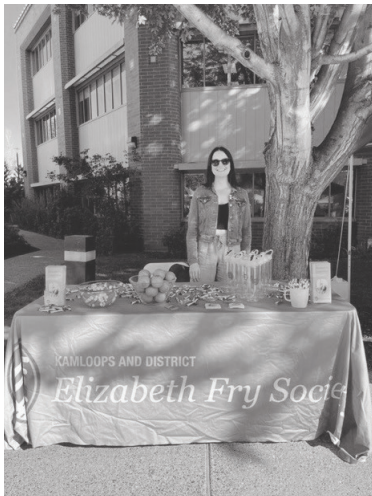




KAMLOOPS AND DISTRICT

Elizabeth Fry Society

A N N U A L R E P O R T 2 0 2 1



Report from the Executive Director & President of the Board

April 2021 - March 2022

This past year has been one of opportunity and growth for the Society. We continued to ensure our services were offered in a safe and supportive manner in the face of the ongoing health and safety concerns of the pandemic. We are proud to have been able to limit disruptions to services to meet the needs of our community.

This year we were able to expand upon our success and expertise in providing legal services with the expansion of the Elizabeth Fry Legal Clinic to Kelowna and surrounding communities. We now offer poverty law and family law services for residents of the central and south Okanagan. We are pleased to provide access to justice services throughout much of the Southern Interior region with a great team of dedicated lawyers, advocates and legal assistants.

We were also honored when we were chosen by the BC Rent Bank to offer Rent Bank services to all communities in BC without this service. We are pleased to be able to support the network of Rent Bank programs across BC to ensure everyone in BC has access to this essential homelessness prevention program. We are thrilled to be able to mentor new Rent Banks to establish in their local communities over the years to come.

This year we completed our Strategic Plan for 2022-2025 and updated our statement of purpose and vision to align our feminist values in the work we do in the community. We are committed in ensuring our work supports women and gender diverse folks, advocates for systems change and follows the principles of reconciliation and diversity, equity and inclusion.

The Society has been very fortunate to lead a systemic change project for gender equity in partnership with a vast network of local agencies, government officials and community members supporting this important work. We completed a local needs assessment this year to guide this project that will aim to raise awareness of what gender inequity looks like in Kamloops and look to shift our community to become more equitable for all.

We will continue in the years to come to ensure women and gender diverse folks have equal access to services and opportunities to thrive in our community.



Cassandra Schwarz (left)
Executive Director

Jennifer Murphy (right)
Board President

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We are proud to announce that we have completed our organizational Strategic Plan for 2022-2025. Through deep consideration of our values and priorities, KDEFS is looking forward to increasing awareness of equity among decisions makers, service providers, and the general public as well as increasing our collaboration with service provides that share our passion for dismantling barriers to equality and justice. We will also continue to enhance our capacity to support equity and decolonization work in our community through leadership, partnerships, and most importantly, through learning and supporting the work of Indigenous and equity-seeking organizations. KDEFS has also identified the growing need for affordable and supportive housing for women and gender diverse people in our community; to we therefore seek to enhance the capacity of our Rent Bank and Housing Programs as well as expand our permanent and second stage housing programs. Through specific projects we have taken on in this past year, such as the gender equity project and our progress toward creating a co-located resource hub for women, KDEFS will continue to “walk the walk” to fully embody our feminist-informed approach at all levels of our organization.

Vision:

Kamloops and District Elizabeth Fry Society (KDEFS) is building a just and equitable community where women, gender diverse people, and families are supported and empowered to thrive.

Purpose:

We support women, gender diverse people, and families harmed by barriers to justice and equity, including criminalization, housing insecurity, and colonization. We dismantle the systems and attitudes that marginalize and oppress members of our community. We take a feminist-informed approach that:

- Values and inspires collaboration
- Promotes the message that equity benefits everyone
- Respects and includes lived experience
- Pays attention to complex and diverse needs

Thank You Donors, We Couldn't Have Done It Without You!

Rent Bank Update

This past year has seen the housing crisis worsen in our province and increased the need for innovative programming, like our Rent Bank Program, to support families facing housing insecurity.

The Rent Bank assists families to maintain their housing or acquire a new housing situation through small, no-interest loans, repayable over a three-year period. We work with families experiencing temporary crisis in making a rent or a utility payment. The program includes financial management, training, and support.

