DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE WOMEN'S CENTRE

ANNUAL REPORT

2025-26

Downtown Eastside Women's Centre

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Our Mission 03

Message from the Executive Director 04

Message from the Board Chair 05

Impact at a Glance 06

Programs and Services 08

A Year of Connection 13

Community in Action 14

Looking Ahead 15

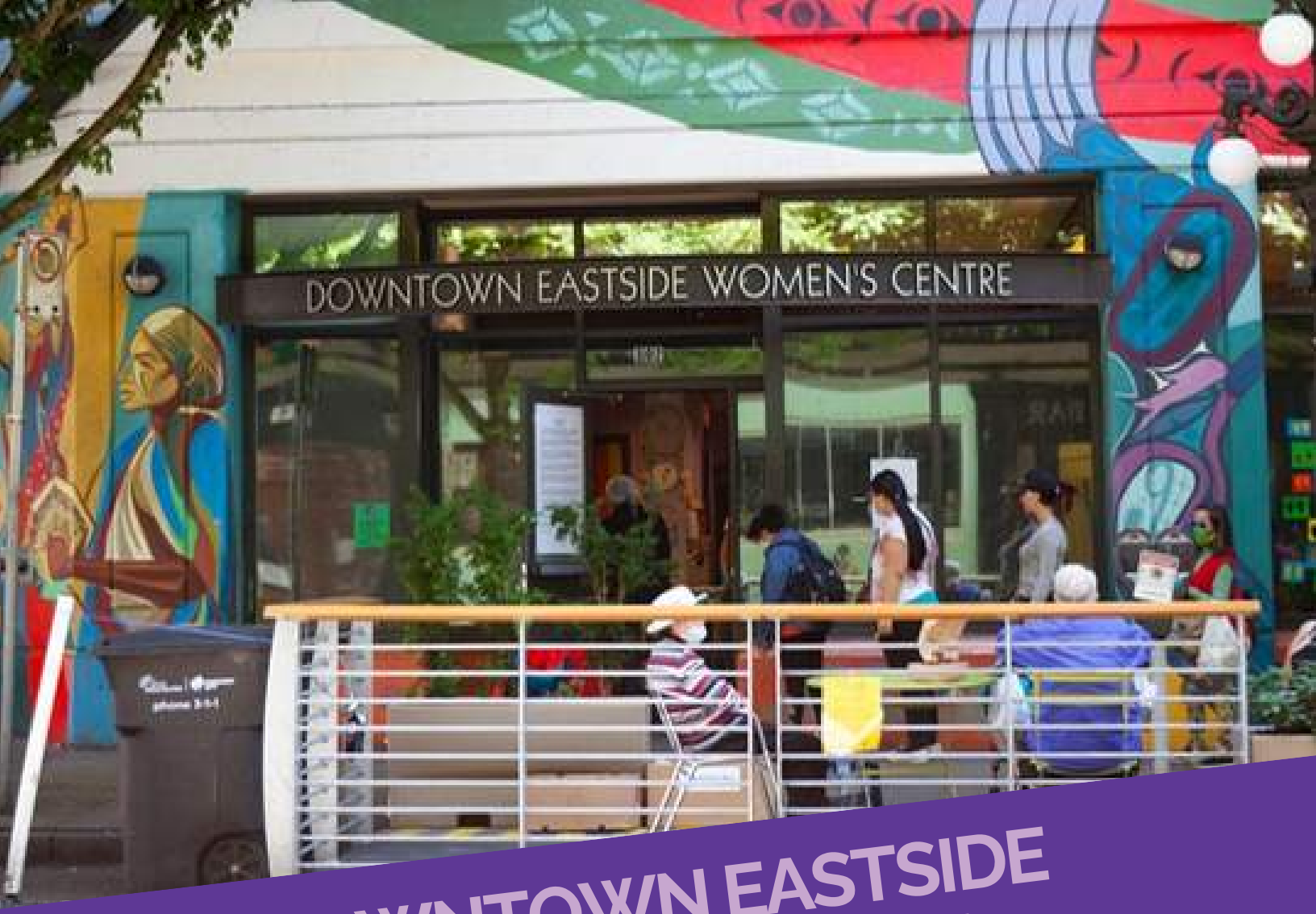
Our Supporters & Donors 17

Financial Overview 18

Board of Directors 19

We gratefully acknowledge that our work takes place on the traditional and unceded territories of the xʷməθkwəy̓ əm, Skwxwú7mesh, and sə́lilwətaʔɬ nations.

