

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2019

Presented at AGM June 2020



Our programs rely on support from our funders.

*We thank our 2019 supporters:*



*Creating community where everyone belongs*

The photo above taken at the end of one of CWN's *cooking and culture* series, speaks to the organization's commitment to building social ties of kinship, friendship and participation, along with a valued sense of identity with the group.

## ***A Message from the Executive Director & the Board***

Dear Members and Friends of CWN:

2019 was a busy year- to say the least. In addition to maintaining our regular 'core" programming activities, CWN received special funding for 3 projects – Worker Bs, MARTINI (Making and Remaking Things that Inspire the Imagination) Project, and Health and Happiness. The latter was an expansion of the Yoga program we had piloted in 2018, and it aimed at including a healthy eating component along with a few pool/spa days.

With only two part-time staff, completing these and maintaining reporting requirements, meant we had to be creative and find ways to combine a few project activities with our on-going ones. In the end, CWN is proud that it did what it set out to do:

- address the challenges of integration faced by newer immigrant women;
- promoted and supported multiculturalism and diversity in Edmonton by serving families of all races; ethnicities; faiths, and places of origin;
- built collaborative partnerships with other agencies and businesses to encourage and support racial diversity in the work-place;;
- made progress on our commitment to healthy community life, decrease isolation for seniors and immigrant women;
- maintained an authentic connection to Caribbean cultural roots through participation in Cariwest, the Parang Christmas Celebration; and elements of the *cooking and culture* series;

Sensitive approaches, conversations; face-to face interactions; friendships; community connections, all helped to deepen and sustain relationships that are essential to living a good life. In 2019, the Caribbean Women Network dedicated itself and its space to create the belonging that many people seek. As one of our partners (Raminder Dhindsa of CSS) put it during the Worker Bs Project:

***“For immigrant women, the small group sessions in Worker Bs at CWN provide a learning and supportive place and brought a feeling of belongingness that is hard to find.....”***



## MARTINI Project

**Making And Remaking Things that INspire the Imagination-** that's what MARTINI stands for. In February of 2019, CWN received a cheque from the area M.L.A. \_\_\_\_\_, for us to get working on the up-cycling project. In March, a conversation was held with would-be participants to discuss the proposal that was funded and what things we would do to fulfill the obligations of the Grant - the funds were to help cover part of the costs of two Cariwests, and to up-cycle 'old' items into useable things.

Two sewing machines were purchased and participants/volunteers loaned theirs for the duration of the project when needed. The Project helped to establish a participative creative process for all involved. Coming together to make stitch "new" clothing from used saris, which were later modeled, crafting the costumes for Cariwest, and re-doing "old" tables, repairing jewelry all helped to achieve the sense of camaraderie and belonging - both for long-time CWN members and the new immigrants who participated in the project. Evaluations show **100% of those surveyed either "agreed" or "strongly agreed"** that the activities helped them learn how to work successfully with others and helped them build good relationships with each other. This happened because ideas were shared; discussions on processes took place; personal stories were told as the women worked together; the light teasing and eating together closed any distance participants may have felt at the start between "us" and "them". Everyone soon felt "at home" - in CWN's kitchenette for example. An atmosphere of sharing and learning infused the project.

*Photos of stitching, painting tables Creating costumes etc. will be added.*

### Caribbean Connections:

Many of us from the Caribbean have been here in Alberta for a very long time. Despite this length of residency, we continue to promote and engage in cultural activities from the Caribbean. We do so partially because these activities symbolize our identities and because they help to maintain ties to our home islands. Participating in Cariwest is a public show-casing of this identity and the Christmas Parang has been for the last ten years or more, a joyful celebration of those *ties that bind*. Through the larger Cariwest Festival and the smaller Parang celebration, CWN members and friends were able to share these expressions of Caribbean culture with their Canadian friends and families so they too could enjoy the experience.

*Photos of Cariwest and Parang along with a cooking session done with Lana.*

### The Value of Volunteers

CWN, like all non-profits, runs with the help of volunteers. In fact, almost all of our programs involve some volunteer time. The makers in the MARTINI project, the helpers/ presenters of our Cooking and Culture events, the volunteer time given by our Worker Bs, those who volunteer their resources, our board members, and everyone in-between. To our generous volunteers: we sincerely thank you for all that you do!

