

2016-2017
annual report



Woman ACT

WOMAN ABUSE COUNCIL OF TORONTO

MESSAGE FROM CO-CHAIRS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Woman Abuse Council of Toronto (WomanACT) is proud to present our 2016-2017 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 fourth “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 second time, WomanACT hosted the Soul of a Warrior Awards Gala. Thanks to our supporters, our fundraiser continues to be 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 Stella Osagie, Erica Fisico, Esel Panlaqui, Carol Hines DaCosta and Monica Amenia, the 2017 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 COMMITTEE

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.

The Shelter and Support Services Committee provides a dynamic venue for front-line staff in the VAW sector to come together to network, to identify and discuss relevant issues and trends in the sector and to promote a comprehensive and integrated response to women and their dependents fleeing violence.



This Committee also creates opportunity for front-line staff to collectively problem-solve around systemic issues faced by workers and clients alike through case study discussions.

The Committee hosts presentations by guest speakers from other relevant sectors for knowledge-sharing, to promote collaborative work and to improve women's access to appropriate services.



Members of the Committee have the opportunity to be part of a larger movement advocating for an improved response to violence against women and their dependents.

The Committee meets monthly on the 4th Tuesday from 10am-noon in a central downtown location.

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 their dependents experiencing violence.

The THSP Network is a dynamic group of front-line staff and managers 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 economic self-sufficiency.

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

The THSP Network celebrated its third anniversary in May 2017 and is currently engaged in its strategic plan process for the upcoming 3 years.

The THSP Network has a distinct and critical role in developing integrated, multidisciplinary and inter-sectoral responses to the issue of domestic violence, especially with a focus on housing and transitional support.

In August 2017, WomanACT surveyed the members of the THSP Network about their satisfaction with WomanACT's Coordination support.

A total of 21 THSP members completed our survey in 2017, with it being completed equally by THSP managers and workers. Of the 21 members who completed the survey 13 members were extremely satisfied and 5 were moderately satisfied, 1 was slightly satisfied and 2 were neither satisfied or dissatisfied with WomanACT's overall coordination of the Network.

As per the following charts, survey results indicate high satisfaction levels with the THSP Network overall and the Network's effectiveness in collaborating with other VAW networks and organizations.

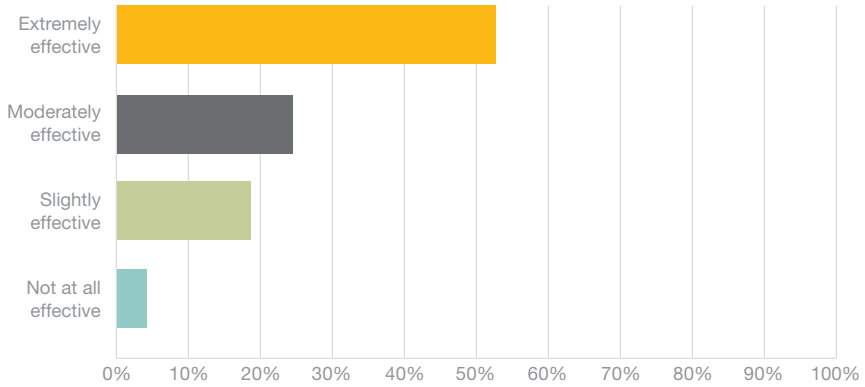


THSP NETWORK SURVEY RESULTS

Q8: How effective is the THSP Network in regularly communicating with and strategically engaging the CAS-VAW Collaboration, VAWN, and other closely aligned organizations?

