

# Annual Report 2020-2021



**MAKING CHANGES**  
Advancing futures for women. **TOGETHER.**



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**WWW.MAKINGCHANGESASSOCIATION.CA**

# MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & BOARD CHAIR

We are very proud to report that Making Changes had a successful fiscal 2020-2021 year. Despite the challenges of the Covid19 pandemic, we were able to pivot our programs to include online offerings and celebrated the combination of our Walk-in-Closet operations with Dress for Success Calgary.

During the past year, we continued to support our clients by pivoting all our programs to include a virtual delivery option. We doubled the number of graduates from our Women in Technology program, introduced a hackathon experience and Microsoft training to enrich our students' training, increased the number of participants in our Employment and Life Skills Program and implemented virtual consultations for both our Dress for Success Calgary and My Best Friend Closet programs. While the virtual program deliveries were motivated by the desire to serve our clients safely during the in-person closures, we anticipate that virtual appointments and training will continue to be an important option for our clients going forward as it eliminates childcare and transportation barriers for women accessing our programs.

We are confident that with the combination of Making Changes' broad, established infrastructure and Dress for Success' worldwide brand and network, and the introduction of the online platforms for all our programs, we are well poised to serve an increasing number of women and girls while enriching the experience of each of our clients as we implement new supports to address their needs.

Thank you to our staff, volunteers, Board of Directors, partnering agencies, donors, and funders. Your passion, dedication, and overwhelming generosity is essential to our ability to serve women and girls. We are privileged to be a part of the Making Changes community and look forward to everything this next year has in store as we work towards strengthening our impact in our community by advancing the future of women, together.

**CATHY COUTTS,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**SARAH CHIU,  
BOARD CHAIR**



# Board of Directors

**Thank you  
for your  
dedication!**



**Sarah Chiu, Chair**  
**Ayden Athwal, Vice Chair**  
**Tanya Causgrove, Past Chair**  
**Jackie Eliason, Treasurer**  
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**Cathy Coutts, Executive Director**

Advancing futures for women. TOGETHER.

# OUR FUNDERS & SUPPORTERS

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## Community Partners

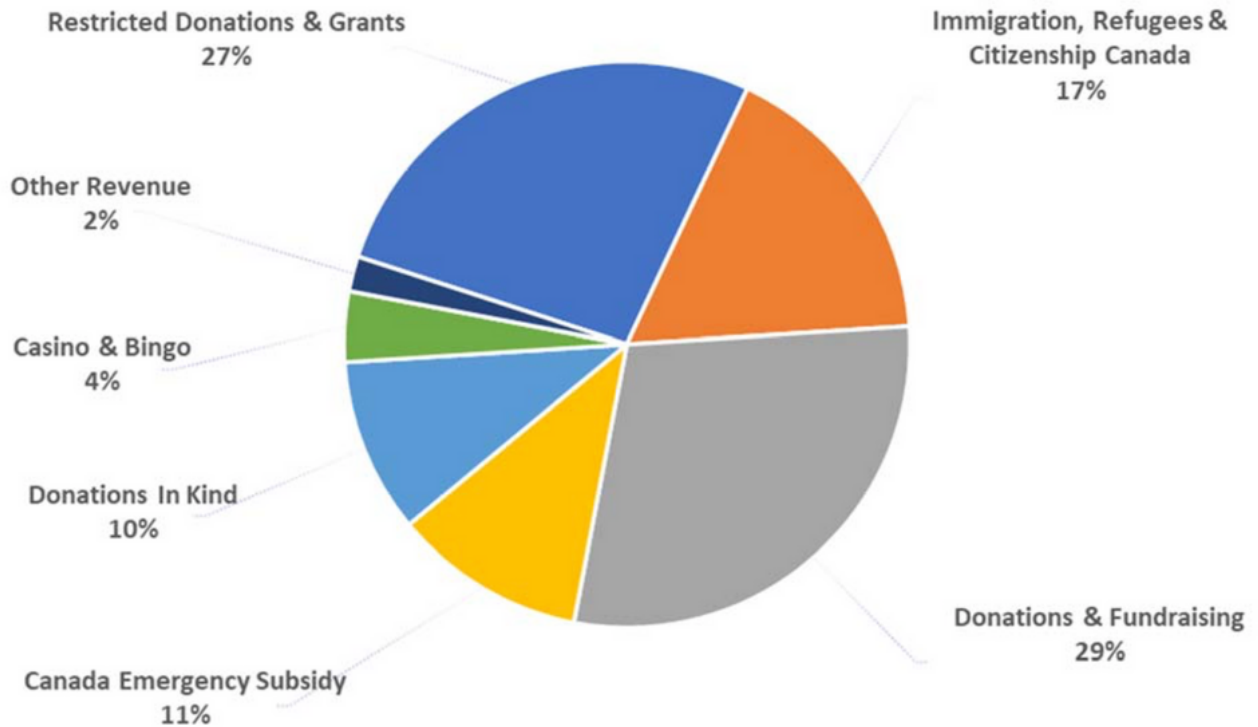
Thank you to the many incredible local businesses, corporations, organizations and individuals who have supported and contributed to our programs this year!

