

AGM REPORT

2019 - 2020

RIWC is committed to supporting Asian and South Asian women and their families in taking greater control of their lives. RIWC provides culturally appropriate and linguistically specific settlement support and counselling services with the use of community determined strategies, developed and delivered by immigrant women.

1326 Gerrard Street East
Toronto, ON, M4L 1Z1
416 465 6021
www.riwc.ca

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President's Report

Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre's (RIWC) remains steadfastly committed to providing culturally appropriate and linguistically specific settlement, anti-violence and employment services to marginalized women and their families in the Toronto area. Over the years, we have had to expand our reach to include other under-served members of our community, including youth, seniors, LGBTQ, and refugees who are isolated and have limited access to services. We continue to operate from a holistic and integrated model to address the social, cultural and political realities of minority communities informed by feminist and anti-racist values to ensure our members receive all available services when they need them.

The success of our programs can be attributed in large part to effective outreach activities and the unwavering support of our community partners. We received increased referrals to our Violence Against Women (VAW) program from shelter workers seeking stronger support and coordinated care for vulnerable women. Lawyers and psychotherapists also recommended our counselling services to refugee claimants so that they could develop coping strategies to deal with the stress around the hearing process. Professional facilitators and representatives from non-profit organizations delivered engaging and informative workshops to participants in our employment programs to impart the resources, skills, training and certifications they required to secure meaningful work. Some of our partners even became venues for work placements and potential employment. We also relied on internal and external guest speakers to further support the Women in the Garden (WIG) program with innovative health and wellness workshops to complement our regular gardening, cooking, and yoga activities.

Our networks are strong as we work towards building our capacity in several areas. Over the past year, RIWC worked with academic advisors and stakeholders from immigrant, refugee and Indigenous communities to help guide the development of an Intercultural Intergenerational Resiliency Framework (IIRF) to inform our approach to family and community counselling for newcomers. We also partnered with a consortium of private sector partners to gain insights into the lived experiences and barriers encountered by women in the restaurant industry by evaluating key policy issues using a gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) framework. RIWC staff continued to connect and network with key housing stakeholder groups to sustain the important work of the Women's Inclusion Network (WIN) in influencing housing decisions at the systemic level to address gaps in services. We also embarked on a four-year project to conduct a GBA+ review of all of RIWC's programs and policies. As a result, key fundraising objectives and strategic directions were identified and integrated into a draft five-year strategic plan for the organization.

Towards the end of the fiscal year, COVID-19 tested our resolve and determination as we came up with creating ways to ensure the continuation of our much needed services with limited disruption. We would like to thank our staff, volunteers, placement students, and board and committee members for their continued commitment and hard work in supporting the delivery of essential services to members of our community, especially during these difficult times.

Violence Against Women

The Violence Against Women (VAW) program receives funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) to provide community-based counselling, support and referral services for women and their dependents who have experienced abuse and/or sexual assault, so that they may live free of violence. The development of a personal safety plan is an integral part of the counselling for women and their families to ensure their immediate safety as they gain greater independence, self-awareness and resilience.

Program Highlights:

In 2019-2020, the VAW program provided trauma-informed counselling to over 400 women, youth and children through one-on-one and group sessions, narrative and art therapy, and crisis support. Of the total number of individuals served, over 50 received counselling services in a language other than English, including Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi, Hindi, Farsi, Arabic, French, Spanish, Vietnamese and Korean. Over 200 of the women came from the following countries: Antigua, Barbados, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Djibouti, Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. 60% of the women we served had claimed refugee status.

We continued to strengthen the collaboration between RIWC's programs to provide a more holistic service. VAW counsellors facilitated the support group component of our Essential Pathways to Employment (EPE) & Food Service & Hospitality Training (FSHT) programs. The sessions focussed on identifying mental health issues, communication, and navigating interpersonal relationships, which have been key in developing a rapport with participants. Referrals between our in-house programs, including Women in the Garden (WIG), ensured that the women received all available services as needed.

