

WISH

Annual Report
FY 2018



WISH Drop-In
Centre Society
Celebrating 35 Years of Supporting Sex Workers



Drop-In Centre

9,000 Meals served every month

MAP Van

800 women seen by the MAP Van every month
96 Bad Dates reported to MAP Van staff last year



Thanks MAP van for
helping me after a
bad date



Clothing and Make Up Rooms

accessed over **48,000 times** last year

Volunteers

More than **7,500 hours** volunteered in the drop-in, at
events, in the office by **110 active volunteers**



Message from the Executive Director

For 35 years, WISH has been a refuge and an essential point of contact for women whose lives are characterized by trauma, violence, addiction and extreme poverty. We are the largest organization in Canada supporting sex workers, and the only drop-in centre in Vancouver supporting sex-workers 365 nights a year.

The WISH Drop-In Centre Society operates in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, often infamously described as Canada's poorest neighborhood. Many of the women who access WISH rely on sex work as their main source of income. Street-based sex work is the form of sex work that is the most dangerous and that has the least amount of choice. Women who engage in street-based sex work are overwhelmingly doing so to survive.

At WISH, our goal is to improve the health, safety, and well-being of women involved in Vancouver's street-based sex trade. We believe that every woman should have access to opportunities to make free, healthy, and positive choices. At WISH, women are never judged. Rather, they are supported in improving their access to opportunities that allow them to make free choices to help them stabilize their lives.

WISH began at St. Michael's Anglican Church in 1984. With the introduction of new "prostitution" laws in 1987, there was

a concerted community effort to drive "prostitution" out of the Mount Pleasant area. As a result, our funding was terminated. Thankfully, First United Church welcomed us at its location on Hastings and Gore, in the heart of the Downtown Eastside (DTES).

Over the years, word spread through the community that WISH was a safe place for sex-working women, and the number of participants began to grow. At this time, women began to go missing from the DTES at alarming rates due to violent predatory behaviour from individuals in the area, including serial killer Robert William Pickton. The need for a place like WISH, where women could find support, assistance and allies, was urgent.

In 2003, WISH received a transformative \$1 million award from Vancity to build a new facility, which opened in 2008. In 2013, WISH received an annual commitment from the Province of BC to open our doors overnight, in response to the recommendations made in the 2012 Missing Women's Inquiry report.

WISH's numbers have increased considerably over the years, and today, with your help, we serve more than 800 women each year. We are eternally grateful for community support over these past 35 years; from individuals, corporations, groups, foundations and all three levels of government.



Thank you for making WISH happen, and for supporting the women who rely on WISH every day.

Mebrat Beyene
Executive Director



THE WISH MODEL

Increasing Women's Access to Opportunities

WISH has always been known for its front-line programs: the Drop-In Centre and the MAP Van. But there are also far-reaching opportunities designed to enable longer-term support; *eight* other programs, in fact! The WISH model – in its ideal form – creates the most positive impact when women can count on the Drop-In and MAP Van to meet basic health and safety needs, and are able to find enough stability to then begin accessing other programs to help them learn, grow, and begin to set goals for themselves.

We know that when women are able to meet their basic needs and begin to find stability, they are more likely to seek additional support such as education, mentorship, and permanent housing. Women can work with program staff to set small to large goals and work towards them in a longer-term, capacity-building manner.

Thanks to your support, these programs can have the capacity to accept women when they are ready, and with no waits.

Music Therapy

WISH participants engage in a range of musical experiences through the WISH Music Therapy program, helping them care for their holistic self through musical education, song-sharing and psycho-education. Music therapy sessions occur several times a week, available for all women who access WISH. Musical experiences can include Song-Sharing Circles, Drumming Groups, Song-Writing Support, Relaxation Groups, and Jams. One-on-one sessions or lessons take place either in the Drop-In Centre or in a community setting.

Transitions

The Transitions program supports women who want to move to safer sex work, reduce their reliance on sex work, or perhaps transition out of sex work entirely. Women develop their own personal progress plans in one-on-one sessions, and then receive highly coordinated support as they work towards their goals.

Inreach Worker

This year, thanks to an anonymous, and very generous donor, we introduced a new area of support: Inreach Worker. Over 300 women come through WISH's doors every day and night, some only grabbing meals or clothing and leaving again, making it challenging for front-line staff to develop supportive relationships with them.

Through one-on-one case planning, the WISH Inreach Worker supports the most vulnerable women's access to care beyond WISH's basic needs program; connecting them with one or more of the WISH capacity-building programs, and/or supports outside of WISH.



Supportive Employment Program

The majority of women who come to WISH rely on street-based sex work as their sole source of income, leaving them more vulnerable to physical and sexual violence. Without alternative sources of financial support, women are often forced to take dangerous dates they might otherwise avoid.

For sex workers who seek mainstream employment, opportunities are limited and barriers are high. The Supportive Employment Program reduces those barriers by providing women with opportunities to develop the skills, experience and confidence required to reduce their reliance on sex work and/or transition when ready.

Women can work at WISH in the Peer Volunteer Program, or alongside Drop-In staff as Peer Safety Patrollers, experiencing regular work shifts, building relationships and gaining experience. They might then transition to the Mainstream Employment stream of the program to secure mainstream employment outside of WISH.

Aboriginal Health & Safety Program

Indigenous women are over-represented in street-based sex work in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. More than half of WISH participants are Indigenous, and many have experienced severe trauma related to colonization, residential schools, and ongoing racism and discrimination.

