



WOMEN'S HABITAT  
OF ETOBICOKE

# ANNUAL REPORT

2016/17





## VISION

All women have choice and opportunity to live their lives in dignity, with equal access to economic and social opportunities, and freedom from violence.

## MISSION

To provide a safe refuge, counselling, support and advocacy for women and their children who are fleeing violence; while also working towards a more equal society where the inherent value of all women is acknowledged and celebrated.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Dear Friends,

This fiscal year at Women's Habitat was one of transformative change. Thanks to the generosity of our compassionate donors, we were able to complete our Outreach Centre Kitchen Renovation project. After a decade of providing outreach services, it was time to remodel and create a space that could accommodate the growing need of the women and children who come through our doors. In September 2016 we welcomed back our community to a new and improved Outreach Centre. As promised to our donors and service users, we continued to provide programs and counselling throughout the renovation by partnering with other South Etobicoke social service agencies. Finally, our Outreach Centre has been transformed into a new, beautiful space with a greater capacity to accommodate and grow, and through the process a deeper connection to our community was made. We are incredibly grateful to our partners for their patronage, expertise and encouragement.

While the renovation was underway, we took the opportunity to regroup and develop our latest Strategic Plan, a living document that guides us into 2019. Our Plan is focused on delivering best practice programs, ensuring organizational resilience and strengthening our advocacy efforts to create positive systemic change.

This year we invested in strengthening our advocacy efforts and made great strides in engaging with government. We worked with them to develop strategies that respond to the unique systemic barriers women face. These barriers, including the gender wage gap and lack of affordable child care, keep women from entering the workforce, forcing many of those experiencing violence to be financially dependent on their abusive partner.

We know that systemic discrimination and oppression based on race, class, sexual orientation, gender identification, age, ability and any number of other aspects of identity must be addressed as part of an integrated approach to addressing issues of poverty and violence in the lives of women. We believe changes to social policy should be an inclusive and collaborative process and we will continue to insist that policy makers at all levels of government engage, listen and respond meaningfully to women with lived experience.

In 2018, Women's Habitat will celebrate its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Over the past four decades, our organization has grown immensely. Every step we've taken has been with the deep understanding that we must always be transparent and accountable to the women, children, supporters and volunteers who place their trust in us. As we enter our 40th year, we renew our pledge to work in partnership and solidarity with every Women's Habitat stakeholder, and to celebrate with pride, the strength and uniqueness of our organization.

On behalf of the staff, management and Board of Directors of Women's Habitat, thank you for your trust, commitment and partnership.

Deborah Templer, President

Silvia Samsa, Executive Director

# STAFF TEAM

(April 1, 2016- March 31, 2017)

## ADMINISTRATION

*Executive Director*  
Silvia Samsa

*Executive Coordinator*  
Erin Breau-Barkley  
(Maternity Leave),  
*Executive Assistant*  
Doreen Rasiah

*Director of Finance & Operations*  
Sushma Subedi

*Senior Accounting Coordinator*  
Sunithira Thuraisingam

*Resource Systems Manager*  
Lina Almanzan

*Front Desk Support Worker*  
Elizabeth Brett

*Community Relations Coordinator*  
Ursula Krubnik

*Administrative Assistant*  
Tanya Mathurin

*Cleaner*  
Georgette Stona

*Communications & Human Resource Manager*  
Sojie Tate

## OUTREACH

*Program Manager*  
Leila Sarangi

*Counsellors*  
Cecilia Nunez  
Munice Wright

*Transitional Worker*  
Jennifer Oliverrie

*Housing Worker*  
Mahbooba Hashimi

*Young Women's Counsellor*  
Michelle Fraser

*Parent Support Worker*  
Naedja Truffi

*Community Development Worker*  
Laura Buccioni

*Administrative Assistant*  
Sarah Johnson



## SHELTER

*Program Manager*  
Julia Fiddes

*Counsellors*  
Ishraq Abu-Ali  
Mariela Chipoco  
Faiza Jama  
Felicia Obakin  
Pauline Richards-Gordon  
Victoria Roth  
Stephanie Gordon

