



West Island Women's Centre

2021-2022



ANNUAL REPORT

WEST ISLAND WOMEN'S CENTRE

SUPPORTING WOMEN IN OUR COMMUNITY

OUR MISSION

The West Island Women's Centre (WIWC) is a dynamic and widely-used non-profit community organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of women. We provide educational, social, and recreational services for women living in the West Island and the community at large.

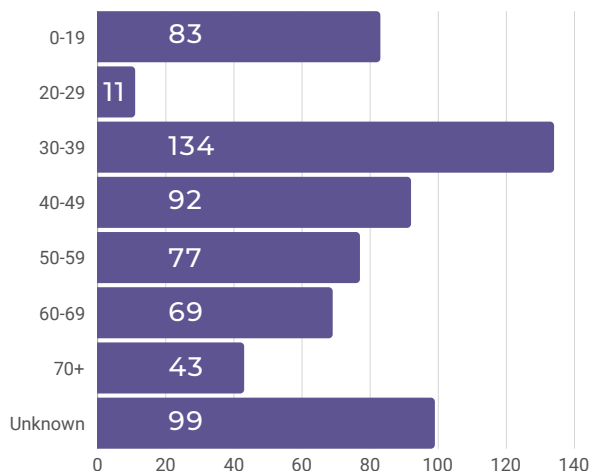
OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Providing a wide variety of programs for personal development, wellness, and special interest offerings that respond to the needs and interests of our members and the community
- Identifying and delivering unique outreach programs that address the needs of women who would otherwise not be served and are in need of increased support
- Organizing and delivering events that reflect our mission, ensuring community involvement and engagement
- Ensuring that we continue to enhance organizational health through reviewing and updating our operational and governance framework

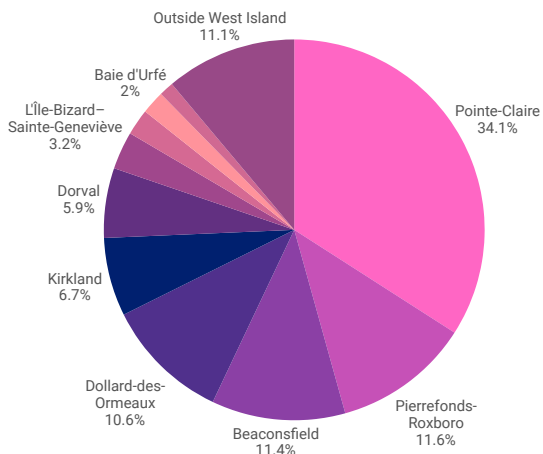
OUR COMMUNITY

The Centre works to reduce the isolation faced by many women and provide a strong support network. The Centre can be a lifeline for women of retirement age looking for connection, for mothers at home with a new baby, and for those of all ages in between. From September 2021 to June 2022, the Centre served over 600 individuals including 405 members.

PARTICIPANT AGE BREAKDOWN



MEMBERSHIP BREAKDOWN BY CITY



WEST ISLAND WOMEN'S CENTRE

GOVERNANCE

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



CHAIR
Dipa Mehta



VICE CHAIR
Sharon Louie



TREASURER
Kendra McFadden



SECRETARY
Judy Harte



PAST CHAIR
Marlyn Brownrigg



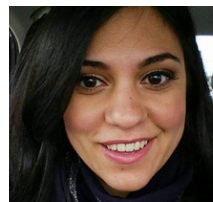
SEMINARS
DIRECTOR
Sangeeta Basarke



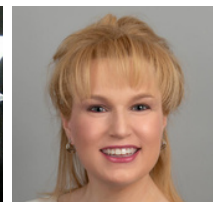
PROGRAMMING
DIRECTOR
Anna Fabro



EVENTS / FUNDRAISING
DIRECTOR
Bojana Andric



VOLUNTEERS
DIRECTOR
Clara Dabaghi



CHILDCARE
DIRECTOR
Alexandra Kindrat



PUBLICITY
DIRECTOR
Lisa Gertsman

MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

In the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic, the West Island Women's Centre (WIWC) continues to grow our programs with tremendous flexibility when serving our community. The 2021-2022 period has focused on keeping our members connected in a safe environment, offering a choice to participate in programs either from the comfort of their home or in-person, with public health protocols in place. The importance of making connections was paramount, and the WIWC also ensured that members could participate in a comfortable environment, ensuring that their emotional, mental, and physical well-being was respected.

