

2015-2016
annual report



WomanACT

WOMAN ABUSE COUNCIL OF TORONTO



MESSAGE FROM CO-CHAIRS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Woman Abuse Council of Toronto (WomanACT) is proud to present our 2015-2016 Annual Report.

We have had a successful year as we continued to fulfill our mandate to women and children whose lives have been affected by violence and abuse.

This year, working in collaboration with VAW sector leaders, WomanACT coordinated the third “End Violence Against Women (VAW) Week in Toronto”. This event was a massive success! With over 700 attendees from various organizations across the city of Toronto, we as a group of strong and passionate frontline workers, advocates, lawyers and policy makers were able to connect, share and discuss better ways to support and serve women and children who are fleeing violence.

We greatly appreciated our VAW sector's front line staff and managers taking the time from their very busy agendas to be part of this event. Their enthusiasm speaks to the importance and priority our sector must put on getting trained and updated on the latest information, tools and strategies that can be used to impact the well-being of women and children facing a variety of barriers such as poverty, precarious immigration status and access to effective legal aid.

For the first time, WomanACT hosted the Soul of a Warrior Awards Gala. Thanks to our supporters, our first fundraiser was a big success!

Award recipients are selected by the WomanACT Nominating Committee, based on nominations from Violence against Women sector representatives. The award recognized front line staff who provides exceptional services to women and children fleeing violence. Congratulations to Michelle Fraser, Iliana Mena and Chris Spiess, the 2016 Soul of a Warriors Award recipients!

MESSAGE FROM CO-CHAIRS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

One of the keys to providing consistent responses to violence against women is working in collaboration with different sectors and experts in the area of woman abuse. WomanACT is cognizant of the fact that coordinated efforts will impact positively systems and service provision for women and children experiencing violence.

We are very pleased to continue coordinating two very important collaborations taking place in Toronto: The Transitional and Housing Support Program Network (THSP Network) and the Children Aid Societies and Violence against Women (CAS/VAW) Toronto Region Advisory Committee. This is an excellent fit given WomanACT's mandate to prevent violence against women and children and promote a Toronto-wide integrated, coordinated response through leadership, education and community mobilization.

We believe these are indeed exciting times for WomanACT, our future is grounded in our continued commitment to and development of a coordinated community response.

Best Regards,

Carla Neto and Lisa Tomlinson, *Co-Chairs*

Harmy Mendoza, *Executive Director*

WOMANACT STANDING COMMITTEES

WomanACT is organized around a network of standing committees and task groups that offer opportunities for members to work on specific areas of interest and concern. The Committees of WomanACT include a number of sector-specific committees including Health, Shelter and Support Services and Cultural Issues Services.

JOINT SHELTER & SUPPORT SERVICES/CULTURAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

This action-oriented committee has become an essential support system for many front line agency staff working in the area of violence against women. This committee has been the mastermind behind some of the biggest projects at WomanACT, and this year it continues to meet on a regular basis jointly with the Shelter Committee for information sharing as well as the provision of valuable input and insight into many of WomanACT's initiatives.

HEALTH COMMITTEE

The Health Committee is made up of members who work in the health sector in Toronto area hospitals, public health offices and community health centers.

The mandate of the committee is to provide collective advocacy, encourage the development of connections with other sectors, provide leadership with respect to Promising Practice Guidelines, provide support to organizations developing programs/policies related to woman abuse and provide a venue for discussion of critical issues.



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (VAW) INITIATIVES WE COORDINATE

TRANSITIONAL AND HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAM NETWORK

The Transitional and Housing Support Program (THSP), funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), provides flexible and diverse community-based programs for women and children experiencing violence.

The THSP Network is a dynamic Network dedicated to promoting effective, consistent and high quality responses that break the cycle of violence and address women's and children's need for safe and affordable housing and transitional support to ensure their safety and self-sufficiency.

A total of 21 agencies are members of the THSP Network.

The Network has a distinct and critical role to play in developing integrated, multidisciplinary and inter-sectoral responses to the issue of domestic violence, especially with a focus on housing and transitional support. There is also tremendous value among the Network's members in sharing issues and knowledge, monitoring trends and problem solving collectively.

As such, the structure and process developed by the Network is fully transparent and accountable to the membership. Communication protocols and reporting processes are member-driven, timely, and accurate.

In August 2015, WomanACT surveyed the Network about their satisfaction levels with WomanACT's Coordination Support.

