



2017

# ANNUAL REPORT

CHALLENGE, CHANGE, AND

**PROGRESS**

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Women's Rural Resource Centre  
[wrrcsa.org](http://wrrcsa.org)



# FROM THE CHAIR

To end violence against women; To have healthy families everywhere. Simple words. Big Goals.

I joined the Board of the Women's Rural Resource Centre back in 2011. Back then there was uncertainty of plans, funding challenges, and deeper thought as to what was next for the organization – where was our place? Fast forward 7 years later, to 2018, and two words for this organization come to mind. Change. Courage. The goals haven't changed, but there is change in perspective, change in strategy, change in awareness. There is courage to challenge the status quo, there is courage to do things differently, there is courage to be a leader, and there is courage to be the one to make a difference.

This year we have seen incredible opportunity evolve for the organization and the sector. We have continued our advocacy work, locally, and provincially and as a result continue to be invited to discussions tables to end violence against women, that impact positives decisions made at a provincial level. Those discussions and advocacy contributed to historical ministry funding announcing the Ontario Gender-based Violence Strategy. It will contribute up to \$242 million to will support survivors and address the root causes of violence and positively impact all organizations across our sector and the additional work we can do as a result.

And that wasn't all for 2018. We also expanded our community partnerships, with result of a marked year of fundraising efforts raising over \$170,000 in 2017-18.

This year marks my final year with the Board of Directors of the Women's Rural Resource Centre. It has been a privilege to serve. I reflect on my time here fondly. The organization has evolved, has grown, and has deepened in purpose. These successes of past and present will keep the momentum of the organization going, and will keep alive the goals of one day ending violence against women and having healthy families everywhere.

As I reflect, the constant and the mark of true continued success of the Women's Rural Resource Centre is its people. On behalf of the Board I do want to thank the wonderful dedication, loyalty of our leadership team, staff, volunteers, donors and community partners. You are the Change. You are the Courage. My very best,



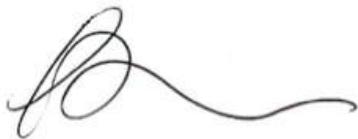
Chair, Board of Directors 2017-2018

# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2017 was a year of reflection, growth, and change for WRRRC. As an agency we experienced incredible successes, and deep challenges. As a result we have come out on the other side stronger than ever. Our team is passionate, engaged and talented. Our hopes, dreams, ambitions and goals continue to grow, and we're more determined than ever to tackle them together.

As with WRRRC, our society has echoed the change and challenge over the last year. The #MeToo movement has fundamentally altered how we view sexual harassment, assault and violence against women. Women are lifting each other up, sharing their stories, and refusing to accept the status quo. It's an incredible time to be a part of the Women's Movement, yet, we still have far to go.

Every day at WRRRC we are reminded of the repercussions of our patriarchal society. Women who seek our allyship and support continue to be treated in unacceptable ways. And yet, we are also reminded of the incredible bravery, solidarity, resilience and resources women have. That's why we know without a doubt that women are going to change the world. In fact, it's already begun.



Corey Allison,  
Executive Director,  
Women's Rural Resource Centre





# MISSION & VISION

## MISSION

Using a feminist, anti-oppressive analysis, we provide education, prevention, and support services for women and families impacted by violence against women in Middlesex County.



*of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16.*

## VISION

A vibrant, connected community where women and children can thrive in healthy relationships.

# SHELTER

Women and children come to our shelter after traumatic and life-changing events that have led them to our door. They experience layers of complex emotions and interdependent challenges like mental health, addiction and emotional trauma. Because of this we believe that a shelter provides more than physical safety, it's about creating a peaceful, clean and beautiful atmosphere for women to rest, re-energize and begin to look at the difficult next steps or choices often involved in their healing journey. In 2017/18, we focused on cleaning up, updating and creating the kind of space we want for women.

Many staff, volunteers and women are rallying together to care for the space – including everything from painting murals, to deep cleaning, to drywall repair. We have been able to replace almost all of our appliances in shelter this year, thanks to generous donations of our community. We've also made renovations to bedrooms to accommodate spaces for families with multiple children. There is a renewed sense of pride for those working, volunteering or staying in shelter and taking care of their space.

As a result, when you visit our shelter now you might note the smell of fresh muffins or take part in collaborative cooking happening between the women, or sit at the kitchen table learning a new craft or sharing stories over laughter in the back yard. We have learned that care and respect for space translates into care and respect for each other.





# TRANSITION

When women are ready make life changes, they often hit a brick wall in our system. Whether it's the justice system, health care system, child protection or simply finding safe, affordable housing, it can be daunting to face these challenges alone while trying to heal from a traumatic experience. Our transition team walks along side these women to navigate systems, advocate, challenge oppressive power structures and shed light on systemic inequality. This kind of support is the core of our work and is of such great demand at WRRRC that our funding is consistently inadequate to address need.

