



ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021



*Life is about change.
Sometimes it's painful.
Sometimes it's beautiful.
But most of the time,
it's both.*



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SOWINS – 40 years – Now More Than Ever.

2021 marks SOWINS
40th Anniversary
of helping women and children in
need in our communities.

Values

- ♦ Accountability
- ♦ Compassion
- ♦ Inclusion
- ♦ Diversity
- ♦ Respect

Vision

All individuals have the ability to make choices to live a safe and healthy life.

Mission

Supporting individuals in their recovery from the impact of violence and abuse while working to prevent violence and abuse in our communities.



Governance Report

From the Executive Director and Chair of the Board of Directors

This past year has had a significant impact on the clients that we serve and the way we provide our services. It has been a difficult time for women and children who suffer from domestic violence when everyone has had to be on lockdowns and live in much tighter living conditions. We have needed extra shelter space and we learned to adapt to support our clients. SOWINS has been given government funding and grants for some of the necessities needed to deal with COVID-19 such as supplies, and financial support for extra costs that have been incurred due to recommended health and safety measures.

Throughout the year our staff have been tremendous, and many have worked under very stressful situations always being vulnerable to getting the virus themselves. Some staff were able to work from home but not the majority. Measures have been taken throughout the year to reduce the risks to staff and clients as much as possible. We were fortunate to have staff and clients vaccinated in early March.

In November 2020 our Executive Director, Debbie Scarborough resigned after serving in this position for 6 ½ years. We are very grateful for the work that Debbie did to expand our offices, the Transition House, and services for our society. Debbie now works for the B.C. First Nations Justice Council.

In December we had a very successful Share the Spirit Campaign, raising funds to support all our programs, providing Christmas Hampers, and supplying backpacks to the homeless. We are currently completing our Virtual Walk to End Abuse – a different approach, but important for fundraising and creating public awareness of the need for our programs. We are grateful for the volunteers and staff who have worked so hard on these two fundraisers.

Throughout the year our Board of Directors has met virtually to continue the work of providing sound governance for SOWINS. We have had some resignations, but we have also welcomed several new Board members that will provide a continuing partnership to work with the Executive Director. Peggy Nicholson has been serving as our Interim Executive Director since December and we cannot thank her enough for bridging the gap while we undertook the search for a new Executive Director.

Now we are delighted to welcome Danielle Goulden as our New Executive Director. Danielle is a familiar face to many of our staff as she previously worked (2011-2012) in our Bridging Program, our Wisdom and Energy Program, and as our Volunteer Co-ordinator. Danielle brings a wealth of diverse knowledge, skills, and experience to this position. In Regina, she was the Executive Director of Carmichael Outreach (services to those experiencing poverty and homelessness), and was the Director of My Aunt's Place, a Women and Children's Shelter. Recently she has been a consultant to several non-profits as well as a grant writer for SOWINS on contract. We believe Danielle will be a collaborative and empowering leader for SOWINS.

We sincerely thank all the staff, volunteers, and Board members for their dedication to SOWINS – we are a strong and vital team! As we celebrate our 40th anniversary of success as a Society, we also look forward to continually adapting to meet the growing needs of the demographic we serve throughout the South Okanagan.

Peggy Nicholson / Rod Fru



Executive Director

I am excited and honored to join SOWINS as the new Executive Director. I want to thank everyone I have had the opportunity to meet for the warm welcome. Also, I want to extend gratitude and appreciation for Peggy Nicholson, Interim Executive Director, and the Board of Directors for this leadership opportunity and their support and assistance in helping me transition into this position. I have followed and admired the work of SOWINS for many years. The organization has experienced immense growth since my brief tenure as the SOWINS volunteer coordinator and program facilitator 9 years ago and that is a testimony to the hard work, dedication, and passion of the leadership team and staff of the organization.

As an experienced non-profit leader, I recognize that I have a lot to learn about the organization and I intend to fully dedicate and invest my time, attention, and energy to getting acquainted and developing relationships with the South Okanagan community, stakeholders, SOWINS staff, volunteers, and gain a thorough understanding of all our program areas, needs of the agency, and broader socio-economic issues in the South Okanagan region that directly impact the work we do here at SOWINS. I am inspired by the SOWINS vision, mission, values, beliefs, and programs & services and by the dedicated Board of Directors, staff, and all other stakeholders who come together to speak out against gender-based violence and work tirelessly to advocate for the women and children we serve.

