



CELEBRATING

4



YEARS

REXDALE WOMEN'S CENTRE
ANNUAL REPORT 2017 - 2018

REXDALE WOMEN'S CENTRE – 40 YEARS OF SERVICE

From a small grassroots organization established in 1978 to a vibrant and essential service provider empowering women to achieve their goals and overcome life's challenges and struggles.



Back in 1978, a group of women came together with a vision to start an organization to help immigrant and refugee women new to this country overcome poverty, their sense of isolation, and gender-based violence. That vision, The Rexdale Immigrant Women's Project, gave birth to the Rexdale Women's Centre, an organization dedicated to empowering women to meet the challenges they face as they build better lives for themselves and their families in their new home.

Our mission continues to grow. Forty years later, Rexdale Women's Centre not only remains dedicated to that original vision, but has also expanded its mission. In the Centre's early existence, services were delivered in groups and many women who did not speak English had little opportunity to gain new skills and abilities. In 1989, the Centre undertook an enterprising review of services and our clients and made the bold decision to broaden services being offered and thereby assisting a wider range of women in need.

Our sisterhood continues to grow. We have grown from three staff to more than eighty staff members, from offering services from one location to offering services from four permanent and more than twenty itinerant partnership locations, from offering a few services in three languages to offering a variety of services in nineteen different languages. In addition to the current eighty staff members, we have a powerful network of past alumnae, women who have volunteered and worked at the Rexdale Women's Centre throughout our 40 year history, and continue to share in the values of the Centre.

Our legacy continues to grow. Over the 40 years, Rexdale Women's Centre has helped more than 160,000 clients. The women that have come through our doors have learned English, found employment, found housing, improved their parenting skills, have overcome violent relationships with their partners, and have since integrated and settled into the community and are now fully participating members in their communities. These women will also help future newcomers along the same path they have traveled to overcome poverty and to feel valued and respected, as a number of the current and past staff members of Rexdale were also former clients.

Rexdale Women's Centre has come a long way from that day in 1978, when that vision of a better world for everyone was born. As we commemorate our 40th year, we can all proudly reflect on the community that we have built. We have a long way to go still. But as we embark on our next forty years, we can be sure that Rexdale Women's Centre will continue to lead that next generation of women that comes through its doors seeking a better life. Because when we enrich others, we enrich ourselves as well.

Thank you

Linli Chee
Chairperson

and

Fatima Filippi
Executive Director



OUR TIMELINE

From the historic day on which we were founded, Rexdale Women's Centre has never looked back. We looked ahead to the future to deliver services and programs in response to the needs of our communities.

Forty years later, that future is our history.



1978

Established as Rexdale Immigrant Women's Project

1982

Incorporation of the Rexdale Women's Centre
Expansion of the Centre's services to include: skill development programs and information and referral

1989

Expansion of supportive counselling and settlement services for immigrant and newcomer women

1998

Introduction of Partner Assault Program addressing domestic and intimate partner violence
Introduction of social-recreational services for ethno-cultural seniors

2001

Expansion of children's school readiness and parenting support services

2006

RWC expands services to Gujarati speaking newcomers and their dependants



By 2034,
as a result of our work,
women in the GTA are healthy, happy,
productive, succeeding and contributing
to their communities. They are able to
make real changes that result in a better
life for the families they may have.
We recognize and value that women
are all unique, complex and multi-
dimensional.

2011

Training for
community residents
to be ambassadors on
violence against women

2013

Service more than
10,000 individual clients

2015

Syrian Refugee
Humanitarian Initiative
participation

2016

Online training for
frontline staff on
violence against
refugee women
participation

2017

Expansion of
Newcomer Youth

2018

Addressing the mental
health needs of our
clients and staff

AT REXDALE WOMEN'S CENTRE...

