

Women's Economic Council
Annual Report 2010



Annual Report Table of Contents

Message from the President	3
Message from the Executive Director	4
Board of Directors and Staff	5
WEC Statements	6
Projects and Action Summaries	8
Funders	12
Project Partners.....	12
2010 Financial Summary	13

Message from the President



In 2010, the torch was passed from Past President, Rosalind Lockyer. Following in the footsteps of a founding mother has been an exciting and humbling experience. Yet, it has been because of her mentorship and support that our Board of Directors under my leadership continues to work with such passion and enthusiasm for women-centered community economic development (CED). Also this past year, Pat Baxter confidently stepped into the shoes of Executive Director from the Board of Director's Vice President's position. Her work at the operational level along with Cathy Dennis, Executive Assistant, has ensured that the profile and work of women's CED remains strong.

The Women's Economic Council (WEC) is a national non-profit organization with charitable status. This national mandate places WEC in a unique position of working with Canadian women on the ground in the labour market while at the same time working with organizations that support women and women's initiatives. WEC's business network across the country is strong and getting stronger as we continue to work with stakeholders who are women-centred with a focus on helping women, their families and communities contribute to their own economic security through CED.

Building on the previous years' work, WEC has strengthened its place in Canada in 2010. This is no easy feat with Canada's geographic size being so large and its population being so diverse. Yet, the women on WEC's Board of Directors are champions who think "bigger" than the challenges that come with Canada's geography. The Board is also proud of its respect for diversity and demonstrates this through its business meetings, projects and business network through partnerships and cooperation that bridges differences in cultures, language, religion and residency.

I would like to acknowledge the contributions of funders to women's centered CED in Canada which includes the Status of Women Canada, the Canadian Women's Foundation and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. These government agencies recognize the need to invest in projects that support women in Canada to reach their full economic potential. I would also like to thank the other partnering agencies and many friends of WEC who supported women across Canada to start and grow income generating activities, cooperatives and businesses this past year.

WEC sees enormous possibilities for women across Canada. There are so many opportunities to explore and so much that can be learned and shared in the equipping of women leaders and workers for the Canadian marketplace. As 2011 unfolds, WEC is excited about the work it anticipates.

I certainly hope that you will join WEC as we work with women to achieve their economic goals!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Valerie Carruthers". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a light blue oval shape.

Valerie Carruthers
President



Message from the Executive Director



The Women's Economic Council (WEC) has had a very exciting, energizing year. As the new Executive Director I am proud of WEC's accomplishments and look forward to our future in supporting women-led Community Economic Development in Canada.

WEC has completed a three-year capacity building project that supported women-led CED in financial literacy and leadership development. Through this work WEC touched and networked with many women-led organizations, other CED groups and worked in partnership with groups such as the Canadian Women's Foundation and The Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet).

These relationships have created momentum towards more direct work with women-led CED and its development. WEC has also worked more closely with Immigrant and Aboriginal women's groups to help address the inequities and barriers to economic security they experience.

WEC branched out in the past year and conducted a national consultation with Immigrant women, asking them to identify their needs in supporting women-led CED. *The Moving Forward Report* provides guidance and excellent recommendations for CED. As well, WEC completed a feasibility study with Aboriginal women and their organizations, testing the potential of developing *The Cluster Model* (a model designed to help network and build local capacity to support women and their organizations towards successful economic development initiatives). Both these reports will lead the way to new projects and exciting initiatives for the coming year.

WEC continues its work to influence women's policy initiatives in CED through their contributions from the Canadian Women's Foundation. WEC works with provincial governments and federal departments such as Status of Women to make systemic changes that will support women's programming and initiatives.

The WEC Board of Directors has been tremendous in their efforts and voluntary support of the organization. They have been committed to supporting staff and helping steer the organization towards a virtual national office that will promote greater reach and better connection and networking with women and their organizations. The WEC office remains in St. Catharines, Ontario and I am just outside of Ottawa. This trend may grow with new projects with new project staff located throughout Canada.

WEC has been very fortunate to have Executive Assistant Cathy Dennis who has been tremendous in providing consistent and quality support to the organization. It is Cathy's commitment that has made the transition smooth and seamless as I have taken on the position of Executive Director.

WEC will build on past achievements and continue to grow towards our vision of *Economic Security for Every Woman*.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Patricia Baxter'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Patricia Baxter
Executive Director

WEC Board of Directors and Staff

Board of Directors

Valerie Carruthers

President

Patricia Baxter

Vice President (resigned in October 2010)

Carol Rock

Secretary-Treasurer and founding member

Rosalind Lockyer

Board member and founding member

Melanie Con

Board member and founding member

Gulalai Habib

Board member

Staff

Jessica Notwell

Executive Director

Patricia Baxter

Acting Executive Director (November 2010)

Cathy Dennis

Executive Assistant

Women's Economic Council Statements

Vision

Economic security for every woman

Mission

Advancing women-centred CED to improve the lives of women, their families and communities

Action

The Council strengthens the women-centred CED sector and organizations through information-sharing and technical assistance

The Council helps to provide a national voice for women-centred CED to increase awareness of the effectiveness of holistic women-centred CED

The Council raises public awareness about policy changes necessary to support women's economic security

The Council researches and documents issues, trends and outcomes of the diversity and spectrum of women-centred CED

Mandate

Women's Economic Council is a national charitable organization of women-centred community economic development organizations and practitioners.