I have some big shoes to fill but I am confident that SOWINS is well-positioned to continue to build upon its great legacy. I look forward with great anticipation to the months and years ahead.

Danielle Goulden



Residential Services

Hughes House – Transition House, 2nd Stage Housing, Youth Bed

Transition House experienced a year of growth for many clients and the team, where everyone's experience to embrace new difficult situations with kindness and compassion for our fellow human beings was put into practice. We were challenged to adapt to new varied protocols to ensure safety within the house. There was increased awareness and recognition of how fragile and yet resilient clients and the team could be, with the ever-changing health climate.

The program's ability to be resourceful brought forth creativity during the most difficult times where isolation was ever present. BC Housing supported the program by offering off site shelter so the program could support people who could not manage within Hughes House. In the expansion site, services were provided to 34 adults and 31 children, aging from infants to over 65. One of the adults sheltered and supported for one month in the expansion site was a transgender person who identified as lesbian female and presented as male. Staff assisted them to access housing support, emotional support, and safe shelter.

The program provided in-house services to 99 women and 42 children, ages newborn to 70 plus years. The varied ages brought to the forefront a very diverse and multi layered approach to the assistance provided to residents. There have been changes to the team with some staff moving into other programs or moving onto new career paths and the team has gained new members, all of which has been healthy for the team.

New cameras, security systems, data bases and new challenges have brought forth struggle and learning. All staff meetings throughout the year were held virtually. To dress up Hughes House, donated quilts have been hung on the wall on the single side, while on the family side an artist used the hallway walls as canvas to paint beautiful garden like pictures and the rooms were “dragonfly”.



year were held virtually. To dress hung on the wall on the single side, way walls as canvas to paint beautiful animal names such as

Change brings growth. Creativity, and open mindedness fuel growth opportunities.

One of the most creative projects was the 2020 Christmas celebration. The program celebrated the 12 days of Christmas starting around the 10 of December by having an activity each noon hour for staff and clients to participate in, while socially distancing. This was hosted by staff who volunteered to set up the activity. Santa arrived on the 12th day and distributed gifts from their Santa sac to every person, while distancing. Photos captured those special moments.

Women who access Transition House may apply to extend their stay in on-site **Second Stage** units. These units are subsidized units where individuals can stay for 6 months to one year, providing much needed time to stabilize, heal and make plans for the next step in their lives. With on-site staff support, women work through self-identified personal goals such as counseling, addictions recovery, returning to school or employment and/or parenting and child protection situations.



The youth we see tend to have an experience of trauma, whether current or past. We help them establish goals and connect with the resources they need to be successful in life. We support them in learning and understanding the kind of support they need and how to access that support. We also work with other community resources to help the youth move forward in a positive way.



Often youth we have supported in the past contact us for further support and to let us know how they are doing. In the case of trauma and the cycle of abuse we may see youth in the house multiple times and even as they grow into adulthood. Hughes House provides a consistent support and resource for these youth that they trust and know they can rely on. The Youth beds provide support for up to two youth at a time, and we work closely with the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

The need for youth beds has been consistent and a vital part of supporting needs within the community.

Tamarack - Safe Affordable Housing

SOWINS' long-term, subsidized apartment building for women and children who have experienced IPV (Intimate Partner Violence) has provided safe affordable homes since May 2019. This past year one of the units was converted into an office and meeting space, leaving the remaining two-bedroom units to house 11 women and 17 children. Although this is not a supportive housing complex, the Housing Coordinator supports tenants as needed. The meeting space is also used for the EXPLORE Program to operate small, COVID safe groups for women.



Homeless Prevention Program - Subsidies

This past fiscal year HPP received additional funding for rent supplements from the Keremeos Safe Home which was not renewed, allowing 13 more women per month to receive financial assistance in order to maintain safe, affordable housing. In addition to this, a one-year contract provided additional rent supplements via the Canadian Housing Benefit. This enabled SOWINS to provide 10 additional monthly rent supplements during a most difficult year for everyone.

Stopping the Violence (STV) and Intake, Outreach & Advocacy

The Stopping the Violence (STV) program provides counselling for women who have experienced intimate partner abuse, sexual abuse, and historical abuse.

This year has been unique for our program, as it has been unique for the whole world. Last March brought a lot of uncertainty to the STV program. We worried we would not be able to meet the unique needs of our clients through virtual counselling. We quickly found out this was not the case. Both counsellors were extremely busy and remained having a full case load. Most of the women we served easily transitioned to virtual counselling, be it through video or phone.