We honour, uphold, and celebrate the Indigenous people among us.



DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE WOMEN'S CENTRE

Our Mission

Opened in 1978, the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre provides a safe, non-judgmental environment for self-identifying women (cis, trans, 2S) who live and/or work in the Downtown Eastside.

Our low-barrier services include meals, counselling, shelter, advocacy, and drop-in programs that nurture and empower members.

We welcome 1200 women each day, seven days a week,
through our low barrier drop-in centre and shelter programs.
We are one of the only trans-inclusive, women-only service providers in the neighbourhood, and with disproportionately high rates of gender-based violence in our community, women frequently cite this as the reason they feel safest at DEWC.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

As the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre approaches its 50th year, we celebrate how far we have come and renew our commitment to what matters most: a safe, welcoming place where women are heard and respected, and where they can find dignity, belonging, and connection. Our mission, established in 1978, remains the foundation of our work: to provide a safe, non-judgmental environment for women from all walks of life who live and/or work in the Downtown Eastside. With other women's organizations closing or reducing services and demand growing, our mission matters more than ever.

This year we focused on strengthening the organization's infrastructure while responding to ongoing crises of gender-based violence, homelessness, inadequate access to health care, and the poisoned drug supply. Meaningful services start with listening to the women who access DEWC, who reaffirmed the importance of a safe drop-in model, essentials such as clothing and nutritious meals, and opportunities to connect with others. With donor and funder support, we dedicated additional resources to activities that help women connect with their culture and one another.

We hosted over 20 cultural and celebratory events, including a summer barbecue, holiday dinners with gifts for women and their children, National Indigenous Peoples Day, Truth and Reconciliation events, Lunar New Year, Harvest Moon Festival, International Women's Day, Black History Month, and supported external events such as the Elders' Gathering. Each week, DEWC offered 30+ activities and workshops, including movie nights, bingo, beading, and English as an Additional Language classes. Around 100 women from the DTES community contributed nearly 16,000 volunteer hours to support these efforts

The year also brought challenges. Declining donations, high staff turnover, and growing demand strained our ability to maintain safe, accessible, and relevant services. We increased our focus on staff training and retention, revised our fund development strategy, updated policies and procedures, and addressed facility concerns. In 2027, we will continue evaluating programs to ensure they reflect our mission, respond to women's needs, and strengthen our infrastructure.

Thank you to our staff, volunteers, board, donors, funders, and partners for their support. Above all, thank you to the women whose experiences and perspectives guide our work.

We invite you to help shape DEWC's next chapter. Donate, share our work, or connect with us about ways to get involved. Together, we can ensure DEWC remains a place women in the DTES can count on.

Sincerely,

Alice Kendall

Alice Kendall
Executive Director

LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Dear donors, partners, members, supporters, and friends,

It is my privilege to share the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre's Annual Report for 2025-26. Throughout the year, DEWC remained a place of safety, belonging, and connection for women facing some of the most significant challenges in our community. As the impacts of housing insecurity, poverty, gender-based violence, the toxic drug crisis, and ongoing inequities continue to be felt across the Downtown Eastside, the need for compassionate, women-centered support remains as urgent as ever.

Yet amid these challenges, we continue to witness extraordinary resilience, strength, and leadership from the women who access our programs and services every day. DEWC is more than a place where basic needs are met. It is a community where women find support, build relationships, share knowledge, celebrate culture, and create opportunities for healing and growth.

This year, we continued to strengthen our partnerships, expand opportunities for connection and engagement, and create spaces where women can experience dignity, safety, and belonging. These achievements would not have been possible without the generosity of our donors, the collaboration of our community partners, and the dedication of our staff and volunteers.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to extend my sincere gratitude to everyone who supports the work of DEWC. Whether through financial contributions, volunteer service, partnership, or advocacy, your commitment helps ensure that women in our community have access to vital supports and opportunities.

I would also like to recognize the remarkable staff and volunteers whose dedication, compassion, and expertise make this work possible every day. Their commitment to women and gender-diverse people in our community is the foundation of everything we accomplish.

