



SISITERING

CHANGING LIVES, ONE WOMAN AT A TIME

Annual Report
2018/2019

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Working with the women at Sistering grounds me. I like being able to put faces to the stories that overwhelm me, around privilege and human rights. These women are not statistics. They are strong, tough people who see the injustice and know how to advocate. And I am learning from them.

— *Sally McLean, Sistering Medical Reception Volunteer*

I have always been amazed by the compassion and efficiency of the small, mighty staff and volunteers at Sistering. There is such a huge need on our city's streets that I'm sure it can be overwhelming at times. However, even on a shoestring budget, Sistering delivers food, a warm refuge from the streets and dignity to the most vulnerable women of Toronto. From the first day I volunteered in the kitchen, I was so inspired by this beacon of hope in Toronto's west end. I vowed I would do whatever I could - whether it was to make a meal, make a joke or raise money and awareness for this incredible organization.

— *Judy Croon, Comedian, Motivational Speaker, Laugh Coach and Sistering Ambassador*



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

With thanks to our tireless Board of Directors for their wisdom, guidance and commitment to the women we serve.

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Status of Women
Canada

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Canada



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FOREWORD

Sistering Board, staff and participants have a history of advocating at City Council and on the front lines for the human rights of Toronto's most marginalized community: poor, homeless and precariously housed women.



Patricia O'Connell
Executive Director

This year, we leaned in even further, taking every opportunity to speak up and speak out.

We worked collaboratively with our community partners, writing letters to our funders, business partners and elected officials at all three levels of government. We presented deputations at City Council and its Community Development and Recreation, Budget and Executive Committees, demanding that the people in power recognize the homelessness crisis – and its attendant issues – and commit to a strategy and action plan.

At City Hall, we voiced our outrage about Toronto's housing and overdose crises, lobbying for more low barrier drop ins and shelters, more affordable housing and safe injection sites across the City.

We pushed for intergovernmental funding and support.

The media amplified our message – Toronto Life, Progress Toronto, Global News, the Toronto Star, CBC and other outlets picked up our story.

Many of the women who access our services deal with complex mental health issues and Sistering is the only low barrier safe haven offering trauma informed support. They are welcomed nowhere else.

Not good enough, we told Council.

Ana Bailão, Councillor for Ward 18 Davenport, agreed and she championed our proposal that Council create two supportive housing sites, one in the west side of Toronto and one in the east, providing women facing the most complicated barriers to support with a place to call home.

Together, the houses will be called Crystal's Place after the late Crystal Papineau, a Sistering participant, whose tragic death this past year was felt across the country.

And we also thank Julie Dzerowicz, Member of Parliament for Davenport and Marit Stiles, MPP for Davenport, for their ongoing support.

We also recognized the role Sistering plays in our local community. Our Community Advisory Council, made up of a diverse group of 15 local shopkeepers and residents, met monthly to foster understanding and respect between Sistering participants and community members. This past year, the Advisory Council also developed a Community Response Plan to formalize the relationship between participants and the community.

And that's not all.

Sistering acted on issues raised by the Council, hiring additional staff and Peers during warmer months to remain on the patio and help participants honour our commitment to a respectful presence on Bloor Street.

We created 1,200 myth-busting pamphlets distributed door-to-door from Shaw Street to Dufferin Street by our Community Advisory Council volunteers.

Thanks to City funding, we were able to hire a full-time Community Liaison Officer to partner with the Council and the community to create an ongoing conversation of mutual respect.

For the past four years, the Sistering team and I have been tenacious advocates for the vulnerable women who come through our doors and I am grateful to have worked with such a fearless and compassionate group. Thank you for standing with me.

To our never-say-never Board – thank you for your guidance and wisdom. Change is coming.

And to the women who count on Sistering - thank you for strength and courage and remarkable ability to look life squarely in the eye: you have been an inspiration.

This year is my last as Executive Director.

I would like to introduce Shelley Nicholls, Sistering's new Executive Director. Shelley is a champion for women and girls.

A Montreal, Quebec native, she is the daughter of immigrants who moved to Canada in the 1960s, to make a better life for their family. She saw firsthand the challenges faced by her parents and other immigrants who were searching to find their place in an environment that often did not speak the same language or value their voice.

She's excited to take the reins at Sistering and continue the fight for women and girls to take their rightful place in the world.

I am confident that Shelley will be an excellent sister! Her value system is strong and I know that she will take Sistering to new heights.

OUR VISION

A world where all women, in all our diversity, are safe, respected, valued, and treated with dignity. All women have equitable opportunities to thrive and participate in inclusive communities.