Answered: 21

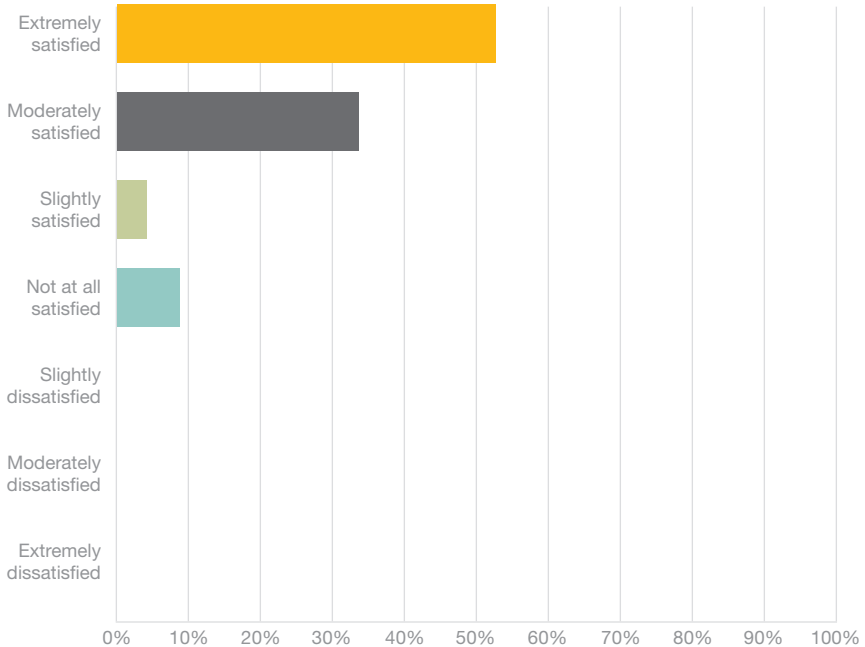
Skipped: 0



Q4: How satisfied are you with the THSP Network overall?

Answered: 21

Skipped: 0



CHILDREN AID SOCIETIES AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (CAS/VAW) TORONTO REGION ADVISORY COMMITTEE



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 CAS/VAW Forum

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

During the Forum attendees connect with each other; share perspectives about common challenges, experiences and assumptions; and problem-solve in order to develop their capacity to provide integrated services to women and their children.



The CAS/VAW E-learning Centre

The advisory developed an E-Learning Centre for workers in the violence against women and child protection agencies. The goal of the e-learning, like that of the Collaboration Agreement, is to increase safety for women and children by enhancing co-operation between workers and improving service delivery.

The E-Learning Centre is a tool designed to ensure increased learning, collaboration, and networking among CAS and VAW workers in Toronto. It is a flexible, web-based, learn-on-demand system that allows staff to complete courses at their own pace and schedule.

There are currently over 200 users registered for the E-Learning Centre which is managed and coordinated by WomanACT.



4TH END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN WEEK IN TORONTO

In collaboration with VAW sector leaders, WomanACT coordinated its fourth annual End Violence against Women Week in Toronto, an entire week of education, training, policy development, and planning.

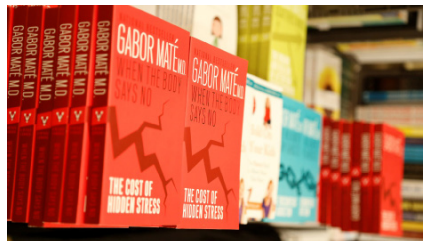
Over 200 front-line workers in the Health, VAW, Substance Use, Mental Health and Child Protection Services sectors across Toronto attended the conference each day.

As in prior years, the training was coordinated as part of WomanACT's End Violence against Women (VAW) Week in Toronto. Some of the initiatives that took place during the week included:

- The VI Supporting Survivors by Supporting Staff Training
- The Children's Aid Society (CAS)/ Violence Against Women (VAW) Collaboration Forum,
- Transitional Housing Support Program (THSP) Forum, and
- WomanACT's Soul of a Warrior Awards Gala.

Conference attendees provide a broad range of services to women and children who have suffered abuse.

This year, our training included a world-renowned keynote speaker, Dr. Gabor Maté, 12 workshops, one panel and two art installations; one created by front-line practitioners and the other by victims of violence.





DAY
1

Monday
March
6th, 2017

DAY
2

Wednesday
March 7th
2017

VI Supporting Survivors by Supporting Staff Training Conference

The 2-Day Training Conference, Supporting Survivors by Supporting Staff (SSxSS), funded by The Ministry of Community & Social Services (MCSS), Toronto Region was organized by The Woman Abuse Council of Toronto (WomanACT) once again in 2017. This is the sixth year that Woman-ACT has been hosting the conference.

Each year, before the conference, a survey is sent out to front-line staff, managers, and attendees of past conferences asking what topics and training areas they would like to gain more knowledge in. This year's survey resulted in 123 responses - an increase 28% from 2016.

