



# SISÏERING

## Impact Report

2023-2024



# Table of Contents



2023 - 2024

A Message from our Board of Directors	02	Research & Advocacy	17
About Sistering	03	Community Engagement	19
Stepping up to Challenges	05	Sistering Volunteers	20
24-Hour Low-Barrier Drop-In <i>Bloor St.</i>	07	Solidarity for Sistering	21
Low-Barrier Drop-In <i>Parkdale</i>	08	2023/2024 Financial Highlights	22
Food Access Program	09	Sistering Funders & Donors	23
Medical Clinic	10	Contact Us	24
Harm Reduction Program	11		
Follow-Up Case Support	13		
Back to Home Program	14		
Community Wellness Groups	15		
Social Enterprise: Spun Studio	16		



# A message from our Board of Directors

We would first like to thank Sistering's staff, volunteers, peers, participants, clients, and community partners for their tireless work over the last year.

It is hard to pinpoint exactly when COVID became *post-COVID*. For anyone working, volunteering, or accessing services in the community sector in Toronto, it can feel as though we simply moved from one pandemic to another. The housing and drug poisoning crises continue to impact Sistering and our community. We have witnessed lives lost and others nearly destroyed by these crises. Sistering's services are needed now more than ever.

With pandemic restrictions lifted, Sistering has been able to open our doors to more women and gender diverse people. Our drop-in has provided a safe space to some of Toronto's most vulnerable when they have nowhere else to go. Our kitchen, case management, and housing support services, combined with partnerships with ICHA and other partners in the sector continue to help make Sistering a vital hub in the community, where dropping in for a meal or to get out of the cold can turn into a connection with a peer, or a case management worker, or even an appointment with a doctor.

This crucial work cannot be done without our dedicated staff. We would like to thank our former Executive Director, Gael Gilbert, for her leadership and her career-long commitment to vulnerable women in our community.

We are excited to announce the appointment of Volletta Peters as Sistering's new Executive Director. Volletta comes to Sistering with decades of experience in the non-profit sector. As a champion of supportive housing, cross-sector collaboration, quality improvement, and better health and long-term care for those who are homeless or precariously housed, we look forward to Volletta's commitment to ensuring that Sistering participants and clients will continue to have access to evidenced-based services and programs and that our staff and partners are equipped with the tools to deliver them.

Some say a crisis can be an opportunity. On behalf of the Board of Directors at Sistering, in 2024-2025, we are committed to turning the housing crisis into an opportunity to change the way we see and support vulnerable people in Toronto. An opportunity to build stronger partnerships with the many agencies we are fortunate to work alongside, an opportunity to make Sistering's services more responsive and accessible, and an opportunity to learn from and uphold the voices and experiences of those we work with.

We hope you will join us in this important work.



Gail Di Cintio, Chair & Sara Fruchtman, Vice-Chair

# About Sistering



## OUR MISSION

We create a safe, welcoming, and non-judgmental space for women and gender-diverse people. We are guided by principles of feminism, anti-racism, and anti-oppression. We offer practical and emotional support to those 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 and gender-diverse people to take greater control over their lives. We work in collaboration with others in the community to change the social conditions that endanger the welfare of the people we serve.

## OUR VISION

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

## OUR VALUES

**COMMITMENT:** Sistering is invested in creating safe and inclusive spaces to respond to the needs of the community.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** Sistering is stewarded by those with lived experience and is led by individuals invested in the well-being of the organization and the people it serves.

**EQUITY:** Sistering's programs are user-informed and designed to meet the needs of our diverse community.

**INTEGRITY:** Sistering is honest and transparent.

**EMPATHY:** Our services meet our users where they are, offering a range of immediate needs and longer-term support.

**INCLUSIVITY:** We offer safe spaces for women and gender-diverse people to access the services they need with care and compassion.

**RESILIENCY:** Sistering is agile and capable of responding to create a positive impact for the community.

**A safe space where all individuals are *valued* and treated with *dignity & compassion***



## Proudly Serving our Community Since 1981

Sistering was founded by a group of local community members who were concerned by the growing number of women experiencing homelessness and the lack of support they were receiving from the government. What began as a “tea & cookies” meetup to reduce social isolation, quickly became a haven where individuals with various experiences and backgrounds would feel seen, heard, and valued, within a safe and non-judgmental environment. Over the past four decades, our programs and services have expanded to serve more people, and we are more dedicated than ever to finding creative and permanent solutions to the complex challenges and evolving needs of our community.



### A message from our Executive Director, *Volletta Peters*

“

Sistering’s longstanding commitment to serving women and gender-diverse people who experience inequities and marginalization speaks volumes to its dedicated staff, clients, participants, partners, and Board of Directors.

