

SISTIERING

ANNUAL REPORT 2019/2020

COVERING FISCAL YEAR APRIL 1ST, 2019 TO MARCH 31ST, 2020

"Wishing the best for everyone during this awful time. You are cared for and appreciated."

"Sistering was there for me, supporting me through the trauma and losses, hugging me and allowing me to grieve and heal."

"I live in the neighborhood. The work you do is incredibly important, and I'm proud to be a neighbour."

"Keep doing the good work! You all are amazing and thank you!"

Whole team at Sistering for your compassionate support of the participants

"Thank you all for the beautiful and selfless work you do. You are all angels and heroes and I can't wait to meet the team some day!"

"My appreciation goes to you and the

that find at Sistering a place of inclusion, safety, renewal and hope."

WE THANK OUR 2019-2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

for their time and dedication to advancing the work of Sistering:

- Alicia Leyva Arcos

Amanda Bertucci

Courtney Briggs

Cynthia Daley

Heather Smyth – Co Chair

Joey Noble - Secretary

Judy Virgo

Lynne Woolcott

Michaela Ferguson – Co Chair
- Natalie Bozinovski

Pat Craig

Sarah Halsey

Sharon Nicholls

Stephanie Mazzocot

Sue Kelleher

Susan Mazza

Tracy Heffernan

We are generously supported by



This report covers the fiscal year April 1st, 2019 to March 31st, 2020
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Illustrated by Madison van Rijn, madisonvanrijn.com.

A YEAR OF RESILIENCE

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OUR 2019/2020 IMPACT

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As I ponder on Sistering being in existence for almost 40 years, I consider all the challenges and accomplishments of the individuals who have brought us this far and I am humbled to stand on their shoulders: tireless advocates, strong feminist strategists, champions and challengers, leaders and system changers. We continue to move forward on the path they laid for us to follow, motivated by all the individuals using our services and amplifying their voices to demand that structures and systems that keep them on the margins be removed.

Viewing the current landscape within the lens of COVID and the significant impact it has had on the most vulnerable not just highlights the gaps but exposes the fissures that must be addressed if we are to succeed as a society. Our programs and services continue to support the vulnerable in an ever changing landscape, yet, we should not be the solution. “Shelter in Place” is a myth for those who seek the safety of the streets and each other when spaces and places become inaccessible to them. Lack of housing, unsafe drug supply, systems that are not designed for support but for incarceration have failed us for too long.

We must use our coming years and the wisdom of turning 40 to find long term solutions to these issues. We work towards building our capacity and ability to address the everyday micro-aggressions as well as the larger issues that have been highlighted in the past several months. Our space and practice requires some significantly difficult work and I am most certain that the team that continues to support the work of Sistering will be ready for the challenge.

None of our work would be possible without the support of our tireless board, the strong partnerships of our Sister organizations, our funders, our generous donors and some amazing women who continue to find the time to support us; Deputy Mayor and City Councillor Ana Bailao, MPP Marit Stiles and MP Julie Dzerowicz are always and have always been champions of the vulnerable and continue to support the work of Sistering.

Next year will be the year that Sistering became a dream 40 years ago and we look forward to the coming years with anticipation and energy to ensure as stated by Rosemary Brown that “Until all of us have made it, none of us have made it.”

Priyanka Sheth

PRIYANKA SHETH

Space remains a key issue with the steady increase in drop-in visits and use of services and programs. We need more room to grow and we are engaged in the process of identifying future needs and real estate options.

The Board continues to advocate and address barriers facing participants. We are committed to the ongoing work of being an actively anti-racist, anti-oppressive, diverse organization; language in our policies and bylaws have been amended to reflect the gender diversity of participants and to be trans inclusive.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unique challenges for us: once again, space being one of the most pressing issues. In March, the Board passed a motion to suspend our Drop In and temporarily relocate to Masaryk-Cowan Center in Parkdale to offer participants the required physical distance. It was a stressful and uncertain time, especially as we had to house fewer participants in that space, but staff quickly adapted and followed stringent safety and public health guidelines.

Another significant change came late April, when the Board appointed Priyanka Sheth to the Executive Director role, on an interim basis. Priyanka brings strong leadership skills and a thoughtful approach that the organization needs at this time. The Board enjoys the collaborative working approach and the shared vision for Sistering’s future.

