

WORKERS' RESOURCE CENTRE

2017 ANNUAL REPORT



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Christy Morgan

The Workers' Resource Centre (WRC - then known as the 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).

WRC 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 two programs offered by WRC are:

1) Casework/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 2017, the WRC helped clients with 986 active claims, complaints and appeals. 94.6% of all cases closed in 2017 were successful and resulted in upwards of \$9,570,526 in entitlements to our clients. This is the highest the Centre has acquired since the WRC opened its doors in 2002. In the 15 years the Centre has been advocating for clients, WRC clients have been entitled to over \$38 million!!!. For every dollar invested in WRC, there is a return of \$19.60.

2) The Public Legal Education Program - plain language information and education sessions provided to the community. In 2017, the WRC presented 115 workshops, which were attended by 1322 individuals from vulnerable populations. 97% of participants agreed that the workshops increased their knowledge of work-related rights and benefits.

2017 was a year of transition for the WRC and its staff. We said good-bye to a former staff and welcomed in a new person into the role.

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.

The WRC Board of Directors will be working over this year to seek out opportunities that will support 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. There has been an increasing trend of clients served who reside outside of the Calgary area. 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

Due to aggressive outreach efforts, many non-profit organizations, government agencies and labour groups referred clients to the WRC in 2017 such as:

Service Canada
Calgary Legal Guidance
Alberta Works
Immigrant Services Calgary
Employment Standards
CCCSA
Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth
ACT Alberta
North East Family Connections
Russet Court Expansion Project
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.

Russet Court Expansion Project

The WRC has been an active and founding member of the Russet Court Expansion Project, offering an on-site Case Worker on a bi-weekly basis in this new community service hub, alongside a number of other serving agencies.

Human Rights Circle, *formerly Calgary Urban Aboriginal Initiative Human Rights Domain*

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



2017 ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

In 2017, the WRC saw its most successful year since beginning to see clients in 2003. This included a 94.6% success rate on combined casework - assisting clients in receiving over \$9.5 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 \$19.60 for every dollar of core funding received (\$19.60:1). 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 2017, the WRC served a total of 986 clients.

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

Employment Insurance: 40%

Alberta Employment Standards: 32%

WCB: 14%

Human Rights: 12%

Canada Pension Plan - Disability Benefits: 4%

Short/Long Term Disability Benefits: 4%

The WRC helps people from all walks of life although the majority of our clients come from vulnerable populations. In 2017:

14% of WRC clients were born outside Canada, 15% were visible minorities, 15% self-identified as having a disability, and 35% were women.

The WRC had a 94.6% success rate based on the outcomes of 327 cases that had been concluded and for which follow ups had been possible by the end of 2017. This significant rate of success resulted in financial entitlements of over \$9.57 million dollars to our clients.

Since 2006, the WRC has helped clients gain access to over \$38 million as a result of the organizations support and interventions.

CLIENT SUCCESS STORIES

Ms Singh* approached the WRC for assistance with filing an appeal of the Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPP-D) decision to the Social Security Tribunal. As a result of filing the appeal, the client was allowed the CPP-D benefits by the CPP-D office. Therefore, the client withdrew her appeal to the Social Security Tribunal. The client received retroactive CPP-D benefits and thus, will receive a total of \$175,296.00 until the age of 65 years old.


Ms. Thomas* was employed for several years when she brought a complaint of harassment against a supervisor. Shortly afterwards, Ms. Thomas was terminated after being accused of breaching company policy. She applied for Employment Insurance benefits and her application was rejected as her job was lost through alleged misconduct. The Caseworker helped Ms. Thomas file an application for Reconsideration arguing that the action Ms. Thomas performed had become general procedure at the company and was tolerated and encouraged by management. Therefore, Ms. Thomas did not commit misconduct and her termination was likely the result of the harassment complaint she filed. The Reconsideration application was successful and Ms. Thomas was able to collect \$23,646.00 in benefits.

* Names have been changed to protect client confidentiality.

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 115 workshops on employment rights and benefits were conducted in 2017. The workshops were attended by 1322 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, 2017:

97% 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.

97% 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.

95% 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:

12% were youth 25 and under

4% were Aboriginal

**57% were Immigrants and Temporary
Foreign Workers**

32% were unemployed

WRC STAFF



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

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

CHRIS FARNESSE, Executive Director

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. In 2017, Chris became the Executive Director.

DR. LEIGH GOLDEN, former 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 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 an advocate for close to 20 years. Leigh holds a Doctorate Degree in Planning and Development (Guelph) and a Masters Degree in Education (Brock University).

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
2017.**

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
BCTGM Local 252
Building Trades of Alberta
Calgary and District Labour Council (CDLC)
Canadian Labour Congress
CUPW Local 744
CUPW Local 776
COPE Local 397
COPE Local 458
CUPE Local 38
CUPE Local 1169
CUPE Local 4731
Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA)
IBEW Local 254
IUPAT District Council 17
International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers
UFCW Local 401
UFCW Local 1118
United Nurses of Alberta
United Steelworkers Local 1-207
UUWA

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