



# **WORKERS' RESOURCE CENTRE**

## **2016 ANNUAL REPORT**





# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

**Christy Morgan**

**The Workers' Resource Centre (WRC) was established in 2002 (and saw its first clients in 2003) with the mission to build the individual and collective capacity of Albertans 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).**

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

**1) Case Work Program - provides individual support to workers struggling with issues that fall under one or more employment-related legislations and systems. In 2016, the WRC helped clients with 951 active claims, complaints and appeals. 95% of all cases closed in 2016 were successful and resulted in upwards of \$8.7 million in entitlements to our clients. This is the highest the Centre has acquired since the WRC opened its doors in 2002. In the 14 years the Centre has been advocating for clients, WRC clients have been entitled to over \$30.1 million! For every dollar invested in WRC in 2016 there was a return of \$18.22 back into the hands of workers.**

**2) The Public Legal Education Program - plain language information and education sessions provided to the community. In 2016, WRC presented 103 workshops, which were attended by 1037 individuals from vulnerable populations. 98% of participants agreed that the workshops increased their knowledge of work-related rights and benefits.**

**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 WRC Board of Directors will continue to seek out opportunities to expand 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.**

**We would like to thank all of our funders, donors, members and community partners for their on-going support throughout these busy and economically challenging times. Your support means that Alberta is a better place for hundreds of individuals and families.**

# OUTREACH AND PARTNERSHIPS

**Due to aggressive outreach efforts, many non-profit organizations, government agencies and labour groups referred clients to the WRC in 2016 such as:**

Service Canada  
Calgary Legal Guidance  
Alberta Works  
Immigrant Services Calgary  
Alberta Employment Standards  
CCCSA  
Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth  
ACT Alberta  
North East Family Connections  
Immigration Law Program  
Radio Red FM  
Calgary Immigrant Women's Association

## **Calgary Chinese Community Service Association (CCCSA) Partnership**

The WRC 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 who have difficulties communicating in English. The CCCSA provides the space and volunteer interpreters for the clinics.

## **North East Family Connections Partnership**

In 2010, the WRC broadened its accessibility to residents of the North East by partnering with the North East Family Connections. Via this partnership, a Punjabi-speaking WRC caseworker works out of this office two days per week. Both agencies continue to be pleased with this ongoing partnership.

## **Calgary Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Circle**

The WRC has been an active member of the Calgary Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Circle, formerly known as the Calgary Urban Aboriginal Initiatives' (CUAI) human rights domain, since 2007.



# 2016 ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

In 2016, the WRC saw its most successful year since beginning to see clients in 2003. This included a 95% success rate on combined casework -assisting clients in receiving over \$8 million in financial entitlements, and a significant increase in the Centre's outreach and advocacy programs. Further, the WRC generated a social return on investment of \$18.22 for every dollar of core funding received (\$18.22:1). Client satisfaction is also at an all-time high, with 100% of clients responding to having a positive description of the service and assistance provided.

The Casework 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 2016, the WRC served a total of 951 clients.

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

Employment Insurance: 50%

Alberta Employment Standards: 25%

WCB: 11%

Human Rights: 15%

Canada Pension Plan - Disability Benefits: 2%

Short/Long Term Disability Benefits: 2%

The WRC helps people from all walks of life although the majority of our clients come from vulnerable populations. In 2016:

20% of WRC clients were born outside Canada, 25% were visible minorities, 10% self-identified as having a disability, and 50% were women.

The proportion of Temporary Foreign Workers was 2% of our clients.

The WRC had a 95% success rate based on the outcomes of 481 cases that had been concluded and for which follow ups had been possible by the end of 2016. This significant rate of success resulted in financial entitlements of over \$8.7 million dollars to our clients.

Since 2006, the WRC has helped clients gain access to over \$30.1 million as a result of the organizations support and interventions.



# CLIENT SUCCESS STORIES

Ms. Thomas was experiencing serious bullying at her workplace. While the way Ms. Thomas' employer treated her was intolerable, it did not explicitly violate the Alberta Human Rights Act. After taking some sick leave, Ms. Thomas found out that her employer did not schedule her for any shifts and refused to respond to her attempts to contact him. Ms. Thomas assumed she had been fired. However, Ms. Thomas' employer took the position that she quit, and listed this in the Record of Employment. This complicated Ms. Thomas' application for Employment Insurance. The Caseworker assisted Ms. Thomas with her application, which was ultimately successful and resulted in the payment of \$11,799.00 in benefits.