In November 2021, we were thrilled to partner with the BC Rent Bank to offer our expertise in providing rent bank services. This partnership has allowed us to expand the reach of the KDEFS Rent Bank beyond the TNRD to cover 100% of BC and its renters in need!

Likewise, after the tragic flooding in Merritt, KDEFS was awarded grant capital to help flood victims in need, marking the first time Kamloops EFry has been able to award grants through the Rent Bank program.

In the past year, we have seen a 78 rent assistance seekers in the TNRD and 101 province-wide. There has been an increase in demand for Rent Bank assistance due to the ongoing housing crisis and the BC governments promotion of Rent Bank services, marking an increasing need for financial support in order to maintain the program's capacity to provide loans.

Testimonials:

*"You referred me to the BC Utilities Commission, and you helped me work things out! I really appreciate everything you've done, and BC Hydro contacted me and said they were going to help me out. You are a life saver and God bless you! Thank you so much!" – James**

**Name changed to protect privacy*

Harpreet is 66 years old, owns her trailer but pays \$570 a month for pad rent. She has been in the same location for 11 years. She had an unexpected bill of \$516 in December and with living expenses increasing over the past year and many health issues she had no extra money to cover the extra bill.*

Harpreet's income comes from CPP, OAS and she has just applied and is receiving GIS.

We put Harpreet in contact with a Lawyer Referral Service to help with putting her trailer in trust. Also gave her some contacts for local places she could get personal items at no cost to alleviate some monthly costs.

**Name of client changed to protect privacy.*

Family Stepping Stones (FSS) Update

The FSS program is the only program of its kind in Kamloops, providing second stage supportive housing for women and their children fleeing violence. The program offers individualized programming to meet the clients' needs in order to stabilize their lives.

The Program has continued to see an increase in demand as we continue to secure additional funding and increase our capacity. Fortunately, early in 2022, we were able to obtain another housing unit meaning Kamloops EFry now has a total of 5 units at our main FSS housing location, and 3 scattered units outside of the main housing location, allowing us to house and support 8 women and their children.

In 2021, two women from the FSS programs successfully completed the program and moved into permanent community housing. One woman came to us in May with her two children who are both diagnosed as being on the Autism Spectrum. Through her dedication and the support of the FSS program, she enrolled in the Canadian Vocational Training Centre where she trained as a social service support assistant. As of August 26th, she has successfully completed her practicum placement and has already completed a job interview with a local organization in the social service sector!

Despite the setbacks caused by COVID-19 restrictions and shutdowns, many of the women in FSS continue to pursue educational and employment opportunities with two women actively researching enrollment options for GED completion and seeking local job opportunities. We are incredibly proud of the hard work of the women in the program who continue to work towards stability and growth.



Kamloops local hair stylist, Jillian, cuts, dyes, and styles the hair of every woman in our FSS program once a month.



The women in the FSS program created 'Stepping Stones' together this summer.

Legal Clinic Update

We were thrilled to open a new branch of the Elizabeth Fry Legal Clinic in Kelowna this past year! We are incredibly honoured to be expanding beyond the TNRD to support access to justice across the BC Interior. Our Legal Clinic program was established to help our community members struggling with legal matters and who may live below the poverty line, or face challenges with complex legal jargon, paperwork, and processes. The opening of our Kelowna Clinic marks the start of our expanded and accessible services across the BC Interior. The Kelowna clinic currently has 33 new client files open and has successfully assisted 82 clients since it opened in September 2021. Both the Kamloops and Kelowna clinics are working seamlessly together to deliver legal services to our community members in need and we look forward to what the future holds for our Clinics and the clients we have the privilege of serving.

Likewise, with the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, the Legal Clinic has also re-established regular visits to the Merritt community in collaboration with the Nicola Valley Advocacy Centre. We are pleased to be able to reconnect and create new connections in our surrounding communities.

The Legal Clinics have seen numerous successes in 2021-2022 for both poverty and family law cases. For example, we sought judicial review of decisions made by the Residential Tenancy Branch, effectively increasing tenants' ability to continue living in their homes despite their initial eviction. In another case, we were able to help our client negotiate a parenting plan when they had previously had no representation and faced accessibility issues related to written communications. The client was incredibly overwhelmed prior to our assistance. We are happy to report that the final order reflected the best interests of the child and each parties' interests equally without having to go to court.

