



**West Kootenay Women's Association
(WKWA)
Annual Report 2023/2024**

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.

WKWA Board of Directors (September 2023 to September 2024)

Kerry Marsland, Treasurer (May 2021 to AGM 2024)

Kai Kafriksen, Acting Chair (AGM 2023 to AGM 2025)

Vanessa Deverall, Director (March 2023 to December 2023)

Lauren Penfound, Director (AGM 2023 to AGM 2025)

Deena DeWitt, Secretary (October 2023 to AGM 2024)

Jaspreet Batra Kaur, Director (November 2023 to AGM 2024/reapplying)

Zoe McCabe, Director (May 2023 to February 2024)

Christine Deynaka, Board Chair (June 2023 to July 2024)

Megan Southam, Director (July 2023 to July 2024)

WKWA had a small Coordinating Collective (CC) of between seven and ten members at any one time throughout the year. We remained unified and resilient throughout the year and made efforts to build relationships as we began to understand and accommodate individuals' needs.

The Board undertook Board Roles and Responsibilities Training through the CBT Advisory program, which helped to clarify and increase understanding of each Directors' role and responsibilities within the organization.

In July 2024 the CC partnered with Joselin Corrigan, from Porchlight Mediation, to create a 3-year Strategic Plan to assist with directing the organization over the next few years. The 3 priority areas that will become the focus of the board and staff are Organization and Operations, Programming, and Community Outreach and Education. The short version of the Strategic Plan has been included in the Agenda Package for membership review.

We will be creating a work plan to reflect our strategic plan in the coming months. One main priority will focus on succession planning for our Board of Directors to maintain stability and capacity for growth.

Nelson & District Women's Centre Staff (September 2023 to September 2024)

Malia Joy, Executive Director (January 2023 to Current) (CC)
Anna Jauncey, Programs Manager (February 2023 to Current) (CC)
Anna Jauncey, Social Media and Marketing Coordinator (February 2023 to Current)
Stacey Fitzgerald, Drop-in Coordinator (January 2024 to July 2024)
Lauren Notley, Queer Drop-in Coordinator (April 2024 to Current)
Lauren Notley, ON-CALL Drop-in Coordinator (April 2024 to Current)
Heather-Lynn Austin, ON-CALL Drop-in Coordinator (September 2024 to current)

The small staff team at the Women's Centre is a united group of passionate progressive feminists that are committed to the success of the organization as well as driven to helping people feel empowered and capable to achieve their goals. While we have seen a fantastic drop-in coordinator come and go, we have retained our management team and are happy to see a high level of stability within the team.

Please Note: This annual report covers activities of the West Kootenay Women's Association from April 1st, 2023 to March 31st, 2024, 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.

Report Overview

The 2023-2024 annual report highlights key organizational developments, community engagement, and strategic initiatives. The Coordinating Collective (CC) maintained cohesion and resilience, completing Board Roles and Responsibilities training and developing a 3-year strategic plan, focusing on Operations, Programming, and Community Outreach.

Staff retention was notable, with a committed team maintaining vital services, including the Drop-In Resource and Referral Program, which supported over 1,400 visitors with food, clothing, referrals and counselling. Practicum programs expanded services, while Rooted in Community, the Youth Empowerment Series and BC Farmers Market Coupon Program offered further community support.

Key committees drove progress in governance, human resource (HR), finance, and facilities. The Governance Committee focused on policy updates and strategic planning, while the HR Committee addressed staff retention. The Finance Committee worked to diversify funding amid declining BC Gaming support. The Facilities Committee improved energy efficiency through solar panel installation and infrastructure upgrades.

The Diversity, Inclusion, and Reconciliation Committee (DIRC) led efforts in decolonization, gender inclusivity, and intersectional feminism, rebuilding community trust through an official statement of apology and increased engagement. Fundraising efforts, particularly the "RIFT" event, raised funds to support or programming, sustaining operations.

Community events, such as International Women's Day, Red Dress Day, and the upcoming 50th anniversary celebration, strengthen ties with the Nelson community. Moving forward, WKWA remains focused on fostering a safe, inclusive environment for women and gender-diverse individuals.

Board Committees

As a small organization we are dependent 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.

Governance Committee

The governance committee identified key areas and focused on them throughout the year. Creating an organizational chart, beginning updates to the policy manual, and completing strategic planning were the major milestones of this committee.

See the 2024 AGM agenda package to review the strategic plan and organizational chart.

