

WELCOME TO OUR NEW COUNSELLOR!



I am so pleased to be working to support women to pursue their own safety, freedom, and independence through Scarborough Women's Centre. I joined SWC in October 2021 as a part-time Counsellor. Despite the challenges of connecting across the physical divide that the pandemic has created, I have already experienced the warmth, connection, resilience, creativity, and determination of this community, including both the staff and service users of the Centre. I have also found that SWC fulfills a leadership role within the service landscape. I recognize the many barriers that can interfere with our ability to access meaningful mental health services, and in contrast the vital need for these services, now more than ever.

In my previous work, I have advocated for the rights and freedoms of children and their parents as a litigator in child protection court, worked with families who are going through separation or divorce as both parents' and children's counsel, assisted in rolling out province-wide programming and services to support vulnerable youth who cannot live at home, and piloted programming to teach self-advocacy skills to young

women. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with individual clients to tackle the barriers that are keeping them down, both internal and external.

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WHEN THINGS DON'T GO AWAY!

Sometimes you are dealing with problems and issues for days, sometimes weeks, and sometimes they can drag on for months and years. Dealing with chronic issues takes stamina, endurance, resiliency, and knowing when to pack up and take a break, even if you just take that break in a quiet corner.

In current times, during the pandemic, you can find yourself seeing the same issues over again. Learning how to deal with crisis situations requires calming the emotions, breathing techniques, assessing safety issues and working through and implementing plans to resolve the issues. This may take several repetitions of this process until the issue is resolved or you are through the crisis period.

Recovering from trauma takes time. Mental and physical energy as well as spiritual energy is required. Pace yourself and work through issues as you can handle them.



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Our Counselling program is made possible thanks to the Government of Ontario-Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (Women's Issues), the City of Toronto, United Way Greater Toronto, Bell Let's Talk, Royal LePage Shelter Foundation, Ontario Realtors Care Foundation, Tippet Foundation, and other generous individuals and groups. THANK YOU!

BOUNCING BACK

We all have seen how a rubber ball hits a hard surface and bounces back to its original place. Many of us, young and old, we still enjoy doing it for fun or just to fidget. Apart from the material world this “bouncing back” has a connection with our lives. How do we bounce back? There are inevitably ups and downs for everyone, and still, we move on. Traumatic events like death and bereavement, unemployment, sickness, poverty, and family break-up are painful and difficult.

What helps us bounce back and keeps us moving forward? The answer is resilience. It is our ability to overcome or manage adverse situations and understand that they do not wholly determine the outcome of our lives. Resilience is like a rubber band, it gets pulled, stretched, and bent under stress but bounces back to its original shape. Resilience also helps us to explore and identify the different aspects of our lives which we can control or modify and grow.

Today the world is under stress with the pandemic affecting everyone on Earth, directly or indirectly. We move forward and make plans hoping that this difficult time will end and things will improve. This is what resilience does. However, there are individual differences in the way we adapt – high resilience or low resilience. A person who tries and fails and goes through intense emotional distress but then tries differently the next day is displaying resilience. People with high resilience view difficulties as challenges, have hope in the future and above all, they invest their time and energy in things that they have control over and that they can change. On the other hand, people with low resilience view difficulties as permanent impossibles and lack hope for the future.

The good news is Yes! We can train our resilience. Over time the rubber band can be molded to different shapes thus making improvements to fit the present need. How do we build our resilience? Build connections and prioritize healthy relationships, foster wellness, find purpose, think healthy thoughts, reach out for help, set realistic goals, gain new skills and try things differently. Resilience sounds like “I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.” (Thomas Edison, American inventor).



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THE GENDERED IMPACT OF COVID-19

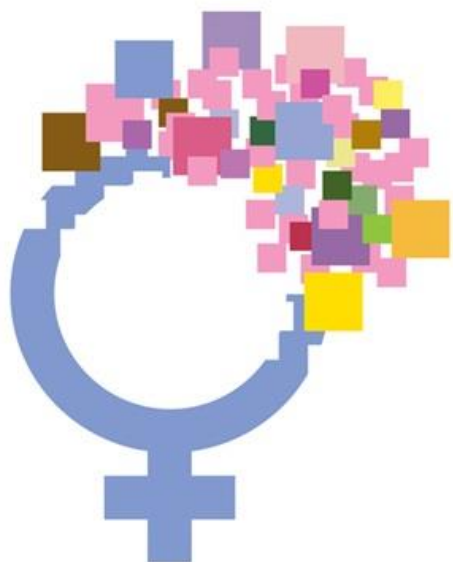
Did you know that women have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in ways that differ from men? Research indicates that women are more likely to become seriously ill from COVID-19 because more women occupy frontline positions in health care and social services that increase their risk of exposure. Government directives that have advised people to stay home to reduce risk of transmission, have also placed women at increased risk for experiencing social isolation and gender-based violence (YWCA Toronto, 2020) For women with disabilities these risks are increased because they are more likely to live with pre-existing conditions that require hospitalization, already experience violence at higher rates, and systemic responses to the COVID-19 pandemic have not considered the lived realities of women with disabilities (DisAbled Women’s Network of Canada, 2020). Community organizations have also seen an increased need for counselling and mental health supports during COVID-19.

