

# ***DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE WOMEN'S CENTRE***



# **M I S S I O N**

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*Our mission is to provide for basic needs and to work toward positive change for women and children in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver.*

## **The Centre**

The Downtown Eastside Women's Centre is a drop-in centre established in 1978. For more than twenty years, the Centre has provided a safe place for women and children living in a neighbourhood now referred to as Canada's "poorest postal code".

The Centre provides practical support to enable our membership to survive conditions of deprivation, ill health, and violence, and encourage them to make long-term change by identifying and removing barriers to full participation in the larger community.

The life expectancy for women in the Downtown Eastside is 23 years less than the National average.

Many Downtown Eastside residents experience violence, drug abuse, low self-esteem, illiteracy, racism and classism. To alleviate the impact of socio-economic disadvantage we provide for basic needs in conjunction with long-term support. This is the key to our programming success.

# **Our Members**

The wide range of women who assist, volunteer & take part in the Centre reflects all aspects of life: mothers, grandmothers, women of colour and First Nations women.

**Homelessness and the lack of basic necessities are a way of life for many women within the Downtown Eastside.**

**Poverty is a common denominator that can be remedied with support from individuals and the community.**

**Please choose to help today.**

## **Volunteer Program**

Our volunteer program includes learning and being responsible for the following: reception, referrals, workshop facilitation, food preparation, general cleaning, peer support and fundraising. These volunteers receive training experience, support and work skills that can assist them in finding gainful employment.

**“Centre volunteers contribute over 10,000 hours per year!”**

# How to Help!

The Downtown Eastside Women's Centre is a Registered Charity # 12989 5959 RR0001. Your tax-deductible donation will make a difference in the lives of women and children.

## To Become A Valued Friend Of The Centre

*Friends* of the Centre help in a number of ways. *Friends* not only donate money but use their connections to enhance all avenues of programs and services. *Friends* provide us with other sources of fundraising ideas, tell their friends about us and allow us to use their names for printed materials.



WOMEN'S CENTRE

### **Downtown Eastside Women's Centre**

302 Columbia Street,  
Vancouver, BC  
V6A 4J1

**Reception:** (604) 681-8480

**Fax:** (604) 681-8470



# Drop-In Centre

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## Providing for basic needs

The Centre is a safe space where women can access basic needs. Daily services available include laundry facilities, safe functioning toilets and showers, telephone, personal hygiene supplies and many other necessities that are required but not readily available under current living situations. **As well as providing for these basic needs, regular programming occurs throughout the week.**

## Food Program

The Downtown Eastside Women's Centre serves lunch seven days a week. It is often the need for a nutritious meal that first brings a woman into the Centre where she can then learn about other services. The Centre also provides dinner for women who attend evening groups. For most of the women these meals are part of their weekly meal planning and spell the difference between health and illness.

## Education

The Centre offers a learning Group once a week which covers a wide range of topics. Computer training and workshops for women interested developing computer skills are part of the Centre's regular programming. The Centre provides income assistance for women who attend workshops and conferences outside of the area.

## **Counselling & Support Program**

Self-help, facilitated support groups, and workshops on a wide range of topics are representative of evening programs. Women Surviving Together is a group that meets once a week to deal with the violence women are facing in their everyday lives. Other groups meet weekly to talk about alcohol and substance abuse issues and how they impact women of the Downtown Eastside along with literacy and various special community development projects. Staff are available Monday through Friday to give one-to-one counselling support.



# Specialized Services

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Working towards positive change

## Legal Advocacy Program

The goal of this program is to make legal advocacy, information and resources available to women of the Downtown Eastside in an easily understood and accessible manner.

## The Stopping the Violence Program

Stopping the Violence program provides self-help, and facilitated support groups to aid women who are facing violence as a part of their everyday lives. This program offers cultural and spiritual support and healing for First Nations women in a safe environment.

# OUR PURPOSE

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The constitution of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre was written in 1978 upon incorporation and is still relevant today.

- To provide a comfortable, safe drop-in centre.
- To provide recreation and self-help programs.
- To act as a source of information by assisting women with referrals concerning their needs.

## **Victim Services Program**

The Centre's Victim Services Worker offers support and assistance to women that have been victims of a crime. These services include help with reporting a crime, emotional support for the victim, accompaniment to court and referrals to other programs and services.

## **Mental Health Program**

This program provides counselling and support to women with mental health issues. It also offers self-help and facilitated support groups and workshops on a wide range of topics.

## **HIV Outreach Program**

This program was initiated in the fall of 1997 to address the rising incidence of HIV infection in the Downtown Eastside. It includes outreach, one-to-one counselling, support and referrals for women who are HIV+ or at risk.

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- To provide a social space and facilitate the opportunity for women of diverse backgrounds to interact and build community.
  - To educate the public and all levels of government about issues concerning women in the area.