The top 5 topics were:

1. Working with Women in Conflict with the Law
2. Violence against Indigenous and Aboriginal Women and Girls in Canada
3. Fostering Inclusive Environments for Trans Women
4. New and Diverse Forms of Violence against Women
5. Sexual Violence and Harassment

This year, our training included a world-renowned keynote speaker, Dr. Gabor Maté, 12 workshops, one panel and two art installations; one created by front-line practitioners and the other by victims of violence.



Throughout the conference, attendees were invited to complete written evaluations to provide feedback, opinions, and reflections of the speakers, workshops, and content provided. After the conference, a post-conference evaluation was sent out to all attendees via Survey Monkey.

French translation services were provided during the morning and one of the afternoon sessions. French language PowerPoint slides were projected simultaneously with English slides during presentations. Headsets were available for francophone staff. This resulted in an atmosphere of inclusion and shared exchange on issues concerning the work of French and English language conference attendees.

WomanACT's website provides detailed information about the week-long conference, and several pages are dedicated to the SSxSS conference. Online instructions included: who was invited to attend and instructions on how to register.

Information about the training, speakers, and registration was also sent out via our Newsletter, Blog and other Social Media Platforms including Facebook, Twitter, and Linked In.

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.

"Very well organized; seamless, . . . seems to get better and better every year!"

"As usual, the staff volunteers were professional and helpful."

"Wonderful coordination, events were interesting & related to my work."

Art Installations

During the SSxSS 2-Day Training Conference, we displayed the artwork of front-line practitioners which was created in an arts-based workshop series (Telling Our Stories) facilitated by a WomanACT staff member, Irene Gabinet.

This year, we were also approached by The Redwood Shelter and asked to create space for an art-based journey they have been facilitating with women in their shelter that have fled violence. There was a total of 14 self-portrait paintings that we displayed in the main room of the training.



What did you like the most about the 2- Day Training?

“

Positive energy and always renewing to be able to talk about the best practices and remember why we're doing the work we're doing.

Meeting and connecting with people from different organizations.

Bringing diverse staff from VAW sector together to have an opportunity for training, the guest speaker was very impactful and a (there was) a variety of workshops.”

I like that it is free to staff and that it is an opportunity to network with other service providers and get current research and innovative ways to provide service.

I liked the format of having a panel for the first half of the day, and workshops during the second half. By the time we got to the workshops, the panelists had gotten us thinking and inspired, and we still had the energy to participate in a workshop.

Amazing time management, brilliant guest speaker (Dr. Maté), and overall organizing was fantastic.

”



WomanACT's 2017 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 second annual Soul of a Warrior Awards Gala on Tuesday, March 8th 2017 during International Women's Day.



WomanACT's 2017 Soul of a Warrior Awards

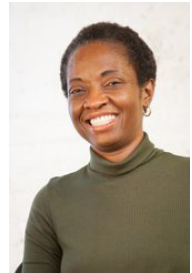
We received numerous submissions for this prestigious award and the nominating committee of the WomanACT Board of Directors reviewed the nominees. The decision was difficult as there were so many dedicated and deserving nominees.

The night was a huge success as we celebrated and honoured front-line workers in the Anti-Violence sector. With over 100 attendees, the night was filled with entertainment, and most importantly, celebration to honour our three winners!

After extensive review and deliberation, the five winners of the 2017 Soul of a Warrior Awards were:

STELLA OSAGIE

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT,
AIDS COMMITTEE OF TORONTO