Like many social service organizations, Sistering has been and continues to be affected by the pandemic. These challenges also provide new opportunities for renewal and growth. As Sistering embarks on its next chapter, I look forward to working alongside its dedicated Board, staff, peers, and community partners to ensure clients and participants receive evidence-informed, high-quality healthcare and social services that adequately address their needs.

# Stepping Up to Challenges

Despite soaring demand and fewer resources, Sistering continued to work diligently to provide the necessary care and support to more than 200 people per day.

## Feeding Our Community

The Daily Bread Food Bank's 2023 "Who's Hungry" report revealed that one in ten people in Toronto were relying on food banks – twice as many as the year prior. With more and more households experiencing poverty, Sistering's Food Access Program became more vital than ever before, serving up more than 350 nutritious and culturally appropriate meals per day to hungry community members.

## Welcoming Refugees

In 2023, over 140,000 refugee claims were made in Canada – a **285% increase** over the previous decade. By the end of the year, refugee claimants accounted for slightly over 50% of all people in Toronto shelters\*. In response to the sudden spike in demand over the summer of 2023, our 24-hour drop-in and Food Access program supported about 40% more people and our staff developed new culturally-relevant programs that catered to the individual needs of refugees.

Report: Federal Support for Refugee Claimants, City of Toronto, Sept 2023



## Recovering from the Pandemic

Sistering, just like charities all over the world, is still feeling the effects of the pandemic, with challenges in generating revenue, a reduction in volunteers, difficulties recruiting and retraining staff, and unprecedented levels of demand from service users. In a 2023 study conducted by CanadaHelps, respondents indicated that staff burnout and turnover have been some of the greatest lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Managing the Housing Crisis

Toronto is at the epicenter of the country's housing crisis, where scarce supply, coupled with a population boom, has led to massive rental costs. In the past decade, the number of people sleeping in emergency shelters in Toronto has more than doubled to more than 9,000 people a night in 2023. Those numbers don't capture those who are sleeping rough or the thousands of 'hidden homeless' – many of whom are women – that are housed precariously or living in unsafe and unstable conditions.

Report: Housing Crisis, Packed Hospitals and Food Lines: Even in Canada? Bloomberg.com, March 2024

# \$1,727

Average monthly rent for unfurnished bachelor apartment in Toronto

# \$390

Maximum Monthly Shelter Allowance for an individual on Ontario Works (OW)

# \$556

Maximum Monthly Shelter Allowance for an individual on Ontario Disability Support Plan (ODSP)



## **Sistering *Listens, Responds* & *Advocates for Change***

# Low-Barrier Drop-In

24-Hour Drop-In at 962 Bloor St. West

For hundreds of women and gender-diverse people, Sistering is much more than a drop-in. It's a place to feel seen, heard, and valued. It's a safe haven where all individuals are welcomed and offered nourishment, compassion, hope, and a sense of belonging.

Over the 2023–2024 year, Sistering's dedicated staff made an average of 850 referrals per month to help Sistering participants move on to shelters or secure more permanent housing; obtain treatment for mental health, substance use, and physical health concerns; gain income and employment support; access legal services; and participate in newcomer settlement support groups.

In addition, we were pleased to offer an average of **24 unique programs and social events per month!**



A few Highlights of the **Many** Wellness Programs & Social Events Offered this year:

Yoga  
Fitness Classes  
Creative Writing  
Abstract Art  
Movie night  
Karaoke

Acupuncture  
Makeovers  
Hair care  
Trivia Event  
Board Games  
Beading

Black History Month events included: speakers, storytelling, African art, drumming, poetry reading, cultural meals, dominoes, cards, board games and music!

Indigenous programming on Truth & Reconciliation Day and throughout the year included speakers, visits from Elders, drumming, and a beading workshop.

Participants especially enjoyed Sistering day trips to see the cherry blossoms at High Park, the AGO, the ROM, St.Jacobs, Niagara Falls, the CNE, Wasaga Beach, and apple picking!

**FY 2023–2024**

**27,860**

Participant Visits

**10,218**

Referrals Made

**287**

Programs & Social  
Events Hosted



# Low-Barrier Drop-In

Daytime Parkdale Drop-In at 220 Cowan Ave.