We quickly adapted to the changing world. STV counsellors and the Intake, Outreach & Advocacy (IOA) worker have shifted to primarily paperless record keeping, sparked by our need to work from home, balanced with the need to maintain client confidentiality.

Once the weather warmed up, we were able to meet women outside for walks, and this was helpful for some of the women who still desired face-to-face counselling.



Our waitlist remains high, and we are fortunate to have the IOA worker to support us. She connected regularly with women on the waitlist, and these women knew that they could still connect with someone who would support them while they waited to receive counselling.

Community-Based Victim Services (CBVS)

The CBVS Program supports sexual assault and domestic violence survivors in the South Okanagan. This year has taught us that we must adapt to change in an uncertain world. Last spring, our clients were faced with uncertainty as the courts were closed and had to change to virtual hearings.

The staff at SOWINS were incredible with helping clients navigate through this new system while still supporting them with the emotions they were already facing with going to court. We were able to find unique ways to update clients on RCMP investigations, criminal court proceedings, court preparation, court accompaniment and referrals to community resources. This was not an easy task as the CBVS program requires staff to fill out forms and files together with clients. Staff worked very hard to follow Covid protocols and still meet with clients.

Staffing changes were made in the program as staff left to continue their education and/or pursue other career opportunities. Fortunately, a staff member who worked at the Transition House for several years as well as in the community in social services came to the program with a wealth of knowledge. She has easily fit into the team.

Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling & Empowerment (PEACE)

The PEACE program continues to be an essential service and support for children, youth, and their caregivers in our community who have been affected by intimate partner violence. The program mandate aims to stop the intergenerational cycle of violence by educating children and youth through several mediums such as art, expressive play, games, and numerous other resources. We also provide education and support to non-offending caregivers to help them in understanding how intimate partner violence affects children and youth; and what they can do to support their child moving forward.



The biggest impact on the program this year has been the COVID-19 Pandemic as we had to put a pause on in-person sessions when the outbreak first began. With children and youth having to be homeschooled this made it hard to connect with them, especially the younger ones. Phone and video calls worked for some, but most clients were not able to connect this way due to lack of privacy at home, safety concerns, age, or simply not having access to a device. New clients did not want to start out in the PEACE program over a virtual setting, so many were put on hold until in-person sessions resumed; this led to an increased number of clients having to wait for services. We have been back to in-person sessions since July 2020.

We have also been able to see some students in the schools who would otherwise be unable to access the service. School district 67 continues to be very supportive of having the PEACE counsellor meet with students at the schools in their district.

Women's Shelter Canada funding was used to make the PEACE playroom more COVID friendly by updating the flooring and furniture in the space and purchasing closed cabinets for toys and supplies. We continue to follow safety procedures to ensure that both ourselves and clients remain safe during any in-person interactions.

Explore Program NEW!

Grant from The Fund for Gender Equality

The Fund for Gender Equality is supported by a collaboration between Community Foundations of Canada and the Equality Fund, with support from the Government of Canada

The Explore program is designed to facilitate an understanding of the impacts of abuse, to promote healing and personal growth. During each four-week session, topics are presented sequentially, through psycho-social education and group counselling. As an example, on the first day, 'Communication #1' prepares group members to participate in a respectful, working group setting. 'Self-awareness' and 'Boundaries' are introduced at the beginning and emphasized throughout the session. 'Understanding Anger' and 'Stress Management' give participants tools for dealing with triggers that potentially arise and provide them with the opportunity to view triggers as signals for healing work.

Currently, the Explore program is offered to past and present Hughes House residents. As COVID-19 protocols restrict group size, a focus on residents enables these women to participate in the group in a timely manner, making the most of their stay.

Each Explore session runs 5.5 hours, 2 days a week, for 4 weeks.

Explore ran 2 sessions in February and March 2021, with 4 participants.

Hours of group counselling/psycho-social education (# of participants X # of hours): 90



Although participants have demonstrated engagement with the Explore material throughout the workshop, it is particularly satisfying when they share how the sessions have positively impacted their lives. Some participants have shown how they are setting up healthy boundaries even as they minimize or cut their connections to an abusive situation. The Explore program works to promote a compassionate self-awareness, and one participant noted that it helped her understand her life, her past choices, and will also help her build a safe, healthy life in the future.

