

ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR EVERY WOMAN



WEC ANNUAL REPORT 2009

WOMEN LEADING CHANGE

WEC Board of Directors: Rosalind Lockyer, Melanie Conn, Carol Rock, Valerie Carruthers, Gulalai Habib, Patricia Baxter

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Growing an organization from an idea to a sustainable, vibrant entity is a challenging and rewarding experience. I have had the pleasure of guiding and participating in such a process for two women's organizations, first in 1995, growing PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise (PARO), where I continue to work as the founding Executive Director, and later, with this Women's Economic Council (WEC). This year I will complete my term as President of the WEC, and pass on the responsibility to another.

I pass the torch with great pride in our accomplishments together, as the WEC, a small group of women who took up the challenge and forged ahead knowing it would be very difficult and would take a lot of hard work. The 'Swamp Sisters', we good-naturedly called ourselves, growing out of a 'Think Tank' in New Brunswick in 2002. We determined that women needed a strong national presence- an organization that would work to advance, promote, and support women's community economic development (CED).

With financial support from the Canadian Women's Foundation and CEDTAP, incubated and administrated by PARO, we started to work. Meeting with the Minister of Status Women Canada, we talked about our plans, the why and the how. Little did we know how demanding it would be to find common ground across the wide variety of approaches and activities called Women's CED, how many volunteer hours would be needed, the extent of the barriers caused by the large geographical expanse of our country, Canada, or what was needed to talk a common language across such diversity of cultures and situations. However, we can proudly look back and forward today with much assurance that the WEC and its work will live on.

We have survived the growing pains to become an independent, vibrant organization working with several women's organizations across the country bringing together mentors with mentees, women who will take strong leadership roles in the sector. We have taken a supportive role to help add capacity to other women's organizations. We have partnered with women's organizations and mainstream organizations to ensure that gender equity would be entrenched in activity coming out of the Declaration of the 2010 National Summit that took place recently in Ottawa. We have an Executive Director, support staff, an office, and a strong board. So, as I move from a leadership role to a mentoring role, I do it with joy that I had the opportunity to be a part of such a resolute, devoted and zealous group of women. I call you my friends and I know you will be friends of women, forever.

Humbly yours,



Rosalind Locker

WOMEN CHANGING LIVES

WEC Staff: Jessica Notwell, Cathy Dennis

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

2009 was a year of profound change for the Women's Economic Council. We celebrated moving to a new office in Thorold, ON, hiring Cathy Dennis as Executive Assistant, beginning the Leadership and Women's Economic Security project, and many new partnerships with women-centred CED organizations. WEC is thrilled to be working with so many new women, communities, and partner organizations.

In February 2009, WEC began the Leadership and Women's Economic Security project, funded by Status of Women Canada, including a Leadership Train-the-Trainer and an Economic Literacy Train-the-Trainer. In the Leadership Train-the-Trainer, thirteen partner organizations chose Mentees to participate in training and mentorship. Mentees completed training on Personal Leadership, Communications, Conflict Resolution, Strategic Thinking, and Leader as Educator. Mentees also worked with leadership Mentors on personal leadership goals that included designing and implementing community-based leadership training.

In the Economic Literacy Train-the-Trainer, 8 organizations committed to completing 2-day staff training on the WEC Economic Literacy Curriculum and implementing community-based training for at least 30 local women per community. WEC staff compiled a curriculum of effective practices in Economic Literacy, emphasizing skills and knowledge important to women including Talking to Your Partner about Money, Developing a Spending Plan, Savings, Understanding Credit and Your Credit Report, Managing Money When Your Relationship Ends, and Building the Local Economy.

In 2009, WEC also assisted with the development of Common Thread Cooperative. Common Thread supports sewing social enterprises to work together on common projects. This collaboration results in more work for more women, increasing the incomes of participating women and their families and supporting greater economic security.