OUR MISSION

We create a safe, welcoming and non-judgmental space for women. We are guided by principles of feminism, anti-racism and anti-oppression. We offer practical and emotional support to women who experience social isolation, homelessness or precarious housing, trauma and violence, discrimination, substance use or need mental health support. Our equitable programs and services enable women to take greater control over their lives. We work in collaboration with others in the community to change the social conditions that endanger women's welfare.

OUR VALUES

Our model is trauma informed, guided by feminism, anti-racism and anti-oppression principles, and the following core values:

Dignity: Each woman has dignity, is equal and is treated with respect.

Equity: All women are provided access to equal opportunities depending on their individual needs.

Inclusiveness: Sistering's program and advocacy work is directed by participants' needs, interests and creativity, and we value the participation and contribution of each woman.

Aspirational: Programs, advocacy and administration are proactive, innovative and committed to supporting women in achieving their goals.

Solidarity: Women help each other with the unique friendship, caring and respect that they give to each other. The unfair treatment of any woman affects the lives of all women.

Sistering services are available to cis women and trans people, in all their diversity. This includes, but is not limited to, trans feminine and trans women, genderqueer, non-binary, intersex, 2 spirit people, trans-masculine and trans men**.

***This is not an exhaustive list of gender identities but highlights communities that are often excluded by gender based violence services*

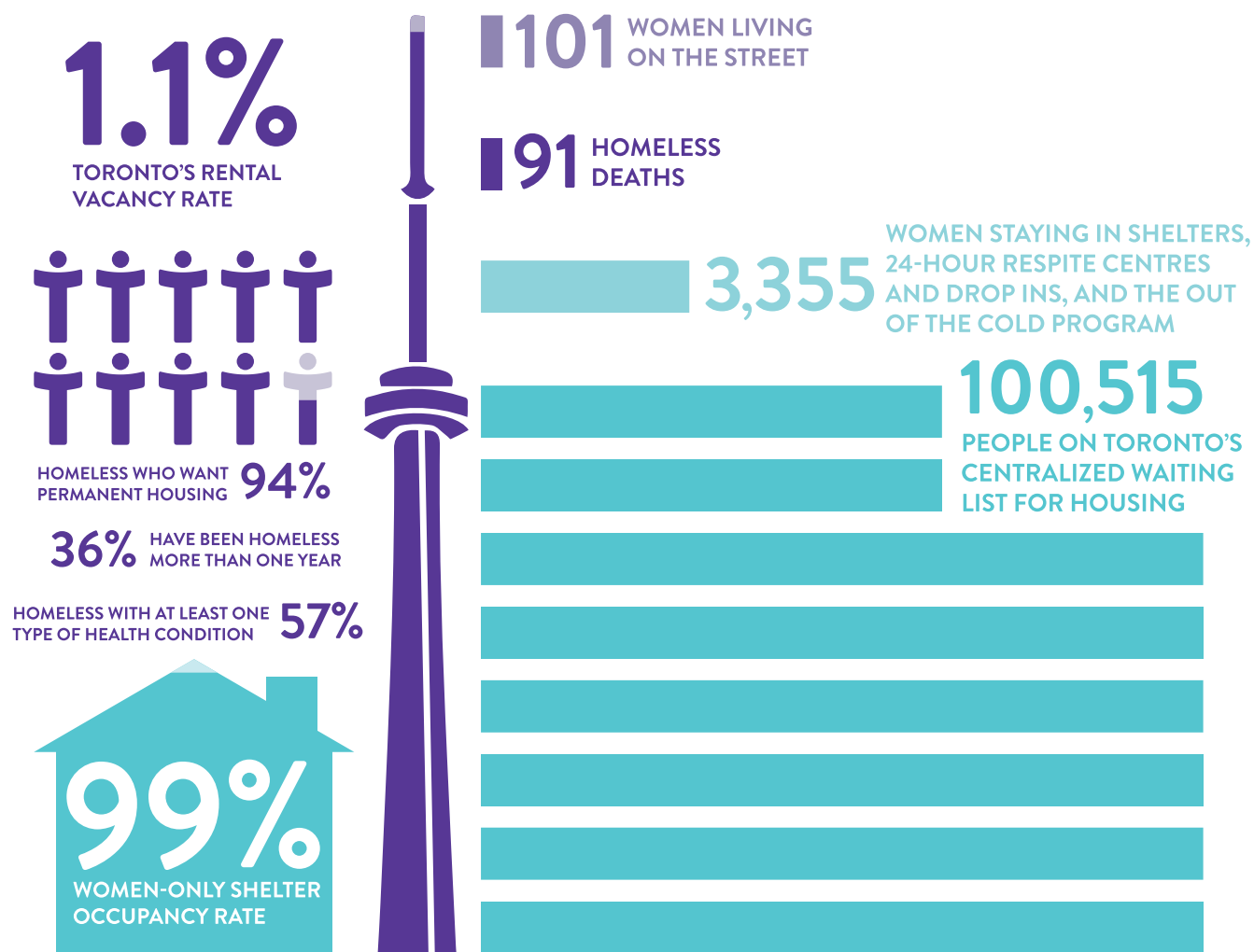


CRISIS: HOMELESSNESS

We have a homelessness crisis in Toronto.