Participants who visit Sistering's Parkdale Drop-In, located within the Masaryk-Cowan Community Recreation Centre, are offered a range of inclusive services, including:

- Breakfast and lunch daily
- Shower facilities
- Clothing, footwear, hygiene items
- Telephone and mailing address
- Crisis intervention and trauma-informed counselling
- Harm reduction support and supplies
- Information, referral, and accompaniment to social assistance services, legal aid, doctors, housing, and other appointments
- Educational workshops
- Seasonal tax clinic

Over the 2023-2024 year, participants enjoyed two-day trips to Paris, ON, and Stratford, ON, and had the opportunity to join a variety of educational and creative social programs, including:

- Making shea butter with Drae
- Painting with Ashley and Aneika.
- Making wontons with Cindy for Chinese New Year
- Baking Zucchini bread with Brenda
- Making cutting boards with Antoinetta
- Flower arranging with Brenda



## Meet a Participant: Mira Z

Mira arrived in Canada in 1992 with her husband and 8-year-old son. Although her husband spoke a little English, she and her son did not, and Mira found her early years in Canada very challenging.

Mira was referred to Sistering in 2012 by her family physician, to assist with creating structure in her day and to help with feelings of isolation and depression.

Mira initially was very reserved when she first started spending time at the Outreach. She was self-conscious about her language skills and worried about making connections with staff and other participants.

It took no time at all for Mira to forge new connections at Sistering, and she soon had many friends and new interests, including those that extended outside of the Sistering space.

Mira is now a valued member of our Honorarium Peer Program, which assists with daily lunch service and clean-up. Our honorarium Peer Program currently offers Mira and four other participants the opportunity to share their experiences, learn practical and transferrable skills, and earn additional income to assist with their already stretched budget.

FY 2023-2024

17,562

Participant Visits

52

Programs & Social  
Events Hosted

1,105

Unique  
Participants

1,657

Referrals Made

# Food Access Program

Our Food Access Program, which serves three meals a day and snacks to individuals experiencing food insecurity, plays a crucial role in addressing hunger and promoting well-being in our community. By providing consistent access to nutritious food, the program helps to alleviate the immediate stress of food scarcity, ensuring that our participants can focus on other critical aspects of their lives. This reliable source of sustenance not only promotes good health but also fosters a sense of dignity, safety, and stability.

## Thank you to our valued Food Access Partners:

Whole Foods  
North York Harvest  
Ubuntu Collective

Red Lobster, KFC  
Daily Bread  
Second Harvest



FY 2023-2024

# 131,122

Meals Served

As always, we were thrilled to celebrate special occasions like Black History Month and Lunar New Year together with delicious celebratory meals. In our experience, nothing brings people together more than *food*, so whether it's just a regular Tuesday, or a special occasion like Indigenous People's Day, Ramadan, Christmas, Thanksgiving, or Passover, participants know they can count on Sistering to receive the nutrition they need, within the caring, warm, and accepting community they deserve.

## Meet a Participant: Adejoke

I was at Sistering for six months and was relatively a Newcomer to Canada when I found myself at Sistering. During my stay, I felt deep compassion for some of the Participants and decided to support them where possible.

...I discovered there were resources available to help me in my quest for knowledge. I registered for courses and used the library to fill gaps in my knowledge. I applied to and attended ten Mental Health Trainings with certification during my stay at Sistering, in addition to acquiring a Personal Support Worker diploma, a Shelter Support Worker certificate, and a Safe Food handler certificate. My experience at Sistering informed my decision to work with vulnerable people. I have just been recently hired by a Community Living in the York Region as full-time staff. This attests to the fact that, with determination and hard work a homeless person can bounce back. **Sistering is a place of comfort in times of uncertainty!**

# Medical Clinic

In collaboration with Inner City Health Associates (ICHA), Sistering is proud to provide low-barrier primary care, psychiatry, palliative care, and population health services to community members, regardless of insurance coverage or citizenship status.

Through our partnership with The Jean Tweed Centre, trauma-informed mental health and/or substance use support is also available at Sistering. Clients are offered an opportunity to talk, guidance on regulating emotions, an understanding of their issues, and a safe space to feel supported.

FY 2023/2024

1,323

Physician  
Appointments

726

Psychiatrist  
Appointments



Before coming to Sistering, many patients of our clinic faced significant challenges accessing adequate healthcare. Some of the most common barriers include:

- Health card lost/stolen, no proof of OHIP
- Negative experience or past trauma with the healthcare system
- Long wait times, especially for mental health treatment
- Technology & language barriers
- Transportation costs, lack of childcare

Continuity of a healthcare provider is associated with increased preventive care, decreased episodic care at emergency departments, and decreased hospital care.

22%

Canadian Adults have no family physician.

25%

Women in Toronto are living with a disability.

3x

Women experience depression twice as often as men yet are 3 times more likely to experience barriers to mental health care.