*To Do- number of hours, photos- both teaching about volunteerism and actual volunteering at CWN.*

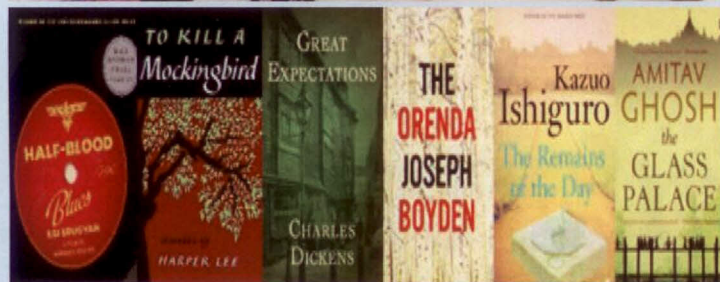
Worker Bs- focusing on Immigrant and Refugee Women was CWN's worked on reducing barriers to employment that immigrant and refugee women face when they arrive in Alberta.

With financial and community supports CWN completed the project that helped 20 newcomer women build better lives for themselves, strengthened CWN's capabilities, and contributed in a small way to societal change in Alberta. The aims were to get the women participants to **begin** their work lives, **become** more self-sufficient, and feel a better sense of **belong(ing)** to their new home. (A full Report on this project is available and was distributed via e mail)



**Recreation** has always formed part of CWN's approach to encouraging sociability and friendships. Life is more enjoyable with others, and to this end CWN continued with its long-standing **Book Club**, its Annual **Summer Garden Visits** and its enhanced **Health and Happiness** Programs as part of its agenda:

Below are some members of the Book Club that met for conversations on the book choices (also listed) to enable us to better understand the lives and the struggles of people from a wide variety of contexts, Reading and conversing with a purpose is most inspiring.



### Annual Garden Visit

The Clifford E. Lee Nature Sanctuary near Devon was the location for 2019's visit.

Later on, Robert Gopaul hosted the group with a BBQ

at his acreage with other members of his family.

Beautiful views and a lovely time- thanks again Robert, Seely and Sharon.



In partnership with the Mill Woods Seniors Centre, CWN progressed into an inter-cultural community with a mix of people of different ages and cultures coming together for light yoga and meditation. As one participant who took the DATS to the program said: *"It is always worth it for me to make the effort and come there. I always leave with warm and good feelings. I really think CWN is a gift ...."*



## Spotlight: The Men of CWN

CWN's membership is open to all persons, and we have always included men who support the work we do with women, and families. While the organization is always women-led the Board also includes a few men have been very helpful to the organization: In 2019/2020 we had to recruit a **new Treasurer- Tony Montrose** who has provided us with sterling service so far. The men have volunteered in many areas- in programs/services; as creators of mas' costumes; participants in discussions; played Santa; cooked and barbecued; danced with us; made music and paranged for us; and generally as attendees of events and activities. We appreciate their involvement and thank them for all their help in 2019/2020.



Above: Tony volunteers to speak to the Worker Bs



Above: Ouda and Ahmed show us the Syrian moves at the AIHfla event.



(From top left) Peter , Bryan, Robert, Mike, former M.P. Amarjeet Sohi, Shaffeeq & Michael Phair in CWN's "Sailors Aboard" Cariwest mas' Band.



### Sharing and Donating:

**Sunita Kumar** - an "old" friend and colleague of Pearl donated a number of

she had from her previous Indian gift store to CWN. Delicate beaded necklaces, jhumkis; japamalás; wooden carved décor, bracelets, clothing and old saris were all part of the bundle we received. Many of us purchased items at the centre and lots were sold at a Saturday Farmer's Market. We also used a few of the old saris to re-make into dresses and tops for the MARTINI Project. We thank Sunita profusely for her donation and we also thank the downtown Farmer's Market for giving us a spot free of charge. There are still some things left at the centre so if anyone is interested in having a look , call Pearl to make arrangements.

**A Final few words;** As this report is being prepared for publication, we are still in shut-down from the corona virus. As with many businesses and public offices, programs schools, and not-for profits, CWN too have had to close down since March. The province is beginning to move into Phase two of opening up and a decision will be made as to CWN in the near future. If we open up, we will have to decide what programs can continue, and to what capacity. CWN has lost a percentage of its revenue as Casinos were closed in March as well. This will affect the organization's operations later on. For now we carry on as best as we could and decision will be made as the months go by.

We wish to say a last word of thanks to all who participated in our programs and activities in 2019 and 2020, and a special thanks to our Board and volunteers. We couldn't move ahead without your support.



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