Community Economic Development (CED) is local economic development that is focused on people, employment, self-employment, inclusion and sustainability. Its goal is to provide meaningful work for all, at a level of income that provides a secure livelihood, in jobs that are environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.

Women-centred CED adapts the CED framework to accomplish changes for women. It starts with women's lives and challenges deeper and more systemic elements of economic and social equality in a practical way, working with women at the grass roots level and building a foundation to increase women's economic security and independence. It is built on a foundation of empowerment and offers a holistic, long term approach to development. It includes training and skills development, co-operatives, small business development supports, social purpose enterprise, micro-lending, and much more.

The Council works to represent women who can benefit from CED as a means to break the cycle of poverty improve the lives of their families and communities, including:

- Women who are exploited in their work – unpaid and underpaid
- Women who have experienced domestic violence
- Women with disabilities
- Women experiencing or at risk of homelessness
- Women in or at risk of persistent poverty
- Aboriginal women
- Immigrant and refugee women
- Visible Minority women
- Women experiencing mental illness as a barrier to work



The realities of intersecting oppressions mean that many women experience complex and multi-faceted economic, social and political exclusion. The Council respects and supports the many routes women take to overcome multiple oppressions, and we stand in solidarity with all women as we work toward women's equity, equality and economic security.

Projects and Action Summaries

Leadership and Women's Economic Security: A Sustainability Approach

The Women's Economic Council (WEC) undertook a three-year project sponsored by Status of Women Canada entitled over the period from June 2009 to February 2011.

The objective of the project was: *To increase the financial competency and leadership skills of women living on low incomes by using women-centred CED approaches to strengthen individual women-centred CED organizations/enterprises and the women-centred CED sector as a whole in the following ways:*



- a. increasing the involvement of women living on low incomes in the management, planning and evaluation of women-centred CED organizations;
- b. training women-centred CED organizations/enterprises to deliver Financial Competency Training and Leadership Development Training;
- c. enhancing the effective management capacity of organizations/enterprises;
- d. strengthening mutual support networks within the women-centred CED sector;
- e. facilitating women's leadership development; and
- f. advancing the women-centred CED sector.

The project actively engaged over 70 organizations and almost 900 women in 12 communities across Canada to enhance women's leadership and women's economic security and independence.

a) Women's Leadership Component: With respect to the leadership development element of the project, participants were extremely positive about all three aspects of the program: the leadership training workshops, the mentorship, and their ongoing efforts in their CED organization to apply what they learned.

- Participants cited many examples of how the leadership program had helped them understand, develop and actually practise important leadership skills, including: relationship-building, public speaking, using the Sustainable Livelihoods model, reflective practice, goal setting, curriculum development, asset mapping, proposal writing, outcome measurement, conflict resolution, self-confidence, risk taking, values-based decision making, presentations, developing training materials and workshops, analysis of community issues, advocacy and social change.
- Above all, the participants valued the relationships built with other CED leaders through the program. Through these relationships, participants learned, felt empowered and supported, were inspired by the examples of others, and expanded their professional networks.

Aboriginal Women's Cluster Model Feasibility Study



The feasibility study was resourced by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to look at an innovative model that would provide holistic networking and community support to build Aboriginal women-led CED initiatives. WEC interviewed several national Aboriginal women's organizations and regional groups to direct and advise on best approaches, to explore how this model might work in Aboriginal communities and how non-Aboriginal women's groups might work together and support women-led CED.

The study determined that this model would be advantageous for all women at the community level. Therefore WEC is interested in pursuing project support to implement the *Cluster Model* in four regions of Canada targeting Aboriginal and Immigrant women in two sites and building two other sites that will service all rural and isolated women.

Policy and Advocacy

The Canadian Women's Foundation supported WEC's work towards impacting women's policy and advocacy in CED. Their support allowed the WEC Board of Directors to meet with Immigrant women's organizations in Vancouver and Newfoundland. WEC provided national support towards international and national backing for specific women-led initiatives. Additional activities include the following:

- The *Moving Forward* Report provides recommendations and guidance on the kinds of supports required by Immigrant women as they build towards women-led CED – this required several focus groups with Immigrant women's organizations across Canada
- Membership with the Common Thread Co-op (a social enterprise) in Vancouver
- Published the report *If Women Mattered*
- Support letter sent opposing the abolishment of the Long Census
- Establishment of several women-led WEC advisory committees providing guidance on issues impacting women-led CED
- Participation at two national conferences sponsored by CCEDNet (Winnipeg/Ottawa)



Governance

The WEC Board of Directors worked effectively to strengthen internal governance policies, including operational procedures to support good governance practices and diligence. The Board of Director's Policy manual was updated and revised, new operating procedures were observed and practiced, attention was given to Board succession planning and a process for recruiting new members.

Due to limited staff and resources supporting the organization, WEC Board of Directors acts as a working board contributing when they can to support the operation and future planning of the organization. Eventually the organization will transition into a policy-making Board.

