

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS
SHIFTING SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT

2017
/
2018



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MISSION STATEMENT

We are a feminist, anti-oppressive, decolonizing rape crisis centre operating on unceded Coast Salish Territories. We provide support services to survivors of sexualized violence with shared experiences of gender oppression: women, Two-Spirit, trans and/or non-binary people. We advocate for social and systemic change through education, outreach and activism.

VISION

A world where people of all genders are valued and live free from sexualized violence.



VALUES

We are feminists who acknowledge and name systems of oppression and the impact of colonialism on Indigenous and other marginalized communities.

WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE.

We respond to calls for action from the communities we serve and recognize our opportunities for growth.

WE ARE NONJUDGMENTAL.

We create spaces for survivors to define their needs without judgement.

WE ARE INCLUSIVE.

We honour and centre different ways of being and knowing.

WE ARE VISIONARY.

We are leaders at the forefront of service provision and social change.

WE ARE SURVIVOR-CENTRED.

We honour that survivors are experts of their experiences and have the right to choose their own paths to healing and justice.



MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

If there is one thing in life that is consistent, it is change. Reflecting on this past year there have been various types of changes for WAVAW, both internally and externally.

*Written by Trina Prince,
Dalya Israel, Sambriddhi Nepal
and Khaleda Ebrahimi*

As an organization we must constantly attune ourselves to the social landscape, the political landscape, and what survivors in the community are asking of us. The last year was no different. What was different, however, was that change was taking place on all three fronts.

On the political front, we saw an increase in funding from the federal government to support systemic change work – something we had not seen in over a decade. On the social front, we saw the **#MeToo** movement take the world by storm and spark conversations about accountability for survivors, whose experiences are counted in the **#MeToo** movement and whose voices are not heard at all. Finally, we were hearing from trans, Two-Spirit and non-binary survivors in the community that it was time to expand our service user population as service needs were high and no one was meeting them. ▶



As an organization we have always committed to being responsive, reflective, progressive and accountable; it is our role as the Leadership team to ensure we are embodying these values as an organization.

In response to changes on all these fronts, we took action. We began our systemic change work, and listened as survivors highlighted the changes that need to take place in the medical and criminal legal systems. We spoke out and found ways to respond to the **#MeToo** movement in the media, via our own publications, and in our service delivery. We reflected on how we would ensure we were ready for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit People with culturally relevant services.

The biggest piece of reflection and change we took on was about who we serve.

After 36 years of being an organization dedicated

to serving women, WAVAW has done the important work of progressing to deepen our analysis of how trans, Two-Spirit and non-binary folks are disproportionately impacted by sexualized violence. This acknowledgement has lead WAVAW to open our doors to survivors of all marginalized genders.

This change is how we progress and evolve as an organization. It is also an attempt to hold ourselves accountable to what survivors in our community are telling us they require.

We are here. We are committed to liberation for all marginalized genders: women, Trans, Two-Spirit, and non-binary people.. We are committed to supporting survivors and shifting society so that one day we can all be free.

Here's to a future free from sexualized violence,

WAVAW's Leadership Team ●

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION COORDINATOR

Written by Felix Gilliland

The Inclusion Project has brought transformative change to WAVAW, across all of our departments and in service delivery to all of our clients. The change we've made, most simply, is to move from being an organization which serves all self-identified women, to one which serves people of all marginalized genders. This new mandate includes all Two Spirit, trans, and nonbinary survivors.

The change was simple enough to acknowledge those who were already here but not able to express their full gendered self, and radical enough to make us rewrite our mission statement, the most fundamental thoughts we work by.

When I tell people about the inclusion project, I often start with how I left WAVAW in 2011, when my

growing awareness of being trans felt like it couldn't exist alongside my volunteer position here. I felt a deep split that seemed to run down the center of me, between being trans and being a feminist in women's spaces. I hold that memory close these days as I consider what I would have needed then to feel safe and celebrated here, and with the inclusion project becoming tangible change, I feel those two sides being finally knit back together.

Trans people, as a community, are over-studied and under-served. That means that, while there are volumes of literature out there about what we're struggling with, there is nothing close to a roadmap for offering sexual assault services specific to trans survivors. What this meant for us was building trust with a community that is used to ►



being consulted but never really heard, and taking the guidance we received as the building blocks for our new services.