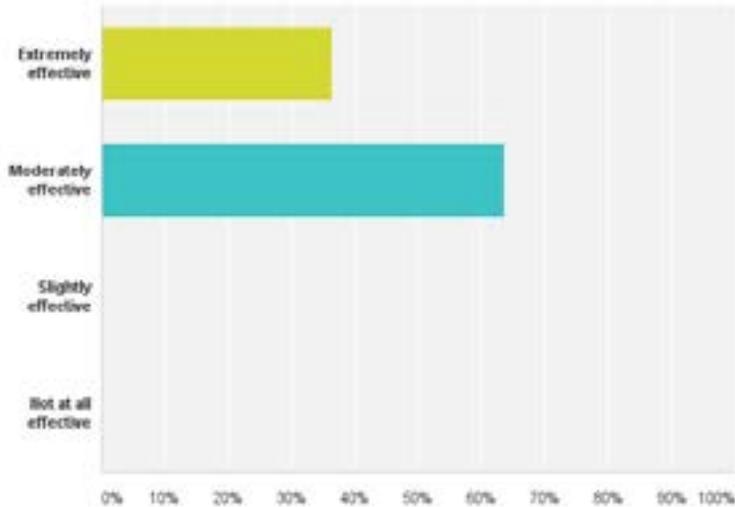
A total of 22 representatives answered our survey: 16 were extremely satisfied, 5 were moderately satisfied and 1 was neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.



THSP NETWORK SURVEY RESULTS

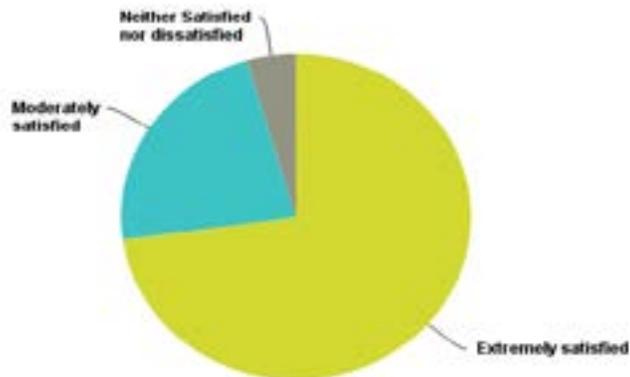
Q2 How effective has the THSP Network been in achieving its Strategic Plan goals thus far?

Answered: 77 Skipped: 0



Q1 How satisfied are you with WomanACT's overall co-ordination of the THSP Network?

Answered: 77 Skipped: 0



CHILDREN AID SOCIETIES AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (CAS/VAW) TORONTO REGION ADVISORY COMMITTEE: COLLABORATING WITH INCREASED IMPACT!



The CAS/VAW Toronto Region Advisory Committee is a community based advisory group that flows important information and recommendations to the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Child and Youth Services. The Committee works across the CAS/VAW sector to increase collaboration and enhance service delivery for women and children.

Membership on the Committee is organizational and may include one representative from each signatory organization or funder. The CAS/VAW Advisory Committee has been active since 2004 and has accomplished a great deal over the past decade. The Committee's success is due, in large part, to the investment of periodic resources and funding into the Collaboration by both the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Youth and Child Services.

The CAS/VAW initiative aims to develop and improve collaboration between the child welfare and violence against women sectors in Toronto. This work of forging and deepening connections in support of service cohesion has resulted in tangible service delivery models, networking, learning and problem solving activities, as well as the development of an online tool that facilitates knowledge exchange.

What are the benefits of the CAS/VAW Collaboration in Toronto Region?

- **Connectedness:** greater sense of working as a team between the two sectors.
- **Increased awareness:** CAS has more awareness of domestic violence issues and VAW has more awareness of the CAS mandate and process.
- **Clarified roles and expectations** and an enhanced sense of comfort with each other.
- **Improved communication** and information sharing.
- **A clear starting point** of agreed upon parameters between the two sectors.
- **A structure and process** for working together, a framework and common ground.
- An emphasis on **shared goals** in supporting mom and child.



The Forum

WomanACT, as a member of the Advisory Committee, continues to support the development of the annual Forum, as an opportunity for focused networking, learning and problem solving responses.

The CAS-VAW Colocation Model

The CAS-VAW Co-location Model is the actioned embodiment of over a decade of stakeholder feedback, government action plan objectives, coroner and death review committee recommendations, and widely espoused best practices: with adamant calls for collaboration coming from each of these sources, there can be little doubt about the crucial importance of meaningful collaboration between child welfare and violence against women agencies. Where previous CAS-VAW Collaborative Agreements outlined collaborative objectives on paper, the Co-location Model has put meaningful service integration and knowledge-sharing into action, to the ultimate benefit of women, children, and families living with violence.