Thanks to our committed staff, the Centre was able to reach a variety of individuals. There were Outreach events at multiple sites, catering to new arrivals to Québec, mothers with preschool-aged children, and women in various life stages. Our in-person and online low-cost programming also showed the community's need for connection, with a number of courses at/or near full capacity.

The WIWC hosted the second Women's Forum, a virtual event which was offered at no cost, in partnership with the Montreal Council of Women. The feedback was very positive for the inspiring lineup of speakers.

This is only possible with a dedicated team behind the scenes. I would like to thank Sarah Ford, Executive Director, for her strong leadership. I would also like to thank the staff, my fellow Board members, our Childcare workers, our supportive funders, our instructors and facilitators, and our members. Let us continue to "connect" in the new year, hopefully with more opportunities to share smiles in person.



AFFORDABLE PROGRAMMING

The West Island Women's Centre is open from mid-September to mid-June. During that time, we offer a variety of programs to our membership.

Highlights:

- Increased membership by 97% from 2020-2021
- Total number of courses offered in 2021-2022 has increased by 22% from the previous year
- Both online and in-person programming offered

**394 WOMEN
AND CHILDREN
BENEFITED
FROM 79
COURSES**

"I find there is a good variety of courses that meet the needs of the diverse population of the WIWC. Over the years, I have taken courses and I have always found the instructors to be excellent. They are knowledgeable, understanding, and very accommodating, taking into account the various needs of members in the class." - Programming participant

PROGRAMMING

MEMBERSHIP AND COURSES

The pandemic continued to impact this year's programming, requiring the Centre to continuously adjust to a dynamic environment respecting both the public health regulations and our members' needs. The Fall 2021 programming offered a hybrid set of class settings to meet in-person, outdoor, and online demands. Combined with ongoing adherence to public health regulations and smaller class sizes, we were able to provide alternatives to meet the needs of participants and we generally saw a strong registration response.

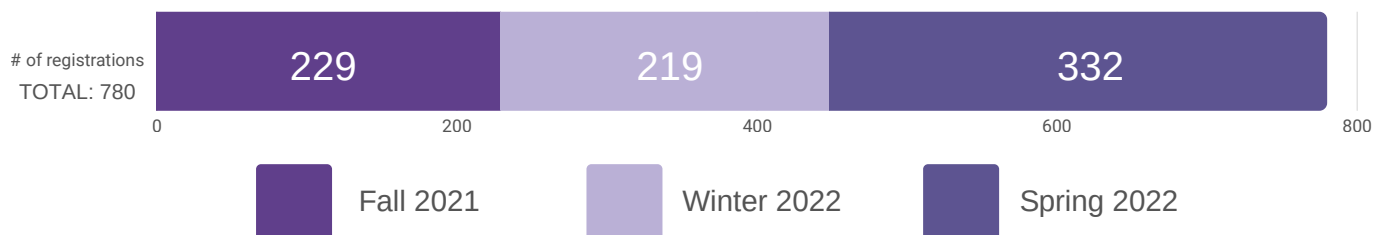
At the start of the Winter 2022 session, in-person courses were diverted online, as warranted by Quebec government health measures. As the restrictions eased, the Centre returned to indoor programming. The Spring session consisted of a mix of in-person, outdoor, and online courses. Each transition went smoothly, with staff, instructors, the Childcare team, and participants adapting to the changing conditions. Credit should be given to our community as they were incredibly supportive, adaptable, resilient, and committed to the Centre during these challenging times. As a result, the year-over-year registration grew by 32% with more courses being offered this past Spring.