We are truly grateful for your relationship and generosity.

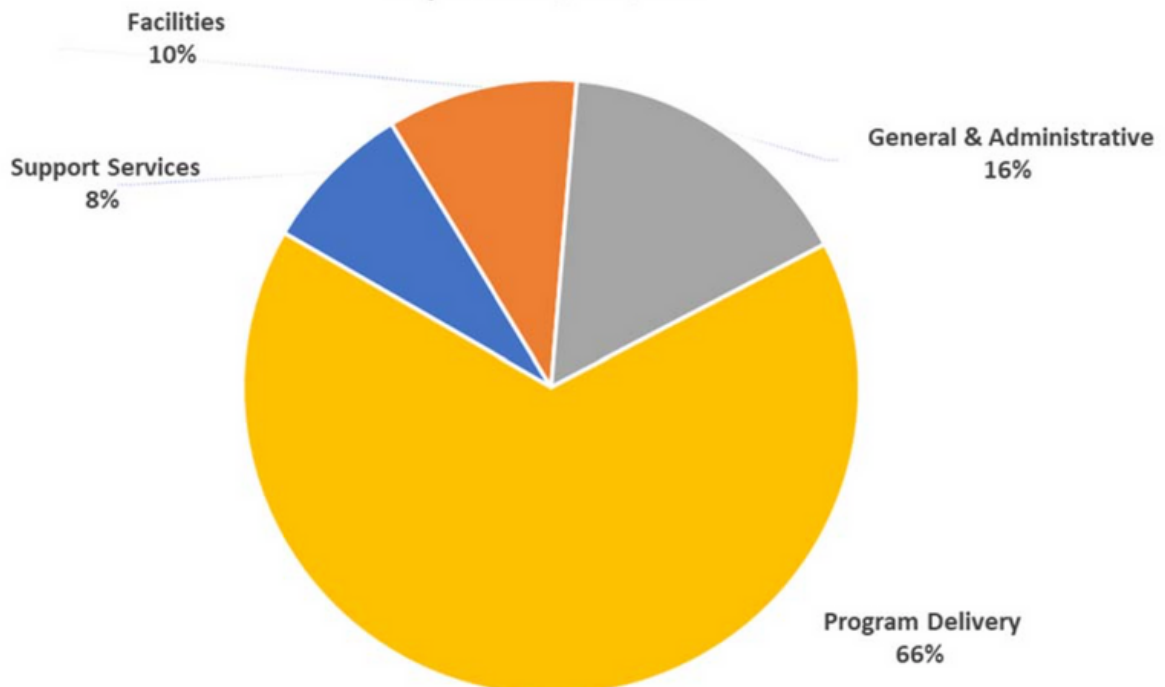


# Financial Overview

Revenue: \$1,065,295



Expenses: \$990,758



# OUR IMPACT:

## ANTOINETTE'S WOMEN IN TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM VIRTUAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE

I chanced upon the Women in Technology (WIT) program about two months after I arrived in Canada as a newcomer from Ghana. Right from the application and selection stages, I could tell this program was going to have a positive impact in helping me build a solid new career in tech. This became more evident during the height of the COVID pandemic when the IT industry showed the highest level of adaptability to the "new normal".

