

DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE WOMEN'S CENTRE



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Mission

Our mission is to provide for basic needs and to work toward positive change for women and children in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver.

Our Purpose

The constitution of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre was written in 1978 upon incorporation and is still relevant today.

- ▶ To provide a comfortable, safe drop-in centre.
- ▶ To provide recreation and self-help programs.
- ▶ To act as a source of information by assisting women with referrals concerning their needs.
- ▶ To provide a social space and facilitate the opportunity for women of diverse backgrounds to interact and build community.
- ▶ To educate the public and all levels of government about issues concerning women in the area.

The Centre

The Downtown Eastside Women's Centre is a drop-in centre established in 1977. For more than 36 years, the Centre has provided a safe place for women and children living in a neighbourhood referred to as Canada's "poorest postal code".

The Centre provides practical support to enable our membership to survive conditions of poverty, deprivation, ill health and violence; and encourage them to make long-term change by identifying and removing barriers to full participation in the larger community. Many Downtown Eastside residents experience violence, drug abuse, low self esteem, illiteracy, racism and classism. To alleviate the impact of socio-economic disadvantage, we provide for basic needs in conjunction with long-term support. This is the key to our programming success.

DEWC Elders Advisory Council

The Elders Advisory Council works with the Board to set the direction of the organization and the members provide links to the immediate community as well as other communities.

The role of the Elders is to oversee the work of the Centre to ensure that we operate in positive ways that are relevant and sensitive.



Davi, Peer Support Worker and Reta, Centre Elder

Our Members

The wide range of women who assist, volunteer and take part in the Centre reflects all aspects of life: mothers, grandmothers, women of colour and Aboriginal women, young women and girls.

Homelessness and the lack of basic necessities are a way of life for many women within the Downtown Eastside.

Poverty is a common denominator that can be remedied with support from individuals and the community.

Please get involved today!

How to Help

The Downtown Eastside Women's Centre is a Registered Charity #12989 5959 RR0001. Your tax-deductible donation will make a difference in the lives of women and children.

Become a Valued Friend of the Centre

Friends of the Centre help in a number of ways. Friends not only donate money but use their connections to enhance all avenues of programs and services. Friends provide us with other sources of fundraising ideas, tell their friends about us and allow us to use their names for printed materials.

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Drop-In Centre

Providing for basic needs

The Centre is a safe space where women can access basic needs. Daily services available include safe functioning toilets and showers, telephone, personal hygiene supplies, a stable mailing address, and many other necessities that are required, but not readily available under current living situations. Our role as a community space helps break down the damaging effects of isolation and discrimination. As well as providing for these basic needs, regular programming occurs throughout the week.

Food Program

We serve breakfast twice weekly and lunch seven days a week. The nutritious meal brings a woman into the Centre where she can access other services and receive assistance. Dinner is available five nights a week for women who attend support and education groups. These meals are part of their weekly meal planning and spell the difference between health and illness. Our kitchen is also a training ground for women to build on skills, enhance social and personal confidence and contribute to the Centre.

Programs

The Centre offers a wide range of learning opportunities - advocacy, rights and entitlements, literacy, new technology, education, emotional support, social gatherings, arts and culture. This includes arts and crafts, yoga, sweat lodge, monthly outings, workshops and computer access. The objective is for women to develop a holistic foundation to make positive change in their lives.

Empowerment & Support

Volunteer Program

Our volunteer program focuses on providing opportunities for women of the community to enhance their skills and abilities to support improvements in their quality of life. This includes pre-employment skills such as culinary, janitorial, clerical and facilitation skills, peer support and administrative support. Participants also increase their personal, group and community skills through anger management, conflict resolution, team building, communication and negotiation skills.

“Centre volunteers contribute over 10,000 hours of work per year!”



Freeda, Annie and Audrey, volunteers

Counselling & Support Groups

Self-help, facilitated support groups, and workshops on a wide range of topics are offered. Battered Women Support Services facilitates a group that meets once a week to deal with the violence women are facing in their everyday lives. Other groups meet weekly to talk about alcohol and substance abuse issues, literacy, cultural recovery, residential school and various special community development projects. Staff are available to provide one-to-one counselling, self help and peer support.

Specialized Services

Working towards positive change

Victim Services Program

The Centre's Victim Services Worker offers support and assistance to women that have been victims of a crime. These services include help with reporting a crime, emotional support for the victim, accompaniment to court and referrals to other programs and services.

Advocacy Program

This program provides advocacy and referral to women with mental health, addiction, homelessness, history of abuse and other issues. It also offers self-help and facilitated support groups and workshops on a wide range of topics.

HIV Outreach Program

This program was initiated in the Fall of 1997 to address the rising incidence of HIV infection in the Downtown Eastside. It includes outreach, one-to-one counselling, support, harm reduction, hospital visits and referrals for women who are HIV+ or at risk.



DEWC Drop In

Projects

Warriors Organizing Women

This project has an iterative element to address root causes of violence against women and other issues relevant to women of the community. Women identify, prioritize, strategize, organize and plan their response to the needs they see in the community. Popular education methods delivered by peers are used to enhance women's participation and voices in our community.

Emergency Shelter

The emergency shelter provides a safe space for homeless women, women at risk of homelessness and women at risk of violence. No woman is turned away. This is a low-barrier system that responds to the needs of the most vulnerable in our community. Through the shelter women are linked with specialized services such as Income Assistance, housing advocacy, mental health and other health services. This is NOT a long-term solution to homelessness, the Centre continues to work in collaboration with different levels of government and other community groups to increase affordable and appropriate housing for women.

Donations

The drop-in centre accepts donations that are distributed to women in need. We accept used women's clothing, socks and underwear, footwear, coats, blankets, toiletries, reading glasses, menstrual pads, and many other items. Check our donation wish list at www.dewc.ca.