Human Resources Committee (HR)

We have identified staff and board retention as a weakness within our organization. It has become a priority of the board to adequately support and compensate our staff for their time and efforts. We are ensuring that the Executive Director is receiving regular performance reviews and the support they need to continue in their role while growing as a leader and supporting the staff team at the Women's Centre.

Finance Committee

We received substantial multi-year funding from the Vancouver Foundation that has been fundamental to maintaining our operations and ensuring adequate staff retention to keep our programming open. Funding from BC Gaming, which provides regular funding for the Drop-in Resource and Referral Program has been decreasing incrementally over the last two years. Diversifying funding streams and re-evaluating program structures to ensure sustainability and adequate services is a priority of our three-year strategic plan.

Our long-time treasurer, Kerry Marsland, will be finishing her second board term with WKWA this September. Kerry has been an anchor of stability for WKWA over the last four years and we are so grateful for her mentorship and all the time she dedicated to the organization. We are looking forward to welcoming a new treasurer to our board of directors and finding a qualified candidate is one of our top priorities moving into this coming year.

Community Relations Committee

This year we focused on repairing relationships with communities in Nelson. With help from the Diversity, Inclusion, and Reconciliation Committee a public statement of apology was released to our community in February 2024 titled "A New Era at the West Kootenay Women's Association" where we stated:

As a society, the West Kootenay Women's Association would like to formally apologize for the hurt, discomfort and loss of trust that was experienced by those involved with the Centre during this time of transition. As an organization, we

were under-prepared to navigate the community's polarized opinions about gender inclusivity. We recognize that women and gender diverse individuals alike are victims of patriarchal systems, as well as the lateral violence that occurs within the feminist movement. We failed to maintain a safe space during the difficult conversations surrounding inclusivity during that time. Although none of the current Directors or Staff were involved with the organization during the height of these challenges in 2019, we want to acknowledge these past challenges in order to move forward with a new era of respect and openness in meeting our community's needs.

Moving forward, we want the Centre to feel safe and inclusive of all people accessing our services. Our progressive new board and staff are dedicated to dismantling oppressive systems and creating a world in which equality, respect and reciprocity are the foundational principles that guide our activism. We recognize that utilizing intersectional, inclusive, feminist principles and providing barrier-free access to resources is our top priority. We are committed to rebuilding trust and upholding our promise to create a safe space and will continue to make necessary changes to the services we offer to meet the needs of the community.

-A new era at the West Kootenay Women's Association

Since publishing this statement, we have noted increased diversity at the Nelson Women's Centre and many people have shared that they feel safe to come back to volunteer and take part in our programming. We will continue to make reparations and hold space to support our community. The statement of apology can be found at <http://www.nelsonwomenscentre.com/news/>.

Fundraising Committee

Our main fundraiser this year was RIFT: renewing intersectional feminism together. The royal allowed us to use their space for free and all the performers donated their time to help us raise funds to keep the organization going. Many artists and local businesses donated items for our raffle, and we were able to raise \$2491. As we move into the new year the committee will be developing a work plan to diversify our funding streams and improve our donor profile. We are in need of committee members with skills in fundraising and adequate time to contribute.

Facilities Committee

The facilities committee tackled several projects this year including general maintenance and the installation of mini-split heat pumps, solar panels, a washer dryer unit and insulating the basement.

We began a deep clean of the shed, in preparation for either renovation or removal based on contractor recommendations after additional assessments of the condition of the foundation and building.

Diversity Inclusion and Reconciliation Committee (DIRC)

The DIRC is committed to advancing gender inclusion, anti-racism, decolonization, truth & reconciliation, intersectional feminism, and dismantling systems of oppression. This

year DIRC held discussions around decolonization, truth and reconciliation, and accessibility, and community relations. We are grateful to the individuals volunteering on this committee and hope more folks join us in our mission to advance EDI within WKWA and in our community.

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.

50th Anniversary Committee

In 1974 the West Kootenay Women's Association was incorporated. For the past 50 years we have operated the oldest rural women's centre in Canada, the Nelson & District Women's Centre. When the WKWA opened the NDWC our objectives were:

- Women's empowerment toward the creation of a world free of oppression.
- Creating healthy community through providing support and resources for women and advancing gender equality (affirming the unique experience of women/girls in our society).
- Maintaining drop-in hours and a place where women can organize around their needs, plus access to our feminist library.