With funding from the Resilient Communities Fund, we have supported women during the pandemic by:

- Pivoting to remote and virtual service delivery
- Training facilitators to deliver online educational webinars that are interactive and accessible
- Training volunteers to become online moderators
- Learning about the process and benefits of real-time captioning, which has helped make our webinars more accessible to Deaf women, women with learning disabilities, and women whose first language is not English
- Developing polices and partnerships with other community agencies that will support the development of a hybrid model of service delivery when the time comes

Thank you to the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Government of Ontario for helping us empower women to become economically and emotionally independent for future success and to strengthen their local communities, free from violence. We are still supporting women and look forward to opening our physical doors again when it is safest to do so. Until then, check out our website for the latest updates, stay safe, and have fun!

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THE MOVING FORWARD PROJECT: SUPPORTING WOMEN TO ACHIEVE FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE AND PURSUE THEIR PASSIONS!

Over the last eight months, the Moving Forward: Next Steps to Training and Employment Project has been working on identifying barriers that Scarborough women face to employment and training. Through consultation with community partners and our employment and training survey administered to our service users, we have identified common barriers to accessing employment and training. We found that many women struggle to maintain employment or to pursue education and training due to child and family care responsibilities. The majority of existing job opportunities are not flexible enough to accommodate family care, and many educational opportunities require funds and time that women do not have. We have also found that many women are struggling to maintain employment due to many work environments not being welcoming and accommodating to women with trauma, mental health challenges and various disabilities. In addition to this, many women have been out of work for a prolonged period of time and are facing challenges returning to work without recent experience or training. For some newcomer women this includes challenges returning to work if their degrees and experience abroad are not recognized in Canada.



Many women in these situations are unsure of what opportunities exist for them or of where to begin finding resources to address these barriers. Through the Moving Forward Project, we aim to support women to overcome these obstacles and to equip them with the pre-employment skills, knowledge and confidence they need to pursue an education and career that facilitates their passions. Our goal is to address the personal and structural barriers that women face so that they can achieve long term success and financial stability in their lives. In response to the challenges we have identified, we are providing ongoing counseling, mentorship and planning the launch of various tools and webinars directed at tackling these issues. As we continue working alongside our partners this winter, we will be releasing a webinar series and self-assessment tools which will serve to provide women with the guidance, support and knowledge needed to move towards financial independence and emotional well-being.

We are grateful to the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (Women's Issues) for this special project funding for the 2021-22 year.

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RBC Career Launch Program

The Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) has a Career Launch program through which 100 recent university grads from across Canada are hired for one year to further develop their employment skills. I am grateful to have been chosen to participate in this wonderful program.

As a Career Launch Associate, I was assigned to Scarborough Women's Centre for a three month

rotation. Being a fresh graduate, I came to SWC with minimal hands-on experience or knowledge of working in such an environment. Although that was the case I had no trouble in progressing at my role with the training provided and the help received from my co-workers.

I first had the opportunity to assist the Executive Director, Lynda Kosowan for the Annual General Meeting which was a great way to be introduced to the Centre. In the making of the AGM presentation I learned about what services and programs SWC offers as well as how they've helped hundreds of women in several ways. No woman is left behind at SWC, from the YWO program that helps young women in their personal development to the ETR program which ensures inclusivity for women with invisible or visible disabilities.

In time I was also able to gain experience in social media management, which allowed me to learn the more specific details of the activities taking place in SWC as I was promoting them. The virtual webinars are a large part of these activities and a way to keep supporting the women through these difficult times. I was impressed by the variety of topics covered and level of accessibility provided by adding things like Real Time Captioning. Having had the chance to moderate a webinar myself, I got to experience first-hand the type of content presented to the women, which gained a lot of engagement and positive feedback.

I also had the opportunity to learn how to find the right resources for different needs, how to make things more accessible for all, how to properly communicate with women in different situations, and more. I was able to not only gain work skills but be able to be a part of a community that helps women have a brighter future, and for that I am grateful.