Since 2015, the average number of people staying in the City's shelter system on any given night increased from 4,095 to 6,702. Nearly 1,000 people are in Toronto's overflow system, which includes respite centres and overnight drop ins such as Sistering where from 50 to 200 people a night sleep in a single room on cots or mats.

Shelter is not just a basic human need; it is a fundamental human right.



Street Needs Assessment 2018, City of Toronto 2018, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation 2018

“

We have people living under the Gardiner, living in the ravines, living in the parks.

”

— Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam

SISTERING IN ACTION

Responding to the homelessness crisis, the Community Support Team put additional resources into seeking out and building relationships with market rent landlords, working to enhance housing opportunities for the women who access our services.

We supported 450 homeless and precariously housed women to secure safe, stable and affordable housing. Whether in person, by phone or by liaising with other community supports, we provided over 5,000 instances of case support.

Sistering's primary care clinic expanded its services. Run in partnership with Inner City Health Associates, our clinic afforded marginalized women much-needed access to physicians and psychiatrists three days a week in addition to trauma counselling offered through the Jean Tweed Centre.

A Housing Access Worker, working full-time out of the 24/7 Drop In, further reduced barriers to support. Once housed, participants could expect continued help through our follow-up support team, including a new position dedicated to those housed through our partnership with St. Clare's Multifaith Housing.

“Sistering was the first organization that welcomed me with open arms. It helped me with the process of transitioning from a refugee shelter to securing my own apartment. Thanks to this body of empowering women, I regained my independence.

— PARTICIPANT



CRISIS: OPIOID OVERDOSE DEATHS

Toronto Paramedic Services receive thousands of suspected opioid overdose calls every year.

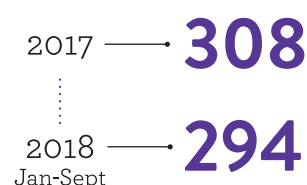
Deaths from opioid-related causes in the City increased 16 percent from 2017 to 2018; in 2017, one in four opioid overdose deaths in Ontario occurred in Toronto.

The unregulated manufacture, distribution and consumption of drugs coupled with the stigma of criminalization exacerbate the harm associated with drug use. Community members and advocates, including Toronto's Medical Officer of Health released a Report for Action in July, calling on the federal government to approach drug use as a public health issue not a criminal one, recommending a shift in resources from punitive enforcement to prevention, harm reduction and treatment services.

With the 2019 announcement that only six of the nine safe injection sites currently in operation in Toronto will continue to receive provincial funding, the fight continues.