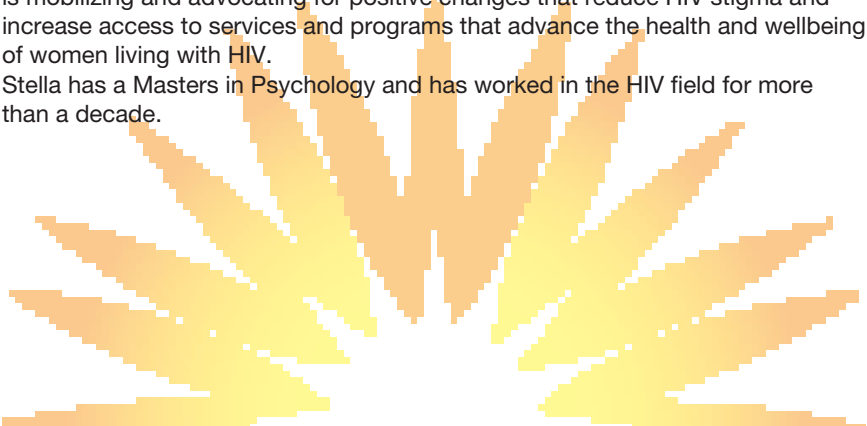


Stella Osagie is the Women's Community Development Coordinator at ACT (AIDS Committee of Toronto), the Toronto site for the provincial Women and HIV/AIDS Initiative (WHA). WHAI is a coordinated, province-wide Initiative to address women and HIV and AIDS in Ontario.

Stella through her work seeks to implement a community -based response to women and HIV and AIDS related issues using a social determinant of health and community development approaches. Stella over the years has worked with community partners to support them in building a welcoming environment in their organizations for women living with and at risk for HIV. Stella provides capacity building opportunities on women and HIV to VAW organizations and other allied organizations where women receive services, raising their awareness about HIV and the intersections with violence and other social issues. Through this Initiative, Stella creates links between agencies serving women and Toronto's AIDS service organizations for greater collaborations that support the women they serve.

A very important part of Stella's role as a community development Coordinator is mobilizing and advocating for positive changes that reduce HIV stigma and increase access to services and programs that advance the health and wellbeing of women living with HIV.

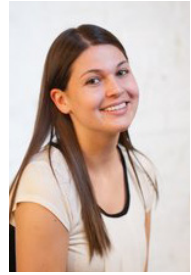
Stella has a Masters in Psychology and has worked in the HIV field for more than a decade.



ERICA FISICO

CHILDREN'S ADVOCATE, YWCA TORONTO

Erica began exploring child and youth work when she enrolled in the Child and Youth Care (Bachelor's Degree) program at Ryerson University in 2008. Her experience in the VAW sector began in 2009, when she began her student internship at the YWCA Women's shelter in the Children's Program. She also completed student placements with homeless youth and youth who had been expelled or suspended from high-school. However Erica always remained involved in VAW work at the YWCA and she became the full time community development worker for children and youth in 2012. In 2016 Erica continued her education in the VAW sector by completing the Managing in the VAW sector program certificate from Humber college.



ESEL PANLAQUI

IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE WOMEN'S ADVOCATE

Maria "Esel" Laxa Panlaqui is a part-time Settlement Counselor at Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office(TNO). Stemming from her own lived experience as an immigrant who arrived in Canada in 2005, she has a strong passion with issues that affect newcomers including foreign live-in caregivers. She joined TNO in 2008. With her previous and current work experience at TNO she was given the chance to explore a variety of roles which allowed her to gain strong knowledge and skills not only in settlement/front line work, intake, referral and counseling, program development but also in the areas of research, grant and proposal writing, project coordination, advocacy and collaborative work. Esel was involved in various community-based projects spearheaded by TNO including the Don Valley West Local Immigration Partnership (LIP), Resilient Neighbourhood Economy (RNE) and the Tower Neighbourhood Renewal (TNR). Her current role at TNO is now focused in working with live-in caregivers. She provides phone services in the evening and weekend itinerant and mobile services to reach out and engage the isolated and vulnerable live-in caregivers. Aside from providing direct services, she is also currently doing work with various community groups in documenting the barriers and challenges faced by these vulnerable workers and advocating on their behalf especially those affected by immigration backlog. She currently represents TNO at the Community Advisory Board of Migrant Mother's Project and sits in the Canadian Council for Refugees Sub Committee on Migrant Workers. Esel holds a Community Service Diploma Program from Trios College and completed the course work for Diploma in Women and Development at the University of the Philippines.



