



ANNUAL REPORT

2019 - 2020

Thank you for your support!

Report of the Board of Directors

We are very pleased to present this report on behalf of the Board of Directors of Second Story Women's Centre. 2020 has been a difficult year to date, presenting challenges that could not have been predicted. Facing a global pandemic, the Centre was closed to the public, but its work went on from the homes of our staff. We would like to acknowledge the challenges that this presented, especially for those tasked with caregiving. Thank you for your dedication - it has not gone unnoticed.

The work of the Board of Directors has also continued. We have met 8 times since June of 2019, three of those meetings held via Zoom. Although hesitant online at first, we have become adept at considering complex issues and decisions in a new meeting format.

Last August, we welcomed several new members to the Board, each of whom bring unique experiences, skills and perspectives. Thank you to Janice Bower, Helah Cooper, Andrea Hancock, Jackie MacDonald, Becky Nodding, Christine Scott, Linda Wentzel and Ruth Wilkins. All of our new Directors are exceptionally committed to Second Story and to their role on the Board. We particularly appreciate their willingness to become involved in Board committees and in volunteering in other ways at the Centre.

The Board has three Standing Committees that have been active in the past year:

1. The Board's **Policy Committee** has met regularly to review and revise our policies. A great deal of time has been spent on re-crafting complex policies, including Personnel, Privacy and Confidentiality and a newly-written Child Safety and Protection policy.
2. The **Fund Development Committee** has met regularly under the leadership of our Finance Officer to develop a consistent and comprehensive strategy to develop relationships with and increase donations from the business sector. Our comprehensive budget for 2020 indicates a need for added funding in order to maintain and extend our current level of staffing and programming.
3. Our **Social Action Committee** - 5 members of the Board of Directors currently sit on this committee. Priority has been placed on continued advocacy for sustainable funding for trauma therapists in our region, working with a local network of service providers to develop a human trafficking strategy, a plan to support women running for political office, and a liaison with the Town of Bridgewater regarding the reduction of energy poverty.

In addition, two Ad Hoc Committees of the Board were convened in the past year:

1. An **Ad Hoc Personnel Committee** conducted our Executive Director's annual performance review, and we are very pleased to once again report that Rhonda is an excellent Executive Director who continues to bring stability and a supportive work environment for the Staff at the Centre. Rhonda has also recently taken on a leadership role in CONNECT, which is beneficial not just for Second Story but for the provincial network of women's centres. We cannot thank her enough for her work and dedication.

In April, we said farewell to Aliyyah Fazil, who has moved back to Ontario - the Board of Directors thanks her for her work and wishes her well.

2. An **Ad Hoc Board Member Recruitment Committee** met to recruit new members based on the same successful strategy that was developed last year. We are happy to report that new members will be elected at this evening's meeting. A sincere thanks is offered to those who are coming "on board"!

Two of our members have decided not to re-offer – Pam Birdsall and Helen Lanthier. The Board thanks them very much for their dedicated service, and has been reassured that both will remain involved with the Centre and can be called upon at any time if they are needed.

Our meetings are held monthly (except for July and December) and are always packed with discussion, information, and laughter. The Board would also like to acknowledge Second Story's Staff - Rhonda, Sally, Stephanie, Nicole, Liz, Linda and Sandra - all of whom have worked so diligently over the past year to fulfill our mission by providing services and programs that enhance the lives of women, girls and other gender-oppressed people.

We would like to extend a sincere thank you to our volunteers who offer their skills in so many ways. Your contributions are invaluable.

Finally, we want to thank everyone for their support of Second Story. The pandemic has shone a stark light on so many of the issues with which Second Story deals - gender-based violence, exclusion and isolation, poverty, systemic racism, and all other oppressions that threaten the safety and wellbeing of those we serve. We need Second Story now more than ever!

We are looking forward to welcoming everyone back as we phase in our re-opening plan!

*Helen Lanthier and Charlene Flint, Co-Chairs
Second Story Women's Centre Board of Directors*

Report from the Executive Director

Another year and many amazing things to report! I am so grateful to play a small part in what our Centre is able to do in 12 short months. We are a cohesive team who meets and strategizes often so that information is freely shared and we are kept apprised of issues that affect us and you!