- We believe that we improve women's lives by serving women and their partners, children, parents, and other family members
- Our approach to service delivery is holistic and responsive to client and community needs
- We believe that every new person living in Canada can contribute to our society by being provided with the services, programs, and tools to integrate easily and to participate fully in our society
- We value the diversity within our agency and within our community
- We believe that every woman has the capacity to be self-sufficient and financially secure and to live a life that is healthy, happy and socially active
- We operate with honesty and integrity, and treat everyone with honour and respect
- We encourage the development of caring and harmonious relationships within our agency and within our community
- As an organization, we focus on what will best serve our clients' needs
- We believe that well-being within individuals, families, and communities is the foundation for well-being within our society
- We promote the principles of access and equity in all that we do



FINANCIAL SECURITY

Helping our clients to achieve employment and financial security

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

NUMBER OF CLIENTS SERVED: 567

For women, especially immigrant women and women from racialized communities with foreign credentials. Gainful employment is elusive. We assist women who are seeking to enter the workforce, or who are looking to establish themselves in the profession for which they have been trained. We provide culturally and linguistically appropriate support for women when they encounter difficulties in moving ahead. Rexdale Women's Centre has developed a number of valued programs including: **Short Term Supportive Counselling, Employment Support Groups for Women, Employment and Career Counselling, English Language Instruction.** We assist women with resume building, job search and interviews, access to job fairs, literacy and numeracy skills building. Linkages are made with other employment related services in the community, English language programs, training, apprenticeship and volunteer opportunities. With the right connections and supports, women spend less time trying to navigate numerous services and eligibility criteria.

LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION

NUMBER OF CLIENTS SERVED: 939 CLIENTS

RWC's employment-related services for newcomers to enhance employment-related skills and access to the Canadian labour market. These employment related skills help newcomer men establish connections and supports needed to enter the labour market. Services include pre-employment counseling, and help address barriers to employment by encouraging them to explore employment opportunities, occupational/essential skills training, networking, internships, mentorships, work placements and preparation for the credential assessment process. In addition, we provide assistance in resume writing, preparing for job interviews and conducting information sessions/workshops.



*Successful
acquisition
of training, job and
career information
leads to
FINANCIAL
SECURITY*



“I have been learning a lot of things in this program. I know how to write a resume, find a job on the Internet. Now I feel confident when I talk and I am independent and looking for more information about living in Toronto.” - Hua



“Before attending the program I had difficulty in listening and speaking English. With the support of the staff I improved my English and now I have a part-time job and I can understand when my boss explains to me what all my duties are.” - Andrea



SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Helping our clients to build a sense of community and belonging

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, CIVIC PARTICIPATION, LEADERSHIP AND VOLUNTEERING

NUMBER OF CLIENTS SERVED: 973

The program offers social support to newly arrived immigrants, in order to ease the stress of starting life in a new country. The program facilitates newcomers' integration into Canadian society and local community life and creates connections and promotes understanding between newcomers and the broader community. One integral component of the program is to match and pair newcomers with a settled Canadian volunteer in an arranged social relationship, where there is a sharing of information about the community and its resources. In addition, group activities, such as Cooking Clubs, Movie Nights, and English Conversation Circles, connect newcomers' to the broader community and establish social supports for integration.

Our Community Engagement program enables us to increase public awareness about our programs and services, as well as build quality relationships with the community members. Our community engagement and volunteering program have encouraged connections with more than 4,137 community members this past year.

We conduct presentations and participate in community events to achieve our goals. This past year we conducted 33 community presentations and events, and 66 information booths at malls, schools and places of worship.

Community Kitchen

In partnership with North York Harvest Food Bank and Toronto Public Health, Rexdale Women's Centre offers free hot meals once per month for community residents. Individuals enjoy a hot meal prepared by trained volunteers; they socialize with other community members

This past year we organized 40 group sessions for volunteers. A total of 165 individuals volunteered their time and contributed 7,819 hours of support.

Engagement, networking and volunteer opportunities lead to SENSE OF COMMUNITY



and learn more about community services. The Community Kitchen Program is run by volunteers who received safe food handling training, as well as nutrition information, in order to prepare delicious and healthy meals. 973 individuals participated in the Community Kitchen and 95 volunteers contributed to making this program a success.