The trans community asked us to commit to changes deeper than an expanded understanding of gender, to challenge beliefs we've held as an organization in a way that centers the lived experiences of the most marginalized amongst those we serve. The most salient example of this is our position on sex work; after hearing in every focus group and consultation that our previous position made us unsafe for trans sex workers to access, we are starting the difficult work of accountability and repair with sex worker communities. This process has the potential to be as integral as the Inclusion Project and every bit as complicated. Trans people's insistence on this accountability represents an act of resilience as we refuse to leave each other behind in exchange for new services.

In a way, this project has been about coming home to an understanding of community which brings trans people and cis feminists together. Much of our struggles have historically overlapped, and it's my firm belief that trans people deserve access to feminist spaces because we helped build

them. Now, we're building on the work trans women have been doing for decades. I'm humbled by the legacy of Kimberly Nixon and all the trans women who have created change long before me.

At the end of the first year of the Inclusion Project, WAVAW looks visibly queerer; I see more queer and trans people in the office every day, we've hung work by queer artists on the walls, and the shelves are full of books and outreach material that speak to the queer and trans experience. At

the same time, the network of LGBTQ service providers is working with us closer than ever. This annual report will show how the Inclusion Project has touched every department, and I'm grateful for courage shown by

the volunteers, board, and staff throughout deep, transformative process.

This kind of change speaks to how change is best made: not at a single desk, but across the entire organization. Not only with new tailored services, but with a re-imagining of everything we do. It gives me hope that an organization as old and established as WAVAW can stay dynamic. I am seeing, finally, a place where healing is possible that can hold the complexity of the trans experience and still offer feminism, a place that would have felt like home to me in 2011, and I can't wait to show it to my community. ●

**“TRANS PEOPLE,
AS A COMMUNITY,
ARE OVER-STUDIED
AND UNDER-SERVED.”**

COUNSELLING PROGRAM

NUMBER OF NEW
REFERRALS FOR
COUNSELLING

2017
202

2018
238

WHICH IS AN
18%
INCREASE

IN NUMBERS OF SURVIVORS TURNING TO WAVAW
RAPE CRISIS CENTRE FOR SUPPORT AND MOST
OF THEM WILL WAIT FOR



2 YEARS

BEFORE THEY SEE
A COUNSELLOR

10% OF THE NEW REFERRALS ARE TEENS

20%

ARE INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND
FAMILIES OF THE MISSING AND
MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN,
GIRLS AND 2 SPIRIT (MMIWG2S).

THE ABOVE REFERRALS ARE ASSIGNED TO A COUNSELLOR WITHIN 2 WEEKS

52% OF THE NEW REFERRALS DISCLOSED THAT THEY
ARE STRUGGLING WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

65% OF THE REFERRALS ARE
BETWEEN THE AGES OF **20 AND 40**

THIS YEAR, THE FOLKS REFERRED TO US IDENTIFIED THEIR ASSAILANTS AS

**FAMILY
(9%)**

**SOMEONE THEY KNOW*
(37%)**

*E.G. TEACHER, DOCTOR, NEIGHBOUR, EX/
PARTNER, DATE, FRIEND, BOSS

**STRANGER
(12%)**

VICTIM SERVICES PROGRAM

1679

CRISIS LINE CALLS
(DAYTIME)

223

NEW REFERRALS TO
THE PROGRAM

SUPPORTED
14 WOMEN

WHEN THEY SPOKE
TO POLICE



ACCOMPANIED
96 WOMEN
TO HOSPITAL



ACCOMPANIED
41 WOMEN
TO COURT

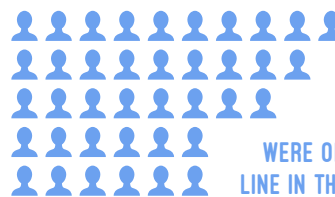
AND SPENT

200 HOURS

AT THE COURT HOUSE
SUPPORTING SURVIVORS

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

1021 CRISIS LINE
CALLS ANSWERED



39

VOLUNTEERS
WERE ON THE CRISIS
LINE IN THE PAST YEAR

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

22
WORKSHOPS
DELIVERED

29
MEDIA
REQUESTS

OUR ONLINE
COMMUNITY
(INCLUDING FACEBOOK,
TWITTER, NEWSLETTER
SUBSCRIBERS)



HAS GROWN BY
626 MEMBERS



VICTIM SERVICES PROGRAM

Written by Dalya Israel

The Ghanaian Sankofa Proverb tells us, “we must look back to the past so that we may understand how we became what we are, and move forward to a better future”. As someone who values and honors the past and believes in the importance of using our lessons for growth, this is how I anchor myself and our team when change work needs to happen in the service of survivors.