Our work with community partners is a pillar of what we do. I meet monthly with our Hub 1 team which is a conglomeration of fellow Executive Directors or leaders who discuss trends and systems change work. We have transitioned Sexual Assault Services Lunenburg and Queens to this table for sustainability of the work. Staff often attend Hub 2 where case and issues are

shared at a practitioner level. We are pleased to partner with the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program which offers evidence collection kits at both Fisherman's Memorial and South Shore Regional Hospitals. Our fellow feminist women-serving organizations; Harbour House, Be The Peace Institute and South Shore Sexual Health are basically on all of our speed dials! Our group has been working (still) to engage the province to support Specialized Therapist for those who have been subjected to sexualized violence in our region. Check out our postcard campaign on our new website at www.SecondStory.ca.

We sure are proud of our new branding work that you will see on that site. A new logo, new messaging and consistent visuals are something we had been planning for quite some time. That branding has heavily influenced our dedicated work on fund development which will aid us in becoming more financially sustainable. Other advocacy efforts this year included encouraging citizens to vote during the federal election.

New projects we've introduced this year were a grief program for rural women. We've also partnered with Elizabeth Fry Society to offer 'Circles of Support' a navigational and legal supports to women who have been subjected to criminalization. Yoga and craniosacral work was offered as a wellness option and was very well received. We partnered with the Lunenburg Farmer's Market to offer food bucks to some of our clients.

An organizational effectiveness tool that we have been working on implementing is a statistics gathering tool. This will be rolled out likely in the winter of 2020 and will support reports to our funders and potential funders.

No offence to previous workplaces, but I don't think I could have thought of a better team to go to work with daily! Aliyyah, Liz, Saundra, Steph, Nicole, Linda, and Sally, my goodness, I am incredibly fortunate to spend my day with you all! Community, please know how dedicated and respectful this group of women are who have chosen to work for gender equity and safe, respectful communities. We take our jobs very seriously!

In addition to the staff, we absolutely would not be able to operate without the large complement of volunteers who show tremendous interest in our Centre. They play such an important part in our collective work. Helen, Janice, Ruth, Jackie, Christine, Helah, Andrea, Charlene, Becky, Linda and Pam, as board members, I truly appreciate your commitment to SSWC and our organization is in very capable hands. I look forward to seeing what incredible things happen in 20-21!

Rhonda Lemire

Report from the Youth Program Facilitator

2019-2020 was a positive year for youth programming. The *Express Yourself* program was again, well-received by schools in our communities. The Fall and Winter terms of the program

were occupied by the maximum number of schools (3 each term), with Aspotogan Consolidated and Newcombville Elementary being added as new schools we had not yet had an opportunity to bring the programming to. Registration at Newcombville was so high that we had to split their 12 sessions into two 6-session groups to accommodate all girls who wanted to participate. *Express Yourself* reached 135 girls in 45 sessions prior to Covid-19. Had the pandemic not broken out, *Express Yourself* would have been brought to New Ross consolidated – another new school– and Bluenose Academy had requested we bring the program back as soon as we were able.

The *Girls' Loft* too had a successful year. Two mentors returned from the previous year, citing the wonderful experience they had, and all girls from the previous year re-joined. The program is seen within our community as a safe space for girls, particularly those struggling socially. As a result, 3 new families requested space for their daughters, pushing the group to its maximum capacity. All girls (13) and mentors (4) attended sessions regularly and several older girls commented that they would like to return as mentors after they are too old to join as participants.

The *Healthy Relationships for Youth* program added a second high school to the list of participants. Unfortunately, as Healthy Relationships for Youth is not a Department of Education program and thereby not mandatory for principals and their schools to participate, it has been difficult bringing schools on board. We are happy that a second school – North Queens Community School – chose to join Forest Heights in offering this vital program and the information it provides, to their students. Through these rural schools, 15 youth facilitators were trained to implement the program and 60 grade nine students received it.

Our newest program, *Boy Talk*, was set to be piloted during March Break. Two young males were hired to facilitate the camp, who were trained and engaged with the material. Had Covid-19 not required us to cancel the camp, with minimal advertising, 8 boys were registered for the camp and we anticipated more registrations for this 12 youth max-capacity camp.

Saundra Vernon

Report from the Volunteer and Administrative Support Coordinator

Volunteers: This year we had about 30 volunteers who supported the centre in a variety of ways including board engagement, event support, watering plants, program facilitation, front desk support, organization, and so much more. These 30 volunteers gave an accumulation of over 200 hours of their time. We are very grateful. As a staff team, we have been more effective with engaging volunteers. Having volunteers support the front desk role has allowed me to focus much needed time and commitment to other part of my role.