SUSPECTED OPIOID-RELATED OVERDOSE DEATHS IN TORONTO



*Toronto Overdose Information System
2017-2019*



SISTERING IN ACTION

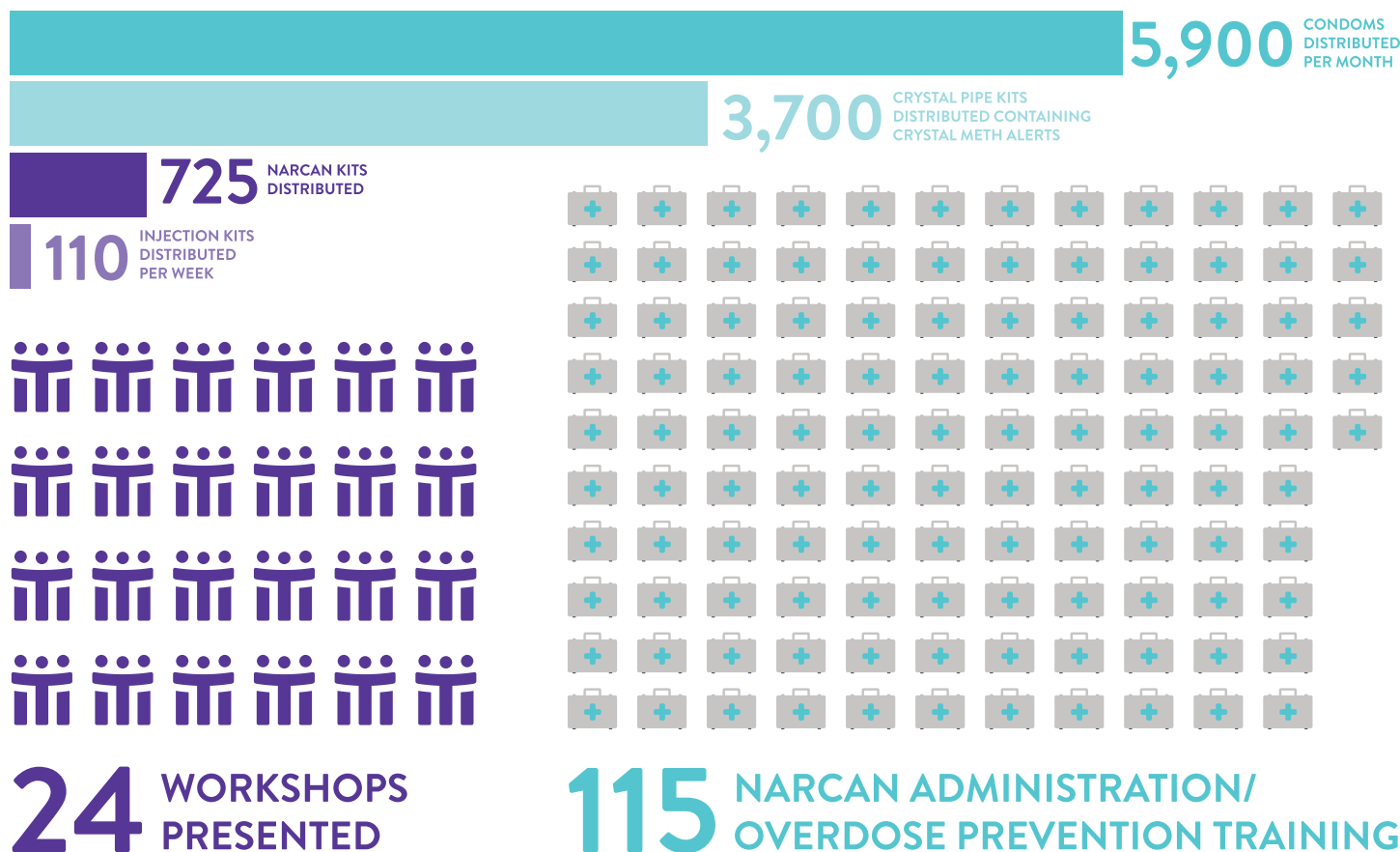
This year, Sistering increased our push for more safe injection sites while distributing life-saving information and supplies.

In September, we hosted 10 training sessions on topics ranging from de-escalation and boundaries to how to administer the opioid-blocking medication Narcan, bringing Sistering's dedicated team of Harm Reduction Peer Workers to 12.

November's Opiates 101 workshop, facilitated by Sistering Peers and held at KAPOW (Knowledge and Power of Women), offered in-depth descriptions of common opiates, accurate information on what withdrawal can look like, and best practices for safer opioid use.

Harm Reduction Peers and participants attended Sistering's monthly Women Helping Educate Women (WHEW) meetings, receiving updates on overdose prevention and awareness and taking part in workshops focused on health, wellness and safety.

With City of Toronto funding, Sistering added a full-time Harm Reduction Housing Worker to our team, prioritizing those participants who use drugs and/or do sex work and are often marginalized from mainstream housing supports. We also saw our first student placement in Harm Reduction organized through George Brown College.



CRISIS: HUNGER


According to Daily Bread Food Banks's 2018 Profile of Hunger, 41 percent of Torontonians were forced to turn to credit cards or payday loans to buy food; 29 percent missed meals to make rent.

2018 saw over 900,000 visits to food banks run by Daily Bread Food Bank and North York Harvest Food Bank member agencies. That's more than double the number of visits recorded two decades earlier.

“
My rent is \$1,136.
My income is \$1,050.
I essentially buy
nothing.”

— SURVEY PARTICIPANT

APPROXIMATELY
200 MILLION
POUNDS



ESSENTIAL FOOD
SHARED ANNUALLY
BY FOOD BANKS
ACROSS CANADA

62%

TORONTO FOOD BANK CLIENTS
IN 2018 REPORTING A DISABILITY
OR SERIOUS ILLNESS

\$733

MAXIMUM AMOUNT RECEIVED PER
MONTH BY A SINGLE PERSON ON
ONTARIO WORKS

2 YRS

AVERAGE LENGTH OF TIME TORONTONIANS
NEED TO ACCESS FOOD BANKS

*Daily Bread Food Banks's 2017 and 2018 Profiles of Hunger in Toronto,
Food Banks Canada 2018, City of Toronto 2019*

SISTERING IN ACTION

No one should go to bed hungry in a city as wealthy as Toronto – but many do.

We know first hand the impact food insecurity has on the physical, mental and emotional health of our most vulnerable citizens: poor, homeless, and marginalized women.

Studies have shown that adults experiencing food insecurity have poorer self-rated health, poorer mental and physical health, poorer oral health, greater stress, and are more likely to suffer from chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and mood and anxiety disorders. Food insecurity also makes it difficult to manage existing chronic conditions such as diabetes.

