



WEST ISLAND WOMEN'S CENTRE

2023 - 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

As the community continues to adapt and recover from the pandemic, the West Island Women's Centre has shown tremendous strength, resilience, and flexibility in adapting to the current needs of women in the community. Throughout 2022-2023, we welcomed many new and familiar faces back to a full schedule of in-person activities. We also maintained an online presence for those who preferred the added flexibility to participate in courses from the comfort of their homes.



We are seeing an increased need for support services for women in the community, and our team has actively responded by expanding both our reach and our range of services. Whether it be a mother who felt isolated during Covid, children who needed to socialize, women in the middle of career changes or orienting new residents to Quebec; the Centre has been able to provide support and resources for our members in two locations. Throughout the year, our team has been able to analyze the programs we offer and strategize how we could do more for women in the community. We have also recently launched our activities on weekends with childcare being offered onsite so that working mothers could have an outlet for themselves outside of our core hours. We have been able to increase our affordable course offerings, provide two additional support groups for parents, a varied seminar calendar, and now a second location to serve the women in Pierrefonds.

In addition, we were finally able to bring back our in-person events after a 3-year pause. We hosted our annual International Women's Day event; an empowering community networking event that celebrates women in the West Island and beyond. All these achievements are made possible thanks to our dedicated and motivated staff team who drive this Centre forward. Thank you to the entire team, volunteers, instructors, facilitators, board members, and community partners for their unwavering support that allows us to continue the important work that we do!



Dipa Mehta
WIWC Chair

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As I took on the role of Executive Director in September 2022 the COVID restrictions were completely removed, and we had to learn to operate in what was called the new “normal”. What a challenging time to jump into this position at the West Island Women’s Centre. We maintained a cautious approach by limiting capacities in our classes and in childcare as our members were also adapting back to the “way things were”. The smiles, the chatter, the excitement of members being back in person to a full schedule brought myself and the team so much energy and drive.

Subsequently, we are also observing an increasing demand for support services at the Centre. More single mothers come to us for assistance and resources. We are witnessing an influx of women who are new to this province looking to integrate into the community. There are women in search of a career change and coming to the Centre to gain new skills. We help new mothers who are struggling with postpartum depression and looking for a place to connect with other moms. The needs are growing, and our team is actively listening, identifying, and pulling resources together to support our members and the community at large.

The importance of making connections with our members, working with our community partners and adapting to the ongoing needs is paramount. In my first few months, I met with dozens of community organizations to understand their reality and where the Centre could fit in to support them. We were able to work together with Pierrefonds Community Project to provide women located in Pierrefonds-Roxboro a chance to participate in fitness activities, language classes and parenting workshops. We also were able to provide food to the West Island Mission that was prepared by our 55+ Up group. We collaborated with Bread Basket by offering free childcare during their Community Kitchens. We are currently looking to collaborate with some of the local youth organizations to re-establish our teen girl empowerment program.

The future at the Centre is filled with potential to develop new programs, connect with new members, and collaborate with our local community partners. None of this could be done without the support of an ever-growing team of dedicated staff members who go above and beyond each day. The team and I are looking forward to the upcoming year and where it will take us. Here’s to empowering women from the West Island community!

Isabelle Prosnick
Executive Director

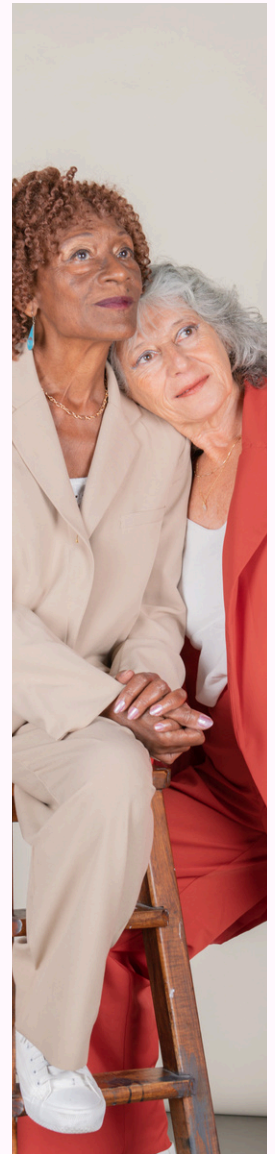
OUR MISSION

The West Island Women's Centre is dedicated to improving the quality-of-life for women through all stages of life. The Centre offers empowering recreational, educational, and social programs for women living in the West Island and beyond.

