

WEST ISLAND WOMEN'S CENTRE



2023 - 2024 
ANNUAL REPORT

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



DIPA MEHTA
BOARD CHAIR

Over the past year, the Women's Centre has experienced a remarkable journey filled with positive changes and impactful milestones.

Firstly, the introduction of new programs at our secondary location has greatly expanded our reach and accessibility, ensuring that even more women have access to the resources and support they need. We have served over 1,500 participants! Of those, 1,260 are members and their children, and an average of 250 women in our community programs each session.

These programs have been tailored to address specific needs within the community, such as improving proficiency in French and English and providing an educational playgroup for preschoolers in two locations. These groups foster empowerment and solidarity among women from diverse backgrounds.

The Women's Centre experienced its highest ever membership levels, indicating a growing recognition of the importance of our organization within the community. This increased membership not only reflects the trust and confidence placed in us by our supporters but also reinforces our commitment to serving and uplifting women in all aspects of their lives.

Our successful Silent Auction fundraiser last fall was a testament to the generosity and support of our community. Through the collective efforts of volunteers, donors, and attendees, we were able to surpass our fundraising goals, providing vital financial support for our programs and initiatives.

The International Women's Day event hosted by the Women's Centre in March garnered significant attention and participation, becoming a highlight within the community. This event celebrated the achievements and contributions of women globally, while also addressing pressing issues and advocating for gender equality.

The Women's Centre also saw a surge in enrollment for our affordable courses and programs, with a large number of women benefiting from our diverse range of recreational, educational and support offerings. These programs have empowered women with valuable skills and knowledge, enabling them to pursue their goals and aspirations with confidence.

Overall, the past year has been marked by significant achievements and growth for the Women's Centre. This growth is made possible by the generous support of our funders.

As we continue to build on these successes, we remain dedicated to our mission of empowering and advocating for women, ensuring that every woman has the opportunity to thrive and succeed.



ISABELLE PROSNICK
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



MISSION STATEMENT

The West Island Women's Centre (WIWC) is dedicated to improving the quality of life of women through all stages of their lives. We provide educational, social, recreational services and support services for women living in the West Island and the community at large.

FOCUS

Our goal at the WIWC is to create a vibrant and inclusive community where women can come together to find support, friendship, and empowerment. We recognize that isolation can be a significant challenge for women, whether they're navigating the transitions of early adulthood, managing the complexities of motherhood, or entering new phases of their lives.

Through our diverse range of programs and services, we aim to connect women with each other in meaningful ways. From support groups tailored to specific life stages or organizing social events designed to foster new friendships, we provide opportunities for women to build lasting connections and find solidarity in shared experiences.

At the heart of our mission is a commitment to supporting women in all aspects of their lives. Whether they're seeking guidance through difficult times, resources to pursue personal or professional goals, or simply offering a listening ear, our dedicated team is here to provide compassionate support and assistance.

We believe that by coming together, women can not only find strength and resilience within themselves but also create a community where every woman feels seen, heard, and valued. Through our collective efforts, we strive to empower women to lead fulfilling lives and contribute positively to the world around them.

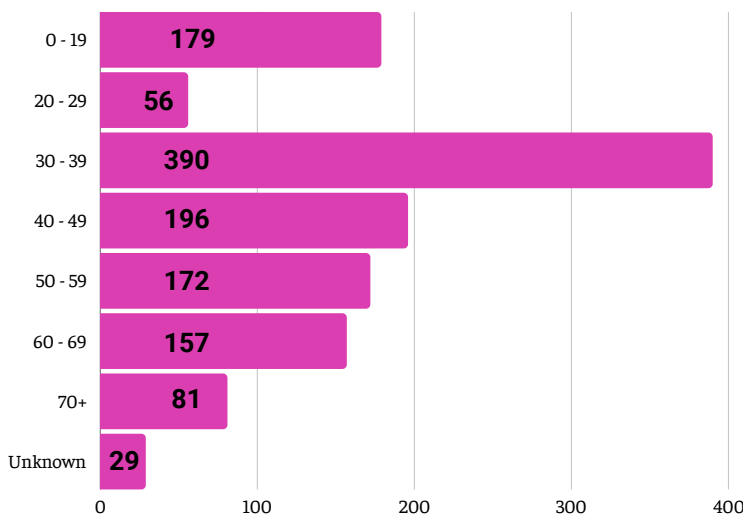
YEAR IN REVIEW

It has been an incredibly eventful and successful year for the West Island Women's Centre. With a record-breaking 998 members, an expanded array of classes, and the opening of a secondary location, we are addressing our community's most pressing needs.