As Board Co-Chair, I am committed to ensuring that DEWC continues to be guided by its feminist, trauma-informed, and inclusive values. Together, we will continue to advocate for meaningful action on gender-based violence, affordable and accessible housing, justice for Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people, health equity, an end to the toxic drug crisis, and sustainable resources to support the communities we serve.

Thank you for standing alongside us. Your support strengthens our collective ability to create a safer, more equitable future for women in the Downtown Eastside.

OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS

393,514
meal served across 5 sites

175,971
302 Columbia

109,653
412 Cordova

53,989
265 East Hastings

38,223
25 East Hastings

15,678
398 Powell

15,936
Volunteer Hours

134
Women supported through Victim Services

50+

Community events and programs program offerings included Spring and Harvest Dinners, National Indigenous People's Day, Pride Month, Sisters in Spirit Vigil, Lunar New Year, a summer barbecue, the Children's Holiday Dinner, and HerStory.

ACCESS TO SERVICES AND SUPPORT

1,850
Internal Referrals

3,048
External Referrals

1,543
Mental Health Support Referrals

164
Initial Sexual Assault Responses

252
Repeat Sexual Assault Responses

Each service connection reflects a woman seeking information, advocacy, care, or support on her own terms. Through low-barrier access and trauma-informed, culturally responsive approaches, DEWC works to make essential services available in an environment grounded in safety, dignity, and choice.

Our Programs & Services

01

Drop-In Centres

DEWC's low-barrier drop-in centres remain welcoming spaces where women can access nutritious meals, showers, toiletries, clothing, harm reduction supplies, referrals, and connections to community. Community-building programs include arts and crafts, bingo, painting and colouring, parklet beautification projects, and dance classes.

Partnerships with the Vancouver Art Gallery, Museum of Anthropology, Science World, SUCCESS, H&R Block, Strathcona Tai Chi Group, Heart of the City Festival, DTES Arts & Crafts Society, African Descent Society, Musqueam Nation, Urban Matters, Hype Chocolate, and One Yoga Van enriched the range of opportunities available to women.

02

Emergency Shelters

DEWC's shelters continued to operate at full capacity, serving more than 1,800 women. The 412 Cordova site provided 24/7 emergency shelter and served more than 109,000 meals. Across all three shelters, women had access to culturally relevant programming, peer-led support, and regular activities including art expression and movie nights.

An upgraded security system, including door fobs, improved safety for residents and staff. Shelter teams continued responding to increasing mental health needs and supporting transitions into housing where available. The shortage of affordable, appropriate housing remained a significant challenge, with waitlists on most days.

03

Food & Meal Services

Across 5 DEWC locations, kitchen teams served 393,514 meals in 2025–2026,
more than 100,000 above the previous year. Seasonal menus, developed with input from women at each location, reflect cultural preferences and foster community participation.

New equipment, including an oven and refrigerator supported by funders, strengthened DEWC's ability to serve fresh, hot meals. Rising food costs, staffing pressures, and aging infrastructure continue to be challenges. Partnerships with Save-On-Foods, Yen Bros, Khalsa Aid, and Terra Breads remain important to this work.

04

Accessible Housing

"Nadine" (a pseudonym) had spent almost a year in a DEWC shelter. Significant health and mobility needs made communal living difficult, and other shelters could not accommodate her circumstances. The Housing Outreach team worked with Nadine to locate accessible housing, connect with health services, and arrange subsidy support. She secured a wheelchair-accessible rental offering greater privacy and stability; we continued working to connect her with home care.

Housing Outreach

With affordable, accessible housing in short supply, DEWC's Housing Outreach team worked alongside more than 250 women to secure or maintain housing. During the year, the team supported 65 housing placements, prevented 51 evictions, issued 124 rental subsidies, completed 75 apartment set-ups, and provided groceries to more than 100 women.

05

06

Specialized Services

DEWC responded to 164 initial and 252 repeat sexual assault disclosures or responses and provided individualized support to 134 women through Victim Services. Peer Support Navigators supported connections through 1,850 internal referrals, 3,048 external referrals, and 1,543 mental health support referrals. Services included income assistance applications, court accompaniment, and trauma-informed care planning. Collaborations with Sheway and Vancouver Coastal Health brought mobile health supports to shelters, including wound care, STI screening, vaccination, and mental health care.

