

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Presented at AGM April 25, 2021



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## *Cariliver!*

A group of CWN members and friends got together on Cariwest Day, 2020 - August 8 - to do a small, socially distance parade down the bicycle path on 102 Avenue in Oliver!

*With masks on, music in a wagon and a medley of costumes we connected in a safe and joyful way!*



*Creating community where everyone  
belongs*



## A Message from the Executive Director & the Board

Dear Members and Friends of CWN:

We all know what kind of year 2020 was. With the Covid 19 shut-down, program activities were minimal and our small staff contingent was disengaged at times. We managed, however, to:

- organize a Casino, and report on expenditures to AGLC;
- complete the required reporting to 3 funders on CWN's operations, Worker Bs and MARTINI Projects;
- hold our AGM and elect a 2020/2021 Board, and carry on board meetings and decision making either through in-person or Zoom;
- participate in two Cariwest parades; have a summer picnic, conduct an anti-racism initiative, continue Book Club readings and discussions, and arrange an in-person Person's Day event - Something Is Wrong.
- and keep connecting with members and friends through our monthly Newsletter Staying In Touch, through telephone calls, texts and e-mails, and chat groups.

The administrative and governance activities helped to sustain CWN, and we are thankful for the assistance we received from Government Programs. The programming activities, though less this year, continued to address the challenges of integration faced by immigrants and minorities- racism, language and cultural barriers. CWN helped to promote multiculturalism and diversity in Edmonton, and increased women's knowledge through the book club readings, and the Person's Day event. Face to face and zoom interactions supported the relationship building and community connections, which are objectives embedded within CWN's mandate as stated in its mission statement, below..



**CWN's  
2020/2021  
Board &  
staff**

*Mission in Action –networking, learning and information exchange.*



**AT CWN we are guided by its Mission**  
 to  
*strengthen community in a  
 blended society among  
 Caribbean women, their families  
 and their friends,  
 through networking, learning and  
 information exchange*

Extracts from two reports on Projects completed in 2020:  
Worker BS and M.A.R.T.I.N.I.



Funded by Status of Women, AB, **Worker Bs** was completed in early 2020. This Report show-cased what

CWN did with 20 immigrant women as they worked on making themselves more job-ready. The women spent 3 months each on “training,” volunteering and “working” with help from agencies and small business partners in the city.

Sherifah came to Edmonton, in 2019 with her young family from Nigeria. Sherifah is filled with the smarts (had a Masters Degree and a budding career in Nigeria), and although, perhaps unaware of the UK subway mantra “Mind the Gap”, Sherifah set about doing just that!

The story of Sherifah in Edmonton thus far, is one of volunteering, doing “training” courses and seminars, all intent on filling her void of knowledge about finding a job in her new home. She has been energetic and she has persevered in the face of the “persistent gap” researchers have identified between very recent, recent, and established female immigrants and Canadian-born females. Thanks to EISA, Sherifah found her way to **Worker Bs** doors. She was truly grateful to get into the program, and in her graduation talk, she said this: *“For me CWN was the last place in my search for a job readiness program and it turned out to be the best place...I have been to several settlement agencies in Edmonton but CWN gave me a holistic approach in putting my foot in the door for employment.”*

Sherifah’s voice (we can hear her) is a source of inspiration for us.

**Sherifah-Oke Buhari-  
Minding the Gap**



*MARTINI helped us to meet CWN’s strategic goals related to diversity, community, and inclusivity*

**Who got Involved:** Women, children and men of different generations, ages and decades - from their first decade to their 9th they all learnt from the project and enjoyed MARTINI.

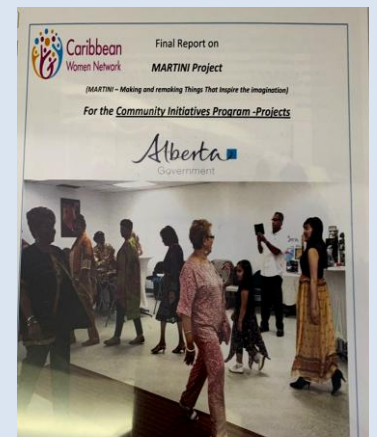
*“The MARTINI project really allowed me to show what I and what everybody could do. I was very proud to be able to help and be part of the time together and to learn more about re-cycling. I wouldn’t have thought of using my saris this way, but now I will.”* **Lydia**