Today our values have expanded to include supporting all marginalized genders including gender diverse individuals. We are working hard to support our transgender, non-binary, two-spirit, gender-fluid, and gender queer community members who access our programming.

Many significant, inspirational projects have run through the West Kootenay Women's Association since it was incorporated in 1974. Countless women and gender diverse folks have contributed with their hearts and souls to keep the doors of the Women's Centre open and ensure the programming continues to be relevant.

Programs

Drop-In Resource and Referral Program

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

- Tuesday Drop-in
- Wednesday Drop-in Crisis Support (or by appointment)
- Wednesday Queer Drop-in

- Thursday Crafternoons and hot lunch

We want to express gratitude for the **4,482 lbs. of food and the 4658 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. **2,098 service users** visited our Centre during drop-in since our last AGM. **537** 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.

Practicum Program

We have been successfully facilitating counselling and social work practicums at the Women's Centre. The ability to offer free counselling services to our drop-in program participants has become one of our best resources available at the centre and services are typically fully booked. We plan to continue expanding this program to best meet the needs of our Drop-in participants.

Food Hamper Program

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.

Volunteer Program

This 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. Since the last AGM, we have had 120 dedicated volunteers give their time to our programs.

Rooted in Community (RIC) Volunteer Training Program

RIC was offered twice this year, in the fall and in the spring. We create a space to discuss intersectional feminism, inclusion and diversity, truth and reconciliation, decolonization and more. RIC empowers and educates participants to help with crisis support and volunteer at the Women's Centre and preparing them to work within the greater community. All drop-in volunteers are required to take RIC. This 8-week program is delivered in person with a few online. We have begun creating resources that can be shared and viewed online.

Youth Empowerment Series (YES)

The focus of this program was 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, funded by Telus, was delivered in the fall of 2023 by our Programs Manager, Anna Jauncey.

BC Farmers Market Coupon Program (BCFMCP)

We received 29 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 29 spots for program participants we also received a transportation grant as well as coupons for the centre to spend on a food literacy workshop.

Service User Round Table

These meetings happened once every three months and are a designated space for service users and volunteers to share their feedback about programming at the Women's Centre. The meetings are facilitated by a staff member and a board member when available. 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.

Events

AGM – September 28, 2023

- 2022 AGM minutes were approved
- 2023 Annual Report was approved
- 2023 Compiled Financial Statement was approved, and audit was waived
- Changes to Bylaws
 - Part I – Interpretation
 - 1: motion to approve this amendment “Core staff that work 15 hours a week or more.” was seconded and carried
 - 2, e): removed the word “her” as the word “their” includes everyone, motion was seconded and carried
 - Part II – Membership
 - Changed the wording in section 3 to say: “Membership in good standing is available to any woman or gender diverse individual who resides in the West Kootenays upon payment...etc. motion was seconded and carried
 - Changed section 5 so that all uses of the word “her” is replaced with “their” motion was seconded and carried
 - Part IV – Coordinating Collective
 - Amendments to section 18 we seconded and carried
 - a. The Coordinating Collective shall be composed of:
 - i. The Board of Directors
 - ii. Core staff (staff working 15 or more hours per week)
 - Section 23 was revised to say: “Any Board Member may be removed from their position by a two-thirds majority vote of the Coordinating Collective”. (This is to clarify that the process of terminating staff is different than removing board members from the CC.) Seconded and carried.

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation – September 30th, 2023

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 continue to consider our place on this land as uninvited guests and acknowledge the importance of our continued work towards truth and reconciliation as well as decolonization.

National Day of Remembrance & Action on Violence Against Women – December 6, 2023

Women's Centre staff worked in partnership with the Violence Against Women in Relationship (VAWIR) Committee to honor the 14 women who were murdered at Polytechnique Montréal on December 6, 1989 as well as all the women who have been victims of gender based violence.

Winter Solstice Celebration – December 21, 2023

Together we welcomed the changing season with snacks, refreshments, and gifts that were donated by our generous community.

International Women's Day – March 8, 2024

In celebration of International Women's Day, we invited folks to gather at the Centre to mingle, eat food, and contribute to our community vision board. This year's theme was 'Inspire Inclusion'.

For the evening celebration we partnered with Association des francophones des Kootenays Ouest (AFKO) for a film night at the Royal, featuring exceptional athletes in the Kootenays.

Red Dress Day -- May 5, 2024

To honor the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit People, we hung a red dress from our front steps. A ceremony was held at the Cenotaph at noon.