Recently I revisited a document that outlined WAVAW’s beginnings and clearly laid out what we as an organization wanted to commit to doing for women who had experienced sexual violence. This document was from 1982. In it, it expressly states that WAVAW would: work with systems while challenging them to change, provide services that included legal and medical advocacy, offer crisis counselling, be respectful of a woman’s choice, and provide a service that was clear that women are never responsible for the ▶

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violence committed against them. It is inspiring to me that we have maintained the essence of who our Founding Mothers envisioned us to be while striving to evolve and progress with what survivors have asked for along the way. Our commitment to support survivors in these ways has never changed.

What has changed this year is we have been laying the foundation to open our services to all survivors of marginalized genders, including all trans, non-binary, and Two-Spirit folks. The social context for our work has also changed, as we’ve found ourselves in the wake of the **#MeToo** movement. On the heels of this cultural shift we have also launched our Systemic Change project “Enhancing Confidence in the Criminal Justice System”.

In order to be of use to all survivors of marginalized genders we have had to consider the ways in which we can recommit to pushing for systemic change. This is necessary to ensure

that trans, non-binary and Two-Spirit survivors will be seen and respected with dignity, will not be pathologized, and will have access to Justice should they desire it.

Through the Systemic Change project we have been able to reflect deeply on how the Criminal Legal system continues to impact survivor’s access to Justice. We have heard from survivors about what needs to change in the system for them to feel like they could achieve their version of Justice, and we will continue to connect with survivors into next year. We have also heard from trans, non-binary and Two-Spirit survivors that the medical and criminal legal systems do not feel like places that they could currently access.

It is an incredibly exciting time to be deepening partnerships with folks across Canada as we do this work, and our program has never been busier. As we move forward in this wake of #MeToo, we will continue to do the incredibly vital work of meeting survivors where they are at. We will validate their experiences and choices, understand that they are the experts of their own experiences, and walk alongside them throughout their healing journey. The moments that we get with survivors are precious, inspiring, gut wrenching moments. They are moments full of grief and resilience all at the same time. Witnessing these moments and making survivors feel held and belonged is what we recommit to daily and is what I believe our Founding Mothers wanted us to do as an organization back in 1982. ●

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH PROGRAM

Written by Sonmin Bong

Change can happen. Change takes many shapes and forms, and it can come from multiple directions. In the midst of last year, as the Inclusion Project has been shaping up and putting organizational change at the forefront, something else happened: the **#MeToo** movement.

In October, the hashtag exploded on social media and the number of calls received on our 24-hour Crisis Line almost doubled. But it wasn't just the demand for support services that spiked following the **#MeToo** movement. All of a sudden, the desire and need for sexual violence education became dire in many places and we received an outpouring of requests.

Our community members called on us not only to provide workshops but also to have a conversation with them about **#MeToo** and what they can do about sexual assault. While many of us were unsure about the lasting ►