Events: We organized a number of advocacy and awareness events including Sisters in Spirit, Persons Day, and Community Lunches. We also organized a production of *The Vagina*

Monologues which was an amazing success and a definite highlight of the year. This production was a fundraiser and also provided an opportunity to raise awareness on issues impacting women and gender oppressed people. It also serviced as an opportunity for awareness around Second Story Women's Centre.

Marketing: Our website has been updated and we have been working hard to strengthen our brand and ease of navigation when someone reaches the site. I am looking forward to maximizing the effectiveness of our website over the coming year. The messages we put out into the community related to our organization are becoming more consistent.

During my time at the front desk this year I noticed a number of individuals returning to the centre who have not engaged in activities and programming for a few years. Individuals regularly comment that the centre feels very welcoming and comfortable.

I am grateful for the amazing team of individuals I get to work with!

Liz McCurdy

Report from the Contract Support Worker

As a part time Support Worker, I provide one-on-one counselling and/or phone support to women and teenagers. The meeting location alternates between my home office in Camperdown, Lunenburg County and Freeman House in Bridgewater in order to accommodate anyone who cannot drive to Second Story Women's Centre in Lunenburg.

Counselling support is offered to women experiencing trauma, abuse, anxiety, stress and loss of self. Various strategies are utilized depending on the readiness and experience of the client. Mindfulness is often used to bring the focus to the present using discussion of a) awareness b) acknowledgement c) action and d) acceptance. Another strategy, Reclaiming/Revisiting Self, uses mindfulness to encourage women to become aware of strengths, acknowledge achievements, develop options for moving ahead and accept that work is needed to change self. Between sessions, many clients take 'homework' seriously and move along in their goals significantly. Attitude and personal perspective often improve as a result of practical and do-able options such as walking with intent, 'breathing in the blue' strategy and visualization.

Since Covid-19, Support Workers have been restricted to phone support. In my case, it is strictly phone or email support as clients that I work with do not want to use Zoom or Face Time. However, without the face-to-face counselling, discussion has certainly been curtailed; facial expressions and body nuances make a tremendous difference in overall rapport and communication. Nonetheless, there has been notable progress in several women who opted for phone support: a greater sense of hope and motivation to explore 'self'.

In total this year, there were 73 appointments with 14 clients

Linda Wilson

Report from the Outreach Coordinator

This has been a very busy year, and the need for ongoing support has been significant in our communities. For example, this year I saw a total of (64) people ongoing, (13) youth, and (51) women. Of that group (11) had dealt with sexualized violence, and (15) had dealt with intimate partner violence. The total number of appointments I had scheduled between March 2019, and March 31, 2020, was (713). Of the people I see I received (2) referrals from mental health, (3) from probation, and (2) from family doctors.

In my role, I have been able to continue to offer support services in Chester, Bridgewater, Liverpool, and New Ross. In Chester, I continue to meet with people at Our Health Centre. Initially when I started there, I was attending for one day a week, this year the needs of the community increased, and I had to add another day for counselling support services. In Bridgewater, the supportive relationship between Second Story and Nova Scotia Works continued. Typically, I have been meeting with people 3-4 days a week, and Nova Scotia Works has always provided me with a space to work, and has been very supportive of our services.

In the winter of 2020, I was able to offer a new group in Bridgewater; the Photography Wellness Group. This group focused on using photography as a way to help manage anxiety, depression, and demonstrated how photography could be used as a tool for self-care. There were (4) participants in the group, and the group ran for (5) sessions.

In Liverpool, and New Ross, I provided four unique hour long sessions focusing on stress management, grief and loss, self-care, and provided information about our services. I was set to facilitate the Filling Your Cup group in New Ross at the end of March, but that was put on hold due to COVID-19.

The themes I have observed this year through counselling support is that many people are struggling with anxiety, depression, grief and loss, trauma, isolation, lack of healthy coping skills, and an increase in suicidal ideation. As the pandemic hit, in some instances, the above issues became more acute.

