

# WISH Annual Report FY 2019-2020



Photo: Emily Kyda



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

## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND BOARD CHAIR



Photo: Wendy D.



Photo: Wendy D.

## Celebrating 35 Years of Supporting Sex Workers

As WISH celebrates 35 years of supporting street-based sex workers, we take time to reflect on the labour, expertise, advocacy, care, and commitment of so many who came before us. There have been countless sex workers, staff members, volunteers, Board members, community partners, funders and donors that have made WISH what it is today. We dedicate this annual report to each and every one of you.

One significant theme of 2019-2020 has been the financial stability and sustainability of WISH so programs and services are best positioned to deliver stellar wraparound supports to street-based sex workers. We completely recovered from all deficits and have rebuilt a responsible and healthy contingency fund should emergencies or unexpected costs befall the organization. We have also – finally – been able to make long-overdue repairs and/or replacements to our facilities, vehicle, appliances, furnishings, and spaces. Your generous support has made it possible for us to run our programs and services as safely and appropriately as possible.

This year has also seen a number of “firsts.” First and foremost was ongoing reflection that WISH is no longer the small organization it used to be, and requires that an appropriate level of infrastructure and human resources are in place to support WISH in its current trajectory and growth.

As such, we continued towards our goal of raising the funds needed to create key, much-needed positions. Those include WISH’s first-ever Human Resources Manager, Payroll and Benefits Administrator, Development Coordinator, and an Operations Manager. With over 100 staff and nine major programs, these positions have enabled us to further implement additional structures, policies, oversight, and operational support appropriate for an organization our size.

We look forward to next year’s annual report where we will share the ongoing impact of these new (and upcoming!) positions and how they affect WISH’s ability to create meaningful and tangible opportunities for sex workers to make safe, healthy and positive choices.

In the meantime, we continue to salute and honour each and every WISH staff member, volunteer, and Board member – past and present – for 35 years of supporting street-based sex workers!

Mebrat Beyene  
Executive Director

Jenn McGinn  
Chair



# WISH timeline

2019

WISH celebrates 35 years  
of supporting street-based  
sex workers.

MAY 27

MAP Van and Drop-In staff join CUPE,  
Local 1936

MAY 28/29

**“A Safer Province for Everyone: Responding  
to Violence Against Sex Workers” Conference**

This conference, the first of its kind in BC,  
was led by Living in Community, an innovative  
initiative working to change the conversations  
about sex work. The initiative focusses on  
educating, changing policies and getting to  
the root causes of multiple issues to create  
healthy and safe communities for everyone.  
WISH was one of the many key Steering  
Committee members.

MAY 29

Provincial Bad Reporting Working Group  
formed

JUNE 3

**Release of National Inquiry into Missing and  
Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls**

WISH, together with PACE, SWUAV, and  
PIVOT, had official standing in the National  
Inquiry. Together, all four organizations formed  
[The Vancouver Sex Workers Rights Collective](#),  
and presented written submissions. The  
Collective worked to amplify the voices of  
Indigenous peoples who participate or have  
participated in sex work or provide sexual  
services.

JUNE 23

\$27,925 raised through the Scotiabank  
Charity Challenge

SEPT 21

WISH Up-Close fundraiser raises \$18,000

SEPT

BC Women’s Health scales-down service at  
WISH’s clinic to one day per week

NOV 21

**WISH’s offices flood for a fourth time**

The office had to close due to flooding,  
forcing WISH to find temporary office  
space. Supporters came to the rescue,  
helping raise the funds necessary to restore  
the space without disrupting our services.

*“Thanks MAP Van for helping me  
after a bad date.”  
– WISH participant*

2020

*"That song was just what I needed. I feel much better now."*

– WISH participant during music therapy

JAN

WISH's InReach Program expanded to two full-time staff members

JAN 25

Pioneering sex worker and LGBT rights advocate Jamie Lee's Celebration of Life

FEB 14

29th Annual February 14th Women's Memorial March

MAR 4

Women of Distinction Awards Nominees announced

WISH's Executive Director Mebrat Beyene is nominated in the Non-Profit category. The awards honour individuals & organizations whose outstanding activities and achievements contribute to the well-being and future of our community.