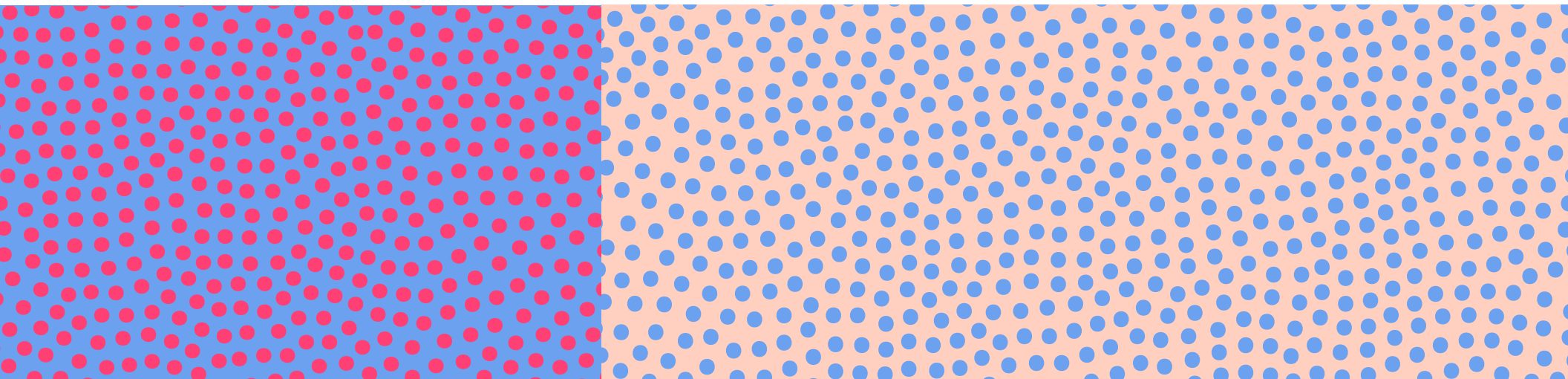
effect of the hashtag movement at first, one thing that became clear is that the landscape of sexual assault conversations had forever changed. Instead of talking about the prevalence of sexual violence, more than ever we were able to engage in conversations about the importance of examining our socialization and how the root causes of sexual violence – patriarchy, misogyny, colonization, white supremacy, and other systems of oppression – shape our own socializations. For the first time, many people opened their eyes to the fact that sexual violence is about power and control. Many people are still coming to terms and at times grieving about the fact that perpetrators can be and are often people we respect, idolize, care about, and/or love.

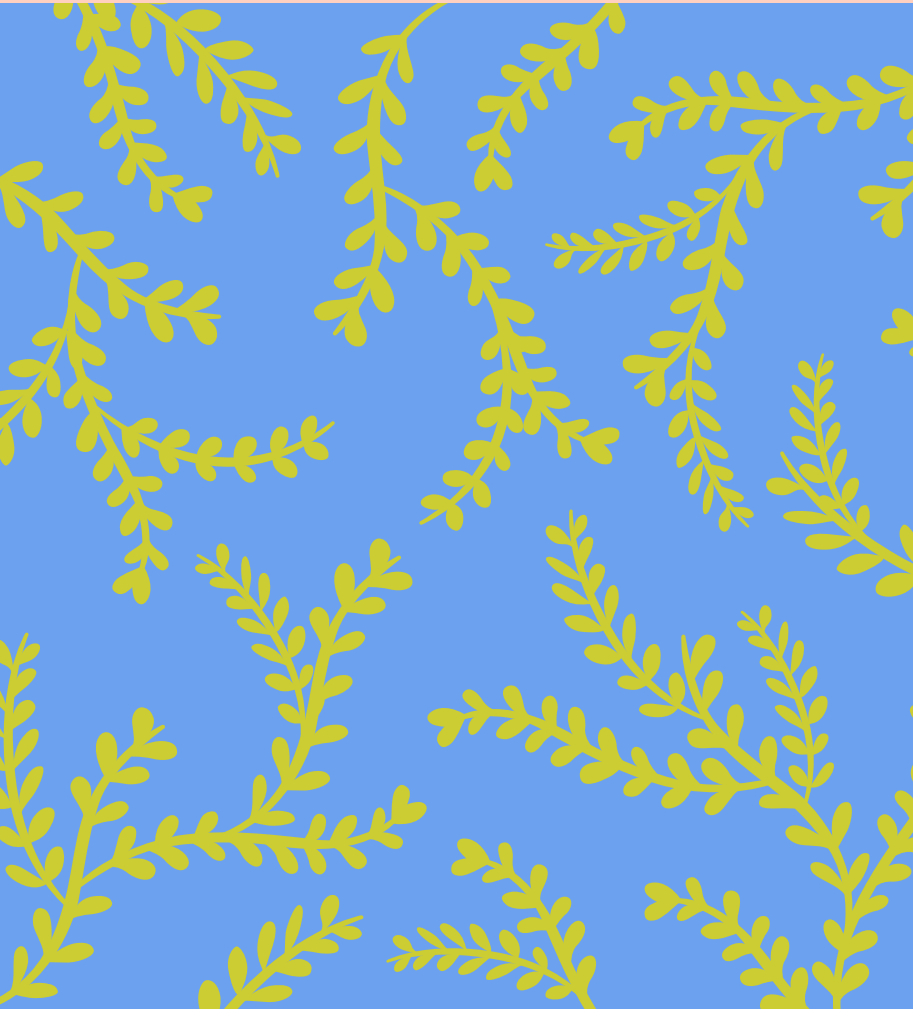
Throughout these conversations, we shared the news with our community about making our services accessible to trans, non-binary, Two Spirit, and gender diverse survivors. And every time it was met with excitement, encouragement, and gratitude. We felt our community's faith and confidence in us to do this work. We also felt reassured that our Educational Outreach Program has always been able to provide cutting-