ACTION and NETWORKING

The Board of Directors for WEC meets twice a year, usually in different locations across Canada. The policy when meeting is to either meet with local women's organizations and/or have guests come and present and or provide training for the Board. This is to ensure we are networking and connecting and keeping abreast of women's issues especially how they relate with women-led economic development.

2010 Guest Speakers:

Kate McInturff - Feminist Alliance for International Action, *Executive Director*

Kate McInturff from FAFIA attended a Board of Directors meeting to brief the Board of Directors of WEC on current political actions and thinking nationally in Canada. Particularly focusing on the Conservative government's Action Plan and where women's issues stood on this agenda.

Roslyn Bern - Leacross Foundation, *President*

Roslyn Bern was invited to a WEC Board meeting to workshop with the Board of Directors how to position WEC to appeal for funding to philanthropic individuals. What kind of messaging, projects and opportunities may be in the future.

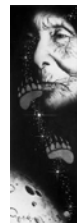
List of Funders 2010

Status of Women Canada

Canadian Women's Foundation

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

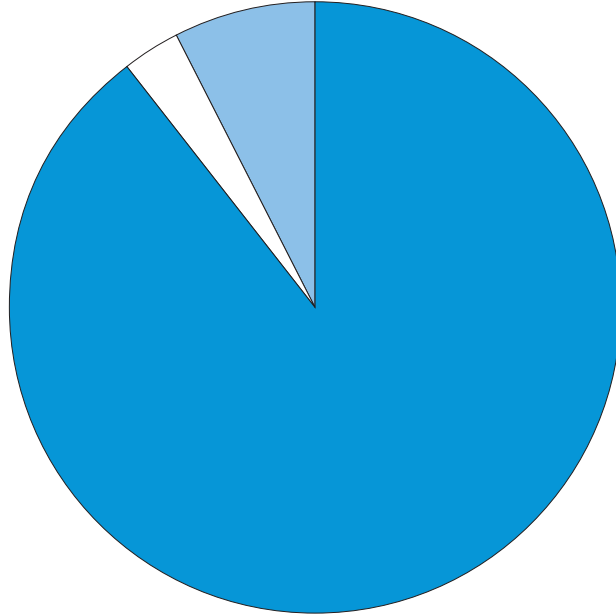
Project Partners



2010 Financial Summary

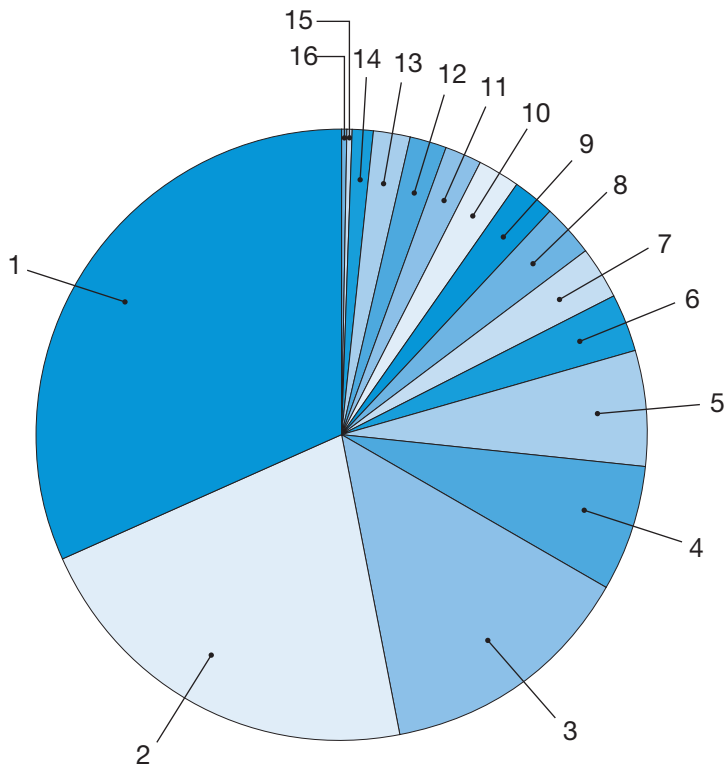
2010 Revenue

- Grant, Status of Women, \$243,554
- Grant, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, \$8,481
- Grant, Canadian Women's Foundation, \$19,629



2010 Total Expenses

1. Travel and Facilities, \$84,311
2. Salaries and Wages, \$56,879
3. Administrative Costs, \$36,567
4. Translation and Interpretation, \$17,150
5. Project Supplies, Resources and Equipment, \$16,263
6. Rent, \$8,253
7. IT Support, \$7,544
8. Evaluation, \$7,189
9. Contracted Services, \$6,000
10. Telephone, \$5,586
11. Professional Fees, \$5,524
12. Public Education, \$5,374
13. Conference Costs, \$4,756
14. Research, \$3,422
15. Bank Charges, \$593
16. Dependant Care, \$100





3340 Schmon Parkway
Thorold ON, L2V 4Y6

T. 905.227.3175 | F. 905.227.4691
www.womenseconomiccouncil.ca