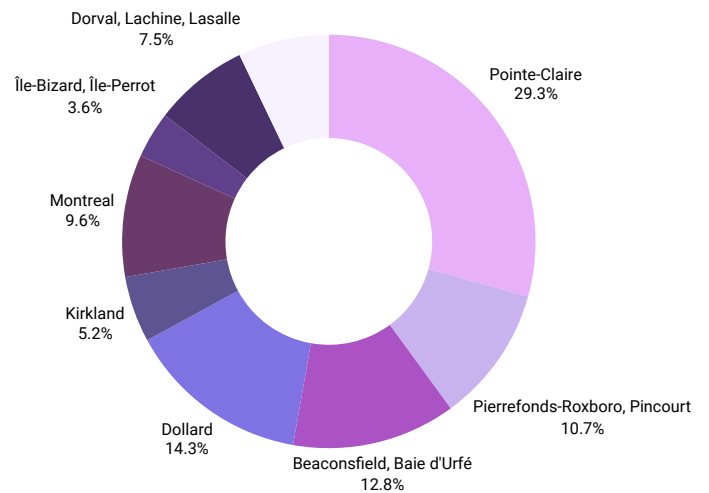
The increased outreach to women through our free community programs demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, and we are seeing the fruits of that labour every day. And a new collaboration with the West Island Community Resource Centre (CRC) is providing new services to further strengthen our ties within the community and expand our impact. This collaboration has taken the form of a resource agent to help pave the way for women in our neighborhoods to get the help they need with the challenges they are facing daily.

We have also transitioned to new operating processes reflecting a good grasp on a commitment to efficiency. Overall, we have accomplished a great deal and set a strong foundation for continued success in the future.

PARTICIPANT AGE BREAKDOWN



MEMBERSHIP BREAKDOWN BY CITY



Testimonial from a longstanding member and volunteer:

"When I first moved to Dorval a little over 15 years ago with my 2 boys (at the time, they were just 5 & 6), I admit I felt a bit like a fish out of water. Coming from Toronto, which couldn't be more different from the West Island, the culture shock was pretty intense. Suddenly, I was in the middle of a brand new world, without knowing anyone. Don't get me wrong - this is my home now, and I feel like I've always been meant to live here - the lake, the parks, the little cafés, the slower, gentler pace was exactly what I needed in my life. But making such a huge lifestyle change (that includes taking early retirement) had its moments of difficulty, especially considering that my marriage was falling apart.

When I joined the West Island Women's Centre (thanks to Anne-Marie), things began to change for the better. I have met like-minded people, I was able to enjoy a wide array of activities, and connect on a deeper level with the community with volunteering, making me feel like we (my children and I) are an integral part of the community."

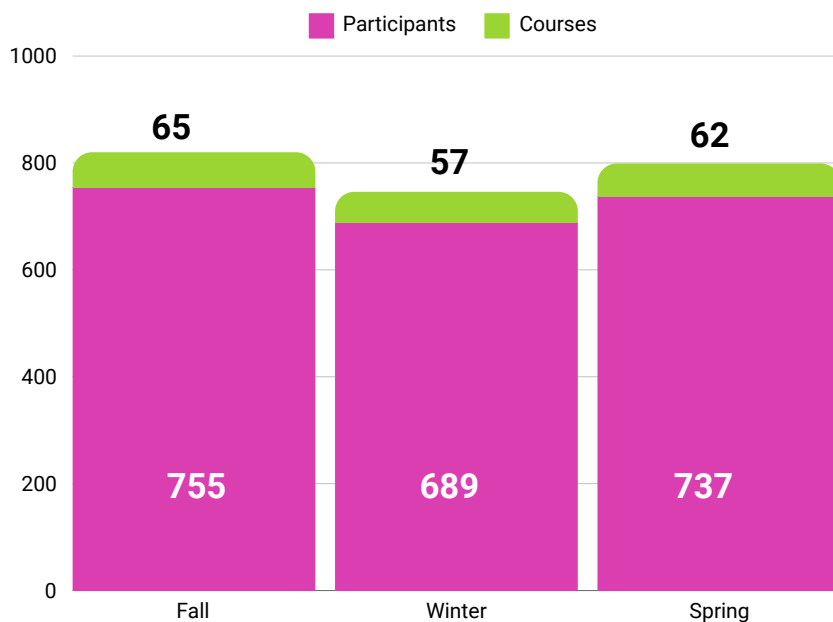
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PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