The Canadian Women's Foundation funded WEC's Public Policy and Advocacy work focused on Aboriginal Women's CED, Immigrant Women's CED, and women's economic security. WEC built relationships with Aboriginal women's organizations and Immigrant-serving organizations, as well as CED organizations preparing for the 2010 National Summit on a People-Centred Economy.

Working with WEC board, staff and partners is an enriching and humbling experience and I am deeply grateful for your guidance and mentorship. Thank you for your commitment to WEC and to women's economic security. Together, we can empower women to build sustainable communities.



Jessica Notwell

WOMEN BUILDING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

WEC LEADERSHIP TRAIN-THE-TRAINER

WEC's Leadership Train-the-Trainer provides fifteen Mentees with an opportunity to build personal leadership skills and knowledge, participate in the development of a Leadership Toolkit, and deliver leadership training to women in their local communities.

In August 2009, Mentees completed a Personal Leadership Assessment designed to encourage self-reflection and goal-setting. Mentees identified three primary leadership goals which included skills enhancement in facilitation, public speaking, values-based leadership, conflict resolution, fund development and program planning. Mentees worked with Mentors on their leadership goals as well as planning for community-based training. Mentees also explored how community-based training would fit into the work of their organizations, which organizations in the community might be project partners, and which women would most benefit from participating.

In 2010, Mentees will design and deliver community-based leadership training for at least 30 women in their local communities.

WEC ECONOMIC LITERACY TRAIN-THE-TRAINER

WEC's Economic Literacy Train-the-Trainer provides 8 women-centred CED organizations with training in the WEC Economic Literacy Curriculum. In 2009, participating organizations agreed to work with WEC to customize the particular pieces of the Curriculum that would best suit the women they serve, and to deliver training for at least 30 women in each community.



WEC Leadership Mentees, August 2009

WOMEN SHAPING POLICY

PUBLIC POLICY AND ADVOCACY

In 2009 WEC, funded by the Canadian Women's Foundation, prioritized Aboriginal women's CED and Immigrant women's CED in our public policy work. WEC built relationships with Aboriginal women's organizations and Immigrant-serving organizations in order to learn more about the economic security priorities of Aboriginal women and Immigrant women. WEC learned about the CED activities of Aboriginal women and the economic security priorities of Immigrant women. WEC also learned that there is a strong desire for greater access to women-centred programs and services to help women and their families build sustainable livelihoods.

WEC used this learning in our public policy work as a member of the 2010 National Summit on a People-Centred Economy Steering Committee, the Canadian Social Economy Hub Board and Public Policy Committee, the Ad Hoc Coalition for Women's Equality and Human Rights, and the Research Committee of the Canadian Community Economic Development Network.

2010 NATIONAL SUMMIT ON A PEOPLE-CENTRED ECONOMY — FINANCE AND INVESTMENT

WEC, in partnership with Causeway Social Finance, prepared the Finance and Investment thematic paper for the 2010 National Summit on a People-Centred Economy. The paper was used to engage potential Summit participants as well as policy makers in co-constructing a people-centred economy. The paper emphasized the importance of investing in social infrastructure as one way to move toward greater gender equality in federal spending. Social infrastructure investments would include a National Child Care Plan, a National Housing Strategy, and targeted support for women-centred CED.

Women-centred CED programs help thousands of Canadian women break the cycle of poverty each year...Investment in women-centred CED organizations such as EthniCity Catering and Neechi Foods Co-op is investment in job creation, improved economic security and financial independence for Canadian families...

- Finance and Investment, 2009

WOMEN GROWING EMPLOYMENT

COMMON THREAD CO-OPERATIVE



For years, Melanie Conn has been dreaming of a way to support social enterprise growth. The answer came in the form of Common Thread Co-operative. Common Thread acts as a broker between a group of sewing social enterprises and companies or organizations in need of products. Common Thread helps this group of sewing social enterprises to work together to produce larger volumes of products, allowing the social enterprises to employ more women for more hours and increasing the incomes of women and their families. Products are made from recycled street banners.