Moving forward, we will continue to respond to our members' needs by offering both online and in-person programming. The virtual model provides convenience for women working from home, with flexible schedules, and for those unable to participate in-person. Both our in-person and online courses provide support, contact, and a community for our members which is essential for their well-being.

The Programming Committee consists of seven volunteers with diverse backgrounds – course participants and community supporters. The committee's support, insight, and research are essential to the variety and quality of programming that we provide.

The affordable cost of our programming provides women with an opportunity to participate in courses that may not always be accessible to them. Most importantly, the Centre will continue to provide a community of support for women.

COURSE REGISTRATIONS - FALL 2021 / WINTER 2022 / SPRING 2022



CHILDCARE

The West Island Women's Centre's free childcare service is highly valued by mothers. It enables them to participate in daytime courses and activities at the Centre while their children receive the free childcare service.

Highlights:

- 87 childcare registrations with 26 individual children
- Children were able to play in a safe and secure environment
- Mothers had an opportunity to participate in daytime, weekday courses that included the free Childcare service

**26 CHILDREN
BENEFITED
FROM FREE
CHILDCARE
SERVICE**

"I have been using the Centre childcare service since 2014, when my son was an infant, until 2022 as my daughter is about to leave for kindergarten in the fall. I can say without a doubt that I would have not been able to attend classes, which greatly benefit my mental health, had it not been for Iva and her group of extremely caring childcare staff." - Childcare user

CHILDCARE

FREE CHILDCARE SERVICE

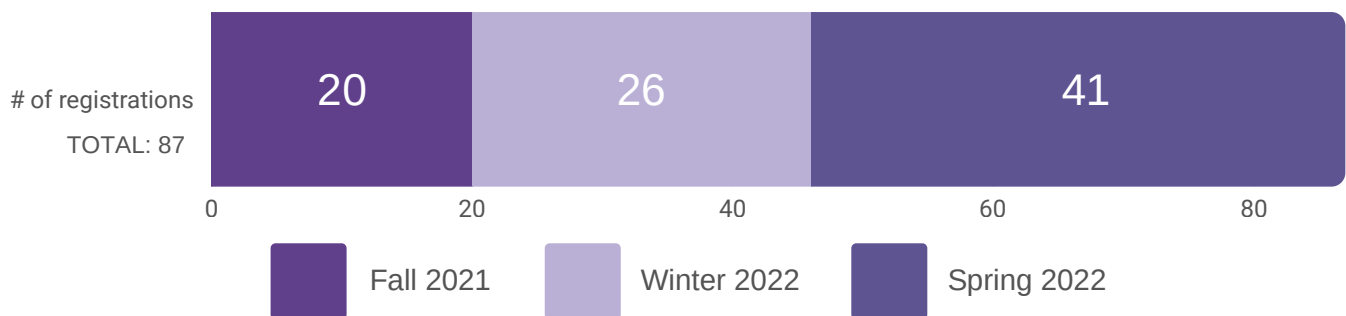
Having childcare workers return in person was wonderful and showed a commitment to our Centre’s free childcare service. This has always been an integral part of the Centre and this is often the first place where moms feel safe leaving their little ones in the care of others. Offering mothers a worry-free time for themselves means that they are able to participate in our affordable programming. In addition, each child has a rewarding first experience with a childcare service and the opportunity to start making friends.

The Childcare Supervisor adapted her programming based on the different ages of the children and has made it a priority to provide a safe, clean, and engaging environment. New moms were appreciative of the smaller ratio of children for in-person classes due to Covid related concerns. To further increase the safety protocols, outdoor play was included in the childcare programming which the children loved. This was also very reassuring for their mothers.