We ensure an incredibly diverse and inclusive range of programming. Offerings with such a wide variety of courses ensure that there is something for everyone, catering to different interests, needs, and stages of life.

It is particularly important that our courses include not just traditional academic or skill-based courses, but also ones focused on health, wellness, and personal development ensuring a responsive approach to the diverse needs and interests of women in the community.

PARTICIPANTS IN CLASSES



"I'm so proud to be both a member and a volunteer here! This center is truly a community of amazing women who work very hard to ensure that the operations of the center run smoothly, and that they are fulfilling their organization's mission of helping improve the quality of life of West Island/Montreal women. I love it here! I wish I knew sooner of their existence. They offer fun, interesting, and unique courses all year and at really affordable prices. Spread the word to your friends and family so they can benefit from these services too! THANK YOU WIWC!"

Amélie Crasci

"It's a very welcoming place super friendly to women and kids. There are a lot of activities going on. There are super friendly staff ready to listen and help, free daycare if the care giver is taking a class, support groups for women in need, as well as volunteer opportunities to help with the events... I can't say enough about how great it is. It's a second home to many women."

Yong S.



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Our organization facilitates free support groups, workshops, seminars, and activities for women facing specific challenges, such as single motherhood, domestic violence, health issues, or isolation. These programs provide a safe space for women to share their experiences, receive emotional support, and access resources. We also provide a venue where women can meet others in the same life stage as themselves.

PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

55 Up!	113
English Language Classes	43
French Language Classes	66
Walking Group	75
New Baby Conversation Group	36
New Connections Café	20
Healthy Relationships	14
Parenting Teens	9
Infertility Group	10
Healing Together Group	29
Separation and Divorce	34
Time for Two South Playgroup	64 moms, 77 kids
Time for Two North Playgroup	46 moms, 56 kids



COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our community partners who we actively collaborated with over the past year:



In 2024, we combined forces in a pilot project with the West Island Community Resource Centre to hire a Resource and Support Agent at the Centre. With the expertise in information and referral services, our agent, Jillian Lalonde, was able to support over 40 women between April and June. Our members and women from the community received information, resources and support related to topics such as legal issues, relationships, parenting, employment, mental health support etc. We are looking forward to establishing permanent funding to continue with this shared partnership that will help even more vulnerable women in the future.



In 2023-2024, our friends at Corbeille de pain held several workshops and community kitchens for our members. The Centre offered our free childcare service during the community kitchen in Pierrefonds. Women from the Centre were able to participate in workshops related to shopping on a budget, knife skills, cooking with pantry staples, etc. They also prepared fresh meals that they could take home.



Every month, our 55 Up! women's group prepares and delivers freshly prepared meals for the Mission's most vulnerable clients. With the rise in food prices, these fresh meals go a long way in helping those who are facing food insecurity. We will continue with this partnership over the next year as a part of our community giving back program.



The Centre is a breastfeeding-friendly location and is happy to partner with Nourri-Source each year to provide new moms the opportunity to speak with and receive support from a lactation consult every Friday morning. Between the months of September to June, Nourri-Source supports over 100 number of women and their babies.