Family Summer Camp

20 families attended the summer camp where they participated in creating arts and crafts, enjoying physical activities, and outings, preparing nutritious food and creating new friends.

ETHNO-CULTURAL SENIORS

NUMBER OF CLIENTS SERVED: 808

We offer many programs and services for ethno-cultural seniors in their own language. We assist seniors to settle into Canada, to engage with other seniors from other cultures, to share views, ideas, traditions and to learn new skills. We provide assistance in establishing social recreational groups, fitness and yoga classes, computer and internet training, leadership development, civic engagement and community matters, social events and activities, community and educational workshops, excursions, and information on community resources. Through these activities, immigrant and ethno-cultural seniors build social supports and connect with other seniors of Afghan, Assyrian, Gujarati, Italian, Punjabi, Hispanic, Sri Lankan, Urdu and West Indian origin.



“As a person with diabetes and thyroid issues, the health and wellness program has benefited me tremendously. I like the exercise classes and the health fairs that Sherldine does” - Arunthithy



SPECIAL EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Black History Month Celebration

International Women's Day

South Asian Heritage Month Celebrations

Seniors' Month Celebrations

Seniors' Program's 20th anniversary

Yoga for Seniors and New Moms

Trips to Local Toronto Parks

Health and Wellness Carousel





Volunteer - Syrian Refugee Outreach Project

On Saturday, July 15, 2017, 47 Syrian refugees were hosted by a group of dedicated volunteers from the Harbourfront Centre. The purpose of this initiative was to reach out and assist Syrian refugees to integrate into Canadian culture. A Partnership between Harbourfront Centre and Rexdale Women's Centre. We worked with Harbourfront Centre to expose Syrian refugees to Toronto's waterfront and to introduce them to the arts and cultural activities available at Harbourfront Centre.



BUILDING SELF-CONFIDENCE

Helping our clients to build necessary skills and self confidence

SUPPORT FOR WOMEN AND FAMILIES

NUMBER OF CLIENTS SERVED: 369

Parenting and Family Supportive Counselling

Raising healthy children can be a difficult but a rewarding challenge for parents. For newcomer, refugee and single parent families, the challenges may be greater than anticipated. Financial resources may be inadequate and families may be at greater risk of poverty and isolation. Newcomer, immigrant and refugee parents need support to raise healthy children in a new country with different culture, values and language. We provide support for parents to cope with the many challenges and rewards of raising healthy children.

Nobody's Perfect Parenting Groups

Many parents and grandparents lack the social networks and supports for positive parenting. Connecting, sharing and building skills with peers are often effective tools in addressing the lack of confidence, and skills when parenting. We offer parenting groups for parents with children from birth to six years of age. In these groups, participants learn about child development, effective discipline methods, information on Canadian institutions and service. Participants share skills, views, ideas. Many develop social support networks once the group is finished.

Eating for Two Prenatal Nutrition Program

This program is offered to expectant and new moms and promotes the healthy development of their children by encouraging healthy pregnancies and reducing the risk of low birth weight babies. The program supports women who have limited social support and who may be new to Canada. RWC staff provide information and referral services, connect moms to resources in the community and provide support for day to day living and challenges. We offer this program in partnership with the Etobicoke Brighter Futures Coalition, Toronto Public Health, and the Rexdale Community Health Centre.

Feeding With Love

This program provides a continuum of care for women and their children from birth to twelve months of age. The program promotes healthy eating for women and their babies. RWC provides information and referral services, connects moms to resources in the community and provides support for day-to-day living and challenges. We offer this program in partnership with Toronto Public Health, Albion Public Library and Rexdale Community Health Centre in offering the program for newcomer women and women living on low-income.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

NUMBER OF CLIENTS SERVED: 627

Care for Newcomer Children – Language Instruction

This program is available to parents with children from six months to five years of age who are registered and attending the English language program. Our staff assist children to participate in daily activities such as reading, story-telling, singing, creating crafts, in a welcoming and supportive environment.