The group process is an important part of learning and healing and the Explore 4-week session promotes this growth and trust among members as it covers 20 core topics. In the future, it could be useful to hold single topic, 2–3-hour workshops to build on the core topics or provide resources for women unable to commit to the 4-week program. These topics could include time management and organization, budgeting, housing/tenancy, problem-solving, dealing with depression, and workplace specific topics.

Also, once COVID-19 restrictions are eased, allowing for larger groups, we may want to open the program to other women, to meet the need in our community.



SAFEXST, Overdose Prevention & Drug Testing

The SAFEXST program (The Centre drop-in program and Mobile Outreach Van) has evolved its scope of services over the past year, introducing exciting new partnerships. **The Centre** reopened on August 17th, 2020 after being closed for five months due to the Pandemic.

In January 2021 UBCO students started bringing the Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR) **drug checking** machine to the Centre. This machine was purchased by Interior Health Authority and left in the care of UBCO. One day a week the team is in Vernon, five days a week Kelowna campus, Saturdays 10-3pm in Penticton. There are four locations in Penticton that samples can be dropped off with various community partners to await testing.

Unfortunately, in mid-April the Centre was closed again for drop-in services due to COVID-19 numbers in the community.

The Mobile Outreach Van (MOV) is excited to announce that as of December 2020 it is now in operation seven days a week. Servicing Summerland to Oliver, with community engagement starting in Osoyoos. Fridays the MOV has a rural route of Cawston, Keremeos, and Princeton.

When the Pandemic began the MOV secured a grant from Urban Matters to create personal sanitation kits (COVID Hygiene Kits) 893 of these were distributed. These are made up of hand sanitizer, bottled water, bar of soap, dry wipes, wet surface wipes, alcohol swabs, and a face mask.

This year the SAFExst program had 9,630 client contacts, 8,055 of those received harm reduction, 4,252 Naloxone kits distributed, 7,111 fentanyl test strips distributed, the MOV travelled 28,952kms, 16,008 pieces of harm reduction litter picked up.

Core funding Public Safety Canada

Supported by funds from Interior Health



40 Years of SOWINS

40 YEARS OF HERSTORY:

1970s Feminist movement entering 2nd stage

A diverse group of women saw a lack of resources for women in Penticton and the need for a safe place for women and children fleeing abuse was identified.

1980s

SOUTH OKANAGAN WOMEN IN NEED SOCIETY

Using the term “safe place” was of utmost importance: the ultimate goal was to open a Transition House, but other safe places could be used in the meantime.

March 1, 1981

Society Incorporation with the BC Registrar

Signed by: Joelle Barrett, Beverley Stapleton, Robin Kowal, Velma Bateman, Christine Saliaris

Volunteers provided transportation to Kelowna Transition House and established Safe Homes throughout the South Okanagan. An 8-bed Transition House on Caribou Street operated by volunteer board members and safe home operators opened in 1986.

1987 – 1997 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Patricia Essington

1990s Ecole Polytechnique - Panel on Violence Against Women

- Purchased a duplex on Cornwall Drive. 10 beds funded
- Victim Services started at SOWINS, later became South Okanagan Victim Assistance Society
- Children Who Witness Abuse counselling program added in 1993 at Transition House
- Outreach Program added in 1994 to support women after leaving Transition House
- SOWINS established safe homes in Princeton Safe Home Project



Transition House: 14 beds funded Cornwall Drive; 19 staff; \$600,000 Budget

1997 – 2014 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Eleanor Summer

2000s Tightening Public Spending

- WINGS thrift shop - 564 Main Street – opened as a place to collect and sort donations, and to provide revenue to programs
- Older Women's Silent & Invisible Safe Home Program added
- Administration and Outreach offices moved to 701 Winnipeg Street
- Resources Coordinator hired – fundraising and volunteer coordination
- SOWINS rented space and provided training at Transition House to Okanagan Nation Transition Emergency House (ONTEH) while their facility was being built
- Administration and Outreach offices moved to 246 Martin Street (second floor)
- WINGS moved into building purchased at 456 Main Street
- Employment Services programs added at 246 Martin Street (downstairs)
- Rebranding – new logo:
- Purchased house on Churchill (sold Cornwall duplex); 14 beds funded



2010s Gender Identity changing, Homelessness and Fentanyl becoming issues of concern