INSTRUCTORS AND FACILITATORS

Instructor	# of classes taught
Sherezad Abadi	5
Nadja Ajami	5
Jason Altidor	3
Andrea Hanson	7
Kim Arrey	1
Chantal Barrette	3
Lindsay Belzie	6
Shelley Braunstein	2
Janet Callary	3
Dolores Carroll	6
Tania Chomyk	3
Donna Coleman	3
Patricia Costa	1
Catherine D'Aguiar	1
Suzie Dalpe	2
Damineh Davari	4
Yekaterina Decouto	2
Alison Dewar	3
Melissa Docherty	6
Donna Coleman	3
Savannah Edgar	1
Nevine Elchibini	2
Rachelle Fagen	1
Marie-Josée Glass	1
Alice Havel	1
Norma Issa	2
Lisa Jarvis	3
Sue Jollimore	6
Hilary Jones	9
Silvi Jung	3
Ann Kallaste	1
Samina Khan	1
Laurence Laplante	4
Cassandra Leslie	2
Stephanie Mankarios	6
Kim Maxwell	11
MJ Moscato	1
Kumie Nakane	12
Patricia Olinik	3
Patricia McGee	3
Natalie Pesold	9
Sumayyah Petrus	4
Francyne Poirier	1
Marcela Ramirez	1
Ardis Root	5
Allison Russell	1
Ilaini Scholl	3
Orly Sharoni	8
Liudmila Siliayeva	3
Shannon Simpson	9
Subanki Sivanantharajah	3
Debbie Smith	2
Kimberley Whitehead	3
Susan Wileman	1
Nicole Z.	3
Helen Zhu	2

Our instructors/facilitators and the number of classes taught in the 23-24 year

We had an amazing group of instructors this year. It is always wonderful to see their smiling faces when they come in for their courses. They are a group of dedicated women (and men!) who pride themselves on making a difference in the lives of women! We thank them for helping us to grow as an organization!



CHILDCARE SERVICE

This year our childcare service has continued to grow steadily with each session. Our new satellite location in Pierrefonds and Saturday childcare in Pointe Claire have seen significant growth. In Pierrefonds, we started with 3 children in September 2023, and now have 14 in total for the Spring 2024 session.

Saturday childcare has also taken off! In September 2023 we welcomed 8 children, and we currently have 21 children registered in April 2024. We also have noticed a difference in the ages of children we care for during the week compared with Saturdays.

During the week over half of the children we have in childcare are under one year old, while on Saturdays most of the children are over two years old. We are now offering childcare earlier in the mornings three days a week at 8:45 am and two afternoons we have childcare ending after 3:30 pm. As we grow as an organization, our childcare service has also pivoted to support women's schedules outside the Centre's typical opening hours.

In Fall 2023, parents and grandparents attended our Halloween and Holiday parties with their little ones. We had face painting, photography, and music at our Halloween party. The Holiday Party in December was well attended with older siblings who were home due to the school strike. We also offered occasional childcare for children during the school strike so that moms could continue to take their classes. Many moms brought their school aged children during their classes!

CHILDREN IN CHILDCARE DURING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Childcare for CDP Community Kitchens	6
Drop Ins	2
Halloween Party	27
Silent Auction	2
Holiday Party	40*
Mom and Baby Playgroup	12
International Women's Day	6
Free Seminars	2
Strike Days	1
Occasional Childcare	50*
Number of Children Registered in Childcare	160

*INCREASED NUMBERS DUE TO THE SCHOOL STRIKE



"I discovered the West Island Women's Centre when my baby was about 5 months old. It has been a great experience so far and we just love the Childcare option. I had never left my daughter before, Christa and her team made me feel super comfortable and I was reassured leaving my baby with them while I got the opportunity to do a great class. Very happy and grateful for this place. Thank you! 😊"

Melissa
WIWC member



CHILDCARE TEAM:

Christa Liesemer
Samantha Marsh
Nicola Cooper
Junko Donovan
Sunyoung Jung
Tiffani Wheeler