Squiggle Park Pilot

Care for newcomer children staff participated in a pilot funded by Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada and Eye Read Inc., to improve the English language skills of children by utilizing innovative software.

Pyramid Project

A collaborative with CAMH, Pyramid Project aims to build professional competencies of early childhood educators to promote social, emotional and behavioural development of young children. RWC care for newcomer children staff received training, mentorship and guided support.

Preschool Program and Family Drop-In

The program provides structured early learning opportunities for children from two to five years of age. Parents also help to supervise the children and support the program. Weekly workshops and information sessions are held on parenting for the adult participants. Our staff assist children to learn songs, partake in dancing, drama, craft making and reading circles.

School Readiness

Our staff work with parents who accompany their children to the program, to learn about their child's development needs as well as acquiring new or brushing up on existing skills. Guided by trained staff, the children participate in activities such as craft making, singing, dancing, drama, play/groups and reading circles. Guided by trained staff, the children participate in activities such as craft making, singing, dancing, drama, play/ groups and reading circles.



NEWCOMER SETTLEMENT SERVICES

TOTAL NUMBER OF CLIENTS SERVED: 9,315

Newcomers, refugees and immigrants need assistance to connect to resources and services in the community because of limited knowledge of the Canadian service delivery systems and/or a limited ability to speak English or French.

Newcomers need assistance in finding suitable housing, learning English, registering their children in school, obtaining equivalency of official education documents, job search and employment. We offer services in 20 different languages at various locations throughout the city. We provide information, referral and access counselling with regards to services such as health, housing, employment, training and education, legal aid, finance, social services, and immigration issues. Our staff act as a liaison between clients, government departments, cultural/community groups.

Newcomer Workshops And Information Sessions

490 sessions for 3,552 participants

Workshop sessions are designed to provide newcomers, immigrants and refugees with information, orientation and support to assist in their integration into the community. Workshops sessions run throughout the year and are available in 20 different languages. Registered participants may qualify for transportation assistance. Free child minding also available.

Settlement Services in Language (SSIL)

896 participants

SSIL is a joint initiative between RWC and the Toronto District School Board-Language Program. The goal of the project is to improve settlement service delivery for newcomers and their families by having staff working directly at the English language program. Our staff facilitate access to information and students become aware and are able to access the full range of services and community resources.

Library Settlement Program (LSP)

926 participants

LSP is a joint initiative between RWC and Toronto Public Library. The goal of the project is to improve settlement service delivery for newcomers and their families by having staff work directly at the libraries. Our staff assist newcomer families to become aware and able to access the full range of library services and community resources.

English Language Instruction

165 participants

The ability to communicate in English is one indicator that newcomers and immigrants are successfully settling and adapting into their community. The ability to understand and speak English enables newcomers to fully participate in life in Canada. Classes are available to newcomers who are new to Canada. We offer various part-time and full-time classes ranging from Literacy and levels 1 to 4. The program aims to build day-to-day English language skills with emphasis on orientation and information for newcomers about Canadian systems and services. In addition, we provide program participants opportunities to learn and practice English by utilizing the aide of computers. As a support to participants, we offer free on-site care for children ranging from six month to five years of age.

“The key to happiness is progress and growth. I have a tremendous desire to grow and learn. RWC’s ECC program has helped me fulfill my desire by supporting me in English language learning.” - Maryam

YOUTH SETTLEMENT SERVICES

NUMBER OF CLIENTS SERVED: 682

RWC provides settlement and integration services for youth from 16 to 26 years of age within a culturally sensitive, non-discriminatory and supportive environment. We assist youth to settle, as well as build self-esteem, leadership and conflict resolution skills. We assist youth to find employment, seek out volunteer opportunities and provide peer support.