Outcomes from the Co-location Model continue to be tracked and documented. To date, it has had proven critical impact in the following areas:

- Effective risk and lethality assessments
- Immediate and effective safety planning
- Willingness of women to disclose family violence and work with agencies that address family violence
- Increased engagement of the abuser, which may lead to greater overall safety for victims of violence
- Immediate, efficient, and effective access to expanded and coordinated services
- Increased systemic efficiencies



3RD END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN WEEK IN TORONTO

Working in collaboration with VAW sector leaders, WomanACT coordinated the 3rd “End Violence Against Women (VAW) Week in Toronto”. An entire week of education, training, policy development and planning, consisting of forums, panel discussions, keynote speakers, and a full day cross-sectoral training. Our audience included but was not limited to: front line workers in the Health, VAW, Substance Use, Mental Health and Child Protection Services sectors in Toronto.

We are so proud and happy to announce that the “End Violence Against Women Week in Toronto” continues to be a massive success! With over 700 attendees from various organizations across the GTA, we as a group of strong and passionate frontline workers, advocates, lawyers and policy makers were able to connect, share and discuss better ways to protect and serve women and children fleeing violence.

A fully bilingual webpage was developed this year, easily accessible at <http://www.womanactsendviolenceagainstwomenweek.com/>



DAY
1
Monday
March 7th,
2016

CAS/VAW FORUM
Creating Connections for Increased Impact

In 2016 the CAS/VAW Collaboration Forum was organised for the 3rd time in the context of the event “End Violence Against Women Week in Toronto”.

Prepared and developed by members of the Children Aid Societies (CAS) and Violence against Women(VAW) Advisory Committee in Toronto; this full-day Forum brought together over 150 stakeholders from child welfare, violence against women organizations and the government to participate in an educational and inspiring session.

During the Forum attendees connected with each other; they shared perspectives, experiences and assumptions; and they problem-solved together in order to develop their capacity to provide integrated services to women and their children.

While celebrating the achievements of the CAS/VAW Collaboration so far, participants also highlighted challenges to their work in common. They also offered a wealth of feedback and recommendations to improve and expand the CAS/VAW Collaboration as it goes forward.

Participants included a cross-section of staff levels within the sectors, including executive directors, managers and front line staff.



DAY
2

Tuesday
March
8th, 2016

DAY
3

Wednesday
March 9th
2016

V Supporting Survivors by Supporting Staff Training Conference

WomanACT hosted the Supporting Survivors by Supporting Staff (SSxSS) annual two day training conference for the fourth year in a row.

SSxSS is a conference for front line workers in the violence against women sector. Each day there are panel discussions, speaker presentations and interactive training workshops where sector experts discuss powerful and practical ideas on key issues facing this sector.

During this two days, we were fortunate to have a diverse collection of dynamic and inspiring speakers that provided an array of crucial training opportunities.

Over the course of the week, we were fortunate to have a diverse collection of dynamic and inspiring speakers that provided an array of crucial training opportunities.

There were several trainings at the conference this year including 2 keynote speakers, 9 workshops, 2 panels and an installation of artworks created by front-line practitioners.

Beyond learning, breakfast and lunch were provided, and attendees could participate in a door prize raffle.

Throughout the week attendees were also invited to complete written evaluations so as to provide feedback, opinions and reflections.

The majority of the attendees were very satisfied with the content at the conference and the quality of the presenters. Written comments indicated that workshops and presentations were not long enough and required more time.

“

“I found the day beneficial and very useful.”

“I felt my voice was heard.”

“Congratulations. Very successful Forum.”

“I learned a lot about different perspectives from different organisations.”

“It’s amazing how people from both sectors CAS/VAW get excited about the collaboration.”

“Good balance of thought provoking sessions, information and networking.”

“I really enjoyed the continued efforts of the VAW/CAS Collaboration as well as the time used to bring everyone together.”

”

Event Website

The website functioned as a matrix for this year’s conference as well.

The website’s updated information described the different events and trainings of the 2016 SSxSS conference and how to register in them.

During the conference we used social media to broadcast to the community. Volunteers wrote and posted blogs about the conference events, and attendees also contributed many feeds and comments on Twitter and Facebook.

Conference Organization

The graph below shows the attendees’ evaluation of and feedback on the organization of the conference. The graph data are sourced from the Survey Monkey post-conference survey.

87% of the respondents to the survey state that they intend to attend the 2017 conference.



Attendees' satisfaction with the conference organization



“

“All presentations were well planned and well presented. Women of colour were for the first time visible as presenters too.”

Excellent workshop! It helped me think of ways to incorporate self-reflection in my life/work.