Rodas Negash, B. Comm., RBC Career Launch Associate

DREAMS ON THE HORIZON: SUPPORTING YOUNG WOMEN THROUGH THEIR EDUCATION

Our main goal in the Building Strong Futures: Young Women's Outreach program is to encourage young women to realize their full potential beyond the constraints that young women are often bound to in our society. A big part of that involves supporting young women for healthy relationships, and future success, through their education. This became increasingly significant during the pandemic with the opening and closing of schools and growing uncertainty about academic futures.

This was especially true for the young women who graduated high school during the pandemic. Certainly, attending post-secondary education for the first time can be stressful under any circumstances, but ever shifting restrictions, made it an especially challenging transition for those who began first year during the pandemic. For these reasons Building Strong Futures has made sure to put extra emphasis on providing young women with the tools they will need in order to be successful academically. Some of the topics that we covered in our program related to academic preparedness included: Campus safety, understanding financial aid, how to find scholarships, how to keep calm during exam time, and even how to study. Additionally, the skills that young women gain in our workshops which are not explicitly connected to academic preparedness will also serve them well as they navigate campus life and young adulthood. For example, the young women who attend our confidence workshops may be more likely to seek extra-curricular opportunities, as they feel more secure in who they are and less intimidated by new experiences.

This semester, many of our young women went back to in-person school. The young women have shared with me that this has been quite an exciting time, as many are very happy to be back surrounded by their peers and eager to



make up for the social time that they lost. Many are still worried that they are behind academically due to the time that they spent at home. There is still a lot of uncertainty, but one thing is for sure; these young women are determined to make their dreams a reality and will not let anything stand in their way.

Thank you to Mackenzie Investments Charitable Foundation and the Johansen-Larsen Foundation for their continued support of the Building Strong Futures program!

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SUPPORT THE CENTRE!

Despite this challenging situation and the suspension of in-person gatherings since March 2020, Scarborough Women's Centre has been able to continue serving as a resource to the community. We are #stillsupportingwomen and have continued to provide information, guidance, care, compassion, counselling, mentorship, and important referral resources to women in need, all while working remotely.

With the help of our funders and donors, we were able to adapt services to provide virtual workshops in order to continue serving women while adhering to the health and safety guidelines required to stay safe during the COVID situation. To sum it up, Scarborough Women's Centre has been able to provide some certainty to our community despite the challenging times.

Your contribution will give the Centre much-needed resources to help us meet the continuing or emerging needs of marginalized women in our community.

Secure online donations can be made here: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/scarborough-womens-centre/>. You will receive a charitable donation receipt right away through this online platform.

You can also make a donation by mailing a cheque to: **Scarborough Women's Centre**
2100 Ellesmere Rd., Suite 245
Scarborough, ON M1H 3B7

OUR GENEROUS DONORS - THANK YOU!

GOVERNMENT FUNDERS

Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada, Service Canada, The Government of Ontario - Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (Women's Issues), City of Toronto-Community Service Partnership Program, City of Toronto-Investing in Neighbourhoods Program

FOUNDATIONS & N.G.O.s

The Canadian Women's Foundation, Enbridge Fueling Futures Foundation, GIVE Foundation, Johansen-Larsen Foundation, Mackenzie Investments Charitable Foundation, Ontario Realtors Care Foundation, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Rochelle & Calvin Sager Foundation, Royal LePage Shelter Foundation, Tippet Foundation, Unifor Social Justice Fund, United Way Greater Toronto

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GROUPS

Agincourt Pentecostal Church (One Church), Canadian Federation of University Women, Scarborough Chapter, ESL Department at Centennial College, Ontario Nurses' Association, PepsiCo Foods Employees, Rotary Club of Agincourt, Rotary Club of North Scarborough, Scarborough Guildwood Women's Federal Liberal Club, Unifor Local 6006