We would like to recognize the contributions that Iva Rooney, WIWC Childcare Supervisor, has made during her 26 years with the Centre. She will retire this June and we would like to thank Iva for her dedication and support towards our community during her time with the Centre. Iva will be greatly missed and we wish her all the best!

“As a long time Centre member and stay-at-home mom, having the free childcare service during the classes is the greatest service being offered by the Centre. It helped me to get to know so many other moms and their kids and made friends. It also helped me to break the isolation, getting out of the house after childbirth.”
- Childcare user

REGISTRATION IN CHILDCARE



OUTREACH PROGRAMS

The West Island Women's Centre endeavours to provide support to all the women who seek its services. Our goal is to identify and deliver unique support services through our outreach programs that address the needs of women who would otherwise not be served and are in need of increased support.

Outreach Program Highlights:

- A number of support groups
- Support for women re-entering the workforce
- Mother and child activities
- Supporting senior women
- Programming in West Island north

**293 WOMEN
AND CHILDREN
REGISTERED IN
OUTREACH
PROGRAMS**

"Being a new mom in the height of the pandemic posed a unique set of challenges. The support group connected me to other new moms and a wonderful and proficient facilitator, who shared their experiences, advice, and knowledge through an online platform that allowed me to safeguard my daughter's health."

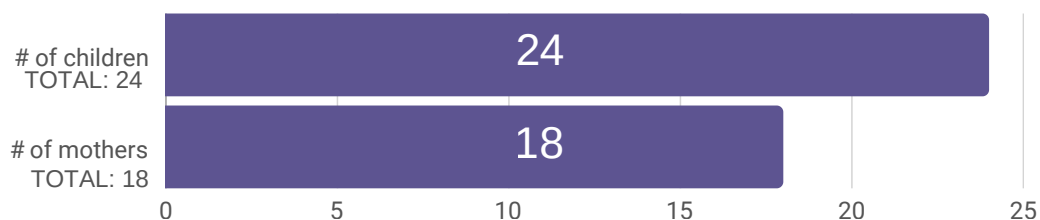
- Outreach program participant

MOTHER & CHILD ACTIVITIES

ONLINE STORY AND CRAFTS WITH IVA

Over the past year, we continued to offer an online mother and child activity with Online Story and Crafts with Iva. Mothers that were unable to attend in-person programming were grateful for this option. Children who were vulnerable due to health issues during the pandemic had an opportunity to meet other children online and take part in engaging activities. To make the craft time easier for the mothers, free craft bags were distributed at the start of each session. It was a wonderful success with children engaging with other children and getting excited with all the crafts, songs, and games.

REGISTRATION IN ONLINE STORY AND CRAFTS

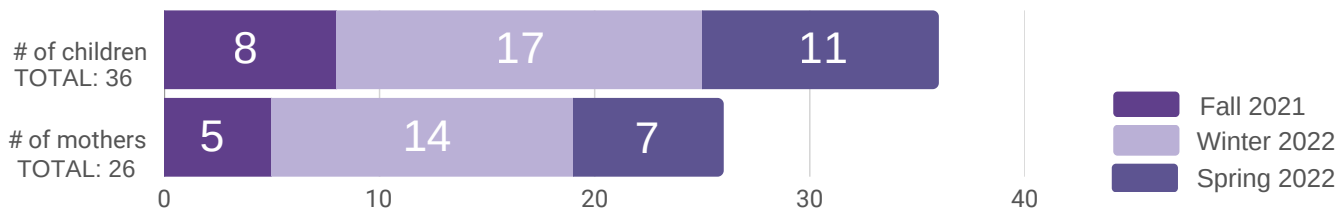


*"Being involved in the WIWC "Time for Two" program allows my children to socialize and play with others, while at the same time allowing me to socialize with other parents. The animators are so friendly and welcoming."
- Outreach program participant*

TIME FOR TWO NORTH (TEMPS POUR DEUX)

Time for Two is a free bilingual program for parents with their preschool aged children, which encourages a positive and joyful experience to share between mother and child. Time for Two helps moms of young children break out of isolation and meet other moms in the area. This year we fostered relationships with community partners (including local CLSC social workers) in order to connect isolated mothers to our program.