It’s always a pleasure to network and learn from like-minded people in the field. Learning about the new initiatives and the progress made in the sector is one of the main reasons these conferences are important.

What I liked most about the conference, besides topics covered, was the different individuals brought in for both panels and workshops.

*The fact that the conference is held for people working in the sector is amazing. It is a great opportunity to learn about new trends and to find out what other VAW organizations are doing in the city, and to learn from each other.
Thanks for giving me this opportunity.*

Excellent workshop! It helped me think of ways to incorporate self-reflection in my life/work.

Excellent!The conference staff and volunteers were very well informed about the event and able to give appropriate directions.”

”

Telling Our Stories Art Installation

During the SSxSS 2-Day Training Conference, we displayed the artwork of front-line practitioners that was created in arts-based workshops. Attendees viewed and talked about the art pieces. They also could respond to the displayed artworks by leaving their messages on specially prepared paper cutouts which were added to the central art table.

WomanACT truly believe each of us play an important role supporting women and children who have experienced violence. Roles that vary from intake worker, to counsellor, to children's advocate, to family support worker, to legal support worker and beyond.

On any given day, these roles require thoughtfulness, compassion, and dedication in order to provide the support and resources necessary. This group was composed of an incredible mix of women that spanned this spectrum of roles. It was humbling to create with such a passionate and inspired group of women.



WomanACT's 2016 Soul of a Warrior Awards



What is a warrior? It is a term that carries different meanings respective to the context. We describe a true warrior as one who protects and works towards balance and peace.

The WomanACT Soul of a Warrior is an award given to an exceptional front line workers in the Violence against Women sector. Nominees for this award must work in Toronto and show commitment to advocacy for improving the lives of women and children experiencing violence.

This year, WomanACT presented our first annual Soul of a Warrior Awards Gala on Tuesday, March 8th 2016 during International Women's Day.



WomanACT's 2016 Soul of a Warrior Awards

We received numerous submissions for this prestigious award and the nominating committee of the WomanACT Board of Directors reviewed the nominees. The decision was difficult as there were so many dedicated and deserving nominees.

After extensive review and deliberation, the three winners of the 2016 Soul of a Warrior Awards were:

Michelle Fraser - Women's Habitat of Etobicoke

Iliana Mena - Ernestine's Women Shelter

Chris Spiess - YWCA Women's Shelter

The night was a huge success as we celebrated and honoured front-line workers in the Anti-Violence sector. With over 90 attendees, the night was filled with entertainment, and most importantly, celebration to honour our three winners!

Congratulations Michelle, Iliana and Chris!



DAY
4
Thursday
March 10th
2016

Together We Are Stronger: Provincial VAWN Think Tank

WomanACT and the Violence Against Women Network (VAWN), a Toronto based Network of Violence against Women Shelters, hosted key stakeholders working in the City of Toronto to discuss current issues affecting women and children fleeing violence as well as initiatives aiming to close gaps in services for victims of violence. By working together, we can achieve more and address systemic and complex woman abuse issues.



DAY
5
Friday
March 11th
2016

CAS/VAW Collaboration: E-Learning Centre Launch

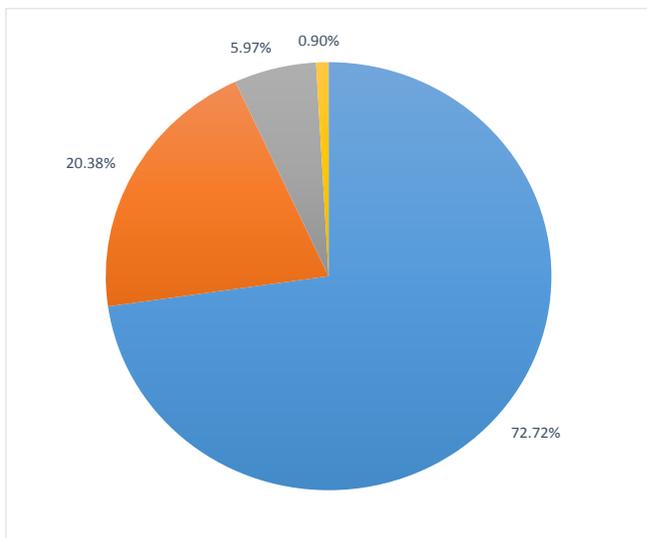
The CAS/VAW E-learning Centre is an evidence-based, multi-modal curriculum designed for front line workers. It addresses the intersections of domestic violence, mental health, and substance use with the goal of improving care and treatment for women who experience these co-occurring problems, regardless of the service or organization they approach. The training includes a text based manual, on-line modules, as well as one-day workshop.