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 are deeply grateful to the Royal for volunteering their space for this event as well as all the talented artists who performed. Sarah Orton, Bella Cat and LBee, Vivian Brass, Avery Florance, Paris Pick and the Pricks, thank you. Thank you to all the amazing businesses and individuals who donated 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 and the West Kootenay Women's Association. We raised \$2491.

Nelson Pride Parade – September 1, 2024

For the second year we piled into Malia's little Nissan Frontier to dance our way through Nelson, celebrating the love and freedom for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to be who they are and love who they want! It was a great success, and we look forward to next year's celebration. Thank you to all the volunteers for decorating the truck and joining us in the sunshine as we took to the streets.

50th Year Celebration -- September 13, 2024

We come together to gather at the Nelson Museum to celebrate 50 years of amazing work done by WKWA. We welcome keynote speakers, Deirdre McLaughlin and Cheryl

Dowden to share their words with us, while we listen to music, eat cupcake and share our stories.

Other Events

- Althaea Herbals Workshops
 - Introduction to Herbal Medicine
 - Somatic Herbalism
- Borscht Luncheon
- Fall/ Halloween Celebration
- KSWAG Gatherings (space rental)
- Knitting Group (space rental)
- Leather workshop with Brit Barkhouse

Grants and Projects

- A **B.C Community Gaming Grant** of \$26,075 for the Drop-in Resource and Referral Program. (2023)
- A **B.C Community Gaming Grant** of \$22,500 for the Drop-in Resource and Referral Program. (2024)
- **BC Farmers Market Coupon Program:** 30 participant spots + \$800 (Summer 2023)
- **BC Farmers Market Coupon Program:** 29 participant spots + \$800 (Summer 2024)
- **Canadian Women's Foundation (CWF):** \$20,000 Shock proofing
- **City of Nelson, Covid Recovery Grant:** \$19,000 (operations and programming.
- **RDCK**
 - **Community Initiatives Programs:** \$684 (carried forward) Garden Tools
 - **ReDi, Queer Drop-in Program:** \$6995.00 (carried forward)
- **Columbia Basin Trust (CBT):**
 - **Non-Profit Sustainability:** 30,350.00 (carried forward- used throughout the fiscal year on capital upgrades including solar, mini slits and insulation)
 - **Technology Grant:** 2,440 Carried forward (technology upgrades for staff June 2023)
 - **Non-Profit Advisory Program:** \$2,760 (Strategic planning July 2024)
- **Health Sciences Association (HSA):** \$9000 (washer/dryer)
- **Kootenay Co-op:** \$1000
- **St. Saviors Grant:** \$750.00
- **TELUS Community Boards:** \$5658.00 for the Youth Empowerment Series (YES) (extension was granted)
- **Vancouver Foundation:** \$72,000 (October 2023) Operations costs
- **Vancouver Foundation** \$72,000 (May 2024) Operations Costs

Thank you to our Sponsors and Supporters

- The Kootenay Bakery Café Cooperative
- Kootenay Co-op
- Silverking Soya Foods
- Oso Negro Café
- Cantina Del Centro
- The Royal
- ISIS Essentials
- Mallards
- Bone Darling
- Zinnia
- Big Cranium
- Valhalla Pure Outfitters
- Bella flora
- K- Tattooist
- Phoenix Computers
- Love of Shiva
- Taylor Stewart
- Gerick's Cycle
- Skin Blis Medi Spa
- Vibe Clothing
- Busaba Thai Restaurant
- Still Eagle
- Urban Legends
- Maison
- Gaia Rising
- Lokel
- Rose Fibers
- Beauties Pizza
- Home Hardware
- Scout Clothing
- Strutters Boutique
- Winnow Seed Co. for donating so many amazing seeds for our garden
- Kootenay Coop Radio
- Anna Jauncey
- The Nelson Star
- Hume Hotel
- Althea Herbals
- Greater Groove
- Eddy's Music Store
- Yasodhara Ashram Society
- Nelson Rotary Club
- Kootenay Rhythm Dragons
- Esprit De La Femme
- Save on Foods
- Rona Maglio building Centre

Thank you to the individuals, organizations, and local businesses for their cash and in-kind donations. Thank you to all our supporters, members, volunteers and staff who continue to stand by the WKWA – thank you dearly for remaining steadfast in your dedication to helping serve 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 WKWA and the Nelson & District Women's Centre.

Additional thanks,



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