In 2009, Common Thread worked on their first Fairware contract, made tote bags for Vancity through Wilson International, and produced other products.

Common Thread designer, Azadeh Hessami, works with the sewers on production quality. Azadeh also coordinates production, working with the sewers to build skills in group production.

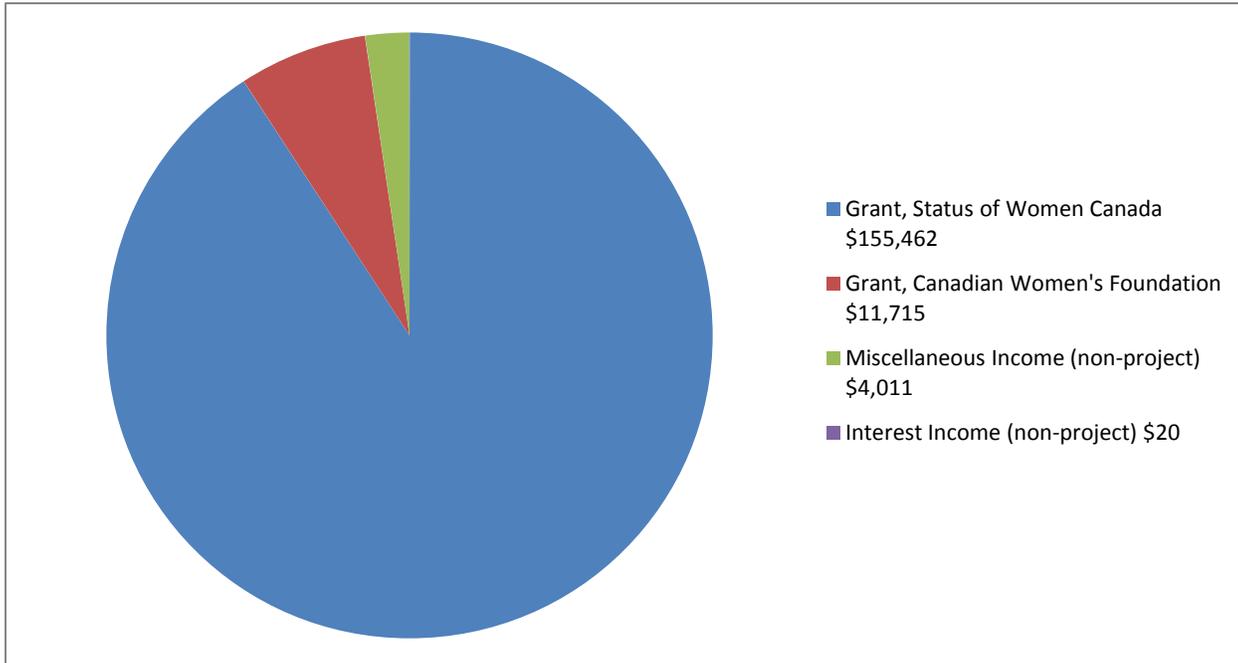
WEC is proud to be a member of Common Thread Cooperative.

Pictured to the right is Canadian Olympic soccer player Amy Vermeulen wearing a sports bag made by Common Thread.