MAR 16

WISH introduces COVID-19 health and safety protocols across all programs and office space

MAR 18

Province of BC declares state of emergency due to pandemic

MARCH 19

City of Vancouver declares local state of emergency due to pandemic

APR 3

WISH creates Emergency Response Team to respond to COVID-19 as fears continue to rise

## WISH monthly numbers



9,000

meals served



150

volunteers



800

women seen by  
the MAP Van



20

clinic visits



512

referrals made



## Inquiry into MMIWG

After more than three years of gathering testimony from more than 2,000 Canadians, and dozens of community meetings, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls inquiry delivered its [final report](#) to the federal government on June 3rd, 2019. The 1,200-page report had 231 calls for justice. Calling it a “Canadian genocide,” the report found murder investigations were too often marked by indifference and negative stereotypes that resulted in Indigenous deaths and disappearances being investigated and treated differently from other cases.

WISH—together with PACE Society, Sex Workers United Against Violence Society (SWUAV), and Pivot Legal Society—formed the Vancouver Sex Workers Rights Collective. Ahead of the inquiry, the Collective worked to amplify the voices of Indigenous women (cis and trans) and two-spirit people who participate or have participated in sex work or provide sexual services in the Downtown Eastside.

Collective members shared their stories in keeping with the diverse Indigenous traditions of the Collective and the Inquiry’s mandate to be respectful of Indigenous legal principles and practices. As was indicated during the Collective’s oral submissions to the National Inquiry, sex workers are knowledge keepers of their own experiences. As with the Collective’s oral submissions, [the written submission to the National Inquiry](#) was animated by the voices and stories of the Collective’s members.

The report included multiple recommendations to all levels of government, the police and the larger Canadian public to help address endemic levels of violence directed at Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA (two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual) people.

*“My life has become so much better. I have a home. I have a job. I have my self-esteem. My family came into my life again. That’s...because of WISH.”*

– WISH participant



# Bad Date Reporting



The vast majority of violence against sex workers goes unreported to authorities. Legal and social barriers to the justice system make it more difficult for sex workers to report safety concerns or violence. Bad date and aggressor reporting (BDAR), was born out of the necessity for sex workers to warn other sex workers of violence or safety concerns.

However, BDAR and associated safety education and supports don't exist in most of the province, particularly in smaller and rural cities and towns. The different reports also have a very limited distribution and aren't connected with each other.

This is why the Bad Date Reporting Working Group was formed in 2019: To create and implement a provincial BDAR system, while encouraging key stakeholders to focus on violence prevention and response.

The working group was formed at the Living in Community [“A Safer Province for All: Responding to Violence Against Sex Workers”](#) Conference. The group includes members across the province, while the core organizations include Living in Community, PACE Society, Peers Victoria, SWAN Vancouver, and WISH.

Creating a sex-worker informed, sex-worker designed, searchable database of bad date reports would create a reliable province-wide tool to allow sex workers to quickly look for keywords, license plates, and other descriptions so they can take informed steps to protect themselves.

# InReach Program Expanded

Before the InReach Program was created, there was a continued, overwhelming, and un-met need for one-on-one support and services for Vancouver's street-based sex workers. Many participants ran the risk of falling through the cracks, as they may have not been quite ready or able to access WISH's capacity-building programs. Participants needed more support, more time for conversations, more frequent check-ins, and assistance navigating both WISH and external services, programs and bureaucracies.

WISH participants experience considerable barriers when trying to access supports, housing, employment, and/or reducing the violence in their lives. This is exactly why the InReach Program was expanded.

With assistance from the InReach staff, women can access one-on-one case management support including referrals, in-house capacity-building programs, assistance with completing forms, housing applications, connecting to legal support, or accompaniment (and advocacy) to medical or other appointments.

Our InReach staff each support a caseload of approximately 30 to 40 women.



Photo: Wendy D.

