



women's support network
of york region

2018 ANNUAL REPORT
FISCAL YEAR 2017-2018

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

In 2017, WSN celebrated its 25th anniversary MILESTONE since its inception in York Region. What a grand moment to reflect upon and a fantastic opportunity to acknowledge the accomplishments of this past year that give us further reason to celebrate. Having completed our 26th year, we applaud the successes of our excellent staff. Over 13 years with WSN, our Executive Director, Michelle Smith, has developed a positive leadership role and coaches our staff with consistent support. Michelle and the staff work with the Board, provincial administration, and government agencies to endeavor to raise awareness of WSN to government leaders and peer agencies on a regular basis. Thanks to their dedication and support, WSN continues to thrive and gain recognition. I commend the team at WSN for their efforts in supporting the York Region Community, its vast population, and the growing number of survivors coming forward.

Our Board continues to work hard to support WSN. Over \$5,000 was raised in May during *Sexual Assault Awareness Month* through the efforts of the Board's Fundraising Committee, Board members, and our wonderful staff. Next year, we plan to build on the success of this event and aspire to exceed this total.

The Board Officers' positions are held by myself as Chairperson, Natasha Sewrattan as Vice-Chair, Suzanne Byrnes as Treasurer, Katie McGrath as Secretary, and Michelle Rioux as back-up Secretary.

Our committees continue to operate regularly and have made important progress throughout this year. Our Board governance trainer shared positive feedback regarding the operations and management of the Board. With regular reporting, our Finance Treasurer and Committee maintain monthly oversight of WSN's finances. Our Strategic Planning Committee recommended amendments to certain minor Board by-laws. Our HR Committee provides annual oversight to our Executive Director and input on staffing matters as required. Our Fundraising Committee continues to advocate for WSN through corporate sponsorship, event planning, and donations. Our Standing Committees and members who devote additional time to WSN over and above their Board positions are as follows:

Finance: Committee Chair and Treasurer of the Board – Suzanne Byrnes, Kelly Collins, Hanna Druzba

Human Resources Committee: Chair and Board Chairperson – Kelly Collins, Suzanne Byrnes, Hanna Druzba, Barbara McCahery, Sheri Taylor

Policy and Strategic Planning: Chair and Board Vice-Chair: Nathasha Sewrattan, Suzanne Byrnes, Barbara McCahery, Katie McGrath

Fundraising: Chair and Board Secretary: Katie McGrath, Hanna Druzba, Michelle Rioux

I have enormous admiration and respect for our sister Board members, dedicated Executive Director, ALL staff, and our exceptional volunteers for without whom we would cease to operate.

I have enjoyed my first year as Chairperson and look forward to continuing in this capacity. Thank you for this honour and privilege.

Kindest regards,

Kelly

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

From the Desk of the Executive Director,

Over the course of the past year, the Women's Support Network has continued to deliver innovative programming across our region. Each year I reflect on the sheer amount of work that comes from the small but mighty team of women at our office, focused on our collective goal of eradicating sexual violence for all women and girls living in York Region.

I am often not at a loss for words when it comes to the dedication and impeccable work ethic and integrity of our team, however this year I have been humbled by each and every staff member's ability to go above and beyond for the clients in our communities.

2017/2018 marked a historical time in our movement through the likes of #metoo and #timesup. It put sexual violence in our media in a way that caused individuals to understand and acknowledge the devastating impact carried by survivors each and every day. Although great strides have been made in our sector, this ongoing dialogue must continue to be in our everyday conversations so we don't fall back into historical patterns of denial. As our political climate changes in Ontario it is imperative that our collective voices speak for those who have been silenced through this horrific violence.

I want to thank and acknowledge the Ministry of the Attorney General whose core funding allows us to provide 24 hour crisis intervention, individual and group counselling and public education for all residents residing in York Region. Along with Ontario Trillium Foundation funding and the Anti-Human Trafficking Support Fund through the Ministry of Community and Social Services, our organization can continue to provide the much needed support and resources to women and girls who have been trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation.

On March 1, 2018, the Province of Ontario launched the It's Never Okay: Ontario's Gender-Based Violence Strategy. Announced by Harinder Malhi, Minister of the Status of Women, Michael Coteau, Minister of Community and Social Services, and Yasir Naqvi, Attorney General, the It's Never Okay plan "will help survivors and families get the support they need, when they need it, as well as help to prevent violence".