REGISTRATION IN TIME FOR TWO NORTH



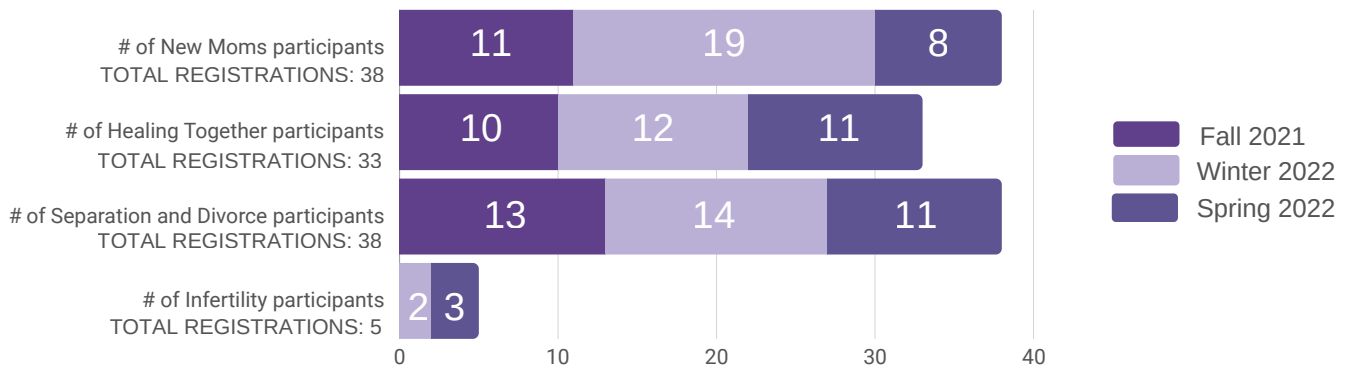
WEST ISLAND WOMEN'S CENTRE

SUPPORT PROGRAMS

FREE SUPPORT GROUPS

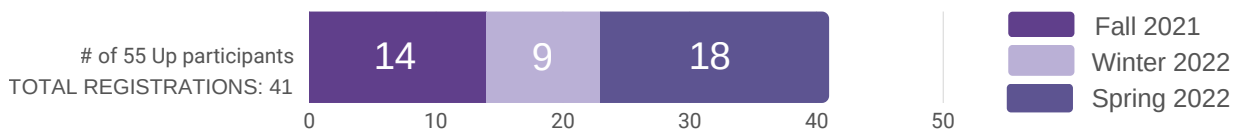
Women go through many different chapters in their lives, each with their own obstacles: infertility, miscarriage, infant loss, babies, post partum depression, or separation/divorce. We offer support groups to help vulnerable women move forward and cope. As the pandemic increased the level of stress on already vulnerable individuals, our ability to continue to offer these support groups was particularly appreciated.

SUPPORT GROUP PARTICIPATION



SUPPORTING SENIOR WOMEN

With each new chapter comes new challenges. Through informal gatherings with guest speakers, we are exposing senior women to different interests (ie. gardening, cooking for one or two people) and a safe place to share with others experiencing the same or similar challenges. The change of format to informal gatherings with occasional guest speakers has been the magic formula in terms of meeting everyone’s needs. Friendships are being created within an extremely supportive peer group. Women facing varied issues, including isolation, are finding fellowship.