The median age of death of people experiencing homelessness in 2022 was 55 years of age for males and **42 years of age for females.**

# Harm Reduction



## Meet a Lived Experience Expert: Cheri



I am a Harm Reduction Peer at Sistering and have been in this position for 7 years. I am passionate about serving diverse women in the community and helping them make healthy choices. I have seen that harm reduction services, including our outreach and naran kits provided to at-risk people save lives. I have struggled with addiction and understand the challenges of addiction and being more at-risk due to being a woman. I am sober today and I believe Sistering has helped me achieve a healthier lifestyle. I love my job because I see women keep coming back to Sistering and we have so much fun at events. I am looking forward to swimming this summer with the gals at Christie Pits!

**I have made many valuable friends at Sistering and Sistering saved my life.**

### FY 2023-2024

26,594

Harm Reduction Kits Distributed

5,168

Naloxone Kits Provided

2,468

Outreach Clients Supported in the Community

569

Clients who received additional support, ie. housing, detox, and in-home visits

## More 2023-2024 Highlights

- 100+ individuals received hassle-free **HIV Testing** at our on-site clinics
- 20+ buildings in the surrounding area received harm reduction **supplies delivered** to prevent overdose
- 10 Harm Reduction **Workshops** were provided in-house to Sistering clients, and to 600+ students at Humber College
- We partnered with Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre and hosted 56 **Kapow** (Knowledge and Power of Women) **kit-making breakfast sessions**
- We participated in The City of Toronto **SPIDER** project to reduce the recurrence of complex health and safety risks among vulnerable people

# Harm Reduction saves lives

“

I think that we are part of that history in the making...We are founders, you know, harm reduction and bringing those things to the public and keeping our people safe. I'm very honoured to be a part of that and glad Sistering is a big part of that also.

-Sistering Peer Harm Reduction Worker, *Narratives of Advocacy*

22

Apparent Opioid Toxicity Deaths **per day** in Canada (2023)

Government of Canada, 2023

82%

of accidental apparent opioid toxicity deaths in Canada involved **Fentanyl**

Government of Canada, 2023

25%

of women diagnosed with HIV for the first time were attributed to injection drug use

Women & HIV/AIDS Initiative, 2022

10x

Trans women are 10 times more likely to report having been diagnosed with HIV than Ontarians overall.

Women & HIV/AIDS Initiative, 2022

The goal of the harm reduction approach is to reduce the social, economic, and health-related issues for individuals involved in substance use and/or sex work, to build resiliency, and improve overall health and wellbeing.

Essentially, harm reduction emphasizes **kindness and autonomy**, and supports the idea that those who use substances should be treated with **dignity and respect** and have the opportunity to make informed decisions about their individual needs and what would be the most effective for them, while also reducing the harms.

# Follow-Up Case Support



82

Individuals  
Supported

Sistering's Follow-Up Case Support team helps individuals exiting homelessness to work toward continued housing stability. These tailored, in-person supports meet the unique strengths and needs of each person while assisting their transition from shelter or outdoors into permanent, safe homes.

Clients may access different housing options, including private market units, social housing, and shared accommodation settings. Follow-up supports help people connect to their community and provide linkages to ongoing services, supports, and resources that help ensure successful housing outcomes. Services are provided with a Housing First Approach.

## Promoting Wellness, Preventing Homelessness

Over the 2023/2024 year, our follow-up case support team enhanced their services by providing their clients with more of the essentials they need to remain in healthy living situations. Where previously these clients may have only been eligible to receive grocery gift cards to support food security, our team now has more resources and flexibility to support their clients with anything that promotes a stable and successful tenancy, for example, bedding and furniture, unit clean-up (in response to hoarding and collecting), and clearing rental arrears as an eviction prevention method. As such, the team prevented three evictions and continues to provide their clients with personalized case management services and holistic care.

## Supporting Learning & Career Development

Our Follow-Up Case Support team was also delighted to support their clients with continuing education. Six clients have returned to college to complete various courses and we have supported women in completing a Medical Assistant course, a Personal Support Work diploma, and prerequisite courses to obtain a Social Service Worker diploma.

# Follow-Up Case Support

Back to Home: 877 Yonge Street



## Meet a Participant: Elizabeth

After about a decade of persistent homelessness, Elizabeth was housed through our Back to Home program and was relieved to finally have a place of her own.

Like many of our clients, however, Elizabeth had a difficult time adjusting to independent living and struggled with disposing of items and keeping her unit clean and organized. The unit became so full that it was determined to be a health & safety risk, and her housing was once again in jeopardy.

With intensive support from our Back to Home team, lots of hard work, personal strength and determination, Elizabeth is now living clutter-free in a safe, stable and comfortable place she can call *home*.