# Financial Statements

## Government Revenue

Provincial	\$	1,531,276
Municipal	\$	142,500
Federal	\$	188,000

**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
Amortization of Deferred Capital Contributions	\$	50,734

**Total Other Revenue \$ 680,711**

**Total Revenue \$ 2,542,487**

## Program Expenses

Drop-In Centre	\$	1,265,831
MAP Van	\$	312,805
Supportive Employment Program	\$	171,756
Transitions	\$	144,555
Aboriginal Health & Safety Program	\$	94,966
Music Therapy	\$	35,888
Learning Centre	\$	26,896
Shelter (Start-Up Costs)	\$	5,653
Organizational Support	\$	410,007

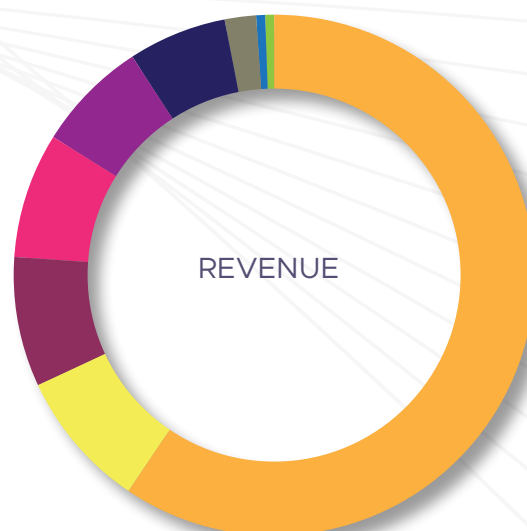
**Total Expenses \$ 2,468,357**

Excess (Deficit) of Revenues over Expenses before Transfers \$ 449,707

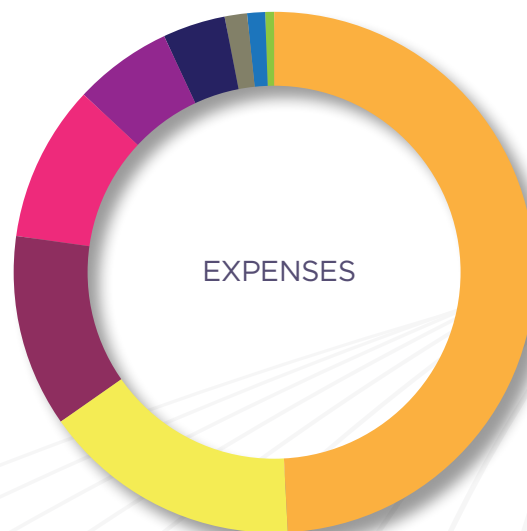
Transfer of Surplus to Externally Restricted Funds \$ 347,260

Excess of Revenue over Expenses (Including emergency/contingency reserves) \$ 102,447

*The excess revenue in our 19/20 audited statements include emergency and contingency reserves, as well as internally restricted revenues earmarked for increased staffing expenses incurred in this current 20/21 fiscal year.*



Provincial 60%  
 Federal 8%  
 Municipal 6%  
 Expense Recovery 8.5%  
 Foundations 8%  
 Donations 7%  
 Capital Contributions 2%  
 Events < 1%  
 Interest and Other < 0.5%



Drop-In Centre 50%  
 Organizational Support 16.5%  
 MAP Van 12%  
 Supportive Employment 10%  
 Transitions 6%  
 Aboriginal Health & Safety 4%  
 Music Therapy 1.5%  
 Learning Centre 1%  
 Shelter (start-up costs) < 0.5%

*“Whether you’re a drug addict, or a former sex worker or somebody who’s in between, [you] can be here and be comfortable, not be judged.”*