“I am a retiree and widow in my 60s. With the pandemic winding down and offices reopening, I find myself with fewer people to reach out to, and fewer people reaching out to me. The 55+ Support Group gives me a much-needed chance to break my isolation, make friends, and feel included again.”
- Outreach program participant

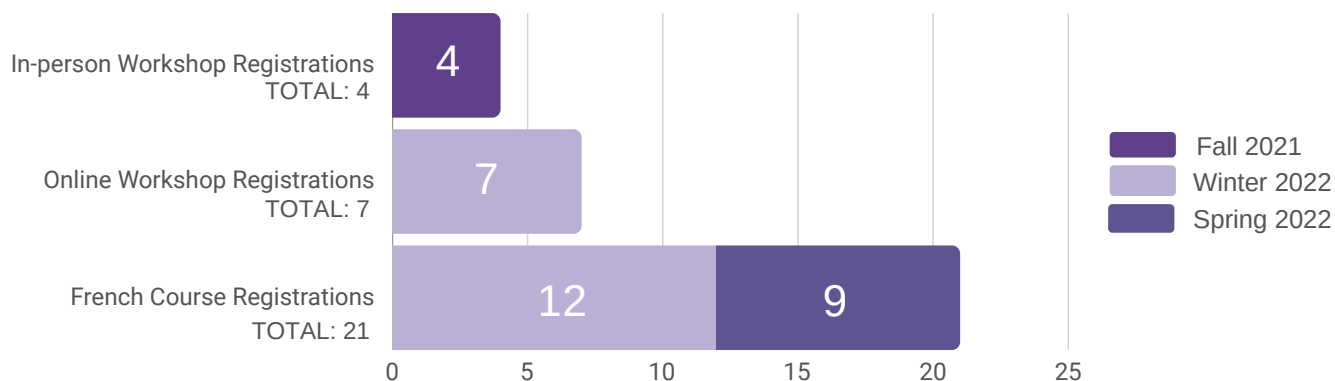


COMMUNITY CONNECTION

NEW CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

This free online program is for any woman that's looking for employment, needing help to prepare for interviews, and would like guidance through the job search process. We expanded our programming to reach more women in West Island North, offering women career tools and resources to expand, change, or further their careers. Going forward, we will offer a hybrid program of online content combined with an in person facilitator available for drop-in consultations in the north part of the West Island.

NEW CONNECTIONS PARTICIPANTS



“The WIWC has played a very helpful role during the years where I’ve been at home due to maternity leave. The programs (both in person and virtual) have allowed me to connect with the outside and made me feel myself again physically and mentally.” - Outreach program participant

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Centre participated in meetings of the following groups: Centre de ressources communautaires de l'Ouest de l'Île, Community Health and Social Services Network, Grand Rendez-Vous for the Pierrefonds-Roxboro Social Development Action Plan, Montreal Council of Women, Montreal Lakeshore University Women's Club, Table de Concertation Enfance Famille Jeunesse de l'Ouest-de-l'Île, Table de quartier sud de l'Ouest-de-l'Île, Table des groupes des femmes de Montréal, and the West-end Intergenerational Network.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As public health guidelines are relaxing, the Centre is in the process of re-evaluating how we reintroduce in-person event programming. Our working group is planning innovative ways to engage our members and the community at large. Hybrid models of programming have seen an increase in interest through digital modes of communication. This is an opportunity to engage more members using several modes of communication.

Highlights:

- 63 people participated in our International Women's Day activity
- 6 seminars were delivered with 62 participants

**157 INDIVIDUALS
PARTICIPATED
IN COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
ACTIVITIES**

"Socializing with the ladies, sharing ideas, and networking. We share the same worries and difficulties which is a great support system." - Centre event participant

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

DIGITAL OUTREACH

Community members and the WIWC membership receive updates through our website, eNewsletters, and social media posts. The Centre's website is a primary source of information for programs and activities, along with our social media channels. As of June 2022, the Centre's Facebook page had 4,447 people liking the page. In addition, 5,012 people follow the WIWC's Facebook page as of June 2022. Both Instagram and LinkedIn have become other valuable social media resources for the Centre, with 927 Instagram followers receiving information about Centre activities.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Following the success of our 2021 West Island Women's Forum, we marked International Women's Day 2022 online with a free workshop. This was an opportunity for our community to come together. We welcomed speakers Wanjira Njenga and Liane Berry from Maison Li-ber-t. The evening concluded with a workshop - Discovering the Joy in Your Life - facilitated by Ann Papyoti. This event was organized by the West Island Women's Centre with the support of the Montreal Council of Women.