Denise Fortier
Anna Renton
Laura Carfagnini
Kimberly Whitehead*
Lisa Jarvis

*Moved on to new adventures

EVENTS

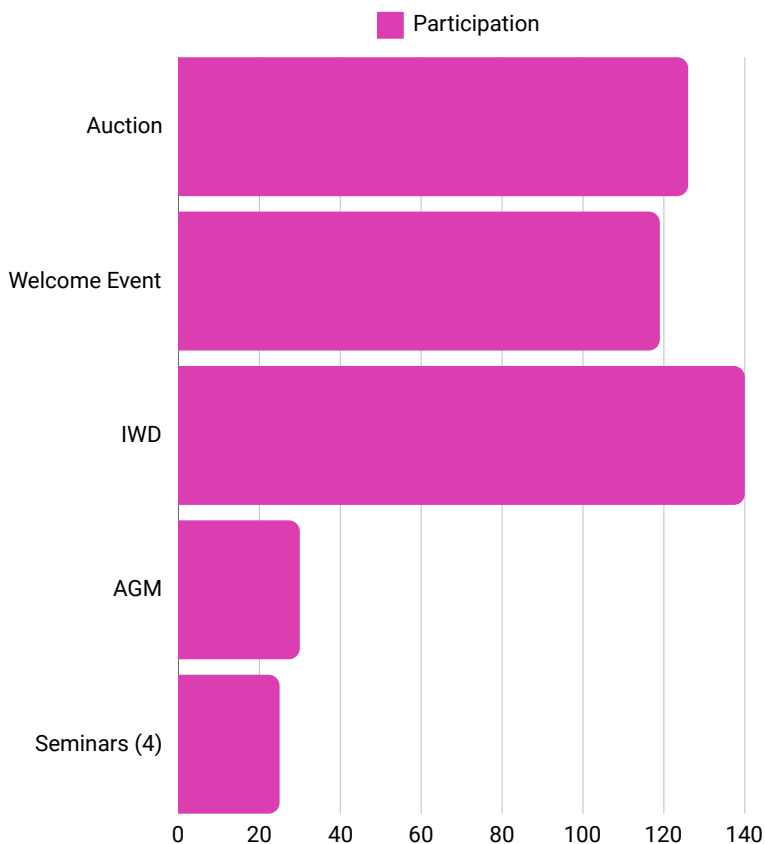
The Women's Centre had a very busy year! We hosted over 440 guests at our various events and activities.

Our Annual Welcome Back event was held in September 2023. With the support of Belron Canada employees, we organized an outdoor Family BBQ for new and returning members to enjoy. We followed that up with our Annual Silent Auction, our first post-COVID fundraising event that raised more than \$19,000 in proceeds for the Centre's programs. We finished off 2023 with our members once again showing their generosity by donating food and personal hygiene products for women and their families in need during the holidays.

2024 started off strong with a very successful International Women's Day Celebration event featuring two amazing guest speakers: Joan Lee from WIBCA Montreal and Thi Be Nguyen from the Canada-ASEAN Business Council who shared their wealth of experience about building inclusive communities that invest in women.

The Centre also participated in Family Day in Pierrefonds, Holiday Tree decorating contest at the Plaza Pointe-Claire, breakfast with West Island Community Shares, and co-organized a tea for seniors. We also held 4 seminars on topics such as menopause, estate planning, giving birth with a midwife and laughter therapy. Over 25 members of the community attended our seminars in 2023-2024.

The year ahead promises to be an exciting one, filled with engaging events that will empower, inspire, and create positive change for the women in our community.



VOLUNTEERS

This year we had over 150 volunteers who collectively donated 477 hours of their own time to help us with our many activities and events. Our volunteers are an integral part of the success and sustainability of our organization. Not only do they provide the Centre with a diverse skill set that help to shape the future of our programs, they also support our events, facilitate activities, and participate on committees. The contributions of the Centre's volunteers are invaluable and we recognize their dedication towards the long term growth of the Centre.



VOLUNTEERS

Thank you to all our volunteers who helped us in 2023-2024! Together, we can make a difference in the lives of Women in the West Island and beyond.

International Women's Day

Heidi Koller
Michelle Falardeau Marchand
Joan Gartner
Catherine Edwards
Sarah Turcotte
Anna Tangorra
Lei Ying
Daphnee Beauchamp
Dumouchel
Maria Pagliuca
Anne Whelan
Elizabeth Pasku
Maria Carrasquero
Ange Mwepu
Wei Feng
Grace Siekut
Eileen Longfield
Liri Pearson
Marion Canute
Sueanne O'Hanley
Joanna Lefebvre
Do Klee
Christine Blais
Jacqueline Casey
Donna Skea
Cherilyn Brownrigg
Monica David
Julie Arel
Stephanie Nichols
Erin Shore

Silent Auction Committee

Natalia DelleDonne
Chantal Massicotte
Codruta Marin
Monica Matas
Jessica Gallschutz
Heather Robertson
Manuela Martin
Meaghan Parizeau
Laura Hernandez
Ardis Root
Hilary Jones
Brenda Bertram
Shannon Cassidy