- Harm Reduction Policy implementation and training
- Integrated Case Management – first case
- Wisdom & Energy (WE) Grant – older / younger women sharing skills
- Hired separate Fundraising / Public Relations and Volunteer Coordinators
- Walk a Mile in Her Shoes
- Blueprint Project – BC Society of Transition Houses – 1 year Housing support for clients



- Rebranding – new logo:
- Move Administration Outreach offices to third floor at 246 Martin Street
- Imagine Canada Accreditation

Transition House: 14 beds Cornwall Drive; Office 246 Martin Street; TH Van; 31 staff; Budget \$1.4 million

2014 – 2020 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Debbie Scarborough

- WINGS closed – revenue down – building sold
- MCFD Funded Emergency Youth Bed added at Transition House
- Grant for Mobile Outreach for summer
- Purchase 1027 Westminster Avenue West and renovate for Administration Outreach offices
- Hughes House purchased by BC Housing in December 2016 – SOWINS to operate – move in July 2017.
- Public Safety Canada funded SAFEXT – Five-year project to support individuals who wish to reduce their reliance on sex work and/or engage in the process of exiting the sex trade
- 1st Walk to End Abuse
- Add Second Stage Housing program
- MCFD Youth Bed increased to two beds
- Interior Health contracts for Drug Checking and Overdose Prevention to address the opiate crisis
- Tamarack 12-unit Apartment purchased by BC Housing – SOWINS to operate
- Community Based Victim Services and Stopping the Violence Counselling contracts funded by Ministry Public Safety & Solicitor General.