We have also been successful in solving an increasing number of human rights cases through mediation. One case involved the dismissal of an application from an employer claiming they had not discriminated against our client because they are Black when the employer had surpassed them for a promotion.

621

Both the Kamloops and Kelowna Legal Clinics have served 621 clients through our staff lawyers, poverty law advocates, and family law advocates in the past year.



KDEFS Staff Lawyer, Odette Dempsey-Caputo. She was pivotal in overseeing the incorporation of our new Kelowna office and its increased client base.

Housing Program Update

Elizabeth Court has received a beautiful upgrade to the underground garage area thanks to partial funding from the Kamloops Chamber of Commerce and the talented local artist, Evan Christian!

Excitingly, we are looking forward to expanding our housing supports even further! We have officially broken ground on our new townhouse development which is expected to be completed as early as the Spring of 2023! This project will add an additional 14 units of supportive housing to provide a safe transition for women and their children graduating from the FSS program into more stable and independent living.



A special thank you to Evan Christian, a local Kamloops artist whose vision and talents turned our underground parking garage into a beautiful midnight forest.

Women's Housing Services update

WHS has seen a busy year with over 300 inquiries regarding housing and mental health support services. In 2021, WHS served 65 unique clients.



THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS & DONORS



Thank You, Volunteers

We are so grateful for the continued support of our amazing volunteers during this last year as COVID restrictions have been lifted and we steadily return to in-person events.

Our Bursary Program Continues to Grow

As a local feminist, charitable organization, we take pride in helping women and gender diverse folks to not only stabilize their lives, but to reach their dearest goals.

Established to financially support women in our community, the Bursary Program also supports women emotionally and practically to foster their personal growth and empowerment.