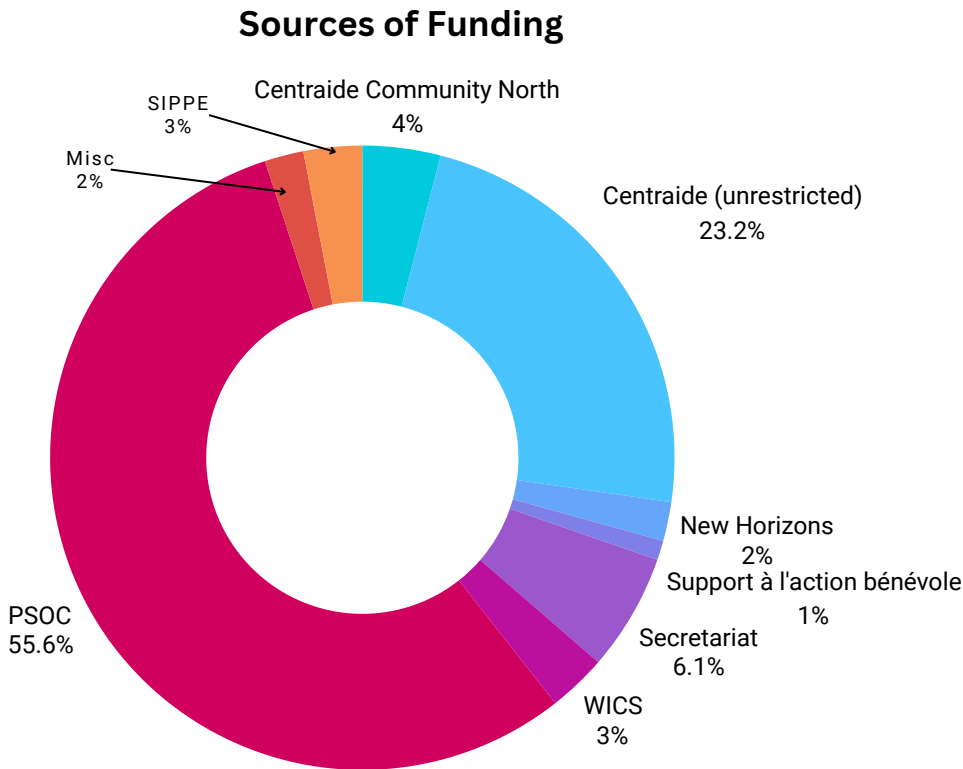
Programming Committee & Registration Volunteers

Pascale Brunet
Maria Sitaras
Emily Scazzosi
Emily Shallhorn
Whitney Gibbs
Cecilia Lopes
Kim Maxwell
Heidi Brown
Susan Pawsey
Amanda Shore
Meaghan Parizeau
Ginette Boudrias
Julie Aurel



FINANCE

The positive impact of our generous funders has enabled us to broaden our reach, offer more opportunities for growth and development, and extend a helping hand to those in need through our new outreach initiatives in collaboration with the West Island Community Resource Centre. We are grateful to our funders, and their continued support will undoubtedly pave the way for even greater achievements in the future.



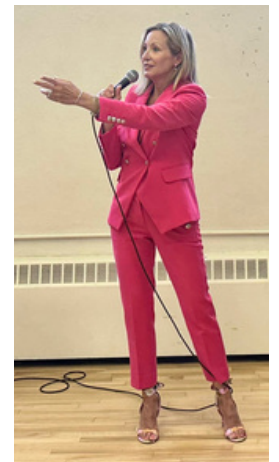
Isabelle Prosnick accepting a donation from the West Island Women's Softball League.



Total fundraising revenue for 2023 - 2024

\$28,836

from events, donations, and the silent auction



Ann Papayoti speaking at our fundraising event, 'In Conversation with Ann Papayoti'

WHAT'S NEXT

As we continue to make significant impact on the lives of women and children, our team and Board of Directors are focused on building upon the long-term growth and development of the Centre for the years to come. Some of our key strategies for 2025:

50th Anniversary of the Women's Centre

In 2025, we will be highlighting 50 years of empowering women in the West Island community. A special event to mark the occasion will be planned!