The new Ontario strategy will focus on four key areas:

1. Improving services and supports for survivors, families and communities
2. Intervening early and effectively to help youth who have seen or experienced violence
3. Changing attitudes and norms through public education
4. Improving the justice system response, and fostering alternate justice options, for survivors.

We laud this investment in survivors of violence and their families.

In closing I want to thank all our volunteers including our Board of Directors who give so much of their time and energy to ensure we continue to meet the vast goals in front of us.

Sincerely,

Michelle

Responded to
2,129
crisis calls



Activist speaking at Take Back The Night 2017

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

COUNSELLING PROGRAM

This year marked one of the busiest years for WSN's Counselling Team.

We provided 140 survivors with individual counselling; 202 women participated in groups and workshops offered by WSN!

This year we saw a dramatic increase in requests for counselling from young women within the High Schools in our region. In response to the high demand for counselling services from young women, WSN hired another Crisis Counsellor to provide counselling services in high schools. Thank you to Katie for supporting our youth in healing through their trauma!

WSN continued to see an increase for requests for counselling services in the Richmond Hill office. In attempts to help eliminate barriers to services and provide enhanced accessibility services we continue to provide service out of our Richmond Hill office. Thank you to Gloria for your continued commitment!

WSN continues to create new and innovative programming to survivors of sexual violence. We continued to offer the Resiliency Group, the Women's Wellness Group and the Women In Art Program. This year we developed the Confident Me! program, a six week program that focuses on empowerment and self-esteem. This year we look forward to expanding our group programming by developing a peer support program to respond to the growing needs of our community.



Activists marching at Take Back The Night 2017



WSN participating in community events to end human trafficking

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

PUBLIC EDUCATION

WSN continues to take the lead role in York Region providing education to the community on sexual violence. This year close to 2000 people participated in one of our public education presentations, workshops or events! Every year WSN partners with community organizations across the region to host the annual Take Back the Night, and every year we see an even bigger turn out from women, men and children of all ages. We hope 2018's 20th annual event will be even bigger, and reach even more people as we stand together in solidarity to eradicate sexual violence.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROGRAM

Human Trafficking continues to be a prevalent and growing issue in York Region.

This year WSN's Human Trafficking Team provided counselling and case management services to 65 survivors of sexual exploitation.

Our referral sources are growing and the 24/7 Human Trafficking Helpline is remaining steady with calls and texts from both service providers requesting education and women reaching out for support.

In addition to providing direct support to survivors, the Human Trafficking team also engages in preventative work, providing outreach, education and training on human trafficking for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. WSN and York Regional Police partnered on a Bus Campaign to raise awareness of human trafficking. The campaign is in its second year and features advertisements in both the interior and exterior sides of Viva buses across the region. A huge thank you to the Human Trafficking Team for all of the work Karen, Nikki and Brianna do to support women. We look forward to the growth of this program!



WSN's 25th Anniversary celebration 2017



Seneca students pledging to take action on Human Trafficking Awareness Day 2018



WSN celebrating International Women's Day 2018 by handing out roses

BOARD OF DIRECTORS '17-'18

KELLY COLLINS, CHAIR

Kelly has worked in the Legal, Land Development Telecommunications industry, along with managing Facilities and Operations for 25+ years as a Law Clerk and various other Management positions, came on board in October 2014 and already she has used her knowledge and skills to benefit WSN. Kelly is active in her community to support other charitable organizations. She is actively a Sr. Manager in one of Canada's largest wireless telecommunications companies.

BARBARA MCCAHERY, PAST CHAIR

Barbara joined the board in the fall of 2008, after retiring from her position as Coordinator for the York Region Violence Against Women Coordinating Committee. Barb has been working on Board of Directors for non-profit organizations since 1985. Involvement in the Violence Against Women sector, and a variety of other social service sectors while working for the Ministry of Community and Social Services and later in private practice, has given her a unique perspective of our field. She holds a Master's Degree in Social Work. Barbara served as secretary to the Board since 2008, then taking on the Chair of the Board from August 2011 to 2017.

NATASHA SEWRATTAN, VICE-CHAIR

Natasha joined the Board in the fall of 2011 and was appointed Vice-Chair of the Board. Natasha completed a Master's in Public Policy & Administration with a focus on social policy and social justice issues, and brings with her professional and volunteer experience from the non-profit sector.