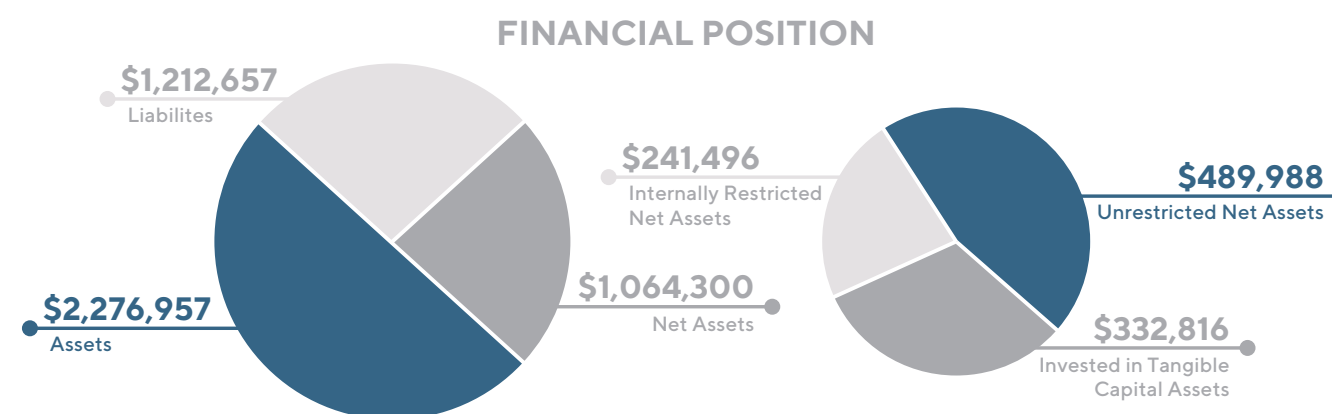
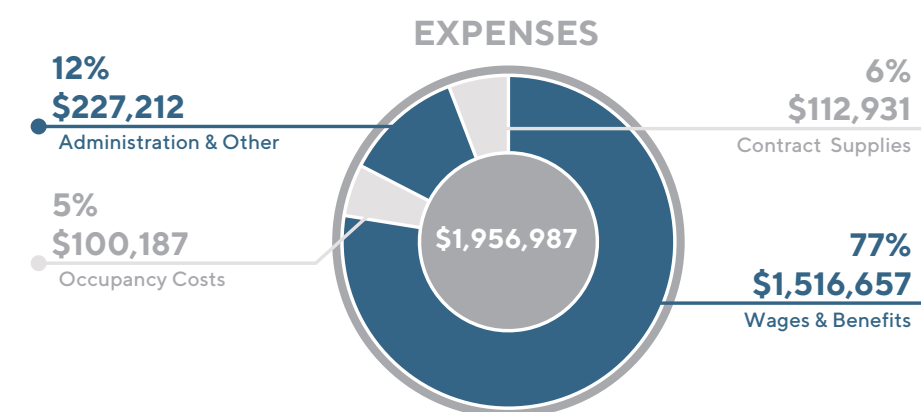
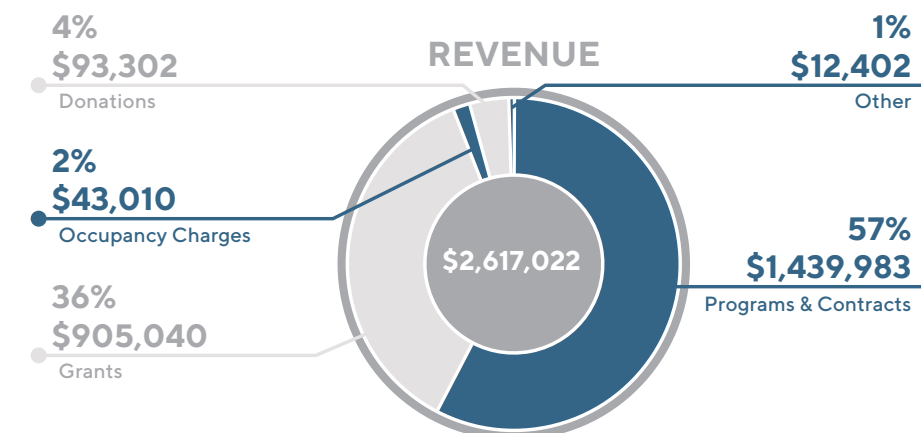
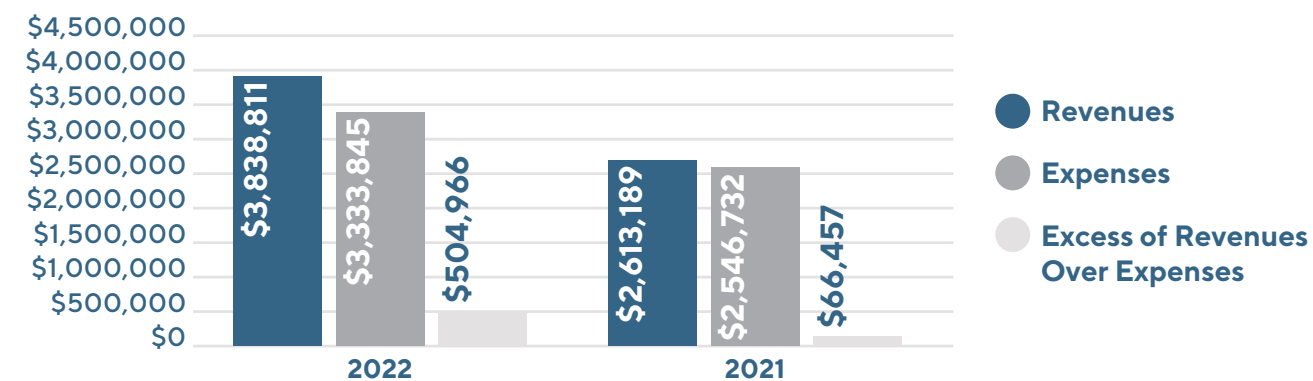
The Bursary program was established in 2017, providing 1 bursary of \$1,000 to a local woman facing financial barriers to her education. We were not only able to assist more women, but we also increased the bursary amount in 2021, providing two women in financial need with \$1,500 for their tuition!

Thanks to our generous donor, the Kamloops Alliance Church, we have expanded this empowering and supportive program and anticipate assisting even more women through the Bursary Program in the years to come.

We are grateful for the generosity of our donors, sponsors, and funders whose support has changed the lives of women and youth in our community.

Year ended March 2022. This information has been extracted from the audited financial statements prepared by Tenisci Piva Chartered Professional Accountants. The full statement is available at www.kamloopsefry.com or by request.

Financials



Thank You!

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Year ended March 31, 2022. This information has been extracted from the audited financial statements prepared by Tenisci Piva Chartered Professional Accountants. The full statements are available at www.kamloopsefry.com or by request.



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