Four Board members have moved on. Their contributions are of immense benefit to the organization and we thank them for their years of service and dedication. The Nominations Committee has identified new Board candidates who will be confirmed at the AGM. We extend a warm welcome, and we look forward to working with them.

The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified underlying racial-ethnic and socio-economic disparities in our society, and individuals who are already vulnerable find themselves in even more precarious positions. As a Board, it reinforces the critical need for nonprofit community service agencies like Sistering, that advocate for and protect the most marginalized. The Board remains engaged and committed especially now in these unprecedented times.

We thank our generous funders, donors and well-wishers for their support: this is not possible without you!

Sistering’s future is bright and as we lay the foundation for our next phase; we reflect on our resilience and strength over the past nearly 40 years. Especially now, we see the strength and determination in staff, management, and participants - everyone lifting each other up and continuously rising to the occasion.

Michaela Ferguson Heather Smyth

MICHAELA FERGUSON & HEATHER SMYTH

Sistering is a multi-service agency for at-risk, socially isolated women and trans people in Toronto who are homeless or precariously housed. We have been serving this community for over 35 years, validating the experiences of women and trans people regardless of outcomes.

OUR VISION

is a world where all women and trans people are safe, respected, valued, treated with dignity and have equitable opportunities to thrive and participate in inclusive opportunities.

OUR MISSION

is to create a safe, welcoming and non judgemental space for women and trans people, guided by the principles of feminism, anti-racism and anti-oppression.

WE OFFER

practical and emotional support to enable women and trans people to take greater control of their lives.

WE COLLABORATE

with others in the community to change the social conditions that endanger the welfare of women and trans people.



OUR 2019/2020 IMPACT

Adapting our Programs and Services

During the pandemic, we were able to adapt our programs and services to respond to health directives while continuing to serve our participants. We temporarily relocated from our 962 Bloor location to a Parkdale Pandemic Response Site in collaboration with the City of Toronto, while providing takeaway meals for participants, access to harm reduction supplies and virtual programming and check-ins.

Strengthening Community Engagement

We were able to dedicate more time to building our relationship with our neighbours and members of the community through our Community Advisory Council and a number of community facing initiatives, including providing de-escalation trainings, an open house and distributing surveys to neighbouring businesses.

Building our Advocacy Capacity

We have taken steps to building our organizational capacity to advocate for specific issues: affordable housing, affordable transit and mental health from an empowerment perspective. We did not only continue to attend events and rallies and reach out to key decision makers, but we have also continued to take on research and advocacy projects to fill in gaps that exist in the homelessness sector around gender.



Open 24-hours, 7 days a week, our Drop In is a place where women and trans people can access hot meals, showers and laundry facilities, telephone and internet, clothing and get access to a range of services and support groups.

140,521

Participant Visits

104

Event attendees

3587

Participants who attended events

84,572

Personal hygiene & clothing items distributed

7128

Referrals made

PARKDALE OUTREACH

We also offer a day Drop In program in Parkdale that primarily serves a senior population. The program offers breakfast and lunch during the weekdays as well as various workshops and social gatherings.

60

Regular participants

130

Enjoyed a special holiday meal together

HARM REDUCTION

Harm reduction offers substance users and sex workers the information and support they need to use safely and stay healthy. It’s a social justice and public health response to drug use; rather than criminalizing users, it focuses on reducing the harm associated with high risk behaviors that come with shared needles and crack pipes, and unprotected sex.

20,407

Harm Reduction Kits
Assembled and Distributed

| | |
|----------|------|
| Needle | 6123 |
| Dragon | 1424 |
| Crack | 6033 |
| Meth | 5440 |
| Naloxone | 1387 |

209,782

Harm Reduction
Resources Distributed

| | |
|------------------------|---------|
| Safer Sex | 101,749 |
| Other Supplies | 108.033 |
| Community Support Work | |
| Shelter | 283 |
| Tax | 27 |
| Home Visit | 339 |
| Landlord Visit | 133 |
| Court | 52 |
| Medical | 446 |
| ODSP/OW | 199 |

“It gave me purpose. Everyone needs that sense of connection and belonging.” – Kathy, Harm Reduction Peer Worker