The cross-sectoral workshop is a key element of the curriculum and requires advance planning and support from the community.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

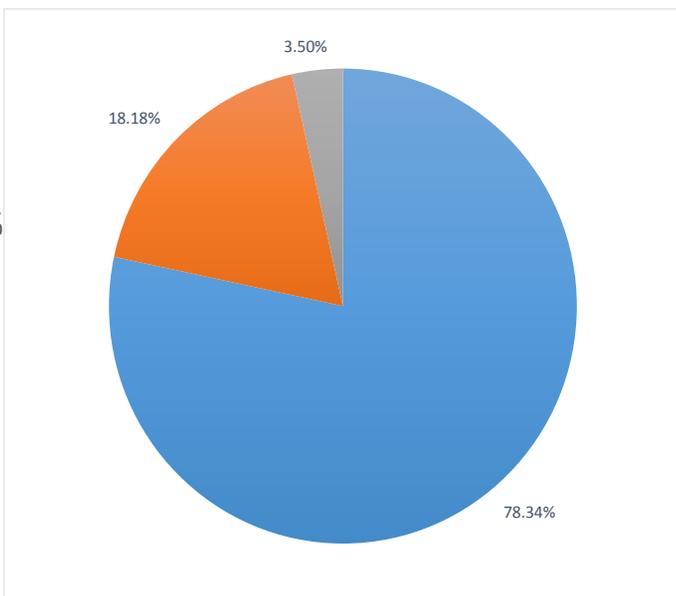
Revenues
\$338,550

- MCSS **72.72%**
- City of Toronto **20.38%**
- Memberships, Donations & Fundraising **5.97%**
- Interest & Other **0.9%**



Expenses
\$338,486

- Program **78.34%**
- Administrative **18.18%**
- Fundraising & Other **3.50%**



BOARD MEMBERS

- Carla Neto**, *Co-Chair*
- Lisa Tomlinson**, *Co-Chair*
- Sharlene Tygesen**, *Secretary*
- Amninder Sandhu**, *Treasurer*
- Audrey Lee**, *Member*
- Michelle Edwards**, *Member*
- Aisha Saintiche**, *Member*
- Silvia Samsa**, *Member*

STAFF

- Harmy Mendoza**, *Executive Director*
- Paula Wells**, *VAW / CAS Committee and Social Media Coordinator*
- Irene Gabinet**, *THSP and Committees Coordinator*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- To Our Volunteers and Students
- City of Toronto
- Ministry of Community and Social Services
- Stancer, Gossin, Rose LLP Lawyers & Mediators
- Homewood Human Solutions Humaines
- Social Image
- Jessica Gorlicky
- Suzanne Gibson & Associates
- Sharlene Tygesen
- Michelle Edwards
- Massimo Siciliano
- The Toronto Yoga Show
- Shoppers Drug Mart
- The Motion Room
- Holiday Inn Hotel
- Toronto Argonauts
- Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment Ltd
- Lula Longe
- Egyptian Dance Academy
- Pro Martial Arts

COUNCIL MEMBERS 2015-2016

General Members

Abrigo Centre
 ACT - Aids Committee of Toronto
 Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
 Catholic Family Services of Toronto
 Catholic Children's Aid Society
 Child Development Institute
 Children's Aid Society of Toronto
 Elizabeth Fry Toronto
 Family Service Toronto
 Ernestine's Women's Shelter
 Elspeth Heyworth Centre for Women
 Flemington Neighbourhood Services
 Interval House
 Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC)
 Native Child & Family Services
 North York Women's Shelter
 North York Women's Centre
 Nellie's Women's Shelter
 Oasis Centre Des Femmes
 Redwood Shelter
 Springtide Resources
 Scarborough Women's Centre
 Woodgreen RedDoor Family Shelter
 West Neighbourhood House
 Women's College Hospital
 Women's Habitat of Etobicoke

Associate Members

Ministry of Community and Social Services
 City of Toronto
 Legal Aid Ontario
 Toronto Police Service
 Toronto Public Health

ABOUT WOMANACT

MISSION

WomanACT is a council of organizations dedicated to preventing violence against women and children and promoting a Toronto-wide integrated, coordinated response through leadership, education and community mobilization.

VISION

WomanACT aspires to a coordinated service response where women and their children experience safety, dignity and opportunities.

VALUES

WomanACT holds the following values

Gender Equity Promote equal opportunity for women and children by addressing social, economic and political power inequalities.

Inclusivity Support participation of all women in decision-making

Dignity Respect the fundamental worth and dignity of all women

Efficacy Produce intended results

Knowledge Sharing Support catalytic and innovative learning initiatives



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SUPPORTED BY:
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City of Toronto