



Gratitude Report

YWCA NIAGARA REGION



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Gratitude: the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.

As I am sure you have noticed, this year's report is called the Gratitude Report. When I saw the title, I thought, how appropriate. We at the YW recognize that it is the collective work of volunteers, community partners, funders, businesses and staff that ensure we are able to provide the programs and services that we do, so that women and their families do not have to face living in unsafe circumstances and get the much needed supports they deserve. It is only fitting that we take the time to recognize this collective work and show our gratitude as we reflect on the past year's activities.

What a year it has been! We have seen growth in the number of programs delivered and an explosion in the number of individuals served. The YW has entered into a capital campaign to build a home for families who are experiencing homelessness, including one of our supported transitional housing programs. We saw a large increase in the number of participants in our signature event No Fixed Address. We have seen significant growth in the number of individuals who are volunteering and supporting our work. For the first time ever, through the work of the Niagara Poverty Reduction Network, we were able to have poverty actually talked about during the municipal elections and have the conversation continue beyond the election. We saw unprecedented media and community responses to the work that we do.

So what am I grateful for? **I am grateful for everyone who makes up the YWCA Niagara Region.** From the staff who passionately advocate and support the women, men and children that walk through our doors every day; to the community members that give their time, their money and whatever other resources that they can; to the funders and supporters who contribute their resources. I am also always grateful for the women, men and children that trust us enough to allow us to provide whatever support we can, as they travel through difficult times.



SAVING FOR A HOME

When asked about their dreams for the future, tears come to Heather's eyes. "Our dream is to have our own home, to have stability. When you have a home, it takes away so much other stress. It would mean everything."

"The programs offered by the YW have taught me a lot about myself," says Heather as she smiles at Cheryl, one of our Transitional Support Workers. They first met about three years ago, and Cheryl has been there for Heather and her family every step of the way, ever since.

At the time Heather, her husband Chad and their three beautiful children came to the YWCA Niagara Region they were living in a mobile home which was less than ideal. They had come to the realization that living in a mobile home was not a long term solution. They also had to admit that given the high rents in Niagara, they were not going to be able to do it on their own. "So I met with Cheryl, we got together for interviews and the application process and only a short time later, we moved into our house", explains Heather.

Their home is a beautifully decorated little townhouse in Grimsby. Both Heather and Chad work hard and are fortunate enough to have reliable jobs and yet, at the end of the month, there is just not enough money left to pay for the rent. Still, the family is always looking for ways to get even better at living with what they have. During their three years in the program, they have taken part in almost every workshop offered by the YW, such as "cooking on a budget", "budget boot camp" and "skills of success." **"This family's story is inspirational," says Cheryl, "they are always sticking together. To see them flourish when they were so broken when they first came to us... it's amazing."**

A few years back, the family lost everything they owned to a house fire. Chad explains that since then, they appreciate everything, even a toothbrush, and Heather adds: "It taught us to take things one day at a time and to enjoy every single day and to be grateful for our health."

They have so much more to be grateful for now, as they have achieved their goal of home ownership and they are moving into their own home in the next year.



IMPACTING LIVES

The work done at the YW is complex and multi-faceted. We rely heavily on the financial, in-kind donation and the referrals of our Community Funders and Partners as women and their families are helped in moving beyond their current circumstances. It is through this support that shelter and meals are provided to homeless women and their families, advocacy for their welfare, a better life for teen girls, solutions to end poverty and support to women, their families, youth and men as they transition into stable housing. We are truly grateful for this support.

Your support allows programs like **stomt** to be available for the women and families who need them.

In the past year alone, 4,414 individuals participated in our Skills Development programming.

stomt stands for “sex trade on my terms” and is a new program offered through the generosity of a grant from the United Way St. Catharines and District. It is a weekly drop-in for women who engage in survival sex work. **stomt** provides them with a space where they can warm up, get some food and a hot drink, or just talk. “This program allows women to come into a space and know that they are safe from judgment and oppression. All women need to feel safe no matter what their choice of job is,” explains Krystal, Skills Development Coordinator.

“THE YW
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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

It is unusual to walk into our King Street Shelter kitchen and not see Cheyenne's smiling face and hear the reggae tunes blasting. Cheyenne volunteers three to four full days a week. We often see her baking cookies and cakes, chopping vegetables, cooking soups, washing the dishes and cleaning, helping wherever she can. A lot goes into planning meals for up to 30 people a day, and Cheyenne plays an integral role in preparing the menu along with her mother, who is the kitchen supervisor. Her enthusiasm and cheerful personality shine into all that she does, making the kitchen one fun place to go.

Volunteers play an integral role in helping us achieve our mission.

Last year, **22** volunteers provided over **1,700** hours in preparing the **59,835** meals served out of our YW kitchens.

Throughout all of our volunteer programs, **225** volunteers provided over **5,683** hours of time.

Thank you to the hundreds of women and men who dedicate their precious time to support the YW programs.

We are humbled by the dedication and enthusiasm you bring to the day.