edge education on sexual violence precisely because we are connected and responsive to our community's needs. With the Inclusion Project, we will continue to reflect on the lived experiences of survivors of all marginalized genders and incorporate them into our deepening feminist, anti-oppressive, and decolonizing framework.

Lastly, I am also a part of the change in our Educational Outreach Program. In January, I have stepped into the role of Educational Outreach Coordinator. It has truly been an amazing journey to connect with students, educators, teachers, organizations, and activists at a time of both cultural and organizational changes. I am eager to bring more changes to the program in order to better serve even more survivors.

It is no easy task to shift society that is deeply entrenched in rape culture and systemic oppressions. But our community's motivation to shift this society is stronger than ever and our Educational Outreach Program hopes to strengthen and support our community in achieving our shared vision for a world free from sexual violence. ●





COUNSELLING PROGRAM

Written by Khaleda Ebrahimi

The counselling program at WAVAW supports survivors of sexualized violence and strives to make space for all survivors to feel comfortable enough to call and safe enough to sit with our counsellors in groups or individual sessions and explore what healing can and may look like for them. Our work is centred on building relationships and trust as we understand that trauma disrupts trust and if conditions in our environment are not supporting us, rebuilding trust and redefining safety, becomes very difficult to envision healing.

As a centre that aspires to have its doors open to all sexual assault survivors, it is crucial to reflect and assess how accessible ►

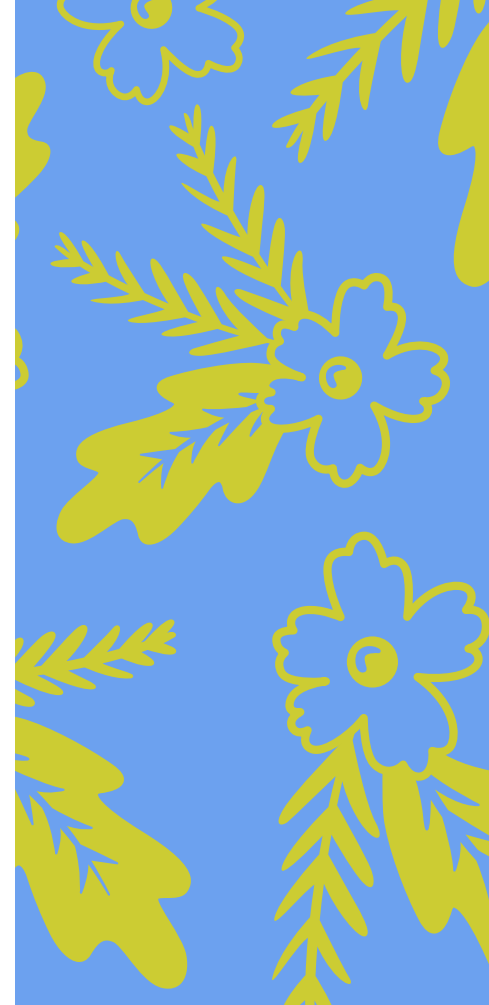
we are to survivors. In the past we have looked at this from the lens of 'how accessible are we to Indigenous women and their families?' and worked at making sure we develop and deliver programming that meets the needs of Indigenous women through incorporating traditional ways of healing, teachings and practices. We have applied the same lens to marginalized genders in our communities this year and as a result we were successful in receiving funding to offer sexual assault services, including counselling and support groups to survivors of marginalized genders: cis and trans women, all trans, Two-Spirit and non-binary survivors through the Inclusion Project.

This past year our focus has been on training our staff, assessing our space and preparing our services to meet the needs of survivors through the Inclusion project. It has been a big year for shifts, changes and transformational thinking. These times may be seen as our evolution to forging new paths to navigate safety, trust and solidarity but none-the-less this process will can/will be messy, challenging, turbulent and will require commitment and hard work to re-configure and re-orient.