That's why Sisters Kitchen serves three hot meals a day, and soup and sandwiches overnight. Nicolette Felix, Food Access Coordinator, and her team design a menu plan and create recipes for lunch and dinner that include meat or fish, a starch, a hot vegetable and a vegetarian option, plus fresh fruit.

No one goes hungry.

At the end of September, Nicolette participated in the Daily Bread Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy Food Access Meeting, brainstorming collective concerns with other nonprofit food service providers for submission to the City.

Nicolette also became a member of the Daily Bread Agency Council and actively worked with the Creating Health Plus Advisory on initiatives to stabilize food security in the community. Continued participation in the Soups and Casseroles program via Daily Bread allows the Kitchen to sample meal items from scratch at affordable prices.

“When I come to Sistering, to work in the kitchen, I put a smile on my face. I couldn't ask for a better place to help others who really need it.

— SONJA



138,023

MEALS SERVED AT 24/7 DROP IN
AND PARKDALE OUTREACH



500 LBS

TURKEY ROASTED FOR
WINTER HOLIDAY LUNCH



650+

CHRISTMAS DAY & NEW YEAR'S DAY
LUNCHES SERVED



1,000

DUMPLINGS MADE
FOR ONE MEAL

CRISIS: GOVERNMENT INACTION

Toronto Council has not declared a homelessness state of emergency, despite mounting calls from housing advocates across the city.

Most of the shelters, respite centres and drop ins continued to run at or over capacity and suffered from safety concerns associated with overcrowding. New shelter and respite beds opened last year but they could not accommodate demand. What was meant to be temporary “housing” has become permanent shelter for many homeless.

By declaring a human rights crisis, advocates including those involved in the newly formed Shelter and Housing Justice Network (SHJN) hope to bring the municipal, provincial and federal governments together to draft an urgent and comprehensive housing plan.



100,515
HOUSEHOLDS ON TORONTO'S
SOCIAL HOUSING WAITLIST, 2018



8-9%
2017 TO 2018
WAITLIST
INCREASE

100,000
NUMBER OF RENT-GEARED-TO-INCOME
HOUSING UNITS SHELTER AND HOUSING
JUSTICE NETWORK (SHJN) IS PUSHING FOR
THE CITY TO OPEN IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

SHELTER AND HOUSING JUSTICE NETWORK (SHJN) AND ALLIED HOUSING ADVOCATES WANT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENTS TO COMMIT AN ADDITIONAL 1% OF EXISTING BUDGET TO COMBAT THE HOUSING CRISIS AND HOMELESSNESS.

“
The social advocacy skills I have learned at Sistering have helped me and will continue to help me speak for the most vulnerable, especially women.”

— Tina James,
Sistering Drop In Peer
and Social Action
Group Co-Facilitator

(City of Toronto 2017/2018, CBC 2018, Sound Times 2019)

SISTERING IN ACTION

Sistering was a fearless advocate for the homeless in Toronto. We held the City accountable for its promise of 1,000 new shelter beds, pushing additionally for affordable low barrier housing and a comprehensive, evidence-based response to the overdose crisis.

A Social Action Committee made up of Peers, staff and Board members worked to shape Sistering's approach to advocacy highlighted in our Strategic Implementation Plan, identifying key issues based on feedback from participants and staff.

We attended rallies that empowered Sistering participants. Twenty women attended International Overdose Day in August with Queen West and Parkdale Community Health Clinic, while September's Take Back the Night in Parkdale drew 30. A Safer Injection Site rally, also in September, led 10 women who access our services to march through downtown in the fight to protect and expand the City's safe injection sites.

Activities for the Fair Fare Coalition included pushing for the full implementation of the Fair Fare Pass, a discount fare for low-income people, with deputations sent to City Councillors and canvassing at Ossington subway station.

Sistering participated in the Grant Faulkner Inquest to ensure the voices of homeless women were included. And we took part in the Town Hall on Affordable Housing during the Municipal Elections, asking candidates questions on behalf of the women we serve.

We participated in the National Day to End Violence at Central Neighbourhood House as well as in International Women's Day events. Twenty Sistering participants gathered on February 14th for the 13th year of the Strawberry ceremony. There, they shared their love and grief for the thousands of missing and murdered Indigenous women across Turtle Island.



41,700

**EMAILS, PHONE
CALLS, LETTERS AND
ACCOMPANIMENTS
COMPLETED ON BEHALF
OF PARTICIPANTS**

305

**NUMBER OF ADVOCACY
ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY
SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE**



HERSTORY

"Being a part of the Social Action Group at Sistering has afforded me the opportunity to be involved with important social issues such as accessible transit and affordable housing.

