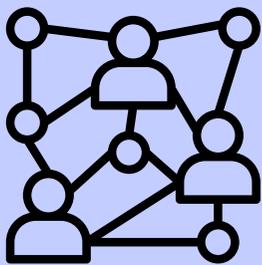
**618**

visits with women who have experienced family violence



**48**

visits with women who have experienced sexual assault



**190**

visits with women accessing our advocacy services

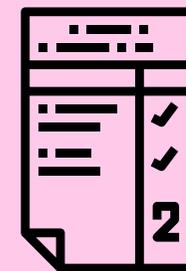


**10**

third-party report inquiries

**3**

third-party report submissions



**26**

protection order inquiries

**6**

protection order applications completed



**134**

**childcare visits**

Our ECE provides care for children while caregivers attend appointments, group sessions, legal clinic, wellness programming, and drop-in services. Historically, lack of childcare has been a barrier for women accessing our services.



**42**

**legal clinic visits**

Various Brandon area lawyers volunteer time each month to assist women with questions related to navigating the legal system, with questions pertaining to family law such as custody, separation, divorce, and protection orders.



Drop-in hours were reduced due to a staff shortage in October - December 2019, consequently a reduction in some statistics was anticipated.

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT Q&A

## Rosabel, Spanish-Speaking Counsellor

### **What is your role at The Women's Resource Centre?**

I provide counselling and advocacy to Spanish-speaking women. I assist with applications such as legal aid and protection orders, and accompany clients to meetings with child & family services, lawyers, and court proceedings. I facilitate groups and workshops that support Spanish-speaking women. As a part of the counselling team, I participate in case management with other counsellors and complete administrative tasks as needed in the Centre.

### **What workshop(s) did you facilitate this year?**

I delivered a workshop for Spanish-speaking survivors of domestic violence in June. This group was attended by women who have previously received long-term domestic violence counselling and advocacy.

Between August and November, I also facilitated a multi-session workshop on self-esteem for Spanish-speaking women. We met on Saturdays for 10 sessions.

And for the first time, I co-facilitated the E.V.E. group for English-speaking women with other counsellors through October and November.

### **What are the goals you hope to achieve through group work?**

The goal of the Survivors of Domestic Violence group was to train these women in getting skills of leadership, empowerment, advocacy to provide support other victims of domestic violence considering their experiences of having break the cycle of abuse. As models for other Spanish-speaking women victims of intimate abusive partners.

### **What are the topics of interest or focus in your groups?**

These groups have been specially designed by me considering all elements that shape self-esteem of Spanish-speaking women which is quite influenced by macho culture and a tremendous religious conception; both make women very vulnerable to get involved in abusive relationships. Taking those elements, the contents of sessions are based on topics such as: forgiveness, body image, macho culture, cycle of abuse, types of abuse, etc.

### **How do you increase access to programming for your clients?**

I usually deliver self-esteem groups on Saturdays, because that is the day that fits very well with Spanish-speaking clients schedules. We started to offer child minding services a couple years ago to provide fun activities for children while mothers are in sessions. We ensure there is food and transportation assistance during our sessions as well. This all makes it easier for women to attend sessions.

### **How many group sessions do you typically plan for in a fiscal year?**

Typically, I deliver one group of 10 sessions in a fiscal year. Sometimes, additional funding allows for more groups or sessions.

### **What other resources do Spanish-speaking women need in our community?**

My clients need legal support that is easy and affordable to access. For example, with legal support clients can have assistance getting child support, negotiating custody arrangements, and handling division of properties, mortgages and other debts.

# COVID-19 AND OUR CENTRE

The COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacts women, girls, and gender-diverse people throughout the world. It is deepening pre-existing inequities, as services have seen an increased need to address gender-based violence, houselessness and vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems. Our experience of these inequities as women is unique:

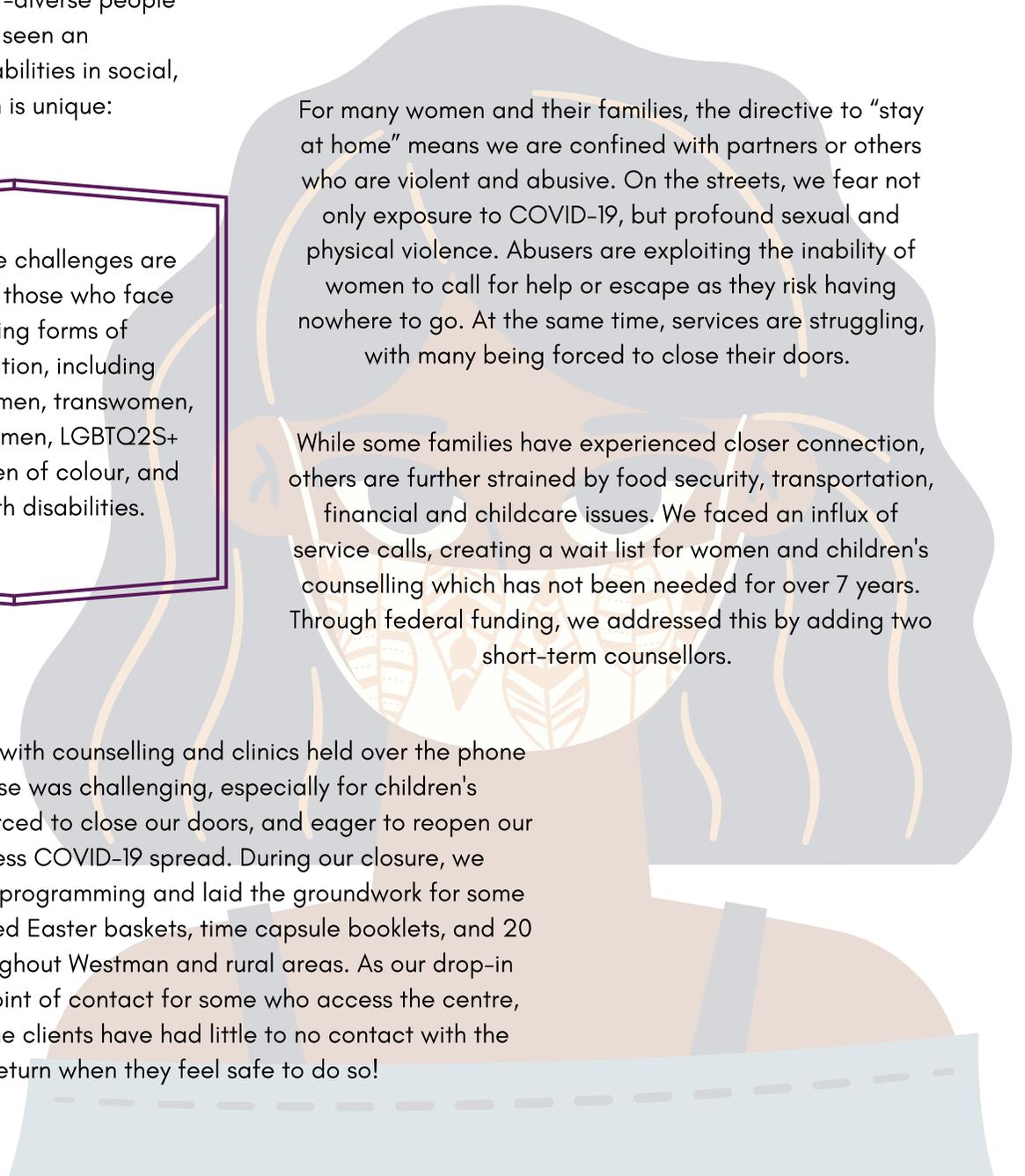
- Women are more likely to be frontline essential workers in health care and social service fields.
- The formal economy is dependent on women's unpaid care work. As folks work from home, domestic and child-care responsibilities predominantly fall onto the shoulders of women.
- Many women already live in core-housing need, head single-parent families, bear the burden of childcare, often being forced to choose between rent or feeding their families.
- Crowded homes, substance use, physical and mental health stressors, limited access to services and reduced peer support are also exacerbating impacts upon women.

Many of these challenges are amplified for those who face intersecting forms of marginalization, including Indigenous women, transwomen, immigrant women, LGBTQ2S+ people, women of colour, and women with disabilities.

For many women and their families, the directive to “stay at home” means we are confined with partners or others who are violent and abusive. On the streets, we fear not only exposure to COVID-19, but profound sexual and physical violence. Abusers are exploiting the inability of women to call for help or escape as they risk having nowhere to go. At the same time, services are struggling, with many being forced to close their doors.

While some families have experienced closer connection, others are further strained by food security, transportation, financial and childcare issues. We faced an influx of service calls, creating a wait list for women and children's counselling which has not been needed for over 7 years. Through federal funding, we addressed this by adding two short-term counsellors.

Many of our centre's services were adapted, with counselling and clinics held over the phone and computer. Engagement through these was challenging, especially for children's counselling. During the first wave we were forced to close our doors, and eager to reopen our space in June following changes to address COVID-19 spread. During our closure, we cleaned, organized donations, prepared fall programming and laid the groundwork for some centre upgrades. Our childcare worker created Easter baskets, time capsule booklets, and 20 child and family activity kits, delivered throughout Westman and rural areas. As our drop-in and breakfast program are often our sole point of contact for some who access the centre, the loss of connection was deeply felt. Some clients have had little to no contact with the centre, and we welcome their return when they feel safe to do so!



# THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS

**Family Violence Prevention Program - Manitoba**

**Department of Justice - Canada**

**United Way Brandon & District**

**Shoppers Drug Mart - Growing Women's Health**

**PrairieAction Foundation**

**Jewish Foundation of Manitoba**

**Early Learning and Child Care - Manitoba**

**Brandon Area Community Foundation**

**City of Brandon**

**Good Shepherd Fund**

**Margaret Lawrence Endowment Fund**

**Healthy Together Now**

**And a special thank you to our generous  
community members for their ongoing  
support.**