The Back To Home team provides wrap-around case support to 22 individuals living with mental health challenges, addictions, physical disabilities and other complex needs. We also offer a diverse range of social activities to our clients, as well as the other 224 tenants of the building, such as yoga, fitness, drama therapy, crafts, bingo, and of course shared meals!

Some of the direct interventions provided by Sistering's Back to Home staff include:

- assistance with moving, cleaning, and laundry;
- one-on-one counselling;
- accompaniment to appointments;
- meal preparation, light cooking, shopping;
- referrals to social services;
- completing forms and applications;
- filing income taxes;
- provision of hygiene supplies and other essentials.

For many people, these tasks come easily and are a simple part of daily life. But for those who have been accustomed to living on the streets or who are living with mental health and physical challenges, independent living can be overwhelmingly difficult.



Elizabeth's Unit: **before**



Elizabeth's Unit: **after**

The goal of the Back to Home program is to empower clients to live independently with support while taking back their footing in the world. Our work aims to address social isolation, enhance food security, build community cohesion, and develop life skills and healthy habits - all of which promote long-term housing stability and overall wellness.

For many, this level of support is a temporary step toward full autonomy, while others may always require some level of care. Whatever the case, Sistering is here to help these tenants stay housed, healthy, connected, and cared for.

# Community Wellness Groups



Sistering offers a safe meeting space with a peer-led model for participants to explore new ideas around mental health while reflecting on their own experiences and building wellness tools that recognize their identified needs.

No matter what challenges each individual is facing, this psycho-educational meeting space is trauma-informed, low-barrier, and allows participants to embrace their own cultural experiences of wellness and personal resources to move forward.

Structured, group-specific content is often discussed using participants' themes of interest, including lectures, movies, guest speakers, workshops, mindfulness meditation, and group discussions. Mindful drumming has been a stress-reduction tool enjoyed by many.

In response to the influx of newcomers Sistering experienced in 2023-2024, Spanish and Arabic language-specific groups have been introduced, as well as a new refugee group that was launched in May 2023.

Language interpreters and ASL sign language support are provided free of cost.



**FY 2023-2024**

**250**

Spanish Group  
Participants

**130**

Arabic Group  
Participants

**433**

Refugee Group  
Participants



# Social Enterprise: Spun Studio

At our Social Enterprise, Spun Studio, participants and newcomers are free to socialize, learn new talents, and express their creativity.

Not only does Spun provide women and gender-diverse people with a path toward economic independence, but involvement in the studio also fosters a sense of belonging and enhances confidence and self-worth.

At the end of this fiscal year, Spun Studio opened its doors to the greater community! Spun now offers a variety of classes & workshops that anyone can attend.

Classes & Workshops Include:

- Sewing
- Knitting
- Upcycling
- Quilting
- Fabric painting
- Aromatherapy
- Candle Making
- Drum Circle
- and more coming soon!



“  
**It's an amazing place to be.  
It's fun and inspiring. It's  
pushing my boundaries  
because I didn't know that I  
could sew...  
I made a jacket!!**

-Hope, Spun Studio Participant



A special thank you to The Needlework Guild of Canada for their generous support, as well as our Spun staff, community partners, in-kind donors, generous teachers, and peer volunteers for their commitment to the studio's ongoing success!

# Research & Advocacy

For over 40 years, Sistering has continued to find ways to address the various concerns that marginalized women and gender-diverse people in this city face. Participating in research and engaging in both proactive and responsive advocacy is a necessary part of creating long-lasting, systemic change.

## Making Visible

Through the Making Visible research project, Sistering used community-based participatory research methods to address and raise awareness of the unique issues faced by women and gender-diverse people who experience homelessness. In its fifth and final year, the project focus shifted towards advocacy and extending the project's goals.

Our research team included six peer researchers and lived expert advisors. Our advisory committee included lived experts as well as volunteers.

Outcomes from 2023/2024:

- Advocacy Assessment of Sistering Conducted
- Advocacy Strategy Implemented
- Social Action Committee Formed
- Online Digital Storytelling Training launched in collaboration with the Homeless Hub

Funded by: Women and Gender Equality Canada



### Meet a Participant: Denise

“

I have had the privilege of working with Sistering's research team as a Lived Expert Advisor for 2 years. I came into the job not knowing what to expect, however the team welcomed me with open arms and I fell into my role very comfortably. I found it so healing to be appreciated, supported, and given such responsibility and trust to use my skills and talents to help forward the project. Every one of us on the team was very devoted to the project and its goals, and we all inspired each other and achieved great things because of it. Seeing all our research, survey results, data and ideas come to life and flourish into a reintroduction of the Social Action Committee, among other things, was very rewarding. The bonds I forged with the team were very powerful. **This has been an incredible, life-changing experience for me, and it has given me the confidence to do things that I didn't know I could do before. Thank you Sistering, for believing in me.**

# Research & Advocacy

On April 1, 2023, we were pleased to host the **“Making Visible: Community Voices & Stories”** screening event, where peers proudly shared their digital stories with the larger community.