Nicole Robson

Report from the Support Coordinator

It has been one of the best years I can remember from my 16 years working at Second Story

Women's Center. There are a few reasons for that but mostly it is the leadership of Rhonda Lemire and the fantastic team. I cannot say enough about the quality of the work of my co-workers and Rhonda's approachable solid and steady leadership. Nicole's expertise with her clients is stellar. The complicated cases that have come our way have been met by Nicole with skill, experience and respect. Liz at the front desk is a master organizer and offers support at the front line with a steady, professional grace. Her ability to engage the volunteers and get our program going has been inspiring. Stephanie is skilled in so many areas. Her ability to counsel people with financial issues and her savvy with our financials leaves me in awe! Saundra's dedication, creativity and down to earth realness is a welcome addition to the Centre, not to mention her skill in directing The Vagina Monologues... need I say more?? We say goodbye to wonderful Aliyyah who will be missed for her adaptability and willingness to jump in where needed with a beautiful, quiet confidence and wisdom.

I have learned so much from sitting with women. The nervous system fascinates me more and more as I understand the more subtle nuances of the body's responses to trauma. It is my privilege to sit with so many women who are survivors, resilient warriors, fighters, creative women who carry on despite hardship and teach me about courage. I feel a little tired when I look at the numbers and the stats report that Aliyyah put together. 30 individuals who are affected by sexual violence, 13 women subjected to domestic violence, a total of 85 women who came through my door hoping to find something better. Of those 85, 48 women self-referred. There was a demand for somatic experiencing. Some of what I have noticed in the women who have accessed this modality is: increased awareness of body sensations and emotions and increased capacity to process some of what needed to be processed resulting in decreased anxiety levels, increased focus, more ability to stay mindfully present and in their body in times of stress. There seems to be a trend toward women leaning toward more alternative modalities such as acupuncture and craniosacral work to deal with trauma.

The addition of Nicole and Linda to our staff has provided me with a much needed team of support in this sometimes difficult work. It is such a relief to be able to call on Nicole with a difficult situation and talk it through or to debrief after a challenging session and to know Linda is a call away.

Moving into Covid 19 at the end of this reporting period, life at SSWC changed drastically. We continued to find ways to meet the needs of our clients which involved meeting them on Zoom, phone, and Skype. I was surprised at how quickly we adapted to the new way of working and how again resiliency in the face of this silent threat rose up. Our team rose to the challenge and even though we could not see each other, I felt we were closer than ever.

In closing I would like to thank our volunteers, in particular our board whose commitment and hard work keep us afloat.

Sally Hutchinson

Report from the Financial Services Coordinator

Financial Overview

Our year end review was performed by Swain and Associates, and I would like to acknowledge their assistance. Our approved budget this year included a planned deficit, as we intended to spend funds on wages that were counted in last fiscal year's revenue but not spent last year. We did realize a deficit this fiscal year, even though we came in under our budget. We still have retained earnings as a result of budget surplus over the years. A portion of these funds are held in GICs and are treated as a contingency fund – ie: they are not factored into our operating budget but set aside for use in an urgent unforeseen situation. We have claimed and collected our HST rebates up to March 31, 2020. Our charitable return is being completed and will be submitted in the first week of July. Our payroll source deductions are prepared and submitted on time each month and we are in good standing with the Registry of Joint Stocks.

I would like to express my gratitude to our Board Finance Officer, Janice Bower. Janice graciously agreed to take on the role of Board Finance Officer this year and has been instrumental in many process changes and new initiatives. Janice has great plans and has amazing follow through. I thoroughly enjoy working with her and feel that we are lucky to have her with us.

Revenue

We exceeded our budgeted amount for fundraising in the 2019/20 fiscal year as a result of our production of The Vagina Monologues, which was very successful. Thank you to the volunteers, board members and staff who worked on this. We currently have an active Fundraising Committee that is being led by Liz McCurdy. The Committee is working on plans for next year's big fundraiser.

We received more donations than we budgeted for, which is always a welcome positive. Follow ups, marketing and thank you strategies are some of the items that the (board driven) Fund Development Committee is working on now and will carry on fine tuning and implementing in the next fiscal year.

Operating Expenses

We did not incur any large unexpected expenses in our day to day operations and our operating expenses were within our budget.

We did some spending related to our strategic plan this year, including a few technology/software updates and a marketing and rebranding project. The funds used for these projects had been set aside in a GIC account specifically for one-time spending related to our strategic priorities.