CAROL HINES DACOSTA

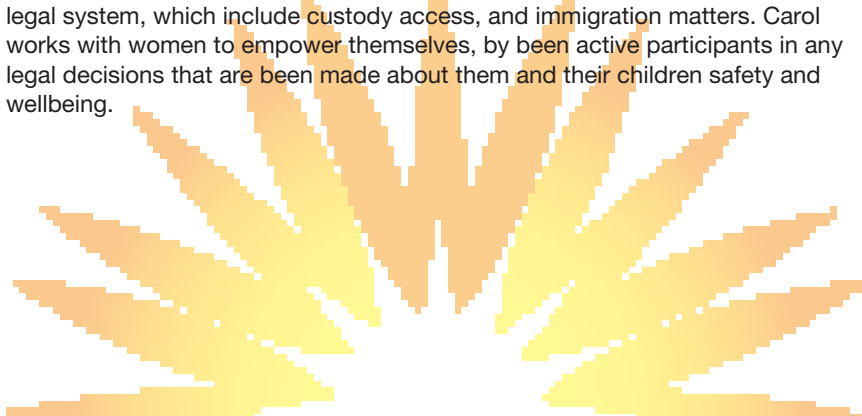
LEGAL ADVOCATE, YWCA TORONTO



Carol's career in the field of social work spans over 20 yrs, starting in her country of birth Jamaica. Her first job after graduating from college was with Windsor Girls Home. While there, she supported these young girls to get involved in community programs. By doing this the girls developed living skills and at the same time was given an opportunity to learn a skill that would allow them to be productive members of society once they leave the home. Some of these young ladies and The Windsor Girls Home with Carol's support went on to win several awards in the areas of Home Economics and Arts and craft.

Next phase of Carol's career was with the National Family Board of Jamaica as a counsellor/training officer. During her tenure at the family planning board she planned and implemented many projects. Her biggest achievement at the board was leader of the team responsible for developing and implementing the first Family Life Education Curriculum for the country's primary and elementary school system.

Carol moved on from the National family Board of Jamaica to secure a position with her country's Child Protection Agency, where she first worked as a field worker. One of her assignments was at the family court where she developed a deep interest in working in the area of family law. Carol and her Husband (Everton) migrated to Canada 15 yrs ago, and on April 2nd 2007, a new chapter in her career began when she joined the staff of YWCA Toronto, specifically The Women Shelter. Her first position at the shelter was that of Child Development and Parenting Specialist. In this role she provided support to women with parenting concerns, and supported them to navigate the family court for custody and access proceedings. Carol was also the liaison between families in the shelter and child protection agencies that they were involved with. During this time she supported families and her colleagues to better understand the role of child protection agencies, working specifically with children's aid society of Toronto. The collaboration between the shelter and child protection agencies, resulted in a very positive relationship for clients and staff. Carol's input in this collaboration can be considered her most significant achievement in this role. Three years ago Carol took on the position of Legal Services Support worker at the shelter, where her main role is helping women understand and navigate the legal system, which include custody access, and immigration matters. Carol works with women to empower themselves, by been active participants in any legal decisions that are been made about them and their children safety and wellbeing.



MONICA AMENYA**TRANSITIONAL, OUTREACH AND HOUSING ADVOCATE**

Monica Ameyna: Was born in Ghana and migrated to Canada in 2002 with her daughter in order to join her partner. She worked in a plastic factory as a line fabricator for a year and because of the physical demands of the job, she was motivated to go back to school, although she had been out of school for about 19 years.

In September 2004, she enrolled in the Community worker program at George Brown College, and graduated in 2006 with honors. The program introduced her to women from diverse backgrounds, working both in the frontlines and behind the scenes to end injustice in society and to empower women.

In her second year at George Brown College, she had the privilege of being a part of Ernestine's Women's Shelter's student placement program, while there she worked under the leadership of Sharlene Tygesen, Carol Latchford and Jill Cunningham.

She was hired as a full time frontline overnight counsellor after her placement where she worked indifferent Programs; from front line counsellor to Skills Exchange Counselor for a year and then an outre*ch counselor for another 5 years.