*Child and Family Advocates*  
Caltha Richards  
Carla Rocha  
Le Tran

*Food Coordinator*  
Karin Hamann

## Milestones:

Lina Almanzan - 10 years  
Mahbooba Hashimi - 10 years  
Ishraq Abu-Ali - 5 years  
Elizabeth Brett - 5 years  
Faiza Jama - 5 years  
Georgette Stona - 5 years  
Silvia Samsa - 5 years



## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

### *KAREN SKOBEL*

Our Springtime in Paris fundraising event was an incredible success thanks to the hard work of our dedicated event committee volunteers. As a member of the committee, Karen Skobel's contribution was instrumental and we are honoured to recognise her impact in this year's report.

Karen has a few friends on the Board at Women's Habitat. Over the years she'd heard some pretty powerful stories about women and children who leave their home, often with no more than the clothes on their back, desperate to escape violence. Karen knew she wanted to be involved, and with a background in restaurant design she was looking for the best way to contribute.

"I have such respect for those who do event planning... to create an event that is comfortable and visually appealing can be challenging. When I asked about volunteering and was told about Women's Habitat's new event committee I happily joined in." The committee got to work right away, and with a blank slate and a shoestring budget they pulled together a stunning event that was both entertaining, poignant and a fundraising success.

The events leading up to the big night were as Karen describes "controlled chaos". When the time came for the Women's Habitat service users to share their stories the room was overwhelmed with emotion. "The two speeches were so unrehearsed, so raw and so moving" Karen says, "The entire room felt that. It was powerful".

When asked how this experience changed her, Karen shares, "once you become more involved and you develop your understanding of the impact Women's Habitat has, you are compelled to share those experiences with others and you are able to speak with more knowledge and passion."

Karen is grateful to her fellow event committee members for their tireless efforts. "I'm honoured to be recognised" Karen says, "but this was absolutely a team effort. What an outstanding group to work with. It was truly a rewarding experience."

# DEAR MARIA

*STAYING SAFE IN THE DIGITAL AGE*



**T**echnology is continually changing the way we interact with each other, the way we share our experiences, and for many women we work with, it is affecting their safety. For women in shelter, how she uses technology can gravely impact her safety and the safety of her children. The modern conveniences we use daily can be used to perpetuate violence. GPS tracking, email and social media are often used as tools to stalk, harass, threaten, humiliate and intimidate women.

In Canada, stalking is the fifth most common violent offence committed against women-identified individuals. Research shows 58% of women reported being stalked by a former intimate partner, and 75% who are stalked by their estranged partners are also the victim of physical or sexual assault by that same person.

Together our shelter staff and service users developed a three-pronged approach to mitigating the dangers of technology: updating our methods of communicating with women, using technology to our advantage, and providing women with up to date tech safety training.

### ***In Canada, stalking is fifth among the most common violent offences against women identified individuals.***

*"Hey it's Maria\*, how are things?"*

At our shelter, we use a code name when communicating safely with residents. Immediately upon entering the shelter, women are taught how to turn off their cell phone's GPS tracking feature and are asked if they prefer communicating via text or call. When we haven't heard from a residents within 24-hours of her expected return, we are concerned for her safety. Our shelter is listed as a private phone number and staff calls to

women's cell phones would routinely go unanswered. So, we developed a code name as a way of contacting women and keeping our identity discreet. We send her a text saying; "Hey it's Maria, how are things?" If she's not ok or doesn't text us back, we know to reach out to her emergency contact or call police.

Many of the women we serve report being harassed by their ex-partner by email and text. Unlike a harassing phone call, this results in automatic documentation of verbal abuse that we encourage her to save. In a legal system which often fails to serve justice in cases of gender based violence, having written evidence to present in court can be crucial for survivors.

As technology evolves, we are committed to delivering women the training and information they need to make informed decisions. We are developing a partnership with Toronto Police at 22 Division to deliver technology safety training from a law enforcement perspective; teaching women how to protect themselves while using social media, including hiding location information and what to be aware of when posting photos online.

At Women's Habitat we strive to create inclusive strategies to navigate technology and ensure women have the tools to keep themselves safe. They are the experts of their safety and we are here to support them.