This work has incredible impact. One woman we support came to WRRRC after experiencing physical, emotional, sexual and financial abuse at the hands of her partner. She has three young kids, and was in desperate need of a place to stay. WRRRC was able to support her creating a comprehensive safety plan, applying for safe housing and prioritizing her on the wait-list based on her risk, connecting her with partner agencies, and accessing counselling for her and for her children. She recently returned to visit our team and enthusiastically shared that she now has stable housing, employment and full custody of her children.

## TRANSITION FOR PETS

This past year, we saw an increase in rural women whose pets and animals presented a significant barrier for leaving their abusive relationships. A recent research study from the University of Windsor revealed some form animal maltreatment was present in roughly 89 per cent of domestic violence cases.

This year, with more demand to re-home pets or help keep them safe in high risk situations, WRRRC appealed to generous donor to help cover the costs of veterinary medical bills, food, and sheltering of pets. This was the beginning of a new fund for donors who want to ensure women never have to choose between safety and their furry friends. As part of this initiative, we have partnered with a local boarding and grooming business that helps foster pets in emergency situations. We hope to continue increasing this fund and raising awareness about the issues women face who are trying to leave domestic abuse.

\*Not her real name.

# CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

WRRC is fortunate to have a robust and progressive Children's Program. It is our belief that children are never at fault for the abuse they witness, and are always impacted by the experience. Our Children's program seeks to give children the language and the tools they need to express and process their most intense feelings, and to give caregivers the knowledge they need to help children grow into healthy adults.

One way WRRC does this is through group work. For example, last summer, WRRC in partnership with Anova, ran an Earthlings Creating Change summer camp, funded by Libro Credit Union. Ten youth participated, all from rural backgrounds. They explored self through different art mediums over four days, which included visual art, written expression, and photography. At the end of the week, they presented their work to friends, family and community to share in their experience.

Earthlings Creating Change is now ongoing throughout the year at Anago as part of their school curriculum. In 2017, they took action by creating personal political platforms for the Ontario election, based on issues that were important to them. They also created their own Instagram account, and created an Earthlings Creating Change communal flag that will soon be proudly flying in the Himalayan Mountains.

WRRC is grateful for the community support that allows us to continue the important work we do with children.

300

*Number of Children's Support/Information calls*



223

*Individuals who received services in Children's Program*

# COUNSELLING

WRRC's counselling program continues to focus on relationship-based healing, despite a complete overhaul of 20-year-old curriculum this past year! While it took some effort to bring the content up to date and relevant to women's current experience, the core of the program has not changed: connection is essential to healing.

WRRC's new curriculum for our Common Threads group included discussion of current events, such as the #MeToo movement, focusing on skills and working through triggers, trauma, setting boundaries, and story sharing (which provides feedback and positive support). Developing deep connections led to women in Common Threads to create organic relationships and support networks with each other. In fact, the group was so successful that the women who took part requested another instalment of Common Threads, so they could continue to grow and learn together.

In response, WRRC and the women involved have developed Common Threads 2.0 with the goal of eventually being completely women-led. This reinforces the powerful impact of relationships and peer support through the healing process.

118

*Women who received counselling*

400

*Counselling support/information calls*

175

*Calls to WRRC Crisis Line*

# COMMUNITY GARDEN

WRRC's aptly named "Unstoppable Garden" remains, well, unstoppable. In 2017, we created community around our garden. Not only were women and families able to plant, grow and harvest their own produce, but they could participate in a variety of programs right in the garden.

Some of the highlights include tai chi and self-defense classes, art classes for kids, and a garden tea party that saw many members of the community come together for food, conversation and relationships building.

The garden continues to attract volunteers, support and resources. With thanks to our generous community, we were able to purchase new supplies in 2017, including garden carts, tools, sprinklers and a shed to safely store it all away for the winter. We received funding to allow us to hire one woman to plan and oversee the garden and start work at alternate sites.

We look forward to more growth – both in plants and community relationships, in 2018!





# INSITE & FUND DEVELOPMENT

## INSITE LAUNCH

In January of 2018, WRRC was part of launching a new project called INsite. Funded by the London Community Foundation, this project brought together WRRC, Family Services Thames Valley, Anova, Craigwood Youth Services, Vanier Children's Services, and WAYS Mental Health Support. INsite is a collaborative network of local mental health and social support organizations working together to address the gaps in London-Middlesex region's mental health services. INsite is a drop-in centre that provides individuals of all ages and families with free, immediate confidential counseling and referrals to additional supports and assistance.

The program has locations in both London and in Strathroy at the Next-Wave Youth Centre.

"As a group, these agencies came together and looked at what could be a game-changing way of delivering service," says Leo Desjardin, director of clinical services at Vanier Children's Services. "We came together to look at how we can help people."

This project has successfully brought together non-traditional partners and is delivering new drop-in counselling services in rural Middlesex on a weekly basis. A win for the county!

## FUND DEVELOPMENT

2017 was a year of aggressive goal setting for WRRC fund development. We set a goal of \$150,000 with high hopes of surpassing our previous record of \$120,000.