**Contribution and Culture:** A 2010 UN Resolution says that culture is “an essential component of human development, a source of identity, innovation and creativity for the individual and the community.” Cheryl Sheridan. Team lead for this component and her team of volunteers put in countless hours but said this when it was all done:

*“how satisfied we all felt though, when it was done, because we were sharing a part of our rich culture with the larger community. Our culture is in our blood. Being so far away from home makes us want to hold on to our memories and share with community, a bit of what makes us such a ‘colourful’ people.”*

**On MARTINI Mondays, Laura Zhu, Project Staff said this:**

*“Participating in different things like painting tables, embroidery workshops, and rug-making, and other things, allowed us to work together and build a rapport during a relaxed activity, while making or renewing an item. The embroidery workshops in particular allowed a few of us to get to know each other better and share our thoughts, while improving our skills.”*



*M.A.R.T.I.N.I. (Making and Remaking Things that Inspire the Imagination) had 3 components:*

- *Sari-upcycling*
- *Production of A Masquerade Band for CARIWEST*
- *MARTINI Mondays- repurposing old frames, tables, jewellery and fabric scraps.*

*This project alone generated 1, 450 volunteer hours at CWN.*



**"I can't breathe" pleaded George Floyd as he died at the knees of a police officer in May 2020 in Minneapolis, USA. This incident and the outrage that followed prompted CWN to want to "do something".**



*Anne Brereton sharing her thoughts*

"On arriving in Toronto- I had my first exposure to racism-. I began to realize "something is wrong."- I had difficulty accessing housing as a student, kept failing in school courses- both me and my friends..... Caribbean people started becoming "activists" and "rebels" and turning into something they never intended to be – all due to the experiences they were having- not being treated as equals. When you confront racism all the time; you become transformed."

Participant



*Facilitator-Karen chin-aleong Brooks reflecting on what she hears*

**Fighting Racism:**

*"You don't need to be free of racism to be an anti-racist. Anti-racism is the commitment to fight racism wherever you find it, including in yourself. And it's the only way forward."* **Ijeoma Oluo,** author of *"So You Want to Talk About Race,"*

*We wanted to talk about race and that's what we did.*

CWN put together an Anti-Racism Committee, and we set about to get the perspectives of the lived experiences of racism by people in our community. These experiences were shared with us through the stories and comments made at in person group meetings; one-on-one conversations; on-line surveys; and zoom meetings held during the months of June, July, and August 2020.

During these "Let's Talk" sessions, we heard from **61 people** about the overt and subtle nature of racism experienced or observed, and the upsetting impact on people's mental and physical well-being, and their sense of belonging to this country. Although listening to it took an emotional toll, what we heard affirmed for us that as racialized persons living in Canada, we are often perceived as the "other" or of "not belonging." We discussed some of Canada's history of past policies of keeping people of colour out of Canada, and of workplace structures and practices that present systemic barriers to education, employment and social standing in our society. The things we heard were not new.

In the Fall, we prepared a Report - *Something Is Wrong*, which has been distributed as part of our contribution to the community action against racism in Edmonton. We feel hopeful about things as there appears to be a momentum for change. Ideas about trying to work with indigenous groups and others were put forward as a way of strengthening our voices, and CWN was commended for organizing the meetings.

"...reading the book **"They call Me George"** made me feel like our system of education failed me and other Canadians like me, because it didn't teach us about Canada's racist past –it's white supremacist policies of keeping it a white man's country. I am fairly well educated and had never heard of the Black Porters' Union and now I have learnt about them, I consider them Canadian heroes. We never learnt about **Stanley Grizzle**, who started the Porters' Union. **Something is deeply wrong** about us not learning of our own history. I think this book can be a great addition to our High School Curriculum"

**Caucasian Female CWN Member**



*Antoinette Allen chaired our meetings*



*Donna Coombs-Montrose telling her story*

*"Among my family and friends, we have had difficulty with employment; In Canada, people are very polite so it's difficult to know where you stand with people, what a person may be think of you."*

Listening Moments Participant





*In the face of the pandemic- people having to social distance and self isolate- it became very important to find ways that sparked feelings of connectedness. CWN used a variety of ways to fight the isolation -via emails and steady newsletters; through telephone calls and “chat” groups; with Zoom meetings and discussions; and through engaging in a few outdoor activities that replicated our annual Cariwest participation and an in-person picnic at one of our beautiful Edmonton parks.*