07

Cultural & Indigenous Programming

For 25 years, DEWC's cultural programming has supported identity, belonging, safety, and connection. Annual activities included National Indigenous Peoples Day, Asian Heritage Month, Mid-Autumn Festival, Black History Month, HerStory, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, and Pride Month. Indigenous programming included language circles, drumming, beading, land-based teachings, traditional foods, storytelling, and expressive arts.

08

Chinese Seniors Program

Weekly activities included Tai Chi, karaoke, art circles, fan dance, technology cafés, calligraphy, storytelling, and group outings. Programming supported cultural continuity, wellness, connection, and opportunities for creative expression.

09

Volunteer Engagement & Skills Development

About 100 volunteers contributed 15,936 hours to DEWC's programs and operations. Peer volunteers led activities including bingo, movie nights, beauty evenings, and holiday dinners. Mentorship and learning opportunities included de-escalation, communication, and trauma-informed support.

10

Facilities & Operations

An expanded four-person facilities team responded to more than 2,000 maintenance requests. Projects included air conditioning installation at 265 East Hastings and 302 Columbia, security upgrades at shelter sites, and the start of second-floor renovations at 155 East Pender. Priorities include climate adaptation, IT upgrades, and replacing aging infrastructure, including shelter beds and dividers.

A YEAR OF CONNECTION

More than 50 events and program offerings gave women opportunities to celebrate, connect, learn, and share experiences throughout the year.

CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

Lunar New Year, Mid-Autumn Festival, Black History Month, Pride Month, National Indigenous Peoples Day.

SEASONAL GATHERINGS

Spring Dinner, Harvest Dinner, Winter Dinner, New Year's celebrations, Mother's Day, Halloween, Children's Holiday Dinner, Ice Cream Day, and Summer BBQ.

COMMUNITY AND WELLNESS

Fan Dance Group performance, Red Dress Day, Sisters in Spirit Vigil, expressive arts, Elders' Gathering, and National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

DROP-IN ACTIVITIES

Movie nights, karaoke, bingo, colouring, painting, ESL, beading, Tai Chi, beauty salon activities, and writing workshops.

HEALTH AND SUPPORT CLINICS

Free Tax Clinic, hearing clinics, elder abuse prevention, VCH mobile health services, and legal advice.

COMMUNITY IN ACTION

Fundraising

Community running events brought supporters together to raise over $20,800 for DEWC. The Eastside 10K exceeded its goal by 34%, while the Beneva Vancouver Half Marathon & 5K earned DEWC an additional $1,500 award for top fundraising participation.

Generous funding from government agencies, foundations, and community partners, including Vancouver Coastal Health, BC Housing, the City of Vancouver, WAGE Canada, and others, helped sustain DEWC's essential programs and services.

HerStory

HerStory celebrated the talents and strengths of women in the DEWC community, including participation in the gala's signature fashion show.

The event raised $227,000 to support DEWC services and programs, according to the supplied program notes.

HerStory returns **March 4, 2027,** for its 11th annual event.

DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE WOMEN'S CENTRE

11th ANNUAL FUNDRAISING GALA

HERSTORY

Stories Woven Together

JOIN US FOR AN EVENING OF COMMUNITY AND GENEROSITY, WEAVING A STRONGER FUTURE TOGETHER FOR WOMEN IN THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE.

SAVE THE DATE

THURSDAY, MARCH 4th 2027

D/6 LOUNGE AT PARQ VANCOUVER

LOOKING AHEAD

As DEWC approaches its **50th year**, organizational priorities remain grounded in the voices and needs of women accessing the Centre.

Strengthening Programs & Services

Continue reviewing programs to ensure they meet women's evolving needs and reflect DEWC's mission and mandate.

Creating Opportunities for Connection

Sustain culturally relevant programming, workshops, events, and opportunities for women to participate and lead.

Supporting Our People

Prioritize staff development, retention, training, and volunteer leadership.

Maintaining Safe, Accessible Spaces

Address facilities needs, aging infrastructure, safety upgrades, and climate resilience.

Building Stronger Systems

Update policies and procedures and strengthen the operational systems that sustain low-barrier services.

Long-Term Sustainability

Develop fund development strategies and partnerships that support stable services and responsible growth.