**“THE YWCA
HELPED ME
GET BACK ON
MY FEET.”**



“Imagine if one of your loved ones or family members was homeless. Would you help that individual?” These were among the thoughts that ran through Jeff Smith’s mind as he experienced the Cardboard House while it was on display at the Pen Centre. Rather than ignore this problem, he chose to take it personally and imagine that the homeless person was his brother or sister. **Immediately, Jeff decided to become a monthly donor and to make the impact of his gift even greater.**

Monthly gifts provide a consistent and reliable source of funding that allow us to plan ahead, and allows the YW to **strengthen the programs and services offered** to homeless women and their families across Niagara.

Your support has helped 1,404 women & their families who used our housing services find shelter and move to a place of hope this past year.

- **1,254** women in Emergency Shelter
- **39** men in Emergency Shelter
- **444** children in Emergency Shelter
- **71** families in Emergency Family Shelter with **247** children
- **7** individuals housed in Housing First units
- **36** women in On Site Transitional Housing
- **158** women, men & children in Off Site Transitional Housing
- **27** women in Supported Transitional Housing

“I WAS ON THE STREET AND NOW I HAVE A HOME.”



1 Launched a \$1.5 million Capital Campaign

2 Piloted & opened a Men's Shelter

3 Started running Sex Trade On My Terms

4 Opened two additional Family Shelter Units

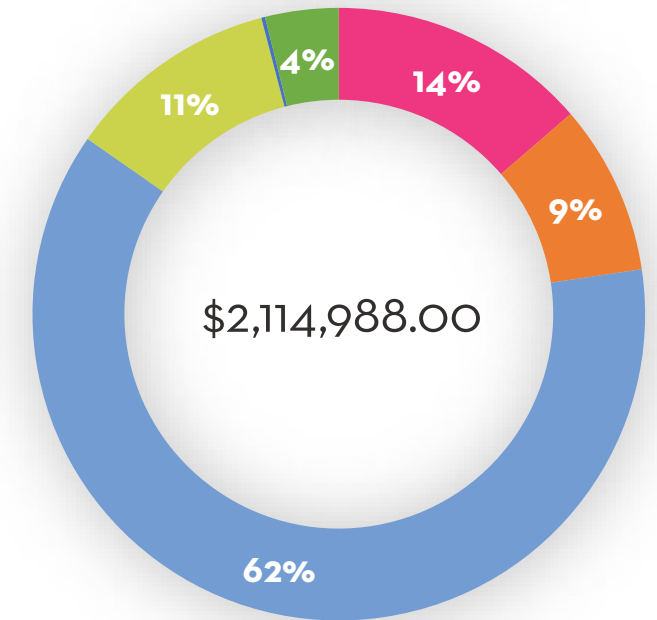
5 Opened five Housing First Units

6 Expanded Transitional Housing services to Fort Erie

Financials

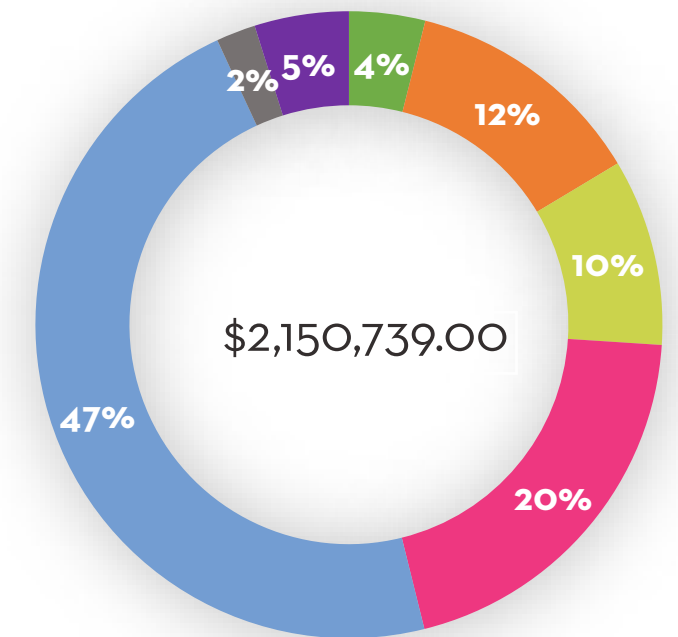
How we received our Funds last year

- Donations & Fundraising
- Fee for Service
- Government Funding
- United Way
- Miscellaneous Income
- GAHP Income



How we applied our Funds last year

- Skills Development
- Administration
- Fundraising
- Transitional Housing
- Emergency Shelter
- Housing First
- GAHP



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Mission

The YWCA Niagara Region is part of a national and worldwide movement that is passionate about empowering women and their families by providing safe, supportive housing, and programs creating opportunity for all women to reach their full potential.

Vision

The YWCA is a leader in the Niagara Region providing awareness through education and advocacy to raise the equality of women and the visibility of issues in our community.

Admin Office & St. Catharines Shelter

183 King Street
St. Catharines, ON L2R 3J5
T: 905-988-3528 | F: 905-988-3739

Niagara Falls Shelter

6135 Culp Street
Niagara Falls, ON L2G 2B6
T: 905-357-9191 | F: 905-357-9161

Online

www.ywcaniagararegion.ca
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YWCA NIAGARA REGION

Hope for Homeless Women and their Families since 1927



THANK YOU!

We cannot accomplish this work across the Niagara Region without your help, so thank you for joining us as such faithful supporters.

Your time and your dollars directly impacted the lives of all those mentioned in this report, and so many more.