KAITLYN MCGRATH, SECRETARY

Katie McGrath joined the WSN Board of Director's in March of 2017 and has recently joined the Fundraising and Strategic Planning committee. Katie completed her post-secondary education in commerce, majoring in Marketing Management and brings fresh, innovative and exciting new opportunities to the WSN board. Katie is an account manager for the largest community of HR professionals, and helps them be smarter and more confident in their HR role. Katie has also founded charitable organizations specializing in the Parkinson's community for the last 6 years, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars towards these causes. Katie brings forth passion, dedication, and professionalism to the WSN table and is eager to make a lasting impact.

HANNA JAKIMZUK-DRUZBO

Hanna joined the Board of Directors in November 2014. Hanna holds a Master's Degree in Pedagogy from University of Warma and Mazury in Poland. A former college teacher in Poland, emigrated to Canada in 1995. Currently works at Sandgate Women's Shelter of York Region. She has a diploma in Addiction Studies from University of Toronto. Hanna has a background in women's shelter work and brings a passion for violence against women services to the Board.

SHERI TAYLOR

Sheri is a Community Consultation Worker for the Chippewa's of Georgina Island First Nation, as well as being a member of the Chippewa's of Georgina Island First Nation. She joined the board in November 2014.

SUZANNE BYRNES

Suzanne joined the board in November 2015. In 1987, Suzanne started her policing career in Toronto and is a current member of the York Regional Police. Suzanne holds a Bachelor of Arts from York University, a Human Resources Management Certificate from Seneca College and her Police leadership Certificate from Dalhousie University. Suzanne is currently enrolled in the MBA program at Athabasca University. In 2003, Suzanne was appointed Secretary on the Women in Law Enforcement Board of Directors, then Treasurer and Vice-President. She remains as a member of the Board of Trustee. Suzanne currently holds the position of Region 11 Coordinator and member of the finance committee for the International Association of Women Police. She is also a member of the Women in Leadership Internal Support Network and Co-Chairs the WIL Special Event's Committee.

MICHELLE RIOUX

Michelle has worked in the Health Industry for 12+ years. To which she has many accreditation as a Holistic Health Practitioner. Manager and Executive Assistant to a network of well respected Physiotherapy Clinics in York Region. Joined the Board Of Directors January 2017. She is on the Communications and Fundraising Committee. Her experience overseeing day-to-day management; strategic communications, writing and editing services for the public; developing, implementing policies and directives is an asset to the Board.

THANK YOU!

VOLUNTEERS

We simply could not do all of the work we do without the amazing dedication and support from our volunteers. WSN would like to recognize and thank all of the women who continue to demonstrate their commitment to WSN and the women we serve.

Each volunteer plays a special role in supporting the agency. The Board of Directors use their expertise and knowledge to advice and support on the services we provide. Our volunteers help to plan and participate in public education events and ensure full coverage on both the 24/7 Crisis Line and the Human Trafficking Helpline. This year alone volunteers responded to over 2000 calls and spent over 500 hours directly supporting survivors over the Crisis Line.

A heartfelt thank you to an amazing team of women!

WSN TEAM 2017-2018

Michelle Smith, Executive Director
Ashley Dunn, Program Manager
Judy Konaka, Finance & Administration
Kirsty Chase, Counsellor
Gloria Zhang, Counsellor
Katie Wise, Counsellor
Janelle Anderson, Public Education & Youth Crisis Counsellor

Karen Dean, Anti-Human Trafficking Trauma Counsellor
Nikki Dube, Anti-Human Trafficking Crisis Intervention Worker
Brianna Wilson, Anti-Human Trafficking Outreach Coordinator
Heather Mort, Bookkeeper
Kerrie Kortis, Clinical Consultant

FUNDERS



AWARDS

THE DIANNE HAMILTON AWARD

This award is given to a volunteer who has gone above and beyond expectations for all volunteers. She has proven to be a leader who radiates positivity and her passion for making a difference. Her commitment and ongoing support for WSN has set her apart.

This year we proudly recognize **Cherry Trung**.

THE TERRI-LEE STRENGTH AND COURAGE AWARD

This program award is given to the client or clients who have overcome barriers and worked hard to achieve their own healing.

This year, we proudly recognize **Hafsa**.