We implemented art therapy sessions in our framework, which were well-received by the women we serve. According to the Canadian Art Therapy Association, "Art therapy combines the creative process and psychotherapy, facilitating self-exploration and understanding. Using imagery, colour and shape as part of this creative therapeutic process, thoughts and feelings can be expressed that would otherwise be difficult to articulate." The introduction of group art therapy programs are in future plans to satisfy the interest expressed by the women.

Our outreach activities resulted in the expansion of external referral sources, which included additional community partners, legal services, shelters, and the refugee community. In particular, we received a higher number of referrals from psychotherapists and lawyers for refugee claimants who needed support around upcoming hearings. Consequently, our staff were called upon to provide letters of support and assistance with coping strategies before, during, and after the hearing. Even successful refugee claimants were influenced negatively by the long and draining process, which included judgmental questioning about why a domestic violence survivor did not leave her abuser earlier. Shelter workers continued to approach us for stronger support and coordinated care for women who were in a situation of heightened vulnerability and safety risk. We are also aware that many of the women we serve heard about our services through word-of-mouth, indicating the positive impact we are having within the refugee community in particular.

There was a significant influx of women from Nigeria seeking refugee asylum. The women cited domestic violence, female oppression, gang violence, female genital mutilation (both in response to their own experiences and to prevent it from being forced upon their children), and persecution as a result of sexual orientation as reasons for fleeing their country. The long wait time for hearings coupled with the discrimination they faced when trying to secure housing was a source of considerable stress and further trauma for refugee claimants.

COVID-19 had a profound impact on attendance in March and resulted in a pause in our service delivery in response to public health directives. The focus of VAW work shifted to ensuring that women's immediate safety needs were met as staff researched options for adapting services to phone and virtual methods.

Case Study:

Anna (name changed to maintain confidentiality) is a refugee protection claimant from Nigeria. She came to Canada to escape the threats against herself and her children due to the sexual orientation of one of her sons. Both the police and her family had attempted to abduct him in order to cause him harm through ritual cleansings, public humiliation, and criminal arrest.

Anna lived initially in a shelter before finding an apartment as she awaited her refugee hearing. She was able to support her family as a cook at a women's shelter, which she secured with the help of Toronto's Community Investment Funding Program. Due to the physical demands of the job and the anxiety about her refugee status, however, she had several health issues including depression, insomnia, ongoing muscle pain, headaches, high blood pressure, chest pain, and migraines. To that end, she was referred to a Community Health Center that works with refugees and other marginalized members of the community. Unfortunately, limitations placed on this program by the provincial government has resulted in a significant wait list for new clients. Consequently, Anna had to rely on walk-in clinics and hence did not receive proper assessment and treatment for her overall health. Government cuts to legal aid for refugees has also added another stressor for refugee claimants like Anna, leading to increased anxiety about the outcome of their hearings.

Anna is representative of quite a few of the women we serve at RIWC who have several social and physical health barriers that impact their mental health, making our counselling instrumental in ensuring the well-being of the women as well as their families.

Essential Pathways to Employment

The Essential Pathways to Employment (EPE) program is a pre-employment program funded by Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) for marginalized men and women. The eight-week program aims to integrate program planning into participants' daily lives by focusing on developing and updating personal strategies to resolve challenges and barriers and build a foundation for employment.

Individualized and engaging self-assessment processes help participants explore what they want -- often for the first time in their lives. The individual program plan outlines the services they will access, career goals that will be achieved, and the learning activities they will complete.

As part of the core program activities, participants explore career options while networking with their peers within group sessions led by internal and external facilitators. Participants attend weekly workshops and one-on-one coaching on how to develop foundational and essential skills to succeed in the workplace, including job search skills, interview preparation, and cover letter and resume writing. Daily workshops in the computer lab allows for the further development of essential workplace skills.

RIWC and the Riverdale Hub offer on-site work-based learning and training opportunities for all EPE participants in the Social Gardener Cafe, Community Kitchen, Riverdale Gallery, and at the reception desk. Wrap around services are also available, including psychological counselling, life skills training, emergency child-minding services, nutrition counselling and food security skills training.