Being more politically engaged has helped me think critically about how to improve society not just for a few but for all citizens. Change begins with community, and educating and involving each other in the issues that affect us is key."

- Tina James, Sistering Drop In Peer and Social Action Group Co-Facilitator

CRISIS: UNEMPLOYMENT

Ontario's unemployment rate was on the rise in 2018, reaching nearly six percent in early 2019 according to Ontario's Labour Market Report for January of this year. In human terms, that translates to more 450,000 people without work.

Many women who access our services struggle to find and secure full-time work at livable wages, so they patch together precarious and poorly paid jobs that do not offer stability or health benefits.

With low incomes and unaffordable housing, the situation for Sistering's un- and under-employed participants is challenging and not expected to improve.

54% OF THOSE RECEIVING INCOME FROM EMPLOYMENT AND ACCESSING A FOOD BANK IN TORONTO IN 2018 MAKING LESS THAN OR EQUAL TO MINIMUM WAGE

OF THOSE RECEIVING INCOME FROM EMPLOYMENT AND ACCESSING A FOOD BANK IN TORONTO IN 2018 MAKING LESS THAN OR EQUAL TO MINIMUM WAGE

31,000

5.8% ONTARIO'S UNEMPLOYMENT RATE AS OF MARCH 2019



“

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I started coming to Sistering about 10 years ago. In 2012, I started participating in Sue's knitting classes. I now come every day Spun is open. I learn a lot here, from watercolour painting and printmaking to quilting. I am currently making four quilts, one for each of my grandchildren. I've also made sweaters, hats and scarfs for them.

— Wen Chiu Kwan

SISTERING IN ACTION

On the Path to Employment is our pre-employment readiness program helping women who have experienced trauma and violence to prepare for the workforce.

Employment and Income Support continued to be robust, offering individual appointments for job search help, résumé writing, career counselling, support for volunteering, education and training, and income support. We also ran weekly Employment Group meetings, and offered a year-round tax clinic. Our Micro-Business Workshop Series included a visit from RISEAsset Development, a partnership between CAMH and the Rotman School of Business that provides small business loans.

Spun Studio, Sistering's social enterprise, contributes to the reduction of poverty and homelessness through opportunities to employ participants in a creative, collaborative and healing environment.

The Studio took part in a creative printmaking partnership with the Textile Museum of Canada (TMC). Ten women participated, block printing and cutting the printed yardage for scarves and bags.

The Studio also secured opportunities for participants to sell their woven, knitted, sewn and crocheted products as well as jewelry, including a creative fair at the Gladstone Hotel, a holiday fair at the Royal York United Church and at the summer Bloorcourt Festival.



50 PARTICIPANTS, EMPLOYMENT GROUP AND MICRO BUSINESS WORKSHOP SERIES

340 TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS, ON THE PATH INCLUDING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

150

WOMEN WHO RECEIVED INCOME SUPPORT



82 PARTICIPANTS, SPUN STUDIO

39 WOMEN, INCLUDING SPUN PARTICIPANTS, WHO GAINED EMPLOYMENT

37

WOMEN WHO RECEIVED SUPPORT IN VOLUNTEERING/ PURSUING FURTHER EDUCATION



CRISIS: SOCIAL ISOLATION

Social isolation is complex issue, influenced by myriad factors and affecting physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing.

Some studies suggest that the impact of isolation and loneliness on health and mortality is similar to risk factors such as high blood pressure, obesity and smoking.

According to a report by Community Food Centres Canada, programs and policies that reduce income inequality by tackling root causes of poverty may reduce social isolation and increase a sense of belonging for vulnerable populations. Other ways to promote social inclusion include free or subsidized access to programs, reducing judgment and paternalistic attitudes and interactions, and employing multi-dimensional and multi-sector approaches.

30-60%

INCREASE IN RISK
OF DEATH BY
SOCIAL ISOLATION

20%

CANADIANS
WHO REPORT
EXPERIENCING
SOME LEVEL
OF LONELINESS
OR ISOLATION



AT A RECORD HIGH,
28% OF CANADIAN
HOUSEHOLDS HAVE
ONLY ONE PERSON
LIVING IN THEM

(SFU Gerontology Research Centre 2018, Statistics Canada 2019)

SISTERING IN ACTION

Many women who come to Sistering lack meaningful engagement with others and have few social contacts. They talk about feeling alone.

For some, trauma has estranged them from their families and the communities they grew up in. Many cite the stress of homelessness and insecure housing as a barrier to meaningful connection and social support.

This past year, monthly hiking trips, run in partnership with Street to Trail, Toronto's only nature-based organization for marginalized adults, got Sistering participants out of the city and into the wilderness, to locations such as Mount Nemo, Mono Cliffs, and Rockwood and Kelso conservation areas. Through this same partnership, Sistering brought 25 participants on a multi-day camping excursion with opportunities to hike, swim, play games, relax and connect with each other.

