



The Calgary Workers' Resource Centre

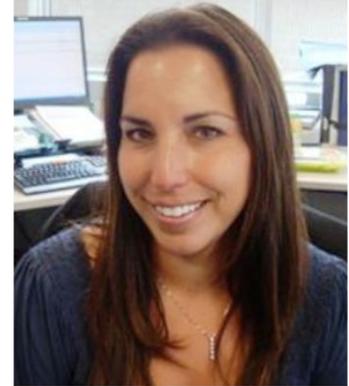
Building the individual and collective capacity of Calgarians to understand and achieve employment rights and benefits

ANNUAL REPORT for 2011

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR — Christy Morgan

2011 was another challenging year for the Calgary Workers' Resource Centre (CWRC) and our clients. The CWRC's two Case Workers continued to provide clients assistance with a volume of new claims, complaints and appeals with an 82% success rate and the CWRC saw a 13% increase in client cases over this past year.

The work of the CWRC is vital in supporting a healthy community. We are very proud of the results our case work program has delivered: in 2011, CWRC clients became entitled collectively to more than \$1,763,970. **For every dollar of core funding the CWRC received in 2011 (not including funding for our public education workshops), the CWRC generated a social return on investment of more than \$7.48 to disadvantaged workers in the community.** Those figures do not include the value of the organization's public education activities. Without the aid of the CWRC, many workers and their families would have experienced greater levels of economic hardship. The Centre's staff of four deserve praise for their dedication, hard work and exceptional outcomes.



The CWRC Board of Directors worked diligently on a number of initiatives in 2011. Among other things, the organizational development committee undertook a review of the organization's strategic plan to ensure that it remains relevant in the face of trends observed by CWRC staff, and of socio-economic and political developments occurring throughout Alberta and beyond. The Human Resources Committee was able to secure the Executive Director position, from Interim Director to permanent, for the CWRC and also continue work on develop or update the Centre's volunteer, occupational health and safety, anti-harassment, and diversity policies. The Fundraising Committee took steps to implement the organization's new fundraising plan.

Despite the challenges faced by the CWRC's small team, these are exciting times for the organization. The CWRC has won many important victories on behalf of individual workers and whole classes of workers over the years (for example, identifying jurisprudence which extended eligibility for regular Employment Insurance benefits to Temporary Foreign Workers), and has come to fulfill an increasingly important and prominent niche in Calgary's not-for-profit sector. We welcomed new staff to the organization and we look forward to being able to serve the community more efficiently. We have been very grateful for the generous support we have received from our funders (the United Way of Calgary and Area, Alberta Law Foundation and Calgary Learns), and for the support we have received over the years from our partners in Alberta's organized labour community (complete list on the back page of this report). As with most charitable organizations, our core funding grants do not cover all of our operating costs, and the financial contributions provided by the labour community and individual donors have been invaluable.

The CWRC has consistently produced strong results on behalf of working people in Calgary who faced economic hardship as a result of job loss, injury, discrimination or violation of their rights under Alberta's employment standards legislation. In the coming years, the CWRC Board of Directors will seek out opportunities for the expansion and enhancement of our services, as it is clear that the clients we currently are serving are only the tip of the iceberg. Ongoing support from current and emerging funders, donors, and community partners will be essential to enabling the Centre to fulfill on a wider scale its mission and vision of a society where the rights of workers are respected, leading to improved quality of life for workers and their families.

The Board of Directors sincerely thanks our hard working staff for all they do to assist the clients and broader community-at-large. We would also like to thank all of our funders, donors, members and community partners for their on-going support throughout these economically challenging times. Your support means that Calgary is a better place for hundreds of individuals and families.