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

**YELL Program
(Youth Engaged in Leadership
and Learning)**

- Youth Christmas Celebration
- Multicultural Night

*Skill
development,
mentorship and role
models lead to
SENSE OF SELF
CONFIDENCE*



“Newcomer Youth program has given me a great opportunity to make friends. It has provided me with a stepping-stone to get involved and engaged in different conversations. The workshops have been a great source of knowledge for me and have helped me to understand different aspects of life.” - Namood

“I admire Rexdale Women’s Centre in helping me build my confidence and embrace my diversity.” - Faeza

SAFETY FROM VIOLENCE/ABUSE

Helping our clients to live a life free of violence

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CRISIS INTERVENTION

NUMBER OF CLIENTS SERVED: 1,195

Spousal-Domestic Abuse Support and Crisis Counselling

Immigrant women, refugee women and women of colour face specific challenges that create barriers which can make them more vulnerable to abuse. Many women seek out our services to address the violence that they are experiencing in their lives. For some women, assistance comes in the form of disclosure and respect. We provide one-on-one assistance to women who are experiencing violence in the home or dealing with a crisis in their lives. Counsellors assist women to understand the cycle of abuse and help women to develop safety plans and to address a life free of violence for themselves and their children.

Medical and Legal Referrals and Client Accompaniment

Women who are experiencing abuse in the home, find it difficult to obtain the services they need in order to cope with their situation. Counsellors provide culturally and linguistically sensitive services in guiding women to obtain medical and legal services. Many times, our staff will accompany women as they attend appointments. Our staff will provide on-going support as women face the difficult task of navigating through the legal and court systems.

Support Groups for Women on Spousal-Domestic Abuse

Support groups offer women a unique opportunity to gain information, share experiences, build confidence and develop safety plans when dealing with abuse. We provide women with information about their rights and how they can be supportive to other women who are experiencing domestic abuse. Support groups are designed to provide women with information and support related to domestic abuse. We assist participants to develop a safety plan and to make decisions to leave an abusive relationship.

Anti-Human Trafficking of Vulnerable Women

Rexdale Women's Centre assisted more than 100 women with precarious immigration status in Canada to overcome their experiences in being trafficked. We assist vulnerable women with trauma, provided culturally sensitive and linguistic services. We supported them to develop short and long term plans for safety and well being.

Syrian Refugee Resettlement Initiative: Violence Against Women

RWC provides Syrian refugee-newcomer women with support to address domestic violence challenges they face in their resettlement to Ontario. We provided one-on-one support as well as group activities.



VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Partner Assault Response Program Groups

Ending violence against women involves working with and educating men about the different forms of abuse, the effects of violence on their children, the pattern of violent behavior and developing alternatives to physical, emotion and financial abuse. We offer groups for court mandated male offenders. In the group, we assist men to develop a better understanding the cycle of violence against women. We work with them to understand and accept responsibility for their violent behaviour and to develop alternative strategies to deal with anger and violent outbursts.

Partner Assault Response Program – Spousal Contact

When court-mandated male offenders attend groups, we maintain regular contact with their female spouses or partners. Through these contacts, it is our goal is to ensure the safety of the women and their children. Many times, the female partners tell us that they feel safer as a result of their male spouse or partner attending the group for men.

SPECIAL EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women Celebration

Take Back the Night

Women's History Month Celebration

“I immigrated to Canada 8 years ago with 4 children. Even before my marriage, my husband was physically and psychologically abusive and in Canada the abuse continued. With support of the counselor I developed a safety plan to leave the abusive situation. I am back in school and living with my children.”

- Lucia

“I am a new immigrant woman to Canada, immediately after arriving, my husband hit me and began to emotionally abusing me. With the help, support, and guidance of the counselor a safety plan was put in place. I received help in finding a shelter and housing in the community. I am now working and thinking of going back to school to upgrade my education and skills so I can get a better job.” - Jeannett



SYSTEMS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Working with institutions and service providers to affect social and systems change so that our clients achieve equitable access and become empowered

Rexdale Domestic Violence Collaborative (RDVC): *Breaking the Cycle: A Co-ordinated Services Response for Abused Women*

Funded through the Status of Women Canada, the Rexdale Domestic Violence Collaborative (RDVC): *Breaking the Cycle: A Co-ordinated Services Response for Abused Women* project is promoting a comprehensive and effective response to domestic violence in North Etobicoke.