HOLIDAY BASKETS

Our Centre provides Holiday Baskets for families in need every year. This year we put together Holiday Baskets for five families (through the West Island Assistance Fund and Nourishment for Hope) and we donated additional items to support women and children who utilize the West Island Mission. We are grateful to the 32 donors and volunteers that helped with our Holiday Baskets program. We would like to recognize the generous contribution from the Ferguson Family Foundation towards supporting this initiative.

SEMINARS

The WIWC hosts seminars for the general public, with the majority held online this year. The seminars are free and open to all. From September 2021 to June 2022, 62 participants attended 6 seminars.

2021-2022 Seminars:

- Cloth diapering workshop
- Optimizing your LinkedIn profile
- Empowering parents and caregivers to talk about pornography
- Introduction to mindfulness
- Feel confident and ready for the arrival of your baby
- Legal seminar on wills and estates



2021-2022 FINANCIAL REPORT

In addition to our core funding from Centraide of Greater Montreal and the Quebec government's Programme de soutien aux organismes communautaires (PSOC), the Women's Centre was pleased to receive new funding in 2021-22 which allowed for the expansion of our services. The Centre was able to address the needs of senior women through New Horizon's funding for our Senior Women's Program. A grant from West Island Community Shares enabled us to offer activities for women under our New Connections Program. Centraide also increased funding to the Women's Centre for Outreach programs in West Island north.

While the pandemic continued to impact our programming revenues, we received unsolicited but significant donations from individuals and companies which helped us maintain our free support groups for women in our community. A grant from the Ferguson Family Foundation supported our efforts to deliver food and necessities to families in need during the holiday season.

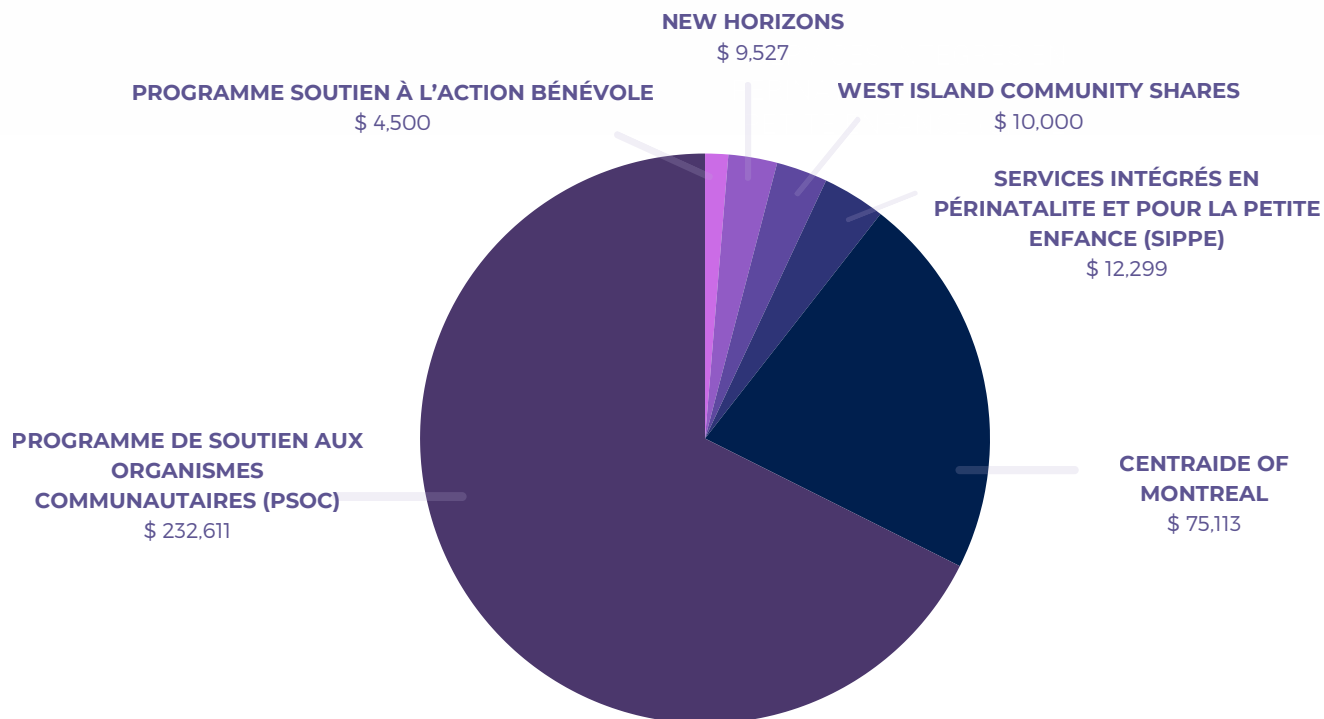
With a carry forward surplus of cash-on-hand from previous years, as well as reduced spending accumulated due to the pandemic, the Centre was able to fund increases to our rent, salaries for staff, instructors and outreach facilitators, along with training and general administration expenses. For a service-based organization, investing in our human-capital is of particular importance and the need to maintain a living-wage for our staff, instructors, and facilitators is recognized.