As an organization, over the years, we have shifted and adjusted our mission, our vision and our values to reflect the needs of those we serve and those we hope feel safe enough to give us the opportunity to serve.

In this journey we have evolved and grown as feminists, as activists and as counsellors, constantly and continuously adding to our understanding of how systemic oppression through racism, sexism, colonialism, classism, transphobia and much more are designed to push people who don't fit the definitions assigned by those systems to the margins of society. This has shown up in our work when we have served Indigenous women and other people of colour, it has shown up in our work when serving Trans, gender diverse and non-binary survivors, it has also shown up in serving those who are struggling with addiction, homelessness and mental health issues. When people are told, directly/indirectly, that they don't belong, it dehumanizes and isolates them which can be another barrier to their healing and their need to ask for support.

What else has become more visible and clear through meeting survivors as they teach us how we can best support them in their struggles with oppression and marginalization is that a space for them to come forward and ask for support in a way that fits for them is crucial. To all survivors of marginalized genders we have been listening deeply this past year, we have heard you, we are growing and evolving and we strive to do better. We hope that we can be the place you call because you trust that you won't be judged and feel safe enough to sit with us and take a step forward in your journey. ●



VOLUNTEER PROGRAM



Written by Sonmin Bong

I often speak of the importance and strength of our Volunteer Program in conversations about WAVAW's organizational change. This is because over the years, WAVAW Volunteers have asked the difficult question around who we serve, shared their insight, knowledge, and lived experiences, and challenged us to consider why WAVAW should also serve trans, non-binary, and Two Spirit survivors of sexualized violence. Whether it was in the Volunteer Training or during their time at WAVAW or after they have completed their commitment, WAVAW Volunteers have always shown up for survivors and for WAVAW in more ways than we can name here.

While our Crisis Line and Educational Outreach Volunteers have always been

supporting and interacting with survivors and community members of all genders, change has brought us closer as a team. Change has brought us more awareness about the interconnectedness of our struggles. Change has brought us a deeper understanding of how patriarchy, misogyny, queer and trans oppression, colonization, white supremacy, and other systems of oppression work together to uphold a society that continues to normalize sexualized violence and perpetuates violence against people of all marginalized genders.

It is no mistake that a number of our staff – including Felix, our Community Engagement and Inclusion Coordinator – came out of the Volunteer Program. I am another staff member who came out of

the Volunteer Program and has learned and grown tremendously through the Volunteer Training and throughout my time at WAVAW. So I understand firsthand the importance of the space we create for learning and challenging conversations that require us to be vulnerable and self-reflective to better support survivors and shift society.

WAVAW is changing as an organization. But it is us who make up WAVAW who create change on a daily basis. Our Volunteers – Crisis Line, Educational Outreach, In-Office, Support Group, and Board Members – have all played an integral role in this exciting change and have been at the forefront of spreading words and enthusiasm to the rest of our community. We also recognize the contribution of gender diverse feminists to our organization and our movement for liberation. So I want to take a moment and express gratitude to all WAVAW Volunteers – past and present – for trusting WAVAW, challenging and pushing WAVAW towards change, and working together as a team in the service of survivors.

There are still many changes to come at WAVAW as well as in the Volunteer Program. But for now, thank you for sticking around! We are the survivors that we serve and together, we are powerful! ●

FUND DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS



*Written by Sambriddhi Nepal, Monica Singh,
Natti Schmid & Megan Cosens*

Between 2012 and 2017, WAVAW's wait time for one-to-one counselling was 24 months. That's like waiting for two years for an ambulance to arrive after a critical injury. Year after year, this wait time existed because of a lack of consistent, reliable government funding.

In 2017, however, we celebrated a huge victory. Our wait time was reduced by six months, bringing the wait time down to 18 months!

This change took place for one reason: our community stepped up and gave survivors the support they needed.

Our community created a change that survivors needed.

They connected survivors to the

healing they deserved. This is what has always remained true about our community: they show up for survivors.

Our community's support keeps our doors open, our lights on, and our services available for survivors.

Our community is the reason we know one thing that won't change: we will continue to be here for survivors.

We will change and adapt as survivors' needs change. We will be innovative and creative with our work to support survivors and shift society.

But we will be here. We will support survivors, and we will shift society.

Thank you for making this possible.
Thank you for standing with survivors. ●



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WAVAW
rape crisis centre