Upon completion of the core program, RIWC provides six months of job search support, referrals to job opportunities, and job retention support where applicable. The post-program and post-hiring support enables participants to follow through on

their individual post-program plan to achieve a positive outcome by obtaining employment or self-employment or pursuing further education, vocational skills training or volunteer placements.

Program Highlights:

In April 2019, we continued to provide post-program and post-hiring support to 27 participants from the previous fiscal year following completion of their core training, with 96% of them receiving a positive outcome during this program.

In 2019-20, nine cohorts with 74 participants completed their core program requirements. EPE participants continued to receive job postings, placement opportunities, and information on networking and hiring events in addition to supportive counselling during the six-month post-program support period. As a result, over 80% of the graduates were able to achieve positive outcomes within this period with 40% securing positions such as an early childhood educator, personal support worker, hair stylist, and collection agent as well as other jobs in customer service or the food industry. Another 12% sought to gain valuable work experience while strengthening their resumes as volunteers with Volunteer Toronto, Providence Healthcare, The Scott Mission and The Salvation Army.

The EPE program's collaboration with the VAW program as well as increased outreach activities with shelters, community centres and TESS managers contributed to increased intake and retention of clients. Through the support of VAW counsellors, EPE participant attendance significantly improved, leading to successful program completion rates as barriers were addressed. Staff worked closely with TESS to address access to childcare and housing concerns with improvement in the management of these issues. These efforts were especially beneficial as a stabilization tool for our newcomer participants allowing them to focus on their career goals.

The staff continued to build partnerships with non-profit organizations along with independent facilitators with specialized professional backgrounds. Toronto Public Health provided an information session on the health and well-being of Toronto residents. Skills for Change shared their knowledge of sector specific courses for participants who wanted to upgrade their skills in high demand trades. Workshops on "How to start a business" and "Youth, Parents, and Society" were held by Enactus UofT's Catapult Program and the YMCA Newcomer Information Centre respectively. The Centre for Education & Training (TCET) and the Toronto District School Board's (TDSB) hairstyling training programs also contributed to employment topics of interest for our participants.

In 2019-20, we were able to establish many new partnerships. Up with Women, Newcomer Women's Services, Working for Change and Lifesaving Society offered information sessions on valuable programs and services available to our participants. In-class training programs from PTP Adult Learning and Employment Program and Work Safe Training Inc. provided participants with Food Handler and WHMIS certifications respectively. Food based organizations such as North York Harvest Food Bank, Fabarnak Community Café and Catering and Toronto EMS' Cardiac Safe City Program not only agreed to facilitate information workshops, but also became venues for potential work placements and subsequent employment for our participants.

The program experienced major challenges in March when the future of the program became uncertain due to COVID-19. However, the program staff were able to successfully transform the in-person training format to an online platform with the help of funding from the United Way.

Case Study:

Rose (name changed to maintain confidentiality) had experienced many challenges. As a refugee claimant and single mother with an infant and young child, she was determined to make Toronto her new home. While she was enrolled in the EPE program, Rose enthusiastically participated in the group discussions and rarely missed any of the sessions. She was diligent about writing down all the information and resources that were shared in a journal, which was one of the tips she received in the employment workshops. This strategy helped her navigate the system and move out of a shelter by finding accommodation within the 6-month post-program support period.

An accountant in her home country, Rose always knew that she wanted to continue in the same field. During the post program plan review with RIWC staff, she was informed about an accounting program offered by Skills for Change, which would allow her to pursue her field of choice at a subsidized cost without making a career change. Rose also expressed an interest in starting her own business and made plans to enroll in an entrepreneurship program for newcomers following completion of the accounting program.

Following a positive outcome to her refugee hearing, Rose is on her way to becoming a permanent resident. She mentioned that discovering the EPE program at Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre was a turning point in her life for making informed decisions.

Food Service and Hospitality Training

The Food Service and Hospitality Training (FSHT) program is a unique employment program funded by Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) for marginalized men and women who wish to enter the food service and hospitality sector.