“  
“I personally gained self-worth, a sense of community, a sense of...  
***I'm not alone in my fight.***  
My feelings. Inclusion, a space away from isolation. A sense of being part of something larger.

-Sistering Participant,  
*Narratives of Advocacy*

## Social Action Committee

With a mandate to improve the societal conditions that impact Sistering participants and advance social justice movements, this committee was excited to relaunch at the end of the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

Membership is comprised of participants, peers, staff, and volunteers.

The Social Action Committee is eager to engage in education and actions focused on systemic advocacy. Topics will be informed by lived experience and respond to local and global issues. The Social Action Committee has taken various forms throughout the years at Sistering; however, it has always been a collaborative and inclusive group that welcomes input from across the organization, from participants to staff to volunteers.

## Walk the Talk

Sistering is a proud partner organization in this five-year research project, which began in January 2024, by McGill University and the Douglas Mental Health University Institute.

The project aims to take Canada's existing mental health guidelines and improve how they are implemented for equity-deserving groups. The objective is to create modified guidelines that are more easily and practically used by social service agencies like Sistering.

The Adaptation Committee at Sistering, which includes participants, peers, and staff, meets with the research team bi-weekly for 6 months.

Principle Investigator: Dr. Myra Piat  
Funded by: Canadian Institutes of Health Research

A few  
Highlights of  
2023-2024:

# Community Engagement

Partnered on the **Multi-Disciplinary Urban Capstone Project** with the University of Toronto

Sistering has been working hard to develop and maintain strong connections with our neighbours, local businesses, Toronto Police Services, and other non-profit agencies across Toronto. Our Community Liaison Associates worked tirelessly over the year to build collaborative partnerships and supportive networks that would ultimately lead to a more equitable, compassionate and connected Toronto.

Launched **Coffee & Conversation Outreach Program** at multiple Toronto Public Library Branches

**260+**

Community organizations contacted

**10**

Community Town Hall Meetings

**3**

Free De-Escalation Workshops

Expanded the **Harm Reduction Pick-Up program**, funded by the Bloorcourt BIA

## Meet a Participant: *Trishawna (Trish)*

Trish first came to Sistering from North York General Hospital at the recommendation of her social worker. The hospital recommended Sistering due to the accessibility of our on-site medical clinic, which was an integral part of Trish's post-care plan. While in the hospital, Trish lost contact with her support system. As such, Trish arrived at Sistering with limited resources and support and was unsure of how to navigate housing insecurity and mental health challenges.

Advocated for food affordability and justice, and raised awareness and vital funds for the **Food Access Program**

Since her time at Sistering, Trish has engaged in several activities and workshops that have helped her regain confidence in her abilities and improve her mental and physical health. For instance, during her stay in the hospital, Trish lost control over her finances and was put under the supervision of a Public Guardian Trust. However, by participating in paid Peer opportunities like *Coffee & Conversation* at the Toronto Public Library, Trish was able to reopen her bank account and regain control over her finances. Honorariums help Sistering Peers like Trish to build confidence and gain economic independence.

Hosted regular **De-escalation Workshops** for local businesses and community members

Ultimately, for Trish, Sistering became a safe haven after discharge from the hospital, a place where she could rest peacefully, engage in outreach work, learn new skills, regain her sense of self, and build hopes and goals for a brighter future.



# Thank you, Volunteers!

The important work we do would never be possible without the dedication and support of our amazing volunteers. Whether they are chopping vegetables each week in the kitchen, offering haircuts to our participants, or greeting guests at *Coldest Night of the Year*, the compassion and selfless work of our volunteers makes our organization more vibrant, healthy and resilient.

**FY 2023-2024**

**288**

Individual  
volunteers  
donated their  
time

**45**

Volunteer hours  
were spent in our  
kitchen per week

**18**

Corporate  
groups  
engaged in  
volunteering

Over the past year, we have also been fortunate to have a variety of fun and educational volunteer-run programs offered to our participants, including:

**Yoga, financial literacy, crocheting, sewing, acupuncture, visual arts, creative writing, and more!**



## Meet a Volunteer: Noelle Elia

“

I first learned about Sistering in the late '90s through my mother. We'd compile donations of gently used clothing, blankets, and towels for the women at Sistering. Many years later, in 2016, my partner Jenn and I began purchasing in-kind donations for Sistering: bags and bags of socks, underwear, adult diapers, feminine hygiene products, and all sorts of toiletries. From there, I started to donate annually – and have done so for the past five years. 2023 was a turning point for me when I was asked to join their fundraising committee.