Activities and services in 2011

CASE WORK: The CWRC's Case Work program provides individual assistance to workers in the Calgary requiring information to understand and access the rights and benefits to which they are entitled under various employment-related legislations in Alberta. In 2011, the CWRC served a total of 727 individual clients (an increase of 4% over 2010) by:

- Responding to more than 3,127 information and support-related phone calls and e-mails;
- Filing a total of 316 new claims, complaints and appeals on their behalf;
- Providing active support and advocacy in relation to an additional 94 claims, complaints and appeals that had been initiated prior to 2011;
- Making contact more than 1,233 times with employers, government institutions, health care providers, union, social service agencies and insurance companies on their behalf;
- Providing upwards of 130 referrals to other organizations and resources when client needs did not fit out mandate and skills.

Clients sought information or assistance related to one or more of the following:

- Alberta Employment Standards (25%);
- Employment Insurance (75%);
- Workers' Compensation Board (10%);
- Human Rights in the workplace (14%);
- Workplace Health and Safety (1%);
- Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits (3%);
- Long/short term disability benefits (2%).

The total exceeds 100% because many workers contacted us with issues that fell under several jurisdictions.

Although the CWRC helps Calgarians from all walks of life, members of vulnerable groups—many of them with language or other barriers—constitute the majority of our individual clients. In 2011, 37.5% of CWRC clients were permanent residents or citizens born outside Canada, 49% were from diverse ethnicities, 13% reported that they had a disability, 23% were youths 25 and younger, 54% were women, 1.5% reported Aboriginal ancestry, and 56% were unemployed. The proportion of the CWRC clientele represented by Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) was 4.4%.

The CWRC had a success rate of more than 82% based on the outcomes of the 218 cases that had been concluded and for which follow-ups had been possible by

the end of 2011. These significant success rates resulted in financial entitlements in excess of \$1,763,970 to our clients. Since 2006, CWRC clients have become entitled to more than **\$6,760,000** as a result of the organization's support and interventions.

In CWRC case work clients' own words:

"This is the first time I was laid off and unemployed and LOST (not knowing where to go or what to do). I was so grateful to CWRC for helping me with EI application and sort out issues with EI and my former employer."

"Helped me a lot and built my confidence."

"I felt more confident and relieved that there is such help for the injured."

"Helped me navigate through the proper channels and clearly explained my options."

"I was starting to lose faith with the system until I stumbled upon [CWRC] who gave me hope in my situation."

PUBLIC EDUCATION: The CWRC's Employment Rights, Obligations and Benefits Education workshops play a preventative role. Our workshops help participants understand their rights and obligations in the workplace and they enhance their awareness of the legislative context in which they work, as well as their capacity to self-advocate and engage in collective action.

A total of 66 workshops on employment rights and benefits were held in 2011. This number was above our target for the year. The workshops were attended by 813 individuals. These trends confirm the growing demand for public education on workplace rights and benefits. All workshops were organized in partnership with other organizations that primarily serve vulnerable populations. 9% of workshop participants were youths aged 25 and under, 5% were Aboriginal, 65% were immigrants, less than 1% were Temporary Foreign Workers, 2% reported having a disability, and almost 45% were unemployed.

- 98% of the workshop participants reported that the information presented helped them increase their understanding of various employment rights and benefits that they may be entitled to as workers, and 97% felt more confident about *how* to access their entitlements and benefits;

Activities and services in 2011

- 95% also reported that they gained a greater awareness of the kinds of problems that workers could experience in Alberta.

In workshop participants' own words:

"After this class, I will not take my rights and obligations for granted in regard to work with future employers."

"It will definitely be a great help that I learned my rights, obligations and benefits from present to future because if any problem arises I will get back to this as reference or help."

"I liked [to hear] the information once and for all, as I hear rules from all over and it's great to know the actual regulations from CWRC."

OUTREACH and PARTNERSHIPS: As a result of the organization's aggressive outreach efforts, dozens of non-profit organizations, government agencies and labour groups referred clients to the CWRC in 2011, including the Alberta Human Rights Commission, Alberta Works, the Office of the WCB Appeals Advisor, the Employment Insurance Board of Referees, immigrant-serving agencies and the Calgary and District Labour Council.