As part of the core program activities that take place over the course of 10 weeks, participants undergo career exploration with the development of a customized career plan outlining key steps and milestones for achieving their education and career goals within the industry. Learning activities include a mix of classroom, career-focused skills training, work placements, and wrap around personal support services to keep participants engaged and motivated, while moving them closer towards the labour market.

Life skills training is an important component of the program as it leads to enhanced decision making, problem solving, and conflict resolution through the identification of personality traits and personal barriers to overcome. Participants also attend regular computer workshops to develop and hone their technical skills. Towards the end of the program, training is provided in safe food handling practices, alcohol service, and health and safety leading to Food Handler, Smart Serve, and WHMIS certifications.

Upon completion of the core program, RIWC provides six months of job search support, referrals to job opportunities, and job retention support where applicable. The post-program and post-hiring support enables participants to follow through on their individual post-program plan to achieve a positive outcome by obtaining employment or self-employment in the food service and hospitality sector or pursuing further education or vocational training.

Program Highlights:

In April 2019, we continued to provide post-program and post-hiring support to 26 participants from the previous fiscal year following completion of their core training with 85% of them receiving a positive outcome during this period.

In 2019-20, we recruited two cohorts with nine participants completing their core program requirements and 78% of graduates receiving positive outcomes by the end of the fiscal year or shortly thereafter. A third cohort of five participants commenced in March 2020, but was placed on hold following the closure of our office and computer lab due to COVID-19 precautions. With the successful awarding of a United Way grant to a newly launched *Riverdale Laptop Library*, we were able to adapt our program to a virtual environment through Zoom video conferencing. Participants with limited access to technology were provided with laptop loans and internet service so that they could resume their employment training in May 2020.

Overall, the program continued to achieve a high success rate in its second year. TESS allocated 15 seats to the FSHT program in 2019 with all participants successfully completing the 10-week core program by the end of the year. Due to the positive outcomes of all participants, our annual seat numbers were increased to 20 participants in 2020!

All classroom and skills training workshops were delivered by staff and our community partners within a support group setting. Participants attended sessions on event promotion, food waste and environmentally friendly practices, as well as Toronto Public Health's food and safety program by DineSafe. In addition to workshops that were sector focused, we had guest speakers that addressed important topics such as stress management, conflict resolution, parenting, and employment law. Dress for Success also introduced their professional attire program and discussed the application process. Other community partners included Credit Canada, Windmill Microlending, Woodgreen Community Centre, and Futrepreneur, which delivered a workshop on how to start a business in response to personal interests expressed by participants. A new referral partnership was also established with Up With Women.

A partnership with Riverdale Hub provided full and free access to the social enterprises that operate at the Hub. Hands-on experience in food and catering services was provided through the cafe and community kitchen; events management exposure was available through the co-working and event spaces; and office administration skills were developed at the reception desk. Consequently, participants were able to learn valuable sector-specific and customer service skills throughout the program as part of their work placement requirements.

The FHST participants, working alongside our cafe staff and Ryerson University partners, successfully delivered a three-day catering event for 125 people at RIWC. They provided catering services, but were also fully engaged in the preparation activities in the week leading up to the event. Although the work was challenging at times, the group learned a lot about teamwork, planning, execution, organization, management, food inventory, and working in a fast-paced environment while meeting tight deadlines.

Case Study:

Mary (name changed to maintain confidentiality) joined the FSHT program in April 2019. She had always dreamed of having her own food truck and was confident that this program would provide her with the foundation to do so. She was eager to improve her confidence as well as her communication and computer skills. While in the program, she identified that she wanted her food truck to specialize in pastries. As such, RIWC staff referred her to Fred Victor's Women's Bakery Program with professional bakers and facilitators who help participants gain practical and transferable skills.

Women in the Garden (2017 to 2020)

Funded by the United Way, Women in the Garden (WIG) is a culturally-relevant intergenerational health and well-being project designed to improve physical and emotional health as well as increase access to healthy food, community resources, connections and leadership for isolated immigrant and refugee women in East Toronto. The framework includes new techniques for urban agriculture, age-appropriate exercises and mindfulness techniques, modules for hands-on learning workshops, and peer leadership building to increase community capacity.