*– WISH participant*



# 2019 Volunteer Board Members

Jenn McGinn  
*Chair*  
Vancity Credit Union

Tiffany Misri  
*Secretary*  
City of Burnaby

Rysa Kronebusch  
BC Hydro  
MoveUp

Carly Teillet  
BC Civil Liberties Association

Maryam Nabavi  
UBC

Nycki Basra  
Ghani Law Corp

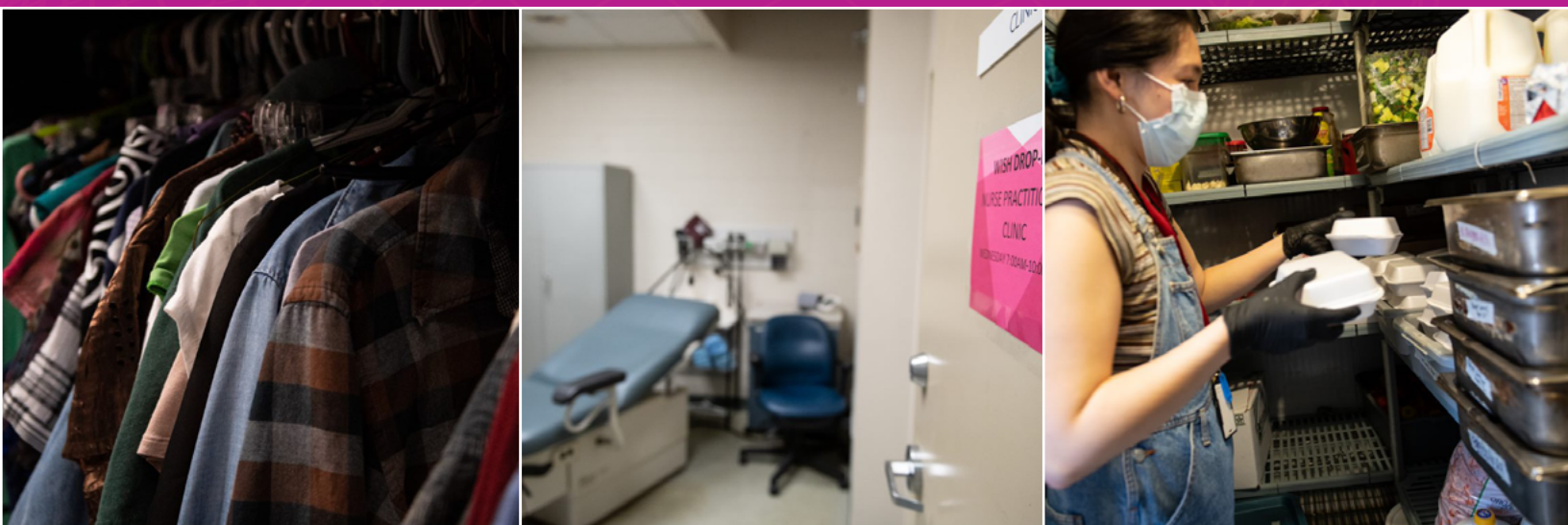
Zoe Grams  
*Vice Chair*  
ZG Communications

Karina Munroe  
*Treasurer*  
Lululemon

Robyn Baron  
Senior Consultant, Gender Equality and  
Prevention of Gender Based Violence

Andi Wiseman  
SWAN Vancouver

Stephanie Merinuk  
Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada



Photos: Wendy D.

## Acknowledgement of Funding

We acknowledge – and are thankful for – the financial support from the City of Vancouver, the Province of B.C. and the Government of Canada. We also want to thank all the public and private foundations, as well as the individual and corporate donors who make our work possible.



## Mission

WISH's mission is to improve the health, safety and well-being of women who are involved in Vancouver's street-based sex trade.

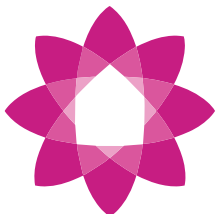
## Vision

Our vision is that every woman should have access to opportunities to make free, healthy and positive choices.

## Values

Acceptance, caring, dignity and respect.

Celebrating 35 years of supporting sex workers.



**WISH** Drop-In  
Centre Society

334 Alexander Street  
Vancouver, BC V6A 1C3

604.669.9474  
[info@wishdropincentre.org](mailto:info@wishdropincentre.org)

[www.wish-vancouver.net](http://www.wish-vancouver.net)

 @wishdropin

 @wishdropin

 @wishvancouver