The Out of Isolation Art Therapy Group, presented in collaboration with the Barbra Schlifer Clinic, and the weekly Sisters Supporting Sisters Peer Support Group offered additional opportunities for participants to heal, create and connect.

Drop In Peers continued to play a vital role at Sistering connecting with participants on a personal level, encouraging holistic supports that spring from the lived experience of the women themselves.

SOCIAL EVENTS & OUTINGS 92 → 8,933 ATTENDEES FOR SOCIAL EVENTS & OUTINGS



133 PARTICIPANTS AT THE SISTABANA BBQ & SUMMER NIGHT BOAT CRUISE



207 ATTENDANCES FOR SISTERS SUPPORTING SISTERS RUN EVERY WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON



536 VISITS TO UNION YOGA STUDIO FOR TUESDAY & FRIDAY YOGA

“ I attended the hike in Milton. We walked around while our guide explained the landmarks and vegetation. It was really relaxing to get out of the City, to get that break from life.

— Chantel



DONORS

Together, you gave more than \$900,000 to support the services Sistering offers some of Toronto's most marginalized women.

Thanks to individuals, foundations, businesses, unions and faith-based organizations across the GTA, we fed over 3,000 women this year, ran art and wellness programming and over 90 social events that took participants around town and out of town.

Your generous support meant we could expand housing and health supports for those members of our community most in need.

This past year, over the 100 third party events held in support of Sistering, from concerts and dinners to fashion shows and fitness workouts, raised funds and awareness - your immense and ongoing generosity makes Sistering possible.



CORPORATIONS, FOUNDATIONS,
FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS,
INDIVIDUALS

\$700,000

COMMUNITY FRIENDS MONTHLY GIVING
PROGRAM: 277 FRIENDS WITH ANNUAL GIFTS
\$89,000

TORONTO'S GRANITE BREWERY HOSTED
A PACKED TRIVIA NIGHT IN HONOUR OF
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY.*

\$3,000+

*ONE DOLLAR OF EVERY PIRATE QUEEN BEER
SOLD - THE BEER WAS BREWED ESPECIALLY
FOR IWD - WENT TO SISTERING.

\$2,000+

THE FUZZ WAX BAR TEAM DONATED
ONE DOLLAR FOR EVERY LIKE OR
SHARE THEY RECEIVED ON FACEBOOK

\$120,000+
RAISED BY THIRD
PARTY EVENTS

16 NUMBER OF LOCAL SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES THAT HAVE
PARTICIPATED IN FUNDRAISING AND IN-KIND DONATION DRIVES FOR SISTERING

“

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When we were first introduced to Sistering, we were immediately drawn in by the outstanding sense of community they have built. We chose our partnership with Sistering based on the empowering attitude they have towards providing resources to women in Toronto; it's a judgement-free, safe space for women in any stage of life. As a female-run organization, we understand the importance of supporting each other, and are so happy with our partnership with Sistering. They have been a pleasure to work with, and Fuzz Wax Bar is so proud to be partners with such a great organization.

— *Megan Savage, Marketing Manager, Fuzz Wax Bar*

After choosing Sistering as our charity for our International Women's Day Fundraiser, Jennifer and I went for a tour. It opened my eyes to things I had no idea existed in the city in which I've lived all my life. That women, with whatever troubles they may have, are welcomed, 24/7, fed, given a shower, a place to rest etc. was one of the most amazing things I've seen. I could go on and on about why this charity has come to mean so much to us, but in the meantime we will continue our support whenever and however we can, and hope that actions speak louder than words.

— *Mary Beth Keefe, Granite Brewery*

VOLUNTEERS

Without our dedicated team of volunteers, we wouldn't be able to offer the programs and activities participants have come to count on.

From facilitating craft activities such as beading and quilting to teaching ESL to prepping and serving meals, our tireless volunteers help ensure that every woman who comes to Sistering feels welcome and valued.

Thank you to every one of our volunteers for their compassion and commitment to the women we support.



274
VOLUNTEERS



4,600
VOLUNTEER
HOURS



90
ESL CLASSES
TAUGHT



520
JEWELRY
PIECES MADE



HERSTORY

Arwen Long flew to Washington to take part in the Women's March in 2017, a life-altering experience, she says.

"I'm 48 years old," she explains, "and I realized that everything that brought about Donald Trump's election happened on my watch. I had done nothing truly tangible to support women and I made a commitment to make a difference."

Back home, she read about Jana Girdauskas and The Period Purse, a not-for-profit Jana launched to provide purses filled with menstruation products to homeless women.

"That's how I learned about Sistering," Arwen says. And she became a monthly donor."