The project initially engaged racialized immigrant and refugee senior women who lived near or had cultural ties to the Gerrard India Bazaar neighbourhood. Over time, the reach of the project expanded to include senior newcomer women from Africa and the Middle East. With such a wide range of cultural backgrounds, we recruited French and Urdu speaking volunteers to provide translation and interpretation support for the project participants.

Program Highlights:

In 2019-20, 53 racialized newcomer and refugee senior women were supported through an experiential gardening and nutrition program, exercise and fitness workshops and peer leadership training to build community capacity.

During the Festival of South Asia in July 2019, we provided tours of our rooftop garden to the public to showcase the WIG program, which received a lot of positive praise.

Yoga classes were tailored to the individual's needs and abilities with a modified schedule that encouraged attendance. Sessions became more interactive as women grew more comfortable with sharing their knowledge and providing feedback, thanks in part to our volunteers who provided translation services as needed. Consequently, two of the women came forward as volunteers to assist the gardener with cleaning and preparing the garden beds for fall.

During the summer and fall, women took part in both indoor and outdoor workshops with the help of internal and external facilitators. Women received instruction on harvesting, seed saving, pollination, plant propagation, and garlic plantation to further develop their gardening skills. Additional hands-on workshops had the women learning how to sprout, make mulled apple cider, create 'ristras' with cayenne peppers, and prepare 'hot' pickles for the cafe using hot peppers from the rooftop garden. In February, WIG participants made kimchi salad under the direction of our cafe manager to sell at our second Sunday Arts Market, which piqued their interest in entrepreneurship. The women also learned how to make bokashi bins for composting their food scraps at home as a part of the workshop.

As a complement to gardening, cooking, and yoga activities, workshops were provided on wide-ranging topics, including COVID-19, science-based positivity, bone health, dental hygiene, period shaming, intuitive eating, nutrition, food security, waste management, fire safety, financial literacy, stress management, and the importance of healthy relationships and interpersonal skills in our daily lives. Resources on English language instruction, winter safety and clothing, and anti-violence services were also shared. A representative from the Toronto Public Library also dropped in to discuss the resources available to library members to encourage more community participation.

A number of introductory initiatives proved popular. Women learned face yoga and how to crochet products for the centre, while learning team building amidst storytelling and socializing. Monthly potlucks provided an opportunity for the women to learn a new recipe and connect with each other through this cultural exchange. A guest student from Ryerson University's nutrition program took this opportunity to promote healthy cooking and eating habits, with instruction on how to prepare healthy snacks and smoothies at home.

Our participants remained engaged with the program during March despite the uncertainty around COVID-19. We provided advice on how to stay safe and organized volunteer services for the women to ensure adequate food and medical supplies while at home as a preamble to the lockdown.

To sustain the project beyond the project period, we plan to leverage the skills of the women from the program to develop a virtual webinar series to support more racialized immigrant and refugee women in the community over the next year.

Toronto - A Place to Call Our Own: Empowering Women to Take Action for Affordable Housing (2017 to 2020)

RIWC, Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA), and Institutes for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society (IRIS) were the lead partners in an important three-year project funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE). The *Toronto - A Place to Call Our Own: Empowering Women to Take Action for Affordable Housing* project set out to identify and deepen the City of Toronto's understanding of the diverse systemic barriers and institutional gaps that result in marginalized women living in precarious and unsafe housing in Toronto.

Representatives from Sistering, Empowerment Council, Native Women's Resource Centre, Across Boundaries, Partners for Planning, Vasantham - A Tamil Wellness Centre, Wigwamen, Toronto Women's Housing Co-operative, and Working Women Community Centre joined our Working Group, referred to as the Women's Inclusion Network (WIN). Their participation in all the Working Group and Steering Committee meetings ensured the implementation of an Action Plan was directed by key marginalized communities in Toronto, including Indigenous, racialized, and refugee women, women with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, and transgender people. The three evidence-based strategic directions of the Action Plan included: 1) Supporting women to stay housed by building a Local Safety & Inclusion Network; 2) Designing a women's housing model; and 3) Influencing policy and program reforms.