290
Events

- 4 HIV/ Hep. C testing events
- Completed 12 peer trainings
- Completed 12 internal and 12 community-based harm reduction workshops
- Completed 96 kit making sessions
- Completed 96 street and community outreach sessions
- Completed 20 Drop- in events for women
- Completed 50 KAPOW sessions

5 New
Partnerships

- Sherbourne Health Centre for mobile Hep. C treatment & testing
- St. Stephens Community House for onsite Hep. C testing
- Toronto Public Library - Gladstone / Bloor Branch: Support for computer literacy, book club for Peers, community fair promotional table
- Breakaway Addiction Services for counselling sessions
- Butterfly for supporting Asian Sex Workers

72,225 Contacts
Reached Through
Outreach

FOOD ACCESS PROGRAM

The Sistering Kitchen plays a vital role in the Drop In, acting as a gathering place for participants to sit and share a healthy meal three times a day. Sharing meals is especially important for the seniors at Parkdale Outreach, acting as a key social connector for individuals who are otherwise isolated.

156,480 Meals Served

Key Partnerships

Daily Bread

Second Harvest

Creating Health Plus

Special Events and Meals

Sistabana

Boat Cruise

Holiday Party

Black History Month



Winner
of the Visionary
Drop-In Award by
Daily Bread



ON THE PATH TO EMPLOYMENT

With the generous funding of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, On the Path to Employment helps women and trans people who have experienced trauma and violence to prepare for the workforce.

405 Participants Served

30

Participants Found
Employment

22

Participants Became
Self-Employed

102

Participants Pursued
Further Training

180

Participants Received
Violence Against
Women Counselling

147

Participants
Received
Pre-Employment
Services

180

Participants Attended
Violence Against
Women Events

SPUN STUDIO

Spun Studio is our social enterprise that offers marginalized women and trans people the chance to earn supplemental income in a creative, collaborative and healing environment.

"Doing arts and crafts is more than doing arts and crafts. It's about being around people and the positive experience of helping each other. It's therapeutic, calming and healing. It just does so many more beautiful things to a person's soul." - Denise

2,077 Spun Studio Attendance

4

Participants that have delivered workshops this year (crochet shawls, journaling, rug hooking, wall applique)

294

Total attendance in Outreach's Thursday morning sewing class

9

Participants attended Entrepreneur Mentorship Group

Participated in 18 pop up sales

Bloorcourt Shop Local Event, Harvest Market Pop up, Sistering Open House, Gladstone Hotel Wellness Market, Coldest Night of the Year, Royal York United Church Holiday Market, Soupalicious.

Items for Sale

Aprons, soap and face scrubbies, mittens, slippers, hats, headbands, baby blankets, totebags, cutlery holders, shawls.

Exhibitions

Community Voices Program at the Textile Museum of Canada
Quilting Group exhibit at Black Creek Pioneer Village



\$2,859.50 Total Sales

ADVOCACY

At Sistering, we commit time and resources to research and advocate for long-term systemic changes that address issues around homelessness and poverty.

63,402 Advocacy accompaniments,
letters, calls

10+

Events/Rallies Attended with 150+
Representatives from Sistering Trans
Access Committee involvement in
Toronto Shelter Network

Countless

Phone calls made and petitions
signed in support of TTC Riders and
Fair Fare Coalition, for affordable
transit, as well as safe transit that
maintained service during COVID-19.



PARTICIPANT SUCCESS STORIES

Sistering partnered with Toronto Writers Collective and facilitated an 8 week writing workshop. One of the participants of the group went on to facilitate her own journaling group

"The writing workshop at Sistering was a safe, positive, non-judgmental space where we could express ourselves through creative writing. I had gone many years without practicing my writing skills, however the exercises that we participated in motivated and inspired me to write again. It gave me the confidence that I needed to write from my soul. I am very grateful that I got to be a part of this wonderful workshop." – Denise

Sistering

Shadows dance
Upon my soul
As I see darkness
And weep
In this stormy embrace

As tears stream
Upon my being
I see a glowing
In the vast horizon
Beyond the mist

Drifting towards
These loving lights
They heal
And comfort
All that pass

My essence is pierced
As I cherish
Energies of kindness
And devotion
With trust and warmth

And as I rest
In its shining embrace
I disown the poisons
Of that bleak past
And step forward

Beaming
As I am touched
By hope and joy
And celebration
Into eternity

- Denise

Kathy, one of our Harm Reduction Peers, lost her apartment and belongings in a fire in April. She got herself to Sistering and was provided with a warm coat, a bag of clothing and food vouchers and most importantly, she felt cared for.