## **Fighting Isolation**

***A person is a person through other persons; you can't be human in isolation; you are human only in relationships***  
**Archbishop Desmond Tutu**

## **CARIWEST Festival In A Box**

*The Edmonton Arts Council and CARIWEST organizers led us along the streets of Duggan.*

*CWN helped to keep the spirit of the festival alive with costumes from the previous year, but everyone missed the energy the camaraderie and connectedness that the costume-making and the general getting ready in anticipation for the big 3-day celebration.*

*“The music, the dancing while parading the streets of Edmonton and most of all the collective joy of all the players was nothing short of exhilarating”*

*Asma Burney 1st time mas player in 2019*



*Christopher Phillips, Reina and friend social having a socially distance chat at the Park*

*Below left: A few shots from the picnic*  
*Below right: Photos from the Festival in a Box Parade*







## Building Volunteerism

### Valuing Our Volunteers

*Running a not-for profit takes time, commitment, and many hours of work by many people. Even in a year like 2020, when things were shut down, close to 1, 200 hours of volunteerism supported CWN. Casino fundraising, administrative services (accounting, zooming, reporting, etc.), board meetings, planning and implementing activities, were all part of the productive outputs by volunteers.*

*We thank everyone who worked on the board this past year. Board members, you helped the organization to serve the community and you have made an impact on the lives of individuals and on our community's life. To committee heads, board and non-board members, your leadership is invaluable. Thank you **Zobeeda Adheen, Tony Montrose, Cheryl Sheridan, Frances Small, Ulrich Birbal, Cristian Munoz, Reina Granados, Lydia Boodram and Mike Boodram.***

*We say a special thanks to all who worked at our Casino – **all 31 of you** who helped us raise the funds so vital to our existence. We couldn't have done it without **the 480 hours of your time!***



*Our other 2020 Volunteers – **Antoinette Alleyne, Karen Chin-Aleong Brooks** – you did a marvelous job on the anti-racism discussion groups; **Harpreet Kaur, Bob Negi, Rebana Bennett and Jessica Naidoo**- thanks so much for your administrative help and with clean-ups; to **Peter, Cheryl and Carlos Sheridan and family, Michael Phair and his neighbours** - for music and costumes for Carioliver; and to **Cristian Munoz and Reina Granados** for help organizing the picnic.*

#### *We also thank:*

*The agencies and small businesses that provided referrals, & support to CWN's programs  
All who participate in CWN's programs. We learn and help each other in this way. We hope you will continue with us as we move forward in 2021 despite the barriers of Covid 19*

*We mention a word of thanks to **Alberta Culture (CIP Operating and Project Grant Programs), the City of Edmonton and the AB. Status of Women** for their financial support.*

*We must not forget our staff, especially **Pearl Bennett**, whose efforts ensured things got done a la CWN's mandate. We take this opportunity to say good-bye to **Laura Zhu** who we reluctantly had to let go due to Covid restrictions. Thank you **Laura**.*



*Board Members  
Volunteers  
Participants  
Helping agencies  
Funders  
and  
Staff*



**CWN Board Members stay for a photograph after a meeting in October**



# Mother's Day Tea

*CWN invites you to join its virtual Mother's Day Tea*



**Saturday May 8, 2021**

**1:30 pm**

**Details with zoom link and other info to follow.**

## *A few last words:*

*Like everyone else, at CWN we have had to look at ways of surviving this trauma we have all been going through - both financially and as a collective. None of us thought it would be this long before we'd be able to hold in-person activities which are really what we do. Our work depends on the relationship building that happens with in-person interactions. To quote **Dr. Yvonne Chiu** from the Multicultural Health Brokers;*

*" Caribbean Women Network's approach to supporting racialized minority women's economic and social integration is thoughtfully done through the **building of the missing social capital** of bonding ,bridging and linking. It is a form of evidence-based practice that often is overlooked by other practitioners committed to social equity and gender equality. As the women come together, they create bonds of safety, mutual learning and a sense of belonging.*



## *Our Memorable M.A.R.T.I.N.I. models*

*(we thank everyone who donated saris for the project)*



**Caribbean Women Network**

*creating community where everyone belongs*