In 2019, we continued to build the local community's support capacity and developed collective advocacy strategies through WIN to create a sustainable holistic web of support amongst service providers. WIN representatives attended several community meetings, forums, and networking events throughout the year to forge relationships with key housing stakeholder groups, give voice to our issues, as well as inform future project work:

- "House Divided: How the Missing Middle Will Solve Toronto's Affordability Crisis" Book Launch and Panel Discussion (hosted by School of Cities' Affordable Housing Project at the University of Toronto and the Urban Studies Program at Innis College) – Four speakers from Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust, Parkdale People's Economy Project, University of Toronto, and CreateTO (real estate agency) were invited to give lightning talks on housing affordability from their community, research and planning perspectives.
- "Affordable Housing Solutions Outside the Box", Forum (Organized by Power in Community Coalition and the School of Cities' Affordable Housing Project at the University of Toronto) – The forum explored the opportunities and challenges in building deeply affordable housing in Scarborough with affordable housing developers, housing advocates, community leaders and affordable housing service providers. Rooming licensing and disability issues were raised with a strong presence from different socio-economic backgrounds.
- "How can business help to end Homelessness?", National Housing Week Panel Event (co-hosted by Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness and Twitter Canada) – The panel featured speakers from the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness, the City of Toronto, Twitter Canada, and the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area.
- "PUSH" Screening & Fireside Chat, National Housing Day Event (hosted by CERA) – The screening of this award-winning documentary was followed by a fireside chat about the financialization of housing that has led to our current crisis.

WIN members prepared a list of questions around the need for shelters and housing to put to candidates in the lead up to the federal election as one of its final activities before the project came to a close in November 2019.

RIWC continues to connect and network with important housing drivers and influencers to identify potential projects to sustain WIN's work in influencing housing decisions at the systemic level. These include Mercedes Zayas and Ana Portillo of Parkdale People's Economy, Karen Andrews of Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, and Sarah Singh of East York East Toronto Family Resources, as well as academia (e.g., School of Cities at the University of Toronto) and other housing advocacy groups.

As part of the ongoing implementation of the three strategic directions, IRIS took the lead in the design of the Toronto Women's Housing Model for national applicability in urban centres; RIWC and CERA participated in policy and program reform initiatives to ensure marginalized women's voices are brought to the table; and many of our other partners continued to build the marginalized women's Local Safety & Inclusion Network for housing. RIWC and WIN members would like to address gaps in services in the context of capacity building to carry on WIN's presence at the City of Toronto housing tables; however, this ongoing work will require additional funding for a housing coordinator position as well as partner support.

Empowering Women in the Food Service and Restaurant Industry (2018 to 2021)

In 2018, RIWC received federal funding from WAGE for a three-year project to work with a consortium of private sector partners to identify and address intersectional barriers that prevent women from achieving economic security within the food service and restaurant industry. Over the project period, three pilot initiatives will be launched and evaluated using a gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) framework to support vulnerable racialized women who are employed or transitioning to employment in the sector.

To achieve our project objectives, we developed partnerships with George Brown College, Centennial College, Hospitality Workers Training Centre, Cuisine Santé, Workplace Safety and Prevention Services and Restaurants Canada to work with us to identify key action areas and develop the three pilot initiatives.

As at the end of the 2019-20 fiscal year, we have completed a GBA+ analysis of key policy issues for the food and restaurant industry, reviewed existing resources in the sector, and hosted six roundtable discussions with women in the sector and stakeholders to gain insights into the lived experiences and barriers encountered by the women. Outcomes from the questionnaires and discussions were consolidated into a report with recommendations for stakeholder review.