INDIVIDUALS

Anonymous, Andrew Johnston & Christina Friend, Arthur & Mary Heinmaa, Fran & Dennis Hitchmough, Oddhay Adhikary, Vicki Alexopoulos, Farhat Ali, Sharena Ali, Shaima Al-Khalili, Danny Amaral, Jawad Ateeq, Mary Neil Avergonzando, Yvette Bailey, Beverly Baird, James Beardmore, Karen Bell, Alan Bilinski, Madison Blois, Marina Boehm, Jennifer Bonsu, Carolyn Borovicka, Shawn Bremmer, Edo Ten Broek, Myya Bryan, Pasqualino Caccavelli, Virginia Caldwell, Jeremy Campbell, Vanessa Campbell, Zenia Castanos, Nicole Cemkov, Kiran Chandra, Christiana Chen, Adanna Chow, Brenda Clarke, Brittany Clarke, Samantha Clarke, Tim Clarke, Ko Clementson, Patricia Coles, Janel Collins, Joe Connolly, Marcus Cote, Maria Cummins, Nazeera Dan, Elaine (Susan) Dandy, Filomena de Sousa, Kirsten de los Reyes, Andrew Denham, Megan Desjardins, Anita Desrosiers, Erin Deviney, Reshma Dhrobia, Izzat Dhrobia, Sophia Dhrobia, Emily Dontosos, Brian Dubeau, Rob Duckworth, Jenny Dundas, Claire Earle, Manesha Evans-Phillips, Célestine Fakoubé, Doris Figueroa, Loretta Fines, Carolyn Forbes, Claudia Fuller, Nadia Garcia, Allison Garland, Reem Gedeon, Geraldine Gerardo, Emma Gerster, Robertas Goloburdo, Joe Goode, Candice Gregoris, Chanel Grenaway-Mills, Heather Haight, Shakira Hakimzadah, Tamara Harduwar, Asna Haris, Shaneela Harpaul, Kerri Harris, Erika Heshmati, Francine Hickman, Kera Hinds-James, Julie Hiroz, Shannon Howanyk, Wai Man (Ray) Hui, Ahillan Ilangko, Michelle Indyarta, Lauren Inouye, Gino Jacobs, Khaliel James, Ian Johnstone, Patricia Joseph, Kourosh Kanani, Irina Katsnelson, George Kay, Zahra Khan, Kathy Killinger, Sara Kim, Salima Kissoon, Deborah Kopansky-Giles, Lynda Kosowan (in memory of Nan and Bill Kosowan), Chelsea Lair, Arnaud Lallouette, Jennifer Lee, Venesse Lewis, Chu Lin Zhou, Carolyn Ling, Didier Live-Nee-Kioon, Clark Luby, Kaiya MacDonald, Judit Marincan, Douglas Mark, Bonnie McBride, Helen McCubbin, Robin McCullough, Nancy McGibbon, Kayla McKenzie, Suzette McLarty, Jane McLellan, Karen Mcneil, Elena Melnik, Jyothi Menezes, Taje Mohabir, Annisa Mohammed, Veruschka Muller, Farah Mustafa, Sara Mustafa, Bhaginy Nadarajah, Christopher Nash, Lan Natasha, Wanjiro Ndungu, Janice Nicholson, Kristen Nolan, Desmond Nwachi, Randy Ouimet, Jennifer Ozungur, George Papayiannis, Ann Patterson, Elizabeth Phillips, Gabriela Jacqueline Hogg Pichardo, Anugya Punetha, Ben Rastin, Amaan Raza, Mary Riccardi, Leslie Rinaldi, Camille Robinson, Mandi Romanski, Neeti Sharma, Linda Sicoli, Kacian Simpson, Vicki Sloat, Kelly Snow, Donna-Marie Soloway, Jayanthan Sritharan, Vithika Sritharan, Francesca Stea, Penelope Stuart, Sumrana Taher, Duc Tai Tran, Nadia Taylor, Sean Thomas, Bianca Thompson, Taylor Thompson, Tiro Timmers, Elizaveta Topounova, Tatiana Topounova, Correne Tran, Aarsh Trivedi, Dimitra Tsagaris, Mary Valid, Maggie Vernon, Tiana Vuckovic, Leslie Walker, Ross Webster, Oskar Westin, Ruihi Wihongi, Barbara Wisner, Evonne Wong, Caroline Wood, Jess Woods

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EXTERNAL EVENTS

BirchCliff Pumpkin Drive, Krispy Kreme Holiday Fundraiser, Liza's 42km #RollerbladeChallenge for Scarborough Women's Centre, Nicey's Eatery-International Women's Day Fundraiser, Reah's Essence-International Women's Day Fundraiser, Royal LePage Estate Realty-Unplugged for Shelter Concert, The Sicoli Family's Young Women's Leadership Program Fundraiser in honour of Bianca Sicoli

BECOME A MEMBER!

Have your say in our future. Attend our Annual General meeting and vote on the structure of our charity and ongoing activities. Annual membership fees can be waived for active volunteers and clients who are not able to pay. All fees collected will be directed towards programming. Find our membership form here: www.scarboroughwomenscentre.ca/become-a-member/