Two years later, she visited the Drop In and saw Sistering in action.

"It was overwhelming," she says. "There were so many women. And it drove home how much Sistering does with so little.

"Sistering goes to the urgency of the issues. Women need help right now. When I learned the agency was low barrier, I realized that that comes with its own set of challenges but the team at Sistering is committed to making that work. It's incredible."

HERSTORY

The Coldest Night of the Year brings tens of thousands of Canadians together every year in February to walk through the cold and the dark in support of vulnerable families and individuals in CNOY's many communities. This was the first year Sistering took part in the nationwide event, and on Saturday February 23rd, we found out how strong and generous our community truly is.

Our fundraising goal: \$35,000.

Our reality: \$64,000!

Vivien Cappe had only recently been introduced to Sistering when she decided to set up a page and fundraise for The Coldest Night of the Year. From

the outset, Vivien was struck by the dignity and respect afforded every woman who walks through Sistering's doors.

While fundraising brought its challenges in terms of time and energy, Vivien refused to quit, finding herself in a caring group of people equally committed to the fight against homelessness. Walking the 10K, Vivien was able to raise an astounding \$3,500 for Sistering. When family and friends praised her, she turned that praise back to the women who access our services, responding, "It's all the women who cross the doorstep of Sistering every day who deserve the admiration and praise."



Vivien Cappe and Barb Aikman walking in support of Sistering at this year's Coldest Night of the Year.

IN MEMORIAM

In many ways, this has been a year of mourning. Sistering lost too many members of our community and they will be missed. As the homelessness and overdose crises in Toronto continue to claim lives, we will ramp up our call for safe, long-term, low barrier housing and safe injection sites.

Marlene Cowley

Marlene Cowley was a regular member of the Drop In community. She took shifts cleaning the washrooms, taking out the garbage and sweeping the floors, and always with a smile on her face.

Ellie Fedak

Ellie Fedak - and her small dog, Emilio - held a special place at Sistering. Ellie was known for her sweet nature, her kindness and generosity. Ellie supported Drop In and Harm Reduction staff with so many tasks critical to day-to-day running of the space.

Nicole Gambino

Nicole (Nikki) Gambino surrounded herself with friends. At Sistering, she often sat quietly, asking little of staff and other participants but if you caught her eye, she always shared a smile.

Kathy Gardiner

Kathy Gardiner was a key figure in Harm Reduction when the program launched in 2011. She was an activist and artist, a leader and spokesperson for social justice, wise and compassionate, honest and incredibly funny.

Cheyenne 'Sky' LaValley

Cheyenne 'Sky' LaValley, a member of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation and Toronto's Indigenous community, was a loved and loving daughter, mother, sister and friend. When she came into the Drop In at night, as she often did, Sky lit up the room with her smile.

Crystal Papineau

Crystal Papineau had a magnetic personality. She would go the extra mile, no questions asked. Full of love despite much adversity, Crystal will be remembered for her strength and resiliency.

Heather Ward

Heather Ward had a gentle manner. Kind-hearted and loving. Heather enjoyed a large support network, including her two dogs whose company she found therapeutic.

Ashley White

Ashley White was warm and welcoming, generous with her time, insight and compassion. She surrounded herself with family and friends who loved her and whom she loved and looked out for. She had a playful sense of humour and a beautiful singing voice.

We will not stop until the preventable deaths do.



STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

	2019	2018
Revenues		
Grant Revenues		
City of Toronto	\$ 2,500,021	\$ 2,621,337
Local Health Integration Network	1,323,314	1,301,512
United Way of Greater Toronto	359,530	411,261
Foundations	249,807	187,012
Other grants	150,129	-
West Neighbourhood House (LHIN Peer)	114,732	139,267
Ontario Women's Directorate	90,000	90,000
Ontario Seniors Secretariat	43,400	66,698
Trillium Foundation	-	16,667
Donations and fundraising	673,433	497,899
Amortization of deferred capital contributions	237,086	210,451
Miscellaneous	127,191	106,594
Interest	9,137	10,075
	5,877,780	5,659,773

Expenses		
Wages and benefits	3,568,682	3,208,602
Programs	817,261	623,566
Building occupancy costs	317,732	320,751
Purchased services	272,106	452,825
Amortization	271,217	205,787
Repairs and maintenance	243,401	176,131
Office and general	219,356	127,669
Fundraising	60,775	29,675
Professional fees	40,565	20,269
Insurance	19,652	21,272
Promotion and publicity	13,301	23,029
Volunteer	-	9
	5,844,048	5,209,585
Excess of revenues over expenses	\$ 33,732	\$ 449,188

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If we don't speak out
on behalf of Toronto's
most vulnerable
citizens, who will?

— *Carol*

SISTERING

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