





United in Equity



In 2021, the challenges women faced intensified. We saw a rise in the number of job losses, gender-based, intimate partner and family violence. Challenges that you help tackle because you believe that all women deserve to thrive.

Thank you for all that you do.

This past year, as we focused on recovery, providing intermediate stability to a network of agencies across the GTA that empower women to reach their full potential, your support was invaluable. You helped provide agencies flexible funding so they could best support women, strengthen wraparound supports for women to equip them with the right support networks, support coordinated care between agencies to best meet emerging needs and increase our efforts to better support women from equity deserving groups.

Thank you so much for your generosity and for doing this important work with us.

In the pages ahead, you will see the impact of your support on so many women in our region.

Sincerely,

**Christine Lonsdale and Heather Mason-Wood,
Co-Chairs, Women United**

Your impact



“I have a special place in my heart for BSCC, it makes me want to volunteer to assist one day because it is so important to feel safe and have people be there for you.”

—Client at Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic

We know from our work that women continue to face many challenges, with nearly **450,000** women in Peel, Toronto and York Region living on low-incomes due to factors like Canada’s persistent gender wage gap, disproportionate responsibility for unpaid work in family life, precarious employment and unaffordable housing.

We also know that Indigenous, Black and racialized women, women with a disability and newcomer women and others face distinct challenges due to overlapping inequities and other forms of oppression.

United Way—with the support of Women United—helps support powerful partnerships where women are leading the way towards a more equitable world. United Way’s collective **\$10 million** investment in women—including the support of Women United—across over **90** programs include services related to homelessness, education and employment, empowering girls to reach their full potential and helping women and their children live free from violence. Through supporting agencies like Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic and YWCA, we also support advocacy work on wide range of poverty-related issues and address the root causes and systemic barriers that hold women and girls back from their full potential.



Here is what your support helped make possible:

57,759

Individuals received support to live free from violence or reduced risk of violence

25,971

Women and children gained stability through connections to housing, education, employment, settlement, legal, financial and other wraparound supports

26,881

Survivors and witnesses of gender-based, intimate partner & family violence were connected to counselling and other supports to cope with their trauma

“One client that expressed a life changing experience was an elderly client who was living in an abusive circumstance with five other young men who would reportedly verbally and physically attack her. Through the extended time frame for support this client received advocacy and navigation around housing and was able to move to safer housing.”

—Women's Health in Women's Hands

How you are supporting women



Although it's been an intense two-and-a-half years, we're so proud of how Women United rallied together to make sure that women across our community got the support they needed. Here are some of the ways we supported women this past year:

“The flexibility of funding has been phenomenal in allowing us to respond efficiently, effectively and impactfully during this extraordinarily challenging and uncharted territory of COVID-19. UWGT's support has enabled us to meet our clients' needs and adapt innovatively. Whether bridging the digital divide to ensure every student could continue online school, mitigating the spread of infection in-house, hiring additional hands to ensure no call was dropped on our digital platform or witnessing the joy return to a child's eyes during a Mom and Me session.”

—The Redwood

We maintained flexible funding for a mix of virtual and in-person supports as agencies followed the latest COVID-19 protocols to ensure the safety and well-being of women. An example? Throughout the year, **Elizabeth Fry Toronto** was able to reduce barriers to accessing services and provide basic needs to support their most vulnerable and isolated clients, thanks to flexible funding. The agency was able to purchase grocery store cards for clients living in poverty and struggling with food insecurity. They were also able to invest in laptops so that clients in their residential program could participate in virtual appointments with their mental health service providers.

The flexible funding allowed **Rexdale Women's Centre** to increase their IT infrastructure so staff could work remotely and to support program and service delivery. The agency needed the flexibility in funding to increase internet speed, add more internet service and purchase online meeting platforms such as Google Classroom and Zoom.



Your support allowed us to strengthen crucial wrap around supports for women to find and maintain housing, develop mental health and build network supports. For example, at **YWCA's** Woodlawn location, the agency provided significant crisis response this year as the stress of the pandemic, combined with the related closures of other community services left many residents struggling to manage mental health and addiction issues. Part of the agency's response included increasing harm reduction efforts for the entire building, including increasing access to naloxone kits. At the Girl's Centre, the switch to a virtual program model allowed the agency to expand their reach to marginalized youth living in many parts of the city, including North York, Etobicoke and the core of Toronto.

We also addressed factors that often limit women's participation in the workforce through funded programs like **WoodGreen's Homeward Bound**, which supports single mothers in transition by providing wraparound services like child care, counseling and life-skills training as they move into stable employment and housing—and is now being replicated across the province.



“I first donated through Women United because the notion of women joining together to lift up other women really resonated with me. I continue to contribute as I have been fortunate in my capital markets career, and want to give back by supporting women in need with access to education, employment and other services, which will grant them and their families opportunities for a better future. What inspires me most about Women United is the strong sense of community, with smart and engaged members who get things done.”

—Laura Isidean, Women United member



We coordinated care between agencies to deliver comprehensive supports to women-led families, which was crucial since gender based violence increased over 30 per cent as a result of the isolation many women faced. In York region, many of the organizations working with women who have experienced violence and abuse collaborated often on the new trends they were seeing and the changes needed to best support women. This type of collaboration helped **North York Women's Center** (NYWC) to reach more women needing our services. One such partnership was between NYWC and the **Elizabeth Fry Society** where we were able to reach women who had faced incarceration and programs were adapted to help reduce the rate of recidivism.

We sustained, and in fact increased our investments in culturally responsive programs by strengthening our investments in organizations that are Indigenous, Black, and equity-led, focused and serving through our newly launched Community Programs grants and our Organization Infrastructure Grants, which support agencies led by, focused on and serving Indigenous, Black and other equity-deserving communities as they build long-term organizational strength. These agencies focus on providing culturally responsive programs to women and two spirit individuals, including two spirit seniors. By 2024, 25 per cent of all of our funded agencies will be led by, focused on and serving Indigenous or equity-deserving groups.



“I have been very fortunate in life, blessed with opportunities for education, a supportive family, other supportive adults through community programs, intelligence and the privilege that comes with whiteness and Canadian citizenship. Everyone has their challenges in life, and I am no exception to that either. We did not come from great wealth, we have a son with significant special needs. I give (and continue to give) because I know the difference access to amazing programs can make to women and girls, particularly those who are disadvantaged through no fault of their own as a result of poverty, where they were born, the colour of their skin or their abilities. While I don't have a lot of time to give at this point in my life given my family and career commitments, I do have the incredible good fortune of a significant income from a job I love that allows me to give generously knowing the ripple effects of the programs Women United supports.”

—Erica Baron, Women United member

Thank You

You have always been there for women and continue to be. Your sustained investment and continued support have allowed us to provide flexible funding, strengthen wraparound supports for women, coordinate care between agencies and ensure that women from equity deserving groups receive the culturally responsive support they need.

As we gear towards reimagining and rebuilding our region in order to provide long-term solutions, you stand with women in our community so they can have the opportunities they need to thrive.

Thank you for contributing to building a better GTA for everyone.







WORKING WITH
COMMUNITIES IN
PEEL, TORONTO &
YORK REGION

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