The Aboriginal Health & Safety Program (AHSP) is a culturally-relevant response to this, helping Indigenous women involved in the sex trade reclaim their culture. They do this by connecting to each other, participating in cultural crafts and activities, learning new skills related to Indigenous traditions and experiencing sisterhood with each other.

Learning Center

Most women involved in street-based sex work struggle to meet their basic needs and, as the result of considerable stigma, systemic poverty, abuse, or trauma, often experience low self-esteem. The WISH Learning Centre, in partnership with Capilano University, offers women a wide range of activities designed to help them develop their communication skills, their ability to advocate for themselves, and stabilize their lives. Women learn computer skills, write letters, journals and poetry, and engage in arts and crafts both in groups and one-on-one. Women can also access one-on-one tutoring to upgrade their education.

Financial Statement

Government Revenue

Provincial	\$	1,712,559
Municipal	\$	142,500
Federal	\$	6,717

Total Grants - Government \$ 1,861,776

Other Revenue

Foundations	\$	195,803
Donations	\$	193,094
Events	\$	20,924
Interest and Other	\$	5,327
Expense Recovery	\$	214,829

Total other revenue \$ 629,977

Total Revenue \$ 2,491,753

Program Expenses

Drop-In Centre	\$	1,238,601
MAP Van	\$	265,943
Transitions Program	\$	137,988
Supportive Employment Program	\$	100,001
Aboriginal Health & Safety Program	\$	96,679
Music Therapy	\$	19,438
Learning Centre	\$	13,452
Organizational Support	\$	270,878

Total Expenses \$ 2,142,980

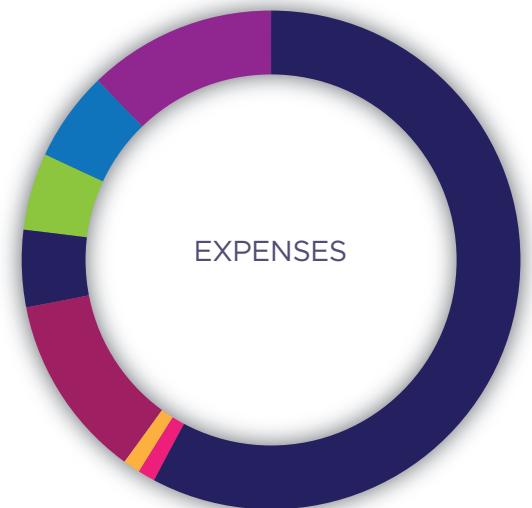
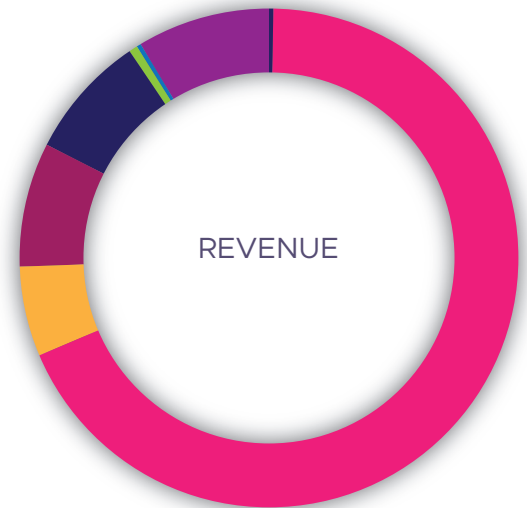
Excess (Deficit) of Revenues over Expenses before Transfers	\$	399,507
Transfer from (to) Unrestricted Funds	\$	(32,233)
Transfer of Surplus to Deferred Revenue	\$	(346,844)

Excess of Revenue over Expenses* \$ 20,430

*Surplus of donation revenue invested in programming and contingency funds.

A Word About Government Funding

In response to the recommendations contained in the Missing Women's Inquiry report, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing, through BC Housing, provides WISH with an annual commitment for the sole purpose of keeping the WISH Drop-In Program operating overnight, when women are most vulnerable to violence.



Drop-In Centre 58%
 MAP Van 12%
 Transitions 7%
 Supportive Employment 5%
 Aboriginal Health & Safety 5%
 Music Therapy < 1%
 Learning Centre < 1%
 Organizational Support 12%

“WISH was a place of refuge.

I came across WISH when I was in a very very vulnerable place in my life. I came simply in the beginning to sleep in a chair... I found WISH at the right time in my life so it was probably essentially a lifesaver for me.”

– WISH Participant

2018/2019 Volunteer Board Members

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Chair
Vancity Credit Union

Tiffany Misri
Secretary
City of Burnaby

Carly Teillet
BC Civil Liberties Association

Maryam Nabavi
UBC

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Zoe Grams
ZG Communications

Andi Wiseman
SWAN Vancouver

Sarah Orr
Civil Resolution Tribunal

Stacey Freeman
Community Living BC

Minda Richardson
First Nations Health Authority

“You all really believed in us.

Two years ago, I never thought I'd be working here and now I am. I didn't know if you all really meant it. It's true and I can't believe it. **It's amazing.”**

– WISH Participant

“WISH impacts so many lives because without WISH, there women here would be going elsewhere and be unsafe in those places.

With WISH being here, we are safe.”

– WISH Participant

“It's the little things or the big things like when a woman walks in and she's freezing cold, and you know **this is the only meal this woman will have today**, and you know that the 50 bucks you donated probably makes a difference in that meal budget.”

– WISH Donor and Volunteer

Mission and Vision

WISH's mission is to improve the health, safety and well-being of women who are involved in Vancouver's street-based sex trade. Our vision is that every woman should have access to opportunities to make free, healthy and positive choices.

Values

Acceptance, caring, dignity and respect



WISH Drop-In
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