2020s Ongoing Opiate Crisis, Homelessness and COVID-19 Worldwide Pandemic

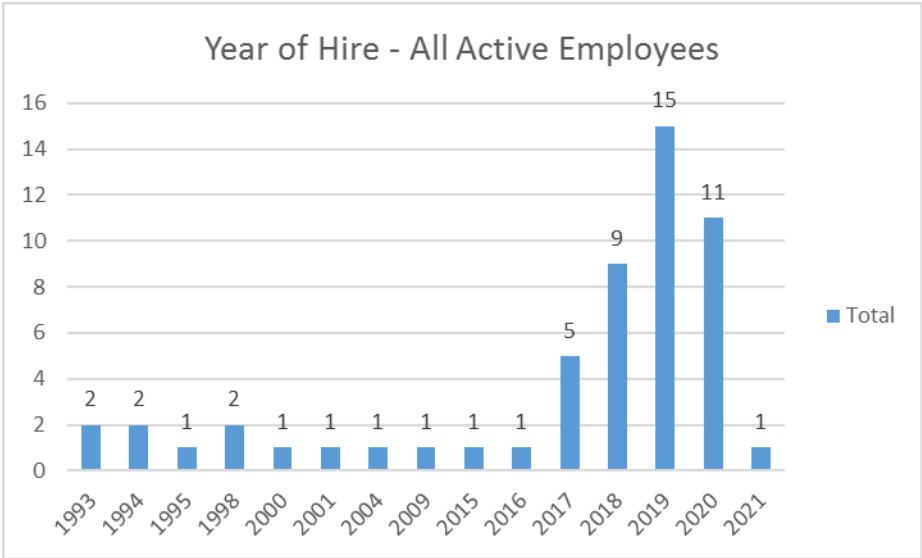
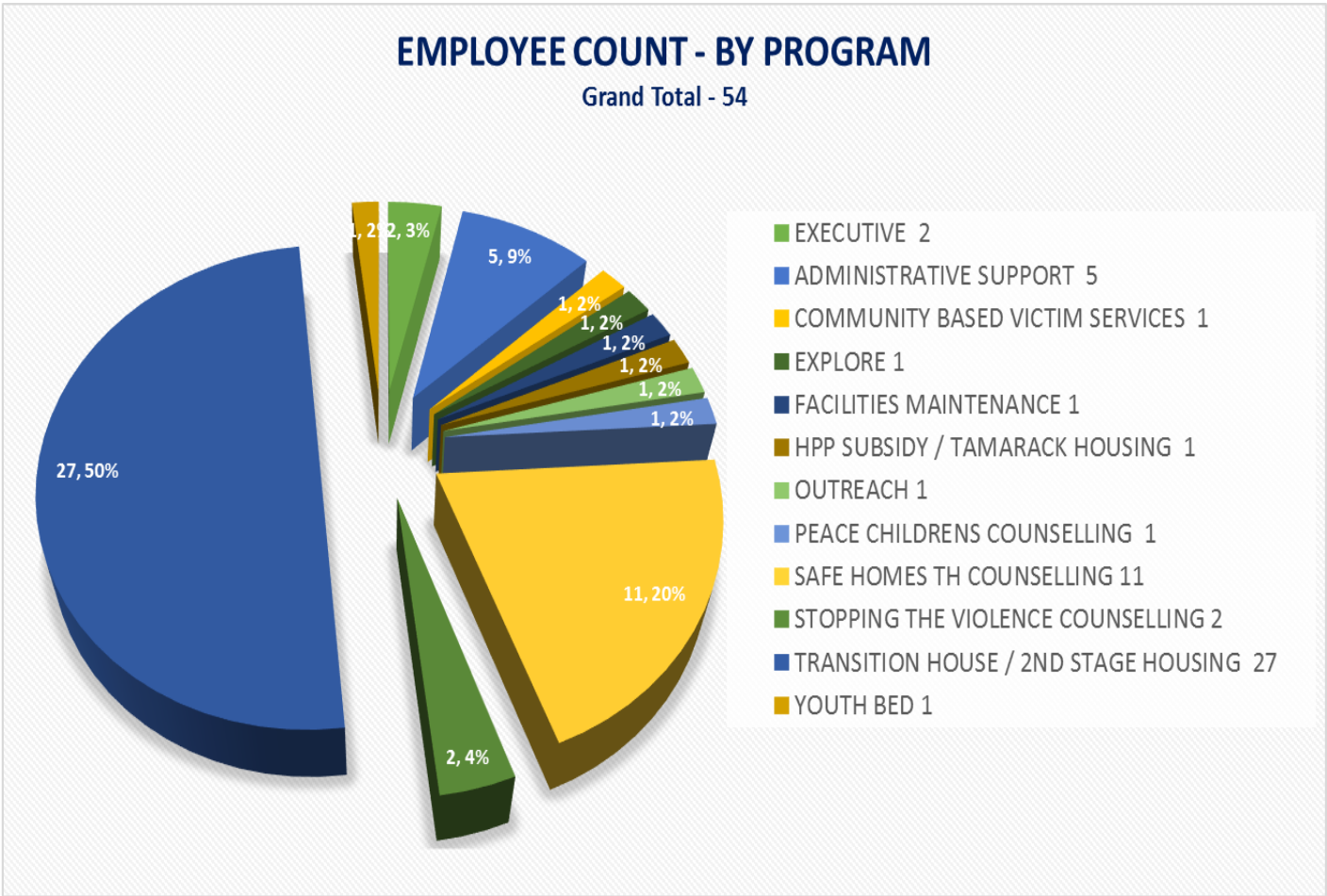
- March 2020 brought COVID-19 shutdowns. SOWINS services are deemed essential and as much as possible was offered by telephone or online. Hotel expansion site for residential clients who may have been exposed to COVID.
- Debbie Scarborough resigned and left SOWINS in December.

Hughes House (Transition House / 2nd Stage Housing / Youth Beds); Office 1027 Westminster Ave W; Tamarack and Cannery; Six fleet vehicles; 50+ Staff; Budget \$2.6 million