The greatest gift, however, was when I was asked to help in the Sistering kitchen for their December holiday meal. I was quite taken by the quality of the food prepared, as well as by the camaraderie of the women working together to feed hundreds of participants. The gathering was made even more festive with a steel drum performance, dancing, and prizes. I now volunteer weekly in the kitchen, and get to see first-hand the impact healthy, homemade meals make in the lives of the Sistering community. I've met women from many diverse backgrounds who've all benefited from services provided by Sistering. As a self-proclaimed "non-cook," who knew working in a kitchen could bring so much to my life? While I receive a lot of appreciation for my time there, it's really me who feels appreciative. **A long, circuitous journey, I've found a home at Sistering that enriches my life tenfold.**

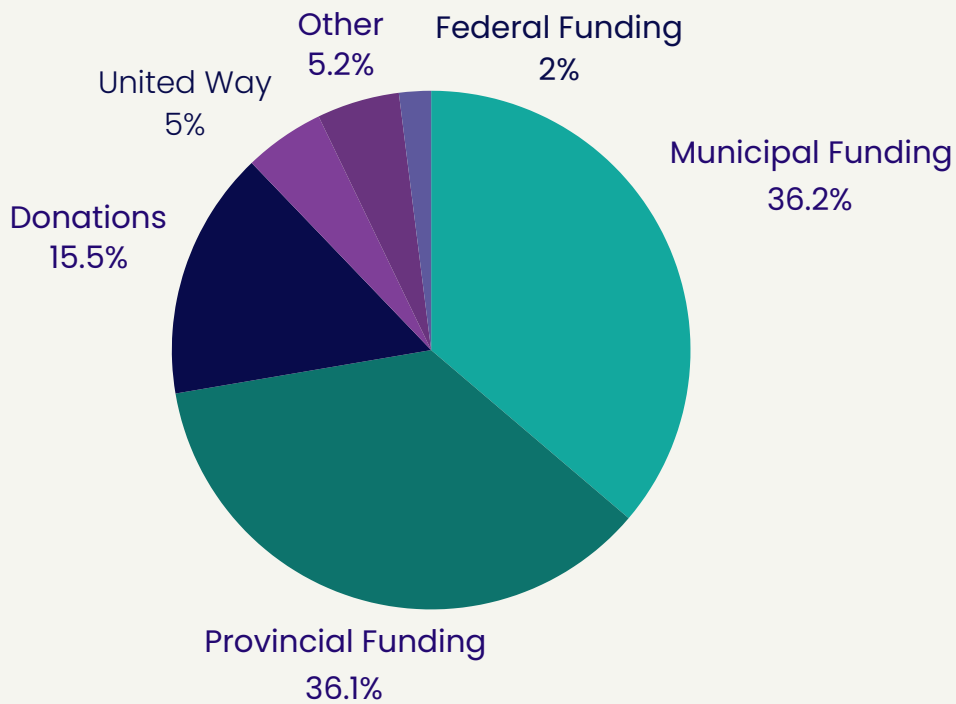
Volunteer AND Fundraiser extraordinaire!

Noelle also raised a tremendous \$15,000 for Sistering at Coldest Night of The Year 2024!