Strategic Planning

In 2024-2025, the Board of Directors, staff and WIWC stakeholders will embark on the vision and strategic planning process that will set the goals and objectives of the Centre for the next 5 years (until 2030).

Fund Development Strategies

Over the next year, the Centre will actively be focusing on ways to engage new partnerships, new sources of funding for our programs, planned investments in marketing and implement fundraising campaigns that will help support the longevity of the Centre.

Support for new arrivals and vulnerable women

In 2025, we would like to continue our collaboration with the West Island Community Resource Centre by offering our Resource and Support Agent as a permanent service. We would also like to continue to offer tailored support to our newly arrived women through our New Connections programs that include language classes, integration support and network building.

Adapting and evolving to meet emergent needs

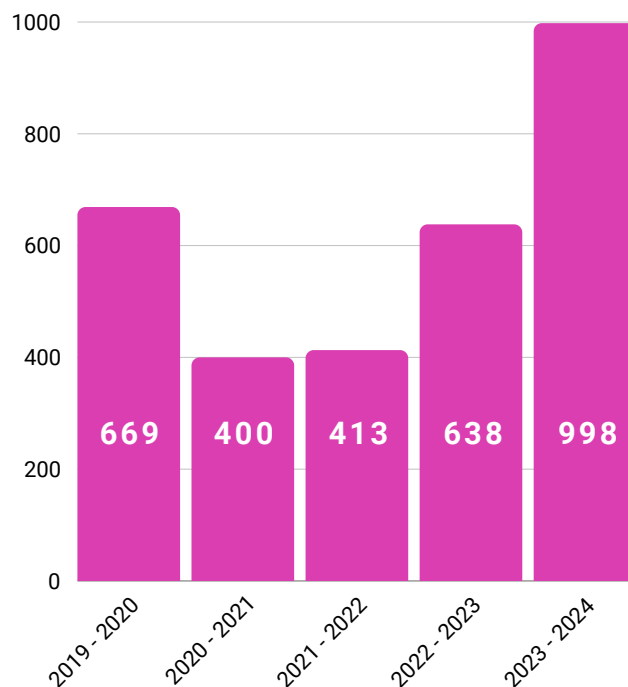
To meet the needs of women, continue to adapt and offer flexible programming options, including extending our childcare program beyond our typical hours. With emergent needs such as legal, relationship and parenting support, we wish to expand our offerings to include access to free consultants such as a lawyer or a psycho-educator. We would also like to expand our offering to our 55+Up women's group with specialized courses and activities at our second location.

The Women's Centre has the potential to grow and expand its reach significantly in the future. Through continuous innovation, community engagement, and a commitment to its mission, the Centre can create lasting change and transform the lives of countless women and children.

Percentage change in membership



Number of Members year over year



BOARD AND STAFF

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Dipa Mehta
Chair



Sharon Louie
Vice-chair



Meredith Furlong
Treasurer



Judy Harte
Events Director



Anne Lajoie
Secretary



Samantha Goodman
Volunteer Director



Boyana Andric
Seminars Director



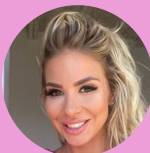
Lisa Gertsman
Marketing Director



Marlyn Brownrigg
Past Chair



Isabelle Prosnick,
Executive Director



Amélie Crasci
Programming Director



Veronique Bélanger,
Childcare Director

OUR STAFF



Wendy Wong
Bookkeeping



Christa Liesemer
Childcare



Donna Beazley
Operations



Nadia Prevost
Community Initiatives



Jessica Gallschutz
Programming



Cheryl Martin
Events &
Communications



Jillian Lalonde
Resource Agent



Tanya Forward
IT Consultant

Staff who have moved on to new opportunities or are currently on leave:

Deemah Rajjoub
Tanya Forward
Cheryl Martin

OUR SUPPORTERS

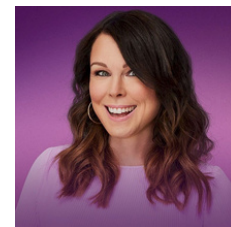


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Courriel: Brigitte.Garceau.ROBA@assnat.qc.ca

SUIVEZ-MOI
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Claudia Marques



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@greg.kelley.jc
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