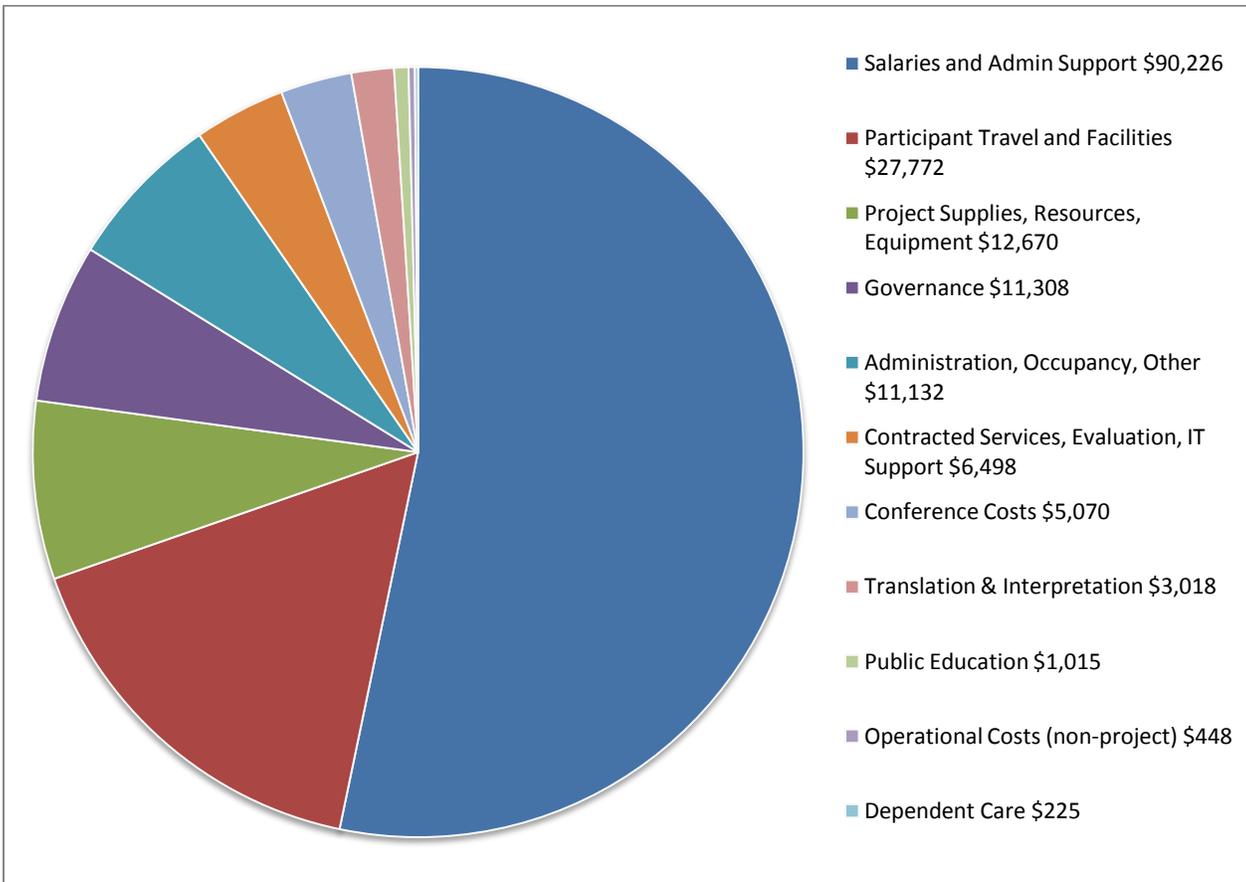


WEC FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2009

2009 TOTAL REVENUE \$171,208



2009 TOTAL EXPENSES \$167,625



WEC PARTNERS

PROJECT PARTNERS

Battered Women's Support Services (BWSS)
Bringing Youth Towards Equality (BYTE)
EthniCity Catering
Alberta Network of Immigrant Women
Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers
YWCA Saskatoon
SEED Winnipeg Inc.
Ka Ni Kanichihk

PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise
Oneida Nation on the Thames
Women's Employment Resource Centre
YWCA Toronto
Compagnie F
Every Woman's Centre
Women Interested in Successful Employment

COMMUNITY-BUILDING PARTNERS

Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet)
Canadian Social Economy Hub
Ad Hoc Coalition for Women's Equality and Human Rights
Women's Worlds Congress 2011

WEC FUNDERS

Women's Economic Council acknowledges the financial support of Status of Women Canada.



Women's Economic Council also acknowledges the support of Canadian Women's Foundation, making it possible for the Council to lift up the voices of women in communities into federal public policy spaces.



WEC CONTACT INFORMATION



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