# Financial Highlights

April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2024

**Revenues = \$6,484,787**



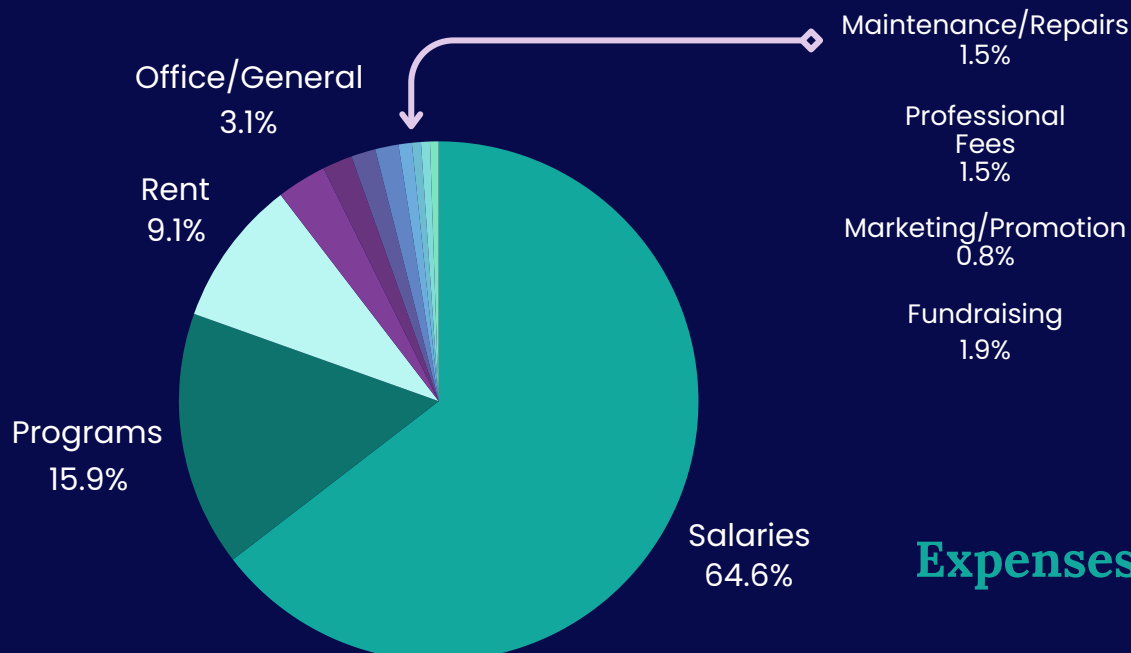
## Revenues

City of Toronto	\$2,348,895
Ontario Health	\$2,131,970
Donations and Fundraising	\$1,006,046
United Way of Greater Toronto	\$325,599
Ontario Women's Directorate	\$157,500
Miscellaneous	\$136,375
Other Grants	\$129,125
West Neighbourhood House	\$121,005
Ontario Senior's Secretariat	\$51,438
Interest from Investments	\$76,834

## Expenses

Salaries and wages	\$4,181,170
Programs	\$1,029,512
Rent	\$591,716
Office and General	\$200,618
Fundraising Expenses	\$120,508
Repairs and Maintenance	\$98,626
Professional Fees	\$93,942
Advertising and Promotion	\$53,425
Amortization	\$36,471
Purchased Services	\$35,982
Insurance	\$34,587

**Excess of revenues over expenses \$8,230**



**Expenses = \$6,476,557**

# Solidarity for Sistering

We would never be where we are today without the dedicated support of our community! Over the 2023-2024 year, we held several events and campaigns, large and small, to help raise vital funds for our programs and services. We extend our heartfelt and sincere appreciation for all who contributed to our fundraising efforts. **Thank you!**



## Food for Thought

Our newest and most delicious event, attendees of Food for Thought sampled gourmet bites from prominent local women chefs at the beautiful Osteria Rialto Restaurant. Chefs used only affordable ingredients and provided their recipe for our lucky guests to recreate at home. While education and awareness-building was at the heart of this event, we also raised much-needed funds for Sistering's Food Access Program.



## Coldest Night of the Year

CNOY is always a special initiative because it's a chance for families, colleagues, neighbours and friends to come together to raise funds in support equity and social justice. Sistering is proud to be part of such a supportive community and we value opportunities to connect in person! We especially loved the enthusiasm and support from some of our youngest supporters. The future is bright!

## Giving Tuesday

What's not to love about a global movement that reimagines a world built upon shared humanity and radical generosity? Whether you gave \$5 or \$5,000, your donation matters and is very much appreciated by everyone at Sistering.



# \$1,006,046

Fundraised in FY 2023-2024

# Sistering is Proudly Supported By...



Women and Gender  
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité  
des genres Canada

Sistering's work would not be possible without the numerous foundations, corporations and individuals who have contributed financially, either toward specific programming or in support of our general operations.

We are humbled by, and extremely grateful to, our generous donors for your confidence in our ability to make lasting change in Toronto, and we hope you are proud to be an essential part of the Sistering community.

## **With special thanks to:**

The Toronto Foundation  
Lorna Sinclair  
Finbarr Smith  
Estate of Helen Allen Stacey  
The LRDR Foundation  
Susan Archibald  
The Azrieli Foundation  
Sarah Kathleen Hughes  
TD Bank  
Rotary Club of Toronto  
Schachter Family Fund  
Blue Sea Foundation

Sistering is incredibly thankful to our many community partners, including, but not limited to, ICHA, West Neighbourhood House, St. Clare's, Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre, and WoodGreen Community Housing.



# SISTERING

“

It's been an honour for me in general, to work with the participants at Sistering. I've learned so much from them every day in terms of their *courage and hope and resilience and humour and strength.*

-Sistering Staff, Narratives of Advocacy



## Contact Us ↙



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