*\*Our real code name will remain a secret for the protection of the women we serve.*

# OUR NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

*BLUEPRINT FOR OUR FUTURE*



Over the past 5 years, Women's Habitat has experienced unprecedented growth and overwhelming strain on our services. To refocus our efforts, meet the needs of our service users and identify our organizational priorities, we embarked on a comprehensive strategic planning process. Our new Strategic Plan has been shaped in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders and relied heavily on the findings of our service user Needs Assessment. The process resulted in a long-term approach to deepening the impact of our work. The Strategic Plan provides a clear blueprint for Women's Habitat's future. It builds on our strength as an inclusive, feminist service agency, and firmly guides us into 2019.

## OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

### **1. *Deliver best practice programs and services that support and promote violence free lives.***

- a) Define and articulate Women's Habitat's continuum of services through a feminist, anti-racist and anti-oppressive lens and create a new evaluation framework.
- b) Develop and implement an organization-wide program plan with clearly defined priorities.
- c) Upgrade our Outreach Centre's facility to meet the increased demand on our services.
- d) Undertake research and assess Women's Habitat's unique role in increasing women's access to safe and affordable housing.
- e) Engage in strategic and high impact partnerships and alliances to create new opportunities and enhance programs.

### **2. *Work towards positive systems change through focused advocacy dedicated to bettering the lives of women and children.***

- a) Solidify and expand our involvement in poverty reduction work, encouraging the engagement of women with lived experience through a community development model.
- b) Promote systemic changes that address the link between women's poverty and gender based violence.
- c) Create alliances and continue to strategically participate in coalitions and forums to influence positive transformation on issues related to the organization's mandate.

### **3. *Strengthen organizational resilience and sustainability.***

- a) Develop and implement an organizational capacity plan.
- b) Strengthen and support Board governance and leadership.
- c) Develop a comprehensive volunteer program that addresses the multiple needs of the organization.
- d) Continue to grow the fund development program to increase our capacity and enrich our programs and services.
- e) Strengthen the organization's external communications to increase Women's Habitat's visibility and impact in the community.



# OUR NEW OUTREACH CENTRE

## *FOOD AT THE HEART OF EVERY PROGRAM*

When you remove the worry about where your next meal is coming from, women and children are in a better position to cope with the other challenges in their lives. Last year our community outreach centre served over 6,300 individual meals to our service users. Since our centre's opening in 2006, we'd outgrown our kitchen, and our program space and counselling rooms were in desperate need of a refresh. We had been working with what we had for the past decade and we knew the time had come to renovate.

Women have told us that our support has a great impact on their day to day life. From the beginning of this project we were in agreement that cancelling our services while we underwent a renovation was not an option. We reached out to local social services agencies and partnered with them to continue our vital programming. Throughout the summer of 2016, we hosted programs and provided counselling at JobStart, St. Margaret's New Toronto Church, LAMP Community Health Centre and the Jean Augustine Centre for Young Women's Empowerment. We are grateful to our community partners for their unwavering support.

On March 7, 2016 we broke ground and on August 31, 2016 we re-opened our doors to our

community. This renovation would not have been possible without the generosity of our committed donors; foundations, corporations and individuals who understand the critical role we play in the lives of the families we support.

Since our renovation, we've hosted the Child Development Institute's "Taste of Home", a cooking program designed to introduce youth to the joys of cooking food from a wide variety of regions and cultures, while at the same time teaching stress management skills. We've been able to continue to host Toronto Public Health's Peer Nutrition Program, teaching women how to cook healthy meals on a limited budget. Most importantly our new kitchen has a fully accessible design and meets all Public Health regulations.

The renovation has allowed us to test and grow food security programs and continue to provide women with life skills programming to feed their families healthy meals on a budget in facilities that accommodate our multiple programs and diverse participants. We are humbled by the generosity of our community and the support we received to provide the services families need to heal from trauma and lift themselves out of poverty.