In the next year, in collaboration with our project partners, RIWC will develop new training resources that will be piloted at multiple sites to assess the impact and efficacy of our resources. Based on existing resources for employers, a two hour training workshop curriculum and powerpoint presentation will be created, a new code of practice for restaurant owners will be developed, and culinary externship conversation guides will be set up to lead students in critical discussions about health and safety and workplace rights in the sector.

Development of Intercultural Intergenerational Resiliency Framework (2019 to 2020)

In 2019, RIWC received funding from Canadian Heritage to support a project involving a cross-section of stakeholders from immigrant, refugee and Indigenous communities and the development of a new Intercultural Intergenerational Resiliency Framework (IIRF). Over the project period, RIWC worked with the Alliance for Intergenerational Resilience to build bridges between Canada's First Nations communities and newcomers to Canada and promote intercultural understanding and increased awareness of Canada's cultural diversity.

To achieve our project objectives, we developed partnerships with the Alliance for Intergenerational Resilience, Oasis Centre Des Femmes, Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, Ralph Thornton Community Centre, and the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic to help guide the development of our IIR Framework. We also worked with academic advisors from the University of Auckland, Carleton University, York University and the University of Toronto to help guide the research and direction of our literature review.

As at the end of the 2019-20 fiscal year, we have completed a review of existing resilience models, set up the project's advisory board, research team and youth feedback group. A draft of the IIR Framework and outlines for six focus group/IIRF training sessions have been developed for review, which is based on the Cree medicine wheel from Turtle Island and offers an innovative non-linear approach to family and community counselling for newcomer service providers. With the limitations of COVID-19, we moved all our community sessions to a virtual platform and hosted two project advisory board meetings and four research team meetings during the winter and early spring.

In the next year, we plan to present the final draft of the model to the community by facilitating three training sessions with stakeholders from the immigrant community, and two youth feedback group sessions to gain insights from younger generations. RIWC and our lead project partners will prepare a Community Report and final IIR Framework for dissemination. All project materials and activities will be documented on an IIRF project website and remain available for the community to access for a one-year period following completion of the project.

Capacity Building for RIWC Women's Programs (2019 to 2022)

In 2019, RIWC received federal funding from WAGE for a four-year project to increase RIWC's capacity to advance equality between women and men in the economic, social and democratic life of Canada. Over the project period, a GBA+ review of programs will be completed and strategic priorities will be identified. A five-year fundraising strategy, results-based management plan and new human resources management policies will be developed to strengthen RIWC's capacity to respond to the needs of the community and further enhance women's participation in the social life of the country. To achieve

our project objectives, a special projects coordinator, fundraising & grants consultant and strategic planning consultant were recruited to complete the key project milestones.

In the first year of the project, a GBA+ review of RIWC's programs and emerging community needs has been completed and key fundraising objectives and strategic directions have been identified and integrated into a draft five-year strategic plan for the organization. All of RIWC's existing policies and procedures have been reviewed, updated and checked against existing provincial policies and guidelines to ensure that our in-house policies align with provincial requirements.

In the next year, we will build upon our strategic directions to develop a fundraising strategy and database of fundraising prospects. We will create needs assessment questionnaires to present to our staff and Board of Directors. Outcomes from the questionnaires will be consolidated and integrated into our final strategic plan, including implementation strategies and key benchmarks for success.

Volunteer Report

In 2019-20, RIWC programs and management relied upon the services of 25 program volunteers (including 4 from St. Stephen's Community House), 13 placement students, and 5 board and committee member volunteers, for a total of 42 volunteers and 6645 volunteer hours. Placement students came from Centennial College, George Brown College, Humber College, Seneca College, and Ryerson University.

We would like to thank all the placement students and volunteers for the contributions they have made to the EPE, FSHT, WIG, and VAW programs as well as their support in the Social Gardener Cafe and at the Front Desk Reception. In return, our programs provided placement students with a valuable opportunity to apply theory to practice. It was also heartening to see our volunteers, many of whom were marginalized themselves, connect with the women in our programs as they gained confidence and embarked on similar pathways to success.

Our board members are a great asset to our organization and it would be impossible for RIWC to provide the services that we do without their dedication, time and help, for which we are extremely grateful.