We appreciate the support received through the Quebec government's Programme soutien l'action bénévole through our local MNA's offices (Enrico Ciccone, MNA, Member for Marquette; Greg Kelley, MNA, Member for Jacques-Cartier; and Carlos J. Leitão, MNA. Member for Robert-Baldwin.)

The Women's Centre would like to thank our donors, funders, and membership for their continued support of our work in the community.



2021-2022 WIWC FUNDING



THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!

We are grateful to our donors for their support of our mission: Benevity Community Impact Fund, Canada Helps, Charities Aid Foundation of Canada, CN Employees' & Pensioners' Community Fund, F.A.S.R.S. Inc., Ferguson Family Foundation, Frontstream Inc., H. Madsen, Le Wellesley, M. Desjardins, P. St-Cyr, P. Ukrainetz, and The W.P. Scott Charitable Foundation.



VOLUNTEERING WITH THE CENTRE

When you volunteer with the WIWC, you support our mission of improving the quality of life of women in our community. Volunteer work is empowering in and of itself, and at the WIWC, empowered women empower women. There are multiple volunteer opportunities at the centre, such as helping out with office work, joining a committee, getting involved with publicity or newsletters, assisting with registration, playing a part in special events, and others.

Your time and effort help us be there for women who are in need of increased support, address the systemic barriers that women face, and create programs for personal development, wellness, and special interest. We are very grateful for the support of volunteers this past year, and hope to continue to count on your support in the coming year in offering our services and further tailoring them to reflect the fabric of our community.

THANK YOU

With the return to in-person programming and the continuation of our online programming, we are very grateful for your support of the Centre. We know that it hasn't been easy to navigate through all the guidelines and regulations but we have appreciated your patience and understanding through it all.

STAFF

DIRECTRICE GÉNÉRALE
Sarah Ford

ACCOUNTANT /
OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR
Donna Beazley

CHILDCARE SUPERVISOR/MANAGER
Iva Rooney

PROGRAMMING & MEMBERSHIP
COORDINATOR
Lisa Brousseau

COMMUNITY OUTREACH COORDINATOR
Nadia Prevost

BOOKKEEPING/ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
Wendy Wong

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CONSULTANT
Tanya Forward

CHILDCARE WORKERS
Nicola Cooper
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Centre des Femmes West Island
West Island Women's Centre

Agency supported by:



Centraide
of Greater Montreal