In order to enhance the accessibility of its services, the CWRC and Calgary Chinese Community Service Association (CCCSA) renewed a partnership established in 2008 that enabled both organizations to collaborate on the delivery of bi-weekly employment rights and benefits clinics to workers of the Chinese community (including Temporary Foreign Workers) who have difficulties communicating in English. The CCCSA provides the space and volunteer interpreters for the clinics.

In 2010, the CWRC enhanced its accessibility to residents of the North East by partnering with the North of McKnight Community Resource Centre. Via this partnership, a Punjabi-speaking CWRC Case Worker works out of the North of McKnight CRC one day per week. Both agencies were very pleased with the outcomes of the partnership, which is ongoing.

The CWRC has been an active member of the Calgary Urban Aboriginal Initiative's (CUAI) human rights domain since 2007.

COMMUNITY IMPACT: The CWRC believes that in order to ensure that working conditions are fair and equitable for all, changes need to be made at the systemic level, in the policies, legislations, and everyday practices that affect the

well-being of workers. To those ends, the CWRC engages in community impact-oriented initiatives and activities. In 2011, those activities included:

- In 2011, the CWRC made submissions to the All-Party Standing Committee on the Economy, which advised the Minister of Employment and Immigration on the minimum wage policy. In 2011, the government of Alberta adopted a new minimum wage policy, which indexes annual increases to the minimum wage to the average increase between the Consumer Price Index and Average Weekly Earnings. The stance adopted by the CWRC and other progressive organizations arguable had an influence on the Standing Committee's recommendations (i.e. to index the minimum wage and raise it annually);
- Some positions long held by the CWRC were also reflected in a report released by Alberta's Minister of Employment and Immigration in September 2011 on the impact of the federal Temporary Foreign Worker program in Alberta. The CWRC had shared its views on the program in a constructive manner at a government consultation in High River in November 2010. The Government of Alberta stated in its response to the Minister's report that: "Temporary foreign workers strengthen Alberta through their active participation in the labour market and in extending the diversity of our communities. We will continue to advocate for new federal regulations that will allow more temporary foreign workers to become citizens of Canada so they can actively participate in our communities over the long term." The CWRC has been a strong proponent of granting permanent residency to a greater number of foreign workers, as this would reduce their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse of their rights, among other things.

LOOKING FORWARD: In light of the demand for and successful outcomes of the CWRC's Case Work program, the Alberta Law Foundation has agreed to provide the CWRC with one-year project funding to add a third Case Worker and an Intake Coordinator in 2012 in order to enhance the Centre's ability to meet the needs of its growing and diverse clientele. One of the CWRC's priorities in the coming years will be to achieve greater diversity in revenue sources in order to enhance client services as well as the long-term stability of the organization.

THANK YOU

We would like to thank all the groups, organizations and individuals that supported the Calgary Workers' Resource Centre in 2011!!!

Board of Directors :

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Lisa Hari (Treasurer), Community Member
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Lawrence Connell (Director), Community Member
Gillian Ranson (Chair until May 2011), University of Calgary — Department of Sociology
David Wilson (Treasurer until September 2011), Canadian Worker Coop Federation
Jordan Hamilton (Director until May 2011), Calgary Drop-in and Rehabilitation Centre

Staff

Xavier Cattarinich (Interim Centre Director)
Debra Apperley (Case Worker)
Jasvir Sandhu (Case Worker—on leave until September 2011))
Navreet Bal (Case Worker—until September 2011)
Candace Martens (Community Outreach and Public Education Worker)
Trevor Loudon (Practicum student)

Funders:

United Way of Calgary and Area
Alberta Law Foundation
Calgary Learns

Donors:

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Bakery, Confectionary, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union local 252
Calgary and District Labour Council
Canadian Union of Public Employees local 1169
Grain Services Union
Health Sciences Association of Alberta
Royal Canadian Legion Chapelhow Branch #284
United Food and Commercial Workers local 1118
United Nurses of Alberta
UA local 496

Thank you also to the numerous individuals that made donations to the CWRC in 2011 (including those who donated anonymously through the United Way's Donor Choice program), and to the organizations we partnered with in the community.



United Way
of Calgary and Area

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