



WOMEN'S
RESOURCES

Women's Resources of Kawartha Lakes

Shelter, Services & Referral for Abused Women & their Children



ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

Women's Resources of Kawartha Lakes

Mission

Working with the community to provide services and support for abused women and their children and to provide opportunities to end violence against women.

Vision

Safety, Empowerment and Equality for all Women

Charitable Number: 12981 8613 RR0001

Board of Directors 2025-2026

Chair: *Jennifer Lee*

Vice Chair: *Sarah Menezes*

Treasurer: *Johnine Harris*

Secretary: *Samantha Burke*

Tracy Ali-Costain, Tricia Cresswell, Shirley Norman, Kimberly Pongo, Tara Upshaw, Denise Williams

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Programs and Services are possible through the funding from our partners:



Chair's Report 2025-2026

Message from the Chair:

As we look back on the past year, I am struck by the incredible resilience and forward momentum of our organization. It has been a year of significant transition, and I am honored to step into the role of Board Chair. I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Jane Chapman, who stepped down this year after many dedicated years as Chair. Her leadership set a high bar, and I am grateful for the Board's support as I transition into this role. This year, we were thrilled to welcome Penny Chatson as our new Executive Director. We have remained focused on providing steady support during this transitional year for both Penny and Jackie, ensuring the stability of our operations as they lead us forward.

We also saw several changes within our Board of Directors. I am delighted to welcome our newest members, Kim Pongo, Tracy Ali-Costain and Tara Upshaw. We are also very pleased to have Denise Williams returning to the Board. This blend of fresh perspectives and seasoned experience is vital to our success.



Jennifer Lee
Chairperson

Organizational Growth & Sustainability

A major focus for the Board right now is long-term sustainability. We have launched a new task group dedicated to a needs assessment and social enterprise exploration. This project is essential for ensuring the organization's growth and finding innovative ways to support our mission in the years to come. Our committees have also been exceptionally active. This has included committee work such as updating the agency's Policy Manual and streamlining our Board orientation, recruitment, and training processes. Under the guidance of our Treasurer, Johnine Harris, the team has been working tirelessly. Johnine will provide a more detailed financial update in her report. This year also saw the signing of our first Collective Agreement. I would like to express thanks and appreciation to the staff, volunteers and council that worked tirelessly on this process.

Celebrating Our Community

Our successes are not just measured in policies and budgets, but in the people who power our mission. The Volunteer Recognition event in April was a true highlight of the year—a wonderful moment to pause and celebrate the hands and hearts that make our work possible.

On behalf of the Board, thank you to the staff, management, and our supporters for your unwavering commitment. As my time as the Board Chair comes to an end this year, I am excited to see and hear of the wonderful things that the staff and volunteers will continue to do in the future.

Jen Lee

Board Chair



ED Report

Penny Chatson



Penny Chatson
Executive Director

The 2025–2026 year has been one of significant change, growth, and progress for Women's Resources, marked by the retirement of our Executive Director, Lori Watson, after an extraordinary 30 years of dedicated leadership and service. Transitions of this magnitude inevitably bring challenges, and this year has required us to adapt in many ways. Staffing changes became a major focus as we welcomed new team members, celebrated retirements, and successfully completed negotiations for the first collective agreement between Women's Resources and our union, the UFCW, a significant milestone in our organization's history. For me personally, this year also marked an important transition. After 15 years as Residential Services Manager, I am honoured and privileged to step into the role as Executive Director. La-Ferne Powell was hired to fill my previous position and I am incredibly grateful that we found such a competent and passionate leader to assume the Residential Services Manager role. She has quickly become a valued member of our leadership team, and her dedication continues to have a positive impact on both our staff and the women and children we serve. Our Community Services Manager left to pursue further education, creating another vacancy in a critical leadership position. Once again, we were fortunate to have an outstanding candidate already within our organization. Chantelle Pelpola, who has been with Women's Resources for 20 years as an Outreach Counsellor, has consistently demonstrated exceptional leadership by supporting colleagues, mentoring new staff, and fostering collaboration across the team. Her promotion was a natural progression, and we are thrilled to have her in this role. With so many changes taking place over the

year, we recognized the importance of investing in our team. We recently held a staff retreat that gave us the opportunity to reconnect, reflect, and strengthen our relationships. With the guidance of a wonderful facilitator, we were able to build a stronger, more cohesive team and establish a shared vision as we move forward together. The past year was also defined by the incredible generosity of our community, partners, and funders. Their support has allowed us to make meaningful improvements across our programs and facilities. At Victoria's, our shelter program, we secured funding to install a new security fence, refresh all resident bedrooms, and renovate the children's playroom, creating safer and more welcoming spaces for the families we serve.

At Lori's Place, our second-stage housing program, we were able to secure funding for an emergency generator, complete much-needed landscaping improvements, and receive a grant that allows residents to learn how to grow and maintain their own gardens. These projects not only enhance the safety and comfort of our residents but also promote self-sufficiency and community building.

As we approach the conclusion of our 2024–2027 Strategic Plan, together with the commitment of our Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, and community partners, we have completed most of the four strategic priorities and are well on our way to completing the remainder. The priorities are:

- ♦ Ensuring Sustainable Human and Financial Resources is a key focus through the leadership, succession planning, securing operational funding for Lori's Place, and exploring new social enterprise opportunities to strengthen our long-term financial sustainability.
- ♦ Optimizing Program and Service Reach and Impact included conducting a comprehensive community needs assessment and service mapping process to better understand emerging demographics and identify priority service gaps.
- ♦ Amplifying the Voice of Women's Resources as an Expert and Advocate saw us strengthen relationships with municipal governments, increase opportunities for public speaking and knowledge sharing, and enhance our advocacy efforts with the Ministry and other stakeholders.
- ♦ Fostering a Culture of Governance Excellence involved strengthening board recruitment and orientation practices while developing succession plans to support future board leadership.

These priorities have enhanced our organization and positioned Women's Resources to continue providing essential, responsive services while advocating for women and children experiencing gender-based violence. As we look ahead to 2026–2027, our focus will be on developing a new