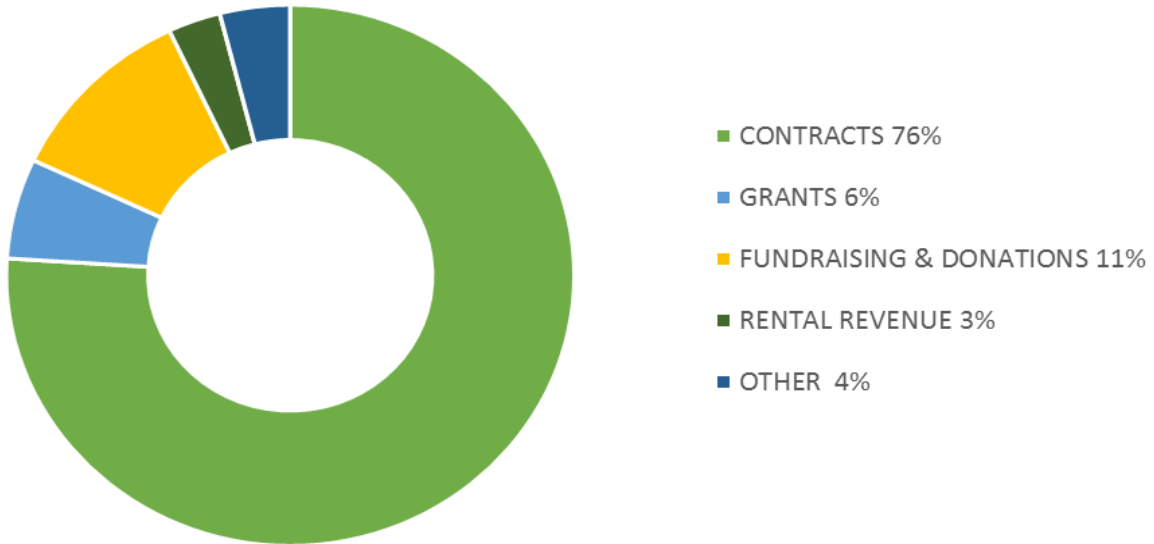
2021 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Danielle Goulden
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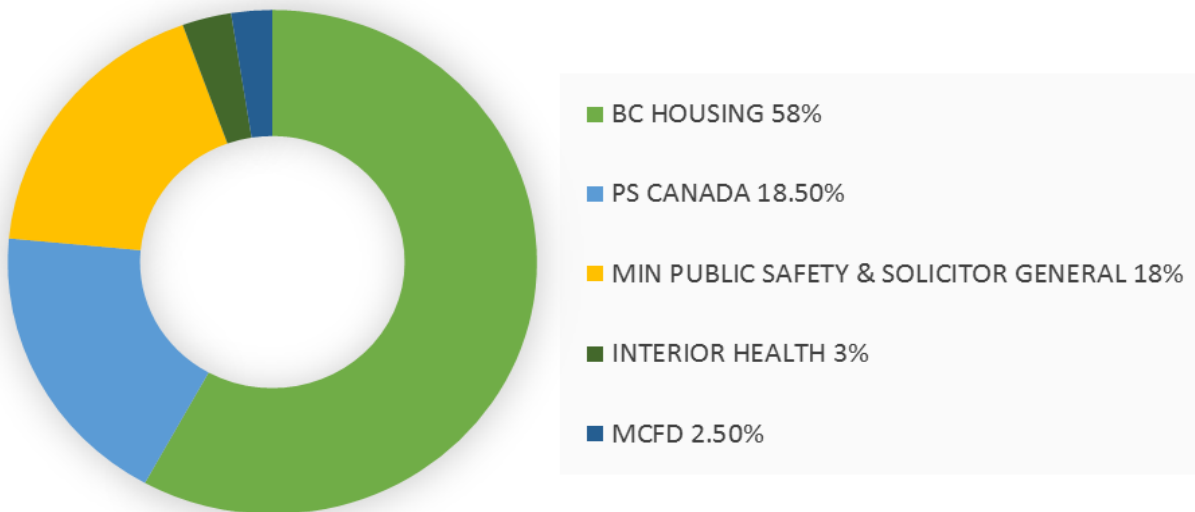
Human Resources



REVENUE BY SOURCE TYPE



SOURCE OF CONTRACT FUNDING



BC Housing



Public Safety
Canada

Sécurité publique
Canada



Ministry of Public Safety
And Solicitor General



Ministry of Children
and Family Development



SOWINS is grateful for Grants / additional funding received from:

BC Housing



Community Foundation South Okanagan



Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women

Rotary Club of Okanagan

United Way Southern Interior BC

Urban Matters—CAT Tables



United Way
Southern Interior BC
unitedwaysibc.com

Women's Shelters Canada



**WOMEN'S
SHELTERS
CANADA** | Shelters and
Transition Houses
United to End Violence
Against Women

And the Estates of:

Yvonne Taylor
John Dwayne Martin

SOWINS – 40 years – Now More Than Ever.

2021 marks SOWINS 40th Anniversary of helping women and children in need in our communities. A year into the pandemic, we need your support now more than ever.

It began in 1981 with a group of women concerned for women in their own communities – Women experiencing intimate partner violence. There was no safe refuge, no Emergency housing or Transition House for women and children. There was only the concern and generosity of volunteers as they began to open their homes to ensure safety of those that needed a place to go.

As the need has grown, so have The South Okanagan Women in Need Society.



HOW FUNDS ARE SPENT



This year has taught us that SOWINS, the women we support, our community and the world at large can persevere. We are stronger when we work together. Thank you to all that support us, which of course includes our board who have worked so hard through this year as well as all our volunteers and funders.