As a student of the WIT program, I gained both technical skills in Full Stack Web Development as well as the necessary employability skills, which have given me a lot more confidence in both my professional and personal life. From the beginning of my job search journey to the end, I utilized aspects of the course like resume and cover letter tailoring skills to the STAR method of answering questions in interviews. I also leveraged my problem-solving skills and other technical skills such SQL during my interview.

Our instructors embraced the challenge and opted to conduct the program remotely, the remote nature of the course opened a world of possibilities and motivated me to consider jobs outside Alberta.

**"The WIT program is truly multifaceted & has helped me highlight my prior experience & given me new skills. But most importantly, I have made new friends who I consider to be my family of sisters."**

**- Antoinette Adjaye-Gaisie**

At the final stage of my interview, I could confidently talk about working remotely because I had both individual experiences through getting directions from our lecturers as well as team exposure through our capstone project and other group class activities.

Antoinette is currently working as a Subscriber Growth Analyst at Xplornet Communications.





# Our Volunteers

**We are truly grateful for your time!**

To our passionate and devoted volunteers, this has been a year like no other and we couldn't have pivoted to reach our clients in different ways without your support, patience and flexibility. We thank you for helping us take our programs virtual and maintaining a safe environment for our team and clients while serving the community in-person. Thank you for your ongoing belief in Making Changes and commitment to advancing futures for women and teen girls in Calgary!

## The Stats



**360**  
Volunteers



**5,588**  
Hours

## Opportunities

Join our Volunteer Team and make a difference!  
We are looking for Stylists, Image Consultants, Sorters, Admin, Special Events, Resume & Interview Support & Mentors.

[www.makingchangesassociation.ca/volunteer-application-form](http://www.makingchangesassociation.ca/volunteer-application-form)

Advancing futures for women. TOGETHER.

# OUR IMPACT:

## SHELLEY'S VIRTUAL VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AT DRESS FOR SUCCESS CALGARY

I joined as a Making Changes volunteer three years ago. My first experience was a shift at the casino, followed by a year of sorting women's clothing for the boutique. Once I had a really great understanding of the programs, I began working with clients as an Image Consultant. What a thrill it was to send our fantastic clients out the door with big smiles, boosted confidence and a whole lot of clothes!

Abruptly, the world shuttered due to COVID-19. After a few stops and re-starts, life at Making Changes had a whole different look and feel. All four programs had made pivotal changes thanks to the creativity and ingenuity of the team members. Online delivery platforms! Curious to hear how this might work for Dress for Success Calgary, I spent some time on the phone with Michelle, the Program Manager, and was hooked! I phoned fellow volunteer Jeanie Thompson, and we teamed up to become a Tuesday afternoon virtual styling team. We absolutely love it!

Jeanie and I pre-pick a rack of clothing and lots of accessories prior to the virtual call. Each item is shown to the client and we chat about why it was chosen, what accessories might look good with it and how to put together different looks.



The clients love that they get a personalized styling experience from the comfort of home.

There's one client experience that stands out in particular for us. A gal was recovering from some health issues and was trying to get back into the workforce. By the end of her appointment, she was crying from happiness and gratitude. After discovering she had no way to come and pick up her clothes, I offered to drop them off on my way home. The client was still crying when I got there. It definitely gives warm fuzzies to be able to create such a unique and powerful experience!





# Our Programs

## WALK-IN CLOSET/ DRESS FOR SUCCESS CALGARY



**453**  
appointments



**3,607** items  
of clothing



**2,522**  
accessories



**2** workshops with  
**21** participants

## WOMEN IN TECHNOLOGY (6 month, full time program)



**30**  
graduates  
(2 cohorts)

## MY BEST FRIEND'S CLOSET



**240**  
appointments



**1,637** items  
of clothing



**1,420**  
accessories



**4** workshops with  
**72** participants

## EMPLOYMENT & LIFE SKILLS



**127**  
graduates

## POLISHING YOUR PROFESSIONAL IMAGE



**29** workshops with  
**684** participants



# Empowering Women Together

## Our Merge With Dress for Success Calgary

In the fall of 2020, Making Changes and Dress for Success Calgary announced an exciting opportunity; we planned to merge into one organization by the end of the year! The two charities have co-existed in Calgary for many years with the shared vision of a world where women are economically empowered and inspired to create change and make meaningful contributions to the community. The combination of Making Changes' broad, established infrastructure and Dress for Success Calgary's worldwide brand and network, has provided the new organizational structure to better advance futures for women – together.