With a renewed focus and an eye on the prize, WRRC was able to accomplish this lofty goal by January of 2018. The strategy included a mix of major gift donations, third-party events, direct mail and increasing community awareness.

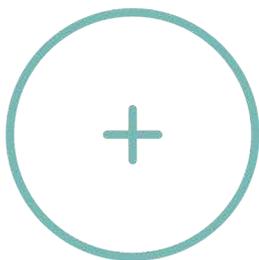
Meeting this goal was thrilling. In total, WRRC raised \$170,000 in fund development revenue. It took the work of our entire team and our entire community to make it happen and we look forward to continuing this momentum in 2018.

# STAFF RETREAT



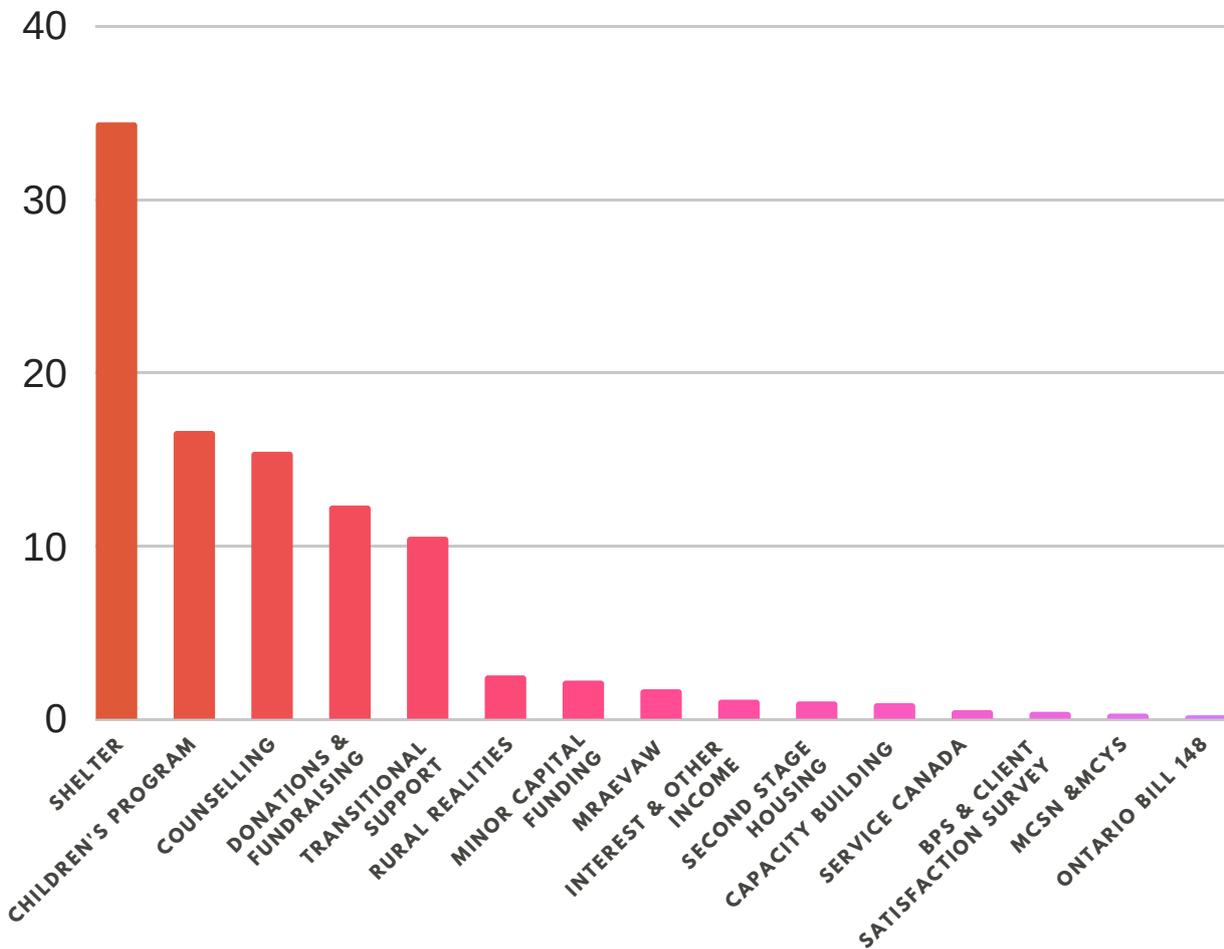
Last September, WRRC participated in a 2-day staff retreat and workshop facilitated by Critchley Coaching. These two days were an incredible experience for our team working and growing together. Over the weekend, we explored our Feminism, emerging some of our deepest values and how to integrate these values into our philosophy, approach and programing.

Our hope is to continue to secure funding for this retreat every year. It allows us to regroup, refresh and revisit why we do the work we do.



# FINANCES

## REVENUE BY PROGRAM



# FINANCES

## 2018 EXPENSES