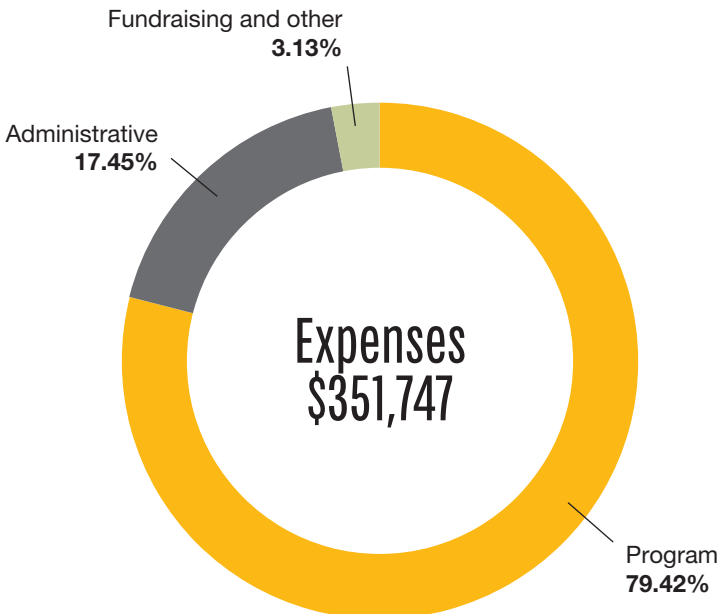
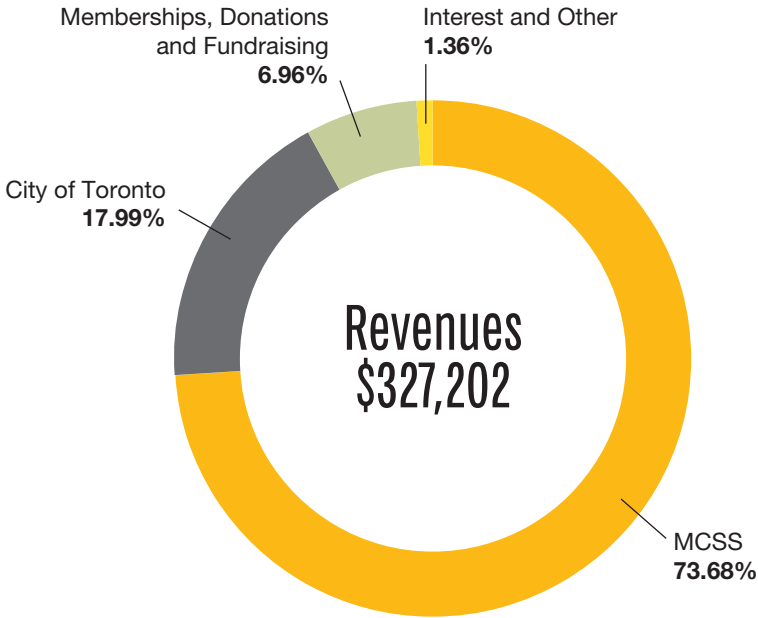
During her 11-year career at Ernestine's Women's Shelter she enriched her knowledge with professional training through resources available like The Hincks dellcrest Center, Tape institute, Humber College and many more.

Ernestine's women's shelter signed a partnership with Crossroads International, which gave her the opportunity to travel to two African countries known as Lomé Togo and Moshi in Tanzania.

The mission in Africa was to share knowledge with frontline paralegals and volunteers in order to manage, control and end gender violence against women and children globally. She has made it her mission to empower women to have self-determination in all aspects of their lives and to be role models for their children.



FINANCIAL STATEMENT



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*
Adrienne Clarke, *Member*
Priyanka Sheth, *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 Health
 White Ribbon
 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 Symphony Orchestra
 Daria Sukman
 Lula Longe
 Egyptian Dance Academy
 Vibe: Dance and Fitness Studio
 Annalay Accesories
 3M
 Arbonne (Kristie and Elizabeth)
 Hartek Salon

COUNCIL MEMBERS 2015-2016

General Members

Abrigo Centre
ACT - Aids Committee of Toronto
Barbra Schliker 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
Elsbeth Heyworth Centre for Women
Flemington Neighbourhood Services
Family Service Toronto
Interval House
Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC)
Native Child & Family Services
Newcomer Women's Services Toronto
North York Women's Shelter
North York Women's Centre
Nellie's Women's Shelter
Oasis Centre Des Femmes
Redwood Shelter
Social Planning Toronto
South Asian Women's Centre
Springtide Resources
Scarborough Women's Centre
Woodgreen RedDoor Family Shelter
West Neighbourhood House
Women's College Hospital
Women's Habitat of Etobicoke
Working Women's Centre
Yorktown Shelter for Women
YWCA Toronto

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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