Toronto West Local Immigration Partnership (TWLIP)

The TWLIP is a collaborative initiative to enhance local delivery of services for newcomers, while promoting the innovative and efficient use of community resources through improved coordination among social service agencies as well as other community stakeholders. Together in collaboration, the four partner agencies are responsible for the development and implementation of a Toronto West settlement strategy to improve newcomers' access to settlement services and other community programs, and to improve newcomers' transition into the labour market.

Recognizing and Responding to Intimate Partner Violence for Refugee Resettlement Assistance Programs in Ontario

Given the recent arrival of many new refugees to Ontario a clear need has arisen to better understand and respond to incidents of intimate partner violence that refugee women are experiencing. Incidence of violence in these communities has been compounded by resettlement stress on the family, the impact of war and geo-political violence and the traumatic conditions that a number of these refugees have had to endure as they fled their home country.

Rexdale Women's Centre and partners, Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, and Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants developed informative resource materials for frontline workers:

- Do's and Don'ts
- Speaking to Refugee Men (guide)
- Speaking to Refugee Men (myths)
- Cultural Competence in Addressing Violence Against Refugee Women
- Webinars
- Self-Directed On-Line Training for Frontline Workers and Managers Working with Refugees: www.rapworkers.com

What is Centralized Intake?

- Centralized intake provides a one-stop entry point for women and families where basic screening helps to identify immediate needs, and referral is made to the programs that are a best fit for the her and her family .





74,382

*Total Number of
Services Delivered*



12,754

*Total Number of
Individual Clients Served*



OUR SUPPORTERS

The Rexdale Women's Centre gratefully acknowledges our financial supporters and donors.

Funders

Government of Canada

Citizenship and Immigration Canada – Multiculturalism Program
Department of Justice
Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada
Employment Social Development Canada
Status of Women Canada

Government of Ontario

Ministry of the Attorney General
Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration
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Etobicoke Brighter Futures Coalition
Eye Read Inc. – Squiggle Park Pilot
George Hull Centre for Children and Families
Harbourfront Community Centre
Job Start – Toronto West Local Immigration Partnership
Legal Aid Ontario
North York Harvest Food Bank
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
Rexdale Community Health Centre
Rexdale Community Hub
Rexdale Community Legal Clinic
Rexdale Employment and Resource Centre
SAV - Canada Syrian Community Centre
Social Planning Toronto
Toronto Employment Social Services

Service Collaborators

Afghan Women's Organization
Ahmadiyya Abode of Peace
Al-Arab Community Centre
Albion Neighborhood Services
Al-Qazza Foundation for Education and Development
Attwell Employment and Social Services
Bangladesh Centre and Community Services (BCCS)
Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic
Braeburn Neighborhood Centre
Burnhamthorpe Adult Learning Centre
B.W. Fleming Public School
The Canadian Arab Institute
Canadian Business College
Catholic Cross Cultural Services
CDI College
Centennial College
Central Library-Mississauga
Children's Aid Society - CAS - Etobicoke Branch
Children's Aid Society - CAS Peel Region
Consolidated Credit Counseling Services of Canada Inc.
Cooksville Library-Mississauga
COSTI-IIAS Ralph Chiodo Reception Centre
Daystrom Public School
Delta Family Resource Centre
Dixie Bloor Neighborhood Centre
Elmbank Community Centre
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Etobicoke North Probation and Parole Office
Evergreen College
George Brown College
Golden Miles Employment and Social Services
Gord and Irene Risk Community Centre

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WHERE TO FIND US



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Rexdale Women's Centre
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