Dress for Success Calgary has moved into our newly renovated space previous occupied by our Walk-In Closet program and continues to help women through life transitions by providing them with the skills and resources to effectively pursue meaningful work, educational, and volunteer opportunities.

**VISION:** a world where women do not live in poverty; are treated with dignity and respect; and are strengthening their families and shaping their communities.

**MISSION:** Dress for Success Calgary promotes the economic independence of disadvantaged women by providing professional attire, a network of support and the career development tools to help women thrive in work and in life.



**DRESS FOR SUCCESS**®  
CALGARY

# OUR IMPACT:

## WHITNEY'S EXPERIENCE IN THE EMPLOYMENT & LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM

Originally from Ghana, Whitney was a Clinical Pharmacist in the UK and worked for nine years in the hospital and health care industry.

Once she arrived in Canada, she began studying for her Pharmacist Qualifying Exams, but was facing challenges finding time to study and care for pre-school children at home.

In need of some guidance on how to integrate into the Canadian workforce, Whitney joined the Employment and Life Skills Program in June 2020. Her goal was to apply her skills and gain much needed Canadian work experience, while continuing to work toward certification.

While attending the program, Whitney learned about networking strategies and made new contacts in the pharmacy field. She also created a targeted resume for a Pharmacy Assistant role and had the opportunity to practice her interview skills.

To help create a successful path forward, Whitney developed an action plan that included strategies for balancing childcare, studying and job searching.

Shortly after completing the program, Whitney was hired as a Pharmacy Assistant with Calgary Co-op.

**"The program opened up opportunities that I didn't even know existed!" - Whitney**

Making Changes was also able to support Whitney during her application for the online International Pharmacy Graduate (IPG) program at University of Toronto. She was accepted and is on her way to completing her Pharmacist Qualifying Examinations to become a pharmacist in Canada. We wish her all the best!





INSTAGRAM LIVE EVENT

# Powerful 「YOU」

presented by 

On November 7, 2020 we hosted a seven hour Instagram Live experience from 12pm to 7pm and raised an incredible \$64,900 for women in our community.

The event brought together all the elements of what makes our community so magical for a jam-packed day full of talks and mini-workshops with topics from fashion to wellness, to local favourites, gifts, travel, and more. Powerful You offered a unique opportunity for Calgarians to be inspired and connect virtually.

We'd like to express our sincere gratitude to our sponsors, donors, guest speakers and volunteers for helping us make this virtual event a wonderful success.



## SPONSORS

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# OUR IMPACT:

## ANGELA BUILDS HER CONFIDENCE AT MY BEST FRIEND'S CLOSET

Angela immigrated from the Phillipines to Canada in 2017 with her family. She described her childhood as "wonderful" with memories of playing outside until dark, learning from her grandmother how to wash laundry by hand and going to the market alone.

Moving to Canada was an exciting adventure. This was the first time she had ever seen snow. However, as she started to settle into her life in Canada, she faced challenges with language barriers and making friends.

Even though her classmates were very friendly, Angela chose to be alone as she didn't feel that she fit in and wasn't confident in this new setting.

When her school counsellor referred her to My Best Friend's Closet, she was concerned that there would be a lot of people coming in and out of the boutique, making for a hectic experience.

To her surprise, there were only a few volunteers around. She described the ambiance as "nice and peaceful."

**"I can't believe I got an entirely new wardrobe!"  
- Angela**

Her stylist was very helpful; Angela appreciated her patience and she felt free to roam the boutique to find items that she really loved. Now, she feels more confident to mix and match her clothes and loves wearing her new outfits.

"For me, this program has given me something to wear comfortably, but also really helped with my self-confidence and a sense of belonging. It just feels like I fit in now. I hope that My Best Friend's Closet keeps doing what they are doing."