"Sistering was there for me, supporting me through the trauma and losses, hugging me and allowing me to grieve and heal."

Sistering receives generous contributions from community members and organizations that allow participants to have access to essential items:

"I recently received some L' Oreal product from the staff at Sistering. My income is from all ODSP normally I cannot afford these products. These are difficult times. We have to use all our money for food and rent. We don't really think about buying nice things like shampoos. This was a very nice luxury and it make me feel very happy. Thank you for thinking about us and for your kindness, it is greatly appreciated." – Rose

HOW WE MAKE AN IMPACT

VOLUNTEER

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

1,062 Volunteers

20+ Programs and Services Offered Through Volunteers

95

Regular Volunteers

382

Special Event Volunteers

4,200

Total Volunteer Hours

Yoga

Beading/Jewellery Making

ESL

English Conversation

Hair Styling

Medical Reception support

Kitchen prep support

Admin/Reception support

Mindfulness/Meditation

Mindfulness and Acupuncture

Law Clinic

Drama and Spoken Word

Music Therapy

Quilting

Enterprise and Entrepreneurship

Beauty and Empowerment

Creative Writing (Toronto Writers Collective)

Bodywork and Massage

Soap Making

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The local community has continued to be a wonderful support to Sistering. We are always working to find ways to be a better neighbour to local residents and businesses as well as create opportunities for dialogue.

45 People at our first community open house

10+

Community Advisory Meetings with local residents, businesses and community members

9

De-escalation Trainings (8 in Community, 1 for Business)

1

BIA x Sistering Community Check-in with Local Businesses and Distribution of Survey

Over \$73,000

Raised at 2nd Coldest Night of the Year in Bloorcourt Neighbourhood

12 sponsors, 170 Walkers and over 800 Supporters



FUNDRAISING

We are extremely grateful for the financial support we have received and continue to receive from individuals to organizations.

\$1,143,903.²⁵
In financial donations

\$46,478.⁶⁷
Raised by third-party events

\$79,249.⁵⁷
In donations from foundations

\$153,604
From monthly donors

\$395,439.⁶⁰
In donations from organizations

\$643,066
From individual donations

\$58,537.51
In-kind donations
for which receipts were given

50+
In-kind donors over the holiday

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

| REVENUES | 2020 | 2019 |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Grant revenue | | |
| City of Toronto | 2,541,543 | 2,500,021 |
| Local Health Integration Network | 1,352,275 | 1,323,314 |
| United Way of Greater Toronto | 356,530 | 359,530 |
| Foundations | 180,822 | 249,807 |
| Other grants | 156,248 | 150,129 |
| West Neighbourhood House (LHIN Peer) | 123,223 | 114,732 |
| Ontario Women’s Directorate | 90,000 | 90,000 |
| Ontario Seniors Secretariat | 38,317 | 43,400 |
| Donations and fundraising | 852,082 | 673,433 |
| Amortization of deferred capital contributions | 151,914 | 237,086 |
| Miscellaneous | 59,634 | 127,191 |
| Interest | 9,759 | 9,137 |
| | 5,912,347 | 5,877,780 |

| | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| EXPENSES | | |
| Wages and benefits | 3,858,388 | 3,568,682 |
| Programs | 774,650 | 817,261 |
| Building occupancy costs | 332,694 | 317,732 |
| Amortization | 318,182 | 271,217 |
| Repairs and maintenance | 282,623 | 243,401 |
| Office and general | 188,421 | 219,356 |
| Purchased services | 188,269 | 272,106 |
| Fundraising | 103,781 | 60,775 |
| Professional fees | 19,932 | 40,565 |
| Insurance | 19,181 | 19,652 |
| Promotion and publicity | 5,666 | 13,301 |
| | 6,091,787 | 5,844,048 |
| (Deficiency) excess of revenues over expenses | (179,440) | 33,732 |

"I really believe in the work that Sistering does."

"I hope that today is a little better than yesterday and that you all get respite and joy. Wish I could give more!"

"Thank you for your great work, especially in support of racialized women and trans people!"

"In honor of all women at Sistering - LOVE"

"Sistering has made my life easier."