A worker was dismissed from her employment despite providing sufficient medical information to her employer. The employer insisted the worker provide them with her specific diagnosis and other personal and confidential medical information. The WRC Caseworker assisted the worker in filing an Alberta Human Rights complaint on the grounds of discrimination based on mental disability. The complaint was resolved for over \$49,000 in general damages. The employer has also been ordered to revise the disability and accommodation policy at the workplace.



# PUBLIC LEGAL EDUCATION

**The Public Legal Education workshops play a proactive 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. They also build capacity to self-advocate and engage in collective action.**

**A total of 103 workshops on employment rights and benefits were conducted in 2016. The workshops were attended by 1037 individuals. These statistics confirm the growing demand for public education on workers' rights. All workshops were organized in partnerships with other organizations that primarily serve vulnerable populations.**

Based on the workshop evaluation surveys that were returned between January 1 and December 31, 2016:

98% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the WRC workshop they attended increased their knowledge about the work-related rights and benefits to which they are entitled.

98% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of the WRC workshop they attended, they knew more about how to access their work-related rights and benefits.

96% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that after the workshop, they understood more about the problems that workers could have in Alberta.

## **Workforce Participant Statistics:**

**9% were youth 25 and under**

**7% were Aboriginal**

**60% were Immigrants and Temporary  
Foreign Workers**

**45% + were unemployed**



# WRC STAFF



**Bottom Row (from left):** Candace Martens, C  
Krahn, Keith Shustov

**Front Row (from left):** Alyssa Smith, Jasvir S  
Leigh Golden, Chris Farness

## **DR. LEIGH GOLDEN, Executive Director**

Leigh has been with the WRC since 2012. Prior to becoming the WRC's Executive Director, Leigh worked as the Manager of Social Planning (Research and Evaluation) for the Region of Waterloo and as a course instructor at both the University of Guelph and Brock University. She has worked in social services and has been a social welfare advocate for close to 20 years. Leigh holds a Doctorate Degree in Planning and Development (University of Guelph) and a Masters Degree in Education (Brock University). Dr. Golden is a proud member of COPE Local 397.

## **CHRIS FARNES, Caseworker**

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 WRC in 2013 as the Intake Coordinator, Chris worked in immigration, settlement and community economic development, both in Canada and internationally. In 2015, Chris became a Caseworker.

## **JASVIR SANDHU, Caseworker**

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

## **KEITH SHUSTOV, Caseworker**

Keith joined WRC in 2015. Keith graduated from the University of Calgary with a degree in International Relations and opted his law degree at the University of Alberta. Prior to joining the WRC, Keith worked with victims of domestic violence in the not-for-profit sector as well as in the fields of immigration and family law.



**CAROLYN KRAHN,  
Intake Coordinator**

Carolyn joined the WRC team in 2017. She graduated in 2010 with a Master of Arts from the University of Victoria. Prior to joining the WRC, Carolyn worked in the areas of disability case management, education, and advocacy to create barrier-free inclusive environments for clients.

**ALYSSA SMITH,  
Intake Coordinator / Caseworker**

Alyssa joined WRC in 2015. Prior to joining the WRC, Alyssa worked for the Alberta Labour Relations Board's Calgary office and as a journalist in Yellowknife, NT.

**CANDACE MARTENS,  
Public Legal Educator**

Candace received her Social Work Diploma from Mount Royal College and completed her Bachelor's of Social Work at the University of Calgary. Candace joined the WRC 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. She returned to her role as Community Outreach and Public Education Worker in 2015. She now represents WRC as the Public Legal Educator.

**THANK YOU**

**We would like to thank all the groups,  
organizations and individuals that  
supported the Workers' Resource Centre in  
2016.**



## **FUNDERS**

Alberta Law Foundation  
Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission  
United Way of Calgary and Area

## **DONORS**

Alberta Federation of Labour  
Alberta Regional Council of Carpenters & Allied Workers  
ATU 583  
Calgary and District Labour Council (CDLC)  
COPE Local 397  
CUPE Local 38  
CUPE Local 1169  
CUPE Local 4731  
Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA)  
IBEW Local 254  
International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers  
UFCW Local 1118  
UFCW Local 401  
United Nurses of Alberta  
UUWA

## **2016 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Christy Morgan (Chair), Community Member

Alexander Shevalier (Vice Chair / Treasurer), CDLC & UFCW 401

Lucille Fedkiw (Secretary), IBEW 254 & COPE 397

Travis Asplund (Director), HSAA

Navreet Bal (Director), Law Student - University of Calgary

Karen Craik (Director), UNA

Terri Griffin (Director), Community Member

Siobhán Vipond (Director), AFL & IATSE

Devin Yeager (Director), UFCW Local 1118