Support, Strength, Sisterhood

SPONSORS AND DONORS

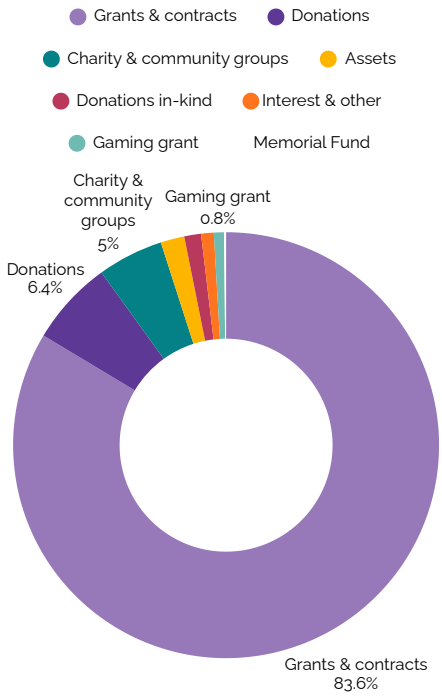
We are grateful to the donors, funders, charitable foundations, businesses, community organizations, and individual supporters whose contributions helped sustain safe spaces, programming, and **nearly 400,000 meals across our five sites.**

We honour your contribution, and we are profoundly grateful to stand with you in this work. **Thank you for believing in the power and strength of women.**

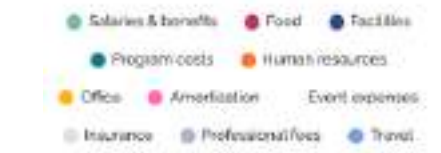
- BOMA BC Building Owners & Managers Association
- Crofton House School
- CUPE BC
- Djavad Mowafaghian Foundation
- Ecclesiastical Insurance
- Face the World Foundation
- Giveback Contracting
- Hylcan Foundation
- Jewish Community Foundation
- Lotte & John Hecht Memorial Foundation
- Quesnel Foundation
- Raven Foundation
- RBC
- Remembering Otto and Marie Pick Charitable Foundation
- Strategic Charitable Giving Foundation
- The Espiritu Foundation
- The Hieros Family Foundation
- The Houssian Foundation
- The Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia
- Trotter Family Foundation
- UFCW Local 1518
- Vancouver Community Foundation
- Vancouver Foundation

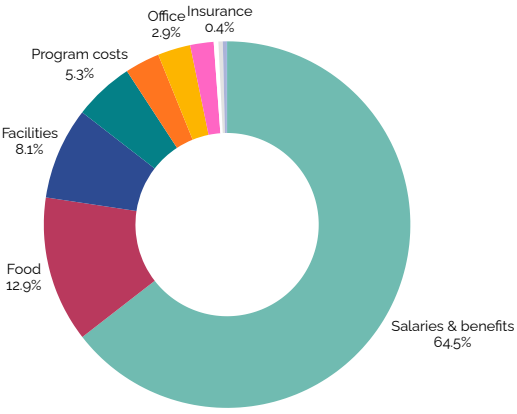
FINANCE SUMMARY

REVENUE	
Source	**CAD**
Grants and contracts	$13,464,292
Donations	$1,037,696
Foundation revenue	$804,282
Charity and community groups	$290,330
Assets	$239,103
Donations in-kind	$205,016
Interest and other income	$154,151
Gaming grant	$125,000
Memorial fund	$23,465
Total revenue	**$16,343,335**



EXPENSES	
Source	**CAD**
Salaries and benefits	$10,471,286
Food	$2,091,308
Facilities	$1,318,564
Program costs	$861,416
Human resources	$499,126
Office	$470,046
Amortization of capital assets	$335,349
Event expenses	$67,176
Insurance	$61,940
Professional fees	$51,296
Travel	$9,177
Total expenses	**$16,236,684**





OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Co-Chair

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Member at Large

Mary Mootrey
Member at Large

Samantha Watkins
Member at Large

Downtown Eastside Women's Centre

Standing with women in the Downtown Eastside since 1978.
Our commitment to dignity, safety, and belonging continues, and so does our work.

STAY CONNECTED

DEWC.CA

155 E Pender St (Administrative Office)

Downtown Eastside Women's Centre

@dewcvancouver