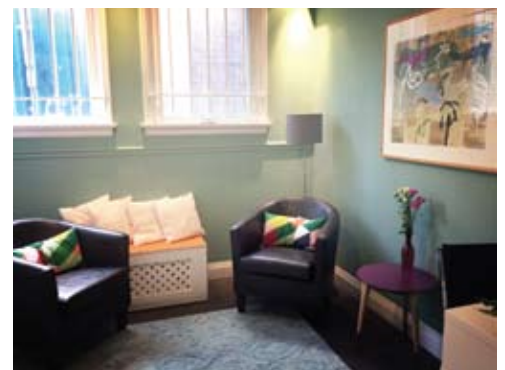
*"Being a single mom is hard. I struggle every day. Women's Habitat has helped me so much. The programs are great and are so supportive. I really feel I'm a better mom since coming here."*

**132 women attended our drop in programs.\***



*"I feel safe in here, the comforts of food and friends is something I look forward to every week. It keeps me going."*

**74 children received support.\***



**1688 counselling hours provided.\***

*"I tell every woman I meet in the neighbourhood 'come!' this is a space just for us. No one judges you, everyone cares and supports each other."*



\* Outreach program statistics from the 2016/2017 fiscal year.

# OUR LOYAL SUPPORTERS

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Shirley Bates

If you would prefer to contribute anonymously, please contact Lina Almanzan, Resource Systems Manager at 416.252.7949 x232 or lalmanzan@womens-habitat.ca. Please note that the above list includes contributions to the Outreach Kitchen Renovation Campaign.

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National Ballet  
New Orleans Restaurant  
Old Mill Toronto  
Oleander Floral Design

Paul Smith  
Paula Lytwyn  
Posticino Ristorante  
Milestones Grill & Bar - 1001  
The Queensway  
Kelsey's Neighborhood  
Bar and Grill - 1011  
The Queensway  
Queens Spectacle  
Raydiance Sun Spa  
Salon Absolute  
Scollard Chinese  
Medicine Clinic  
Sheraton Toronto Airport  
Simply Chic  
Skin Care Clinic  
Soulpepper Theatre  
Company  
Starbuck's Coffee Company  
Sue McDermott  
Taissa  
Tatsu's Bread  
Tuff 'N Up Athletics  
The Basket Company  
The Big Stuff  
The Crooked Cue  
Vibo Restaurant  
Walley Lem  
Victoria Russell



# FINANCIALS

## Statement of Financial Position

as at March 31, 2017

<b>Assets</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>
Cash and other current assets	\$ 1,198,707	\$ 1,779,400
Capital assets	3,052,782	2,752,782
	4,251,489	4,532,182
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Accounts payable & accruals	\$ 106,921	\$ 233,611
Deferred revenue	40,782	77,629
Mortgage payable	277,044	286,995
	424,747	598,235
<b>Fund Balances</b>		
Invested in capital assets	\$ 2,775,738	\$ 2,465,787
Externally restricted	-	93,071
Internally restricted	973,708	1,037,085
Unrestricted, operating	77,296	338,004
	3,826,742	3,933,947
	<b>\$ 4,251,489</b>	<b>\$ 4,532,182</b>

## Statement of Operations

for the year ended March 31, 2017

<b>Revenue</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>
Government grants	\$ 1,374,146	\$ 1,657,815
United Way of Greater Toronto & York Region	429,274	505,904
Fundraising & foundations*	437,544	725,891
	2,240,964	2,889,610
<b>Expenses</b>		
Staffing cost	\$ 1,770,941	\$ 1,780,868
Purchased services	30,803	32,415
Clients' needs	100,303	90,986
Building and occupancy cost	134,649	120,162
Office & administration	175,315	271,811
Amortization	121,840	113,026
Fundraising expenses	14,318	74,960
	<b>\$ 2,348,169</b>	<b>\$ 2,484,228</b>
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	<b>\$ (107,205)</b>	<b>\$ 405,382</b>

\* \$191,080 of fundraising revenue is related to the 2017 outreach kitchen renovation project.

\*\* Derived from the complete financial statement of Women's Habitat of Etobicoke for the year ended March 31, 2017 on which auditor Lynne D. Remigio, Chartered Accountant, issued an opinion in her auditor's report dated July 12, 2017.



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