Wages and Benefits

We entered into this fiscal year with a surplus that was the result of funds set aside for wages that we had been unable to use last fiscal year. We were able to use those funds this year. We were able to provide a cost of living increase for our core staff, effective April 1, 2020.

Grant Programs

We have wrapped up the following grant program budgets this year:

- Canadian Women's Foundation Year 3 of 4 – Express Yourself and Girls Loft
- Lunenburg Community Health Board – Grief Support Group

We had planned to run a pilot day camp for boys (Boy Talk) this March Break but were unable to go ahead with it due to COVID 19 restrictions. We have plans to look at running something this coming summer. I work closely with grant leads and with our Executive Director on proposals for new grant funding and programming.

Support and Education for Clients

We were unable to participate in the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program this year (put on by the Canadian Government) however we were able to connect with a provider in the area who was able to safely prepare returns and we connected our clients with her. I worked one on one with 12 women this year. The majority of those clients were 1-2 visits to help resolve a specific issue, however, 3 of those clients are ongoing. In total, I had 32 client appointments. I was also able to do some outreach work in partnership with the New Ross Family Centre, who referred clients (4) and provided space to meet with them

Thank you to the staff, volunteers, supporters and clients of Second Story Women's Centre for making the last year another great one.

Stephanie Balcome

Second Story Women's Centre Financial Statements

Year Ended March 31, 2020
(unaudited - see notice to reader)



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NOTICE TO READER

On the basis of information provided by management, we have compiled the balance sheet of Second Story Women's Centre as at March 31, 2020 and the statements of operations and net assets for the year then ended.

We have not performed an audit or a review engagement in respect of these financial statements and, accordingly, we express no assurance thereon.

Readers are cautioned that these statements may not be appropriate for their purposes.

Bridgewater, Nova Scotia
May 28, 2020

CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS,
Licensed Public Accountants

Second Story Women's Centre

BALANCE SHEET

as at March 31, 2020

(Unaudited - See Notice to Reader)

	2020	2019
ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash	\$ 138,021	\$ 45,763
Short term investments	79,983	99,936
Accounts receivable	16,066	2,832
	<u>\$ 234,070</u>	<u>\$ 148,531</u>
LIABILITIES		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 7,504	\$ 4,909
Deferred contributions	122,164	20,825
	<u>129,668</u>	<u>25,734</u>
NET ASSETS	<u>104,402</u>	<u>122,797</u>
	<u>\$ 234,070</u>	<u>\$ 148,531</u>

Signed on behalf of the Board

J. Bower Director

A. Lanthier Director

Second Story Women's Centre
STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS AND NET ASSETS
for the year ended March 31, 2020
(Unaudited - See Notice to Reader)

	2020	2019
REVENUE		
Grant: Province of Nova Scotia	\$ 205,716	\$ 205,716
Core Programming	-	87,064
Other grants	92,192	33,059
Donations	14,603	8,709
Fundraising	19,094	11,302
Other	2,529	1,418
	334,134	347,268
OPERATING EXPENSES		
Advertising and promotion	5,960	281
Coordinator fees (CONNECT!)	5,000	5,000
Dues and fees	127	112
Equipment rental	2,370	3,102
Insurance	4,614	4,434
Interest and bank charges	1,281	1,359
Office expenses	8,256	4,752
Other operating expenses	422	238
Professional fees	2,698	1,174
Rent	21,016	20,693
Repairs and maintenance	482	2,818
Resources	70	75
Salaries and wages	278,362	189,578
Special events	7,032	5,404
Special project expenses	1,467	56,705
Staff and board development	3,069	3,149
Telephone and telecommunications	3,968	3,679
Travel expenses	6,335	3,137
	352,529	305,690
EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENDITURES (EXPENDITURES OVER REVENUE) FOR THE YEAR	\$ (18,395)	\$ 41,578

Second Story Women's Centre
STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN NET ASSETS
for the year ended March 31, 2020
(Unaudited - See Notice to Reader)

	2020		2019	
	Net Assets Invested in Capital Assets	Unrestricted Net Assets	Net	Net
NET ASSETS - BEGINNING OF YEAR	\$ -	\$ 122,797	\$ 122,797	\$ 81,219
Excess of revenue over expenditures (expenditures over revenue) for the year	-	(18,395)	(18,395)	41,578
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	\$ -	\$ 104,402	\$ 104,402	\$ 122,797