



Calgary Workers' Resource Centre

2014 ANNUAL REPORT



Message from the Chair - Christy Morgan

The Calgary Workers Resource Centre (CWRC) was established in 2002 (and saw its first clients in 2003) with the mission to build the individual and collective capacity of Calgarians to understand and access their employment-related benefits and entitlements (e.g., under the *Alberta Employment Standards Code*, Employment Insurance, the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, Workers Compensation Board (WCB), Occupational Health and Safety and Canada Pension Plan (CPP) – Disability Benefits).

CWRC provides services to those workers who struggle with issues in the workplace, and who are unaware of how to access their employment-related benefits and entitlements. The three programs offered by CWRC are:



1) Case Work/Enhanced Vulnerable Worker Support Program - provides individual support to workers struggling with issues that fall under one or more employment-related legislations and systems. In 2014, the CWRC helped clients with 595 active claims, complaints and appeals. 90% of all cases closed in 2014 were successful and resulted in upwards of **\$4,338,367** in entitlements to our clients. This is the highest the Centre has acquired since the CWRC opened its doors in 2002. In the 12 years the Centre has been advocating for clients, CWRC clients have been entitled to over **\$16 million!!!**. For every dollar invested in CWRC, there is a return of \$10.96.

2) The Employment Rights, Obligations and Benefits Education Program – plain language information and education sessions provided to the community. In 2014, CWRC presented 86 workshops, which were attended by 1093 individuals from vulnerable populations. 88% of participants agreed that the workshops increased their knowledge of work-related rights and benefits.

3) The New Alberta Workers Program - collaborated with the Alberta Workers' Health Centre and the Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative (both located in Edmonton) to create the New Alberta Workers (NAW) program to educate Temporary Foreign Workers and other New to Alberta Workers on their health and safety rights and responsibilities in the workplace, and provide resources and support for accessing information and using these rights.

The CWRC Board of Directors and staff engaged in their annual retreat to review the work of the organization in the fall of 2014. This annual event provides a venue for staff and Board to connect with each other, hear about all the great successes, and areas to focus on for the coming year.

We are very grateful for our funders, who work with us diligently to ensure that these much needed programs are available to the community. We would to thank the Alberta Law Foundation, United Way of Calgary and Area, our partner organizations and all those who gave donations to allow us to continue this great work.

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 serve are just a small fraction of the community in need. Ongoing support from our 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 an improved quality of life for them and their families.

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 2013, including the Alberta Human Rights Commission, Alberta Works, the Office of the WCB Appeals Advisor, 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 (CRC)**. Via this partnership, a Punjabi-speaking CWRC Case Worker works out of the North of McKnight CRC **two days 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. This is based on change in the policies, legislation and everyday practices that affect the well-being of all workers.

NewAlbertaWorkers Program

In 2014, with the collaboration of the Alberta Workers' Health Centre (AWHC) and the Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative (MHBC), we launched the NewAlbertaWorkers (NAW) program - a new initiative aimed at educating TFWs and other new to Alberta workers on their health and safety rights and responsibilities in the workplace and providing resources and support for accessing information and using these rights.

We have helped Albertans understand and access the rights and benefits they are entitled to as workers under a variety of employment-related legislations in Alberta. And we have engaged in dialogue with governments and other stakeholders in an attempt to promote policies and legislation that will improve working conditions of workers in Alberta.

CLIENT FEEDBACK

Case Work

- It's helping me get what I deserve from the company that did all wrong, I would not have been able to do this without these guys (CWRC)!
- I spent hours on the phone for days, trying to get info from gov't agencies - received nothing but voicemail. CWRC answered all my questions in one hour.
- Helped clarify employment rights and occupational standards, pointed me in the right direction of actions to take and proceed with obtaining what is rightfully mine.
- It gave me a better understanding of how EI decisions are made and that there is a lack of forward thinking.
- CWRC is awesome!

Public Education

- I learned to know my rights and to understand clearly what is said on the contract. I have also learned to fight for my right because somebody can help me.
- It will allow me to protect my rights as a worker and prevent employers from illegally taking advantage of me.
- The facilitator is very easy going, allows us to ask openly and answers promptly and specifically, she really knows what she is talking about.
- All of your effort is great, thank you so much for letting us know and we can also let others know about.
- I liked the handouts, the brochures, the stickman video, and the friendliness of the facilitator.

2014: ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

In 2014 the CWRC saw its most successful year since beginning to see clients in 2003. This included a **90% success rate** on combined casework - assisting clients in receiving over **\$4.3 million** in financial entitlements, and a significant increase in the centre's outreach and advocacy programs. Further, the CWRC generated a social return on investment of **\$10.96** - for every \$1.00 of core funding received (**\$10.96:1**). Client satisfaction is also at an all-time high, with **99%** of clients responding having a positive description of the service and assistance provided.

CASE WORK

The CWRC's Case Work Program provides individual assistance to understand and access the rights and benefits to which they are entitled under various employment-related legislation in Alberta. In 2014, the CWRC served a total of 881 individual clients.

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

- Alberta Employment Standards: **23%**
- Employment Insurance: **51%**
- Workers' Compensation Board: **6%**
- Human Rights: **10%**
- Canada Pension Plan - Disability Benefits: **2%**
- Short/Long Term Disability Benefits: **3%**

The CWRC helps people from all walks of life, although the majority of our clients come from vulnerable populations. In 2014, 24% of CWRC clients were born outside Canada, 17% were visible minorities, 5% self-identified as having a disability, and 50% were women.

The proportion of **Temporary Foreign Workers** was **10%** of all CWRC clients.

The CWRC had a **90.1%** success rate based on the outcomes of 596 cases that had been concluded and for which follow-ups had been possible by the end of 2014. This significant rate of success resulted in financial entitlements of **\$4,338,367.13** to our clients.

Since 2006, CWRC has helped clients gain over **\$16.6 million** as a result of the organization's support and interventions.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

The CWRC's Employment Rights, Obligations and Benefits Education workshops play a preventative role in our community. 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 **86 workshops** on employment rights and benefits were held in 2014. The workshops were attended by **1093 individuals**. These statistics 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.

23% were youth (25 years of age and under), **2%** were **Aboriginal**, **68%** were **Immigrants**, and almost **20%** were **unemployed**, based on self-reporting of the participants.

Of workshop participants:

- **93%** reported that the information presented helped them increase their understanding of various employment rights and benefits that they may be entitled to as workers.
- **94%** felt more confident about how to access their entitlements and benefits.
- **93%** reported that they gained a greater awareness of the kinds of problems that workers could experience in Alberta.

CWRC STAFF

Rear, left to right: Cesar, Chris, Leigh, Candace
Front left to right: Edith, Jasvir, Crystal



DR. LEIGH GOLDEN, Executive Director

Leigh became Executive Director of CWRC in 2012. Prior to taking this role, Leigh worked as Manager of Social Planning for the Region of Waterloo, and as a course instructor at the University of Guelph and Brock University. She holds a Doctorate in Planning and Development (University of Guelph) and a Masters Degree in Education (Brock University).

JASVIR SANDHU, Case Worker

Jasvir joined CWRC in 2008. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice and a minor in Sociology from the University College of the Fraser Valley.

CANDACE MARTENS, Community Outreach and Cultural Broker

Candace received her Social Work Diploma from Mount Royal College and completed her Bachelor's of Social Work at the University of Calgary. In 2009, Candace completed her final BSW practicum at CWRC and joined the CWRC team in 2010 as the Community Outreach and Public Education Worker. In 2013, Candace moved into the role of Community Outreach and Cultural Broker for the NewAlbertaWorkers Program.

CRYSTAL CHAN, Case Worker

Crystal joined CWRC in 2012. She has a degree in Sociology from the University of Calgary and a Diploma in Social Work from Mount Royal University. Prior to working at CWRC, Crystal was an AISH Generalist with the Government of Alberta and a Client Support Worker at Sunrise Native Addictions Service Society.

CESAR AGUDELO, Case Worker

Cesar graduated from the University of Calgary with a degree in Political Science. Cesar has worked in non-profits advocating on behalf of marginalized classes. He has experience with refugee claimants, TFWs and the education system as it affects immigrant children and youth. Cesar joined CWRC in 2012 as Intake Coordinator and moved into the role of Case Worker in 2013.

CHRISTOPHER FARNES, Intake Coordinator

Chris graduated from the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne with an M.A. in International Development, the University of London with an LLB, and the University of Victoria with a Bachelor's degree in Political Science. Prior to joining CWRC in 2013, Chris worked in immigration, settlement and community economic development - both in Canada and internationally.

JACOBET EDITH WAMBAYI, Community Outreach and Public Education Worker

Edith has a Master's degree in Health Sciences, a Bachelor's degree in Education, and a Diploma in Community-based Project Planning and Management. Prior to joining CWRC in 2013, Edith worked with community agencies conducting educational workshops on social determination of health.

THANK YOU

We would like to thank all the groups, organizations and individuals that supported the Calgary Workers' Resource Centre in 2014

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Christy Morgan, *Chair, Community Member*

Alexander Shevalier, *Vice Chair & Treasurer, Calgary and District Labour Council*

Larry Connell, *Director, United Nurses of Alberta*

Devin Yeager, *Director, United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1118*

Lucille Fedkiw, *Director, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers*

Michael Embaie, *Director, University of Calgary*

Tom Langford, *Director (until May 2014), University of Calgary*



Left to right: Larry, Travis (Director-in-waiting), Christy, Alex, Devin, Lucille. Missing: Tom, Michael

FUNDERS

United Way of Calgary

Alberta Law Foundation

Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission

DONORS

Calgary and District Labour Council

Health Sciences Association of Alberta

United Nurses of Alberta

United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1118

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Canadian Office and Professional Employees Union, Local 397

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Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 4731

Thank you also to the numerous individuals that made donations to the CWRC in 2014 (including those who donated anonymously through the United Way's Donor Choice program), and to the organizations we partnered with in the community throughout the year. We truly appreciate your support.

Alberta **LAW**
FOUNDATION