OUR PRIORITIES

The West Island Women's Centre:

- offers affordable courses that respond to the interests and needs of women in the community.
- encourages women to take time for themselves with our free childcare service.
- offers flexibility in its schedules to reach more women in their busy lives.
- delivers and develops free outreach programs that offer support for women in different stages of their lives.
- provides free educational conferences on current issues women are facing.
- is open to all, no matter the age, race, or socio-economic background.
- supports community engagement and collaboration amongst other organizations to serve more women.



2022 - 2023 TEAM

Board of Directors

Dipa Mehta
Chair

Sharon Louie
Vice-Chair

Kendra McFadden
Treasurer

Judy Harte
Secretary

Marlyn Brownrigg
Past-Chair

Sangeeta Basarke
Seminars Director

Anna Fabro
Programming Director

Bojana Andric
Events Director

Alexandra Kindrat
Childcare Director

Lisa Gertsman
Publicity Director

Childcare Staff

Samantha Marsh

Nicola Cooper

Junko Donovan

Sunyoung Jung

Tiffani Wheeler

Claire Pinios Destounis

Denise Fortier

Anna Renton

Shari Spanier

Anastasia Assimakopoulos*

Catherine Pemberton

Amy Waugh

Office Staff

Isabelle Prosnick
Executive Director

Donna Beazley
Accountant/Office Administrator

Wendy Wong
Bookkeeper/Administrative Assistant

Nadia Prevost
Community Outreach Coordinator

Amy Bates
Community Outreach Assistant

Cassandra Mckay
Programming and Membership Coordinator

Christa Liesemer
Childcare Supervisor/Manager

Tanya Forward
IT Consultant

Cheryl Martin
Events and Communications Coordinator

Amy Waugh
Weekend Office Attendant

Sarah Ford*
Executive Director

Iva Rooney*
Childcare Supervisor/Manager

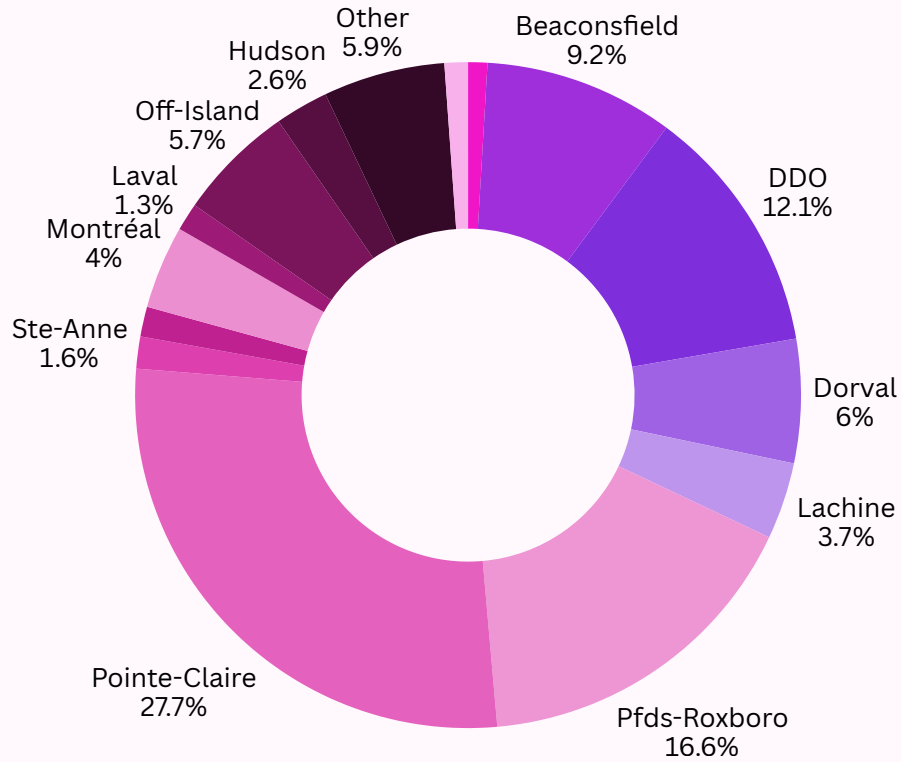
Lisa Brousseau*
Programming and Membership Coordinator

*Moved on to new adventures

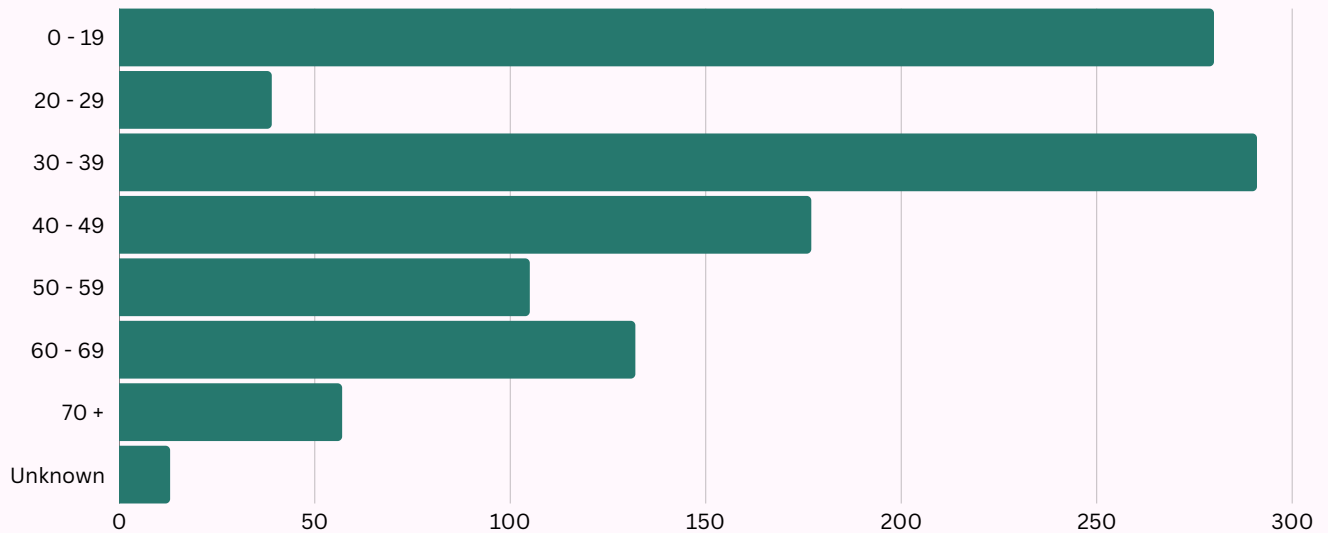


COMMUNITY IMPACT

Participants by Location



Participants by Age Group



AFFORDABLE COURSES

The low-cost courses offered at the Centre provide the opportunity for women to take some time for themselves so they can reach their full potential.

The Centre offers a variety of daytime and evening classes that include fitness, children's activities, special interest, and personal/professional development.



Our affordable classes provide the opportunity to become a member of the Centre, creating a network of friendships and support for women of all ages.

APPRECIATION

NUMBER OF YEARS FACILITATING OUTREACH GROUPS

12 Ann Papayoti	10 Corrie Sirota	6 Hasnaa Rzouzi
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The Centre has a group of dedicated instructors and facilitators that offer affordable courses and free support groups. We would like to highlight the milestones and achievements of the following instructors and facilitators who have been with the Centre for the past few years! **Congratulations to all!**

TOTAL CLASSES GIVEN BY THESE INSTRUCTORS AT THE CENTRE

> 75 Natalie Pesold Ilaini Scholl	> 60 Sue Jollimore	> 30 Alison Dewar Dolores Carroll Hilary Jones Shannon Simpson Orly Sharoni	> 15 Janet Callary Subanki Sivanantharajah Kumie Nakane
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YEAR IN REVIEW

With the ease of Covid-19 restrictions, our courses slowly started to go back to pre-pandemic registration levels. We maintained a balance between in-person classes and online classes to offer continued flexibility to our members.

Over the past year we increased our membership to 637 and 141 classes were offered. In the fall of 2022, we maintained a cautious approach by offering limited participation in classes to gradually help members feel more comfortable in larger spaces indoors.

In the winter of 2023, we increasingly offered more classes and launched our satellite location in Pierrefonds-Ouest to become more accessible for our community members living in the north of the West Island. Our satellite location offered a free mini session that included Pilates, Mom and child activities, and a café for mom entrepreneurs.



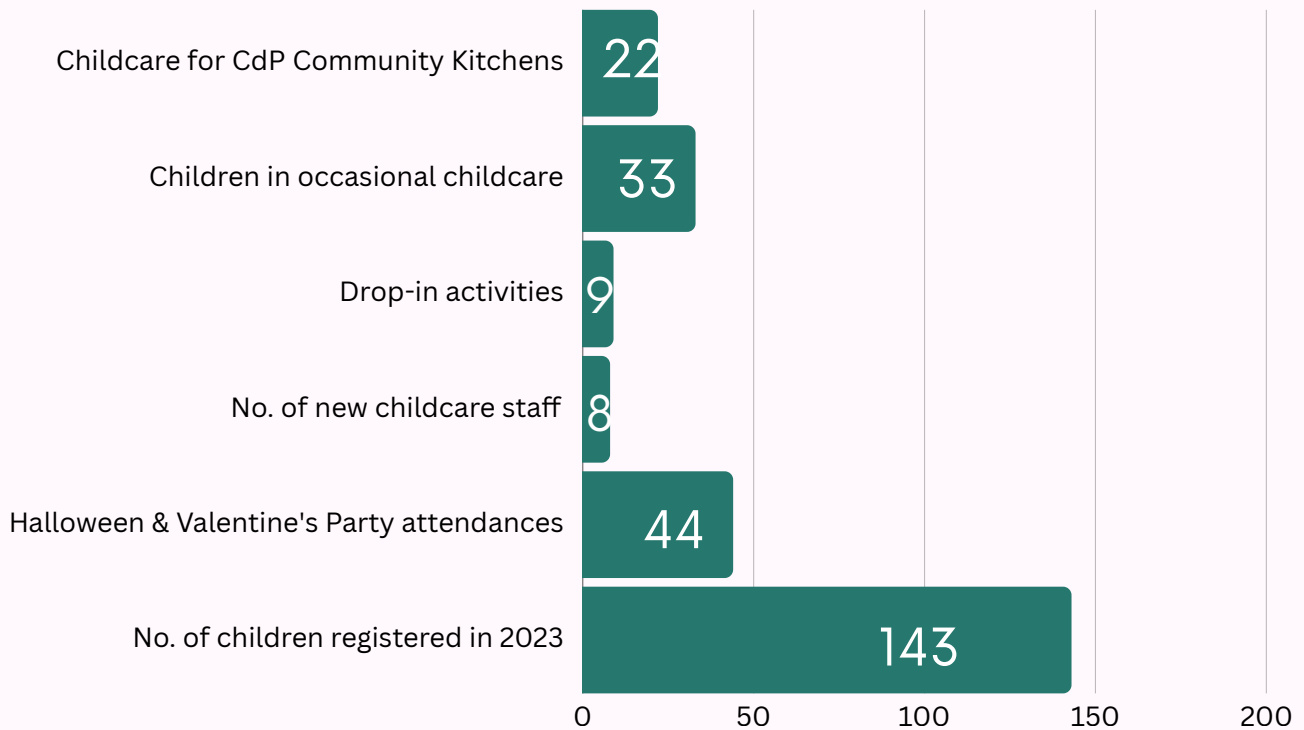
In the spring of 2023, we launched weekend programs which included a full morning of classes on Saturdays with childcare being offered for the first time.

Number of courses online	29
Number of courses in-person	112
Number of women who benefitted from courses	538
Number of children who took courses	146
Number of members	637

CHILDCARE SERVICE

This past year in childcare has been a gradual return to normal. We have gone from caring for a couple children at a time in the fall, to having as many as 12 little ones in the room at a time this spring. The requests for our childcare service is increasing each session.

Our Halloween and Valentine events were well attended with moms showing an appreciation for activities they could celebrate and share with their children and other moms.



We held an open house before the spring session for moms to come with their children and meet our staff. It gave them an opportunity to learn more about our childcare service and spend time with their child in our childcare room. We hope it helped moms feel more comfortable leaving their children in our care.

CHILDCARE SERVICE

The addition of classes and childcare at our satellite location in Pierrefonds has been a new option for moms in the Pierrefonds area to attend our programs without travelling to Pointe-Claire.



Spring brought not only an increase in childcare numbers, but we also started offering childcare on Saturdays. This has given working moms even more flexibility in their busy weekend schedule to have a place for their children while they attend a class.



"As a protective mother of a 20-month-old from whom I had never been separated from, the thought of leaving my son in a childcare setting was overwhelming. But, if there's a place to experience this for the first time, it most definitely should be with WIWC childcare. I instantly felt comfortable, confident, and understood by the staff who wear their hearts on their sleeves and who treat my son like their own. We, mothers of the WI, are so very lucky to have this incredible resource in our community. Thanks to the caring and attentive staff at WIWC childcare, I no longer feel guilty about taking a few moments to myself while exercising."

Valerie, WIWC Member

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

This year saw our new Pierrefonds satellite location project really take off! In addition to our Time for Two playgroup, we offered an evening English conversation class and a free trial session of our fitness and mom & baby massage classes. There were 101 women who benefitted from services at our second location this year.

Participants included women who had previously taken part in programs at our Pointe-Claire location but found commuting from Pierrefonds unmanageable due to the distance. Some had no or limited access to a vehicle and public transit across the West Island territory is complicated and time consuming.

The Pierrefonds location allowed women of all ages and of a varied demographic to benefit from our services. We engaged many new young mothers, local senior women, and recent arrivals to Canada that were grateful to find us in this new area.

Our partnership with Pierrefonds Community Project (PCP) introduced more women to our services which included our collaboration with Bread Basket's Community Kitchens offered at the Centre Communautaire Gerry Robertson in Pierrefonds-East. The Centre provided free childcare, enabling more women to participate in the workshops. They prepared a complete meal to share together including extra portions to take home for their families.

The weekly 55 Up! Women's Group decided to dedicate a monthly session to prepare meals to be distributed to those experiencing food insecurity in the West Island. Together they produced over 200 portions of hearty soups as well as over 100 packages of healthy muffins which were shared between the West Island Mission and an affordable housing facility for seniors.



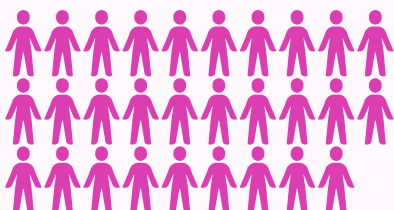
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Our free Outreach programs address the current issues women are facing in the community. The goal of our community outreach programs is to provide access to support services that address the overall needs of women that may otherwise not be served elsewhere.

Time for Two Playgroups

With two locations to serve the North (Pierrefonds) and South (Pointe-Claire) of the West Island, our parent and child playgroup provides a safe and stimulating environment for all women. Mothers get the chance to socialize, make friends, and break isolation. Children participate in free play, games, crafts, and activities that engage the mind and senses! Children also receive a healthy snack to promote good eating habits.

Number of Moms and Children in Time for Two Playgroups



129

Support Groups

The Centre offers 4 main support groups regularly over the year: Divorce and Separation, Infertility support, Healing through miscarriage and infant loss, and New Baby group. The goal of these groups is to support and guide women in the most vulnerable time of their life.

Number of participants in Support Groups



178

Breastfeeding drop-in

In collaboration with Nourri-Source Montreal, the Centre offers a weekly breastfeeding drop in for women who need support in their breastfeeding journey. A lactation specialist is on site to answer questions, offer support, encourage, and inform women about feeding their baby.

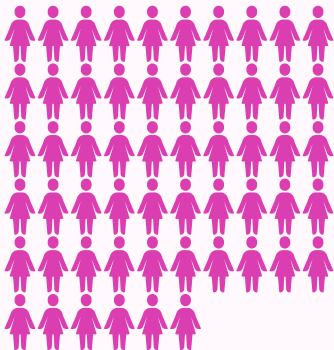


COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Walking group

A group of women that meet weekly for a walk around Pointe-Claire and beyond. Rain or shine; walks take place and provide an opportunity to make new friends, exercise, and feel great!

Number of participants in the Walking Group



56



55 Up! group

Our seniors group gathers weekly to participate in a variety of activities such as fitness courses, conferences, outings, crafts, cooking, and coffee & chat! The goal of this group is to break the isolation some senior women face and provide support or referrals as needed.

Number of participants in 55 Up! group

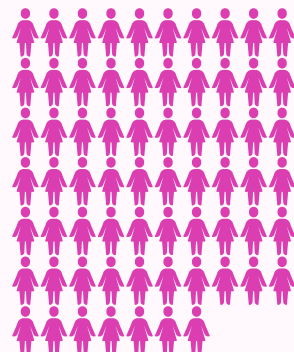


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Support for new arrivals

Starting over in a new community can be overwhelming and scary. This past year we joined forces with Pierrefonds Community Project to offer support and resources to women who were new to Canada. Through language courses, workshops on parenting, nutrition, as well as, some fun fitness classes; we provided information and helped those who are new in Quebec to navigate the system and find community. Our free childcare service was offered at the same time so women could have peace of mind; knowing they could focus on themselves while their little ones were taken care of.

Number of participants in New Connections group



67

EVENTS

Frozen Fun at the Plaza

The Centre was invited this year to participate at the Plaza Pointe-Claire's Frozen Fun Wonderland for families. Face painting, cookies, and pictures with Elsa and Olaf were on the schedule! This fundraiser for the Centre was attended by 150 families and raised over \$700 for the Centre's programs!



Welcome Event

Our annual welcome back event was held in November 2023 after a 3 year pause due to the pandemic. This event allows new and returning members to mingle in a relaxed atmosphere. The excitement about the return to in-person events was evident with over 40 members in attendance.



EVENTS

Holiday Baskets

Our annual campaign to help women in need was expanded to help 3 organizations this year: The West Island Assistance Fund, West Island Mission, and West Island Women's Shelter. Our members donated and distributed 25 toasters for women leaving domestic violence situations, toys and food for a single mother with 4 children, and 20 boxes of food for women and families in need. Thank you for the generosity of all our members and volunteers!



International Women's Day

After a 3-year hiatus, our annual International Women's Day event was back and bigger than ever! A community networking breakfast, with over 70 partners and members in attendance. Our special guest speakers for the morning were Fariha Naqvi-Mohammed and Sherri Rabinovitch.

FREE SEMINARS

The Centre offers free educational workshops and seminars from September to June. The goal is to focus on current women issues in the community and to provide information to empower women in their everyday lives. This year we held 8 seminars that were attended by 108 women:

Beyond Appearances: Understanding eating disorders with Karine Pendleton, ANEB



Santé mentale périnatale: comprendre et soutenir avec Philippe Drouin et Clara Blot en collaboration avec les Amis de la santé mentale



Baby led weaning with Meighan Kennedy, RD/DtP, MSc.



Nutritious Meals for Busy People with McGill nutrition and dietetics students



Managing big emotions in Kids with Veronique Bélanger



Youth & Anxiety in collaboration with Friends for Mental Health



Picky eaters with McGill Nutrition and Dietetics students



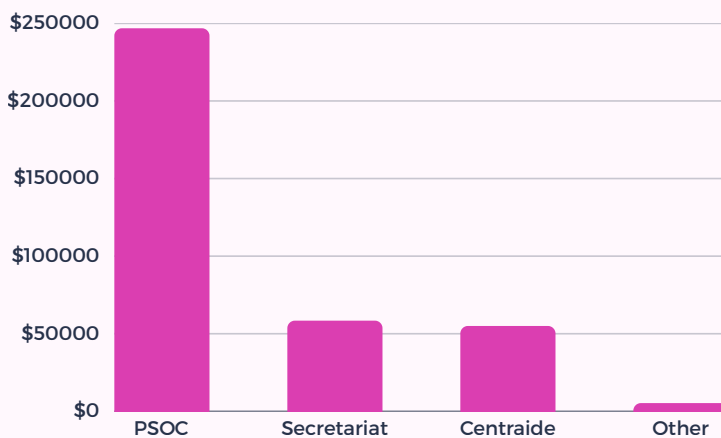
How to make the most of your budget with Barbara Cieply



FINANCIAL REPORT

This past year saw a revival of in-person courses which has started to generate revenue closer to what the Centre produced pre-pandemic. While still not there yet, we are well on our way. This was supported by a grant from the Secretariat, which helped us fund courses at a new off-site location in Pierrefonds. Also, we were able to update our aging computers, as well as purchase a device to facilitate offering hybrid options for participants who cannot join in person for an activity.

CORE FUNDING



PSOC - Programme de soutien aux organismes communautaires / Mission globale

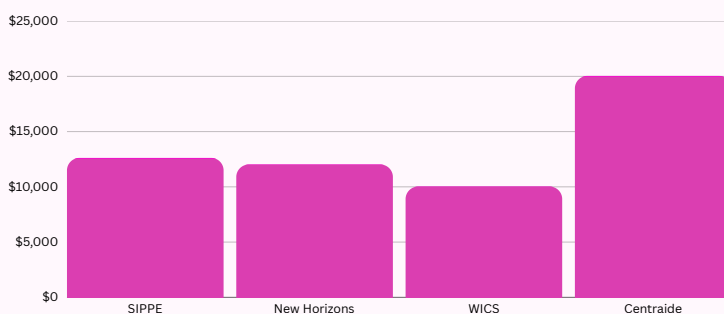
Secrétariat - Secrétariat à la condition féminine

Centraide - Centraide du Grand Montréal

Other:

- Support à l'action bénévole
- Pointe-Claire Oldtimer's
- WP Scott Foundation

OUTREACH PROGRAM FUNDING



SIPPE - Programme de services intégrés en périnatalité

New Horizons - Senior's program

WICS - West Island Community Shares

Centraide - Centraide du Grand Montréal

We would like to thank our funders for their on-going support of the West Island Women's Centre. Their contributions enable us to continue to offer quality low-cost programming and free outreach activities to the communities who need it most.

VOLUNTEERS

The West Island Women's Centre is a volunteer-driven organization and relies on dedicated individuals to support our mission. The implications of our volunteers are greatly appreciated. The contributions our volunteers have made a difference in the programs we offer and in the lives of women in the West Island and beyond. **We wish to thank all 148 volunteers who supported us this past year!**

Walking group and Book Club

Laurence Laplante
Andrea How

Holiday Baskets

Hilary Jones
Afnan Irshaid
Megan Pickering
Audrey Noel
Anne Whelan
Denise Addona
Christina MacDonald
Irene Robson
Lindsay Lapaquette
Jenn Worsnip
Diane Lague
Ange Mwepu Lunda

Office and Admin support

Meaghan Parizeau
Christine Massicotte
Melanie Scrosati
Naomi Fergusson
Cailey Ambrose

Frozen Fun Event

Katelyn Gariepy
Olivia Gariepy
Dean Liesemer
Olivia Venturelli
Judy Harte

Seminars Committee

Anne Lajoie
Véronique Belanger

International Women's Day

Bojana Andric
Lynn Collins
Judy Harte
Sara Hassanien
Mila Siliyeva
Marlyn Brownrigg
Lisa Gertsman
Amy El-Hout
Sheila Clark
Leonara Bassrei
Caitlin Jenkins
Kim Morin
Yasmin Jazayeri
Roselyn Kryczka
Yong Song
Avril Kent
Sara Albuquerque
Donna Coleman
Erin Haller
Wendy Clifford

Programming Committee

Susan Pawsey
Fondy Tam
Kay Heaton
Anna Fabro
Emily Shallhorn
Wendy Robinson
Heidi Brown
Kim Maxwell
Amanda Shore
Meaghan Parizeau

Krista Pershall
Kelly Beausejour
Regina Zaman
Rand Allabade
Catherine Pemberton
Grace Siekut
Jessica Stremi
Catherine Battershill
Lea Capuano
Sophia Skoulikas
Jessica Sarena
Jessica Singh
Tongruethai Makpiam
Diane Lu
Biance Davila
Patricia Bench
Anna Tarenzo
Franca Cambria
Maja Dionisi
Elidee Sondermeyer
Patricia Carson

Silent Auction Committee

Natalia DelleDonne
Chantal Massicotte
Codruta Marin
Alexandra Kindrat
Monica Matas
Jessica Gallschuetz
Heather Robertson
Manuela Martin
Meaghan Parizeau
Laura Hernandez
Ardis Root
Brenda Bertram
Shannon Cassidy

Finance Committee

Meredith Furlong
Dipa Mehta
Kendra McFadden
Marlyn Brownrigg
Judy Harte
Sharon Louie

Childcare Events

Shannon Simpson
Colleen Coolidge
Catherine Pemberton
Cassandra Leslie

Food Initiatives

Susan Anctil
Johanne Argo
Patricia Bench
Brenda Bertram
Margaret Bichay
Nancy Boissonneault
Ginette Di Francesco
Ayman El-Hout
Terri Fabes
Frieda Flisar
Andrea How
Angel On Kei Lai
Laurence Laplante
Do Kyong Lee
Paulette Lewis
Shirley Maguire
Patricia McGee
Audrey Noel
Yvonne Sewell
Marge Smith



The West Island Women's Centre is an agency supported by



Centraide
du Grand Montréal



Centre intégré universitaire de santé
et de services sociaux du Centre-Sud-
de-l'Île-de-Montréal



partageaction
West Island Community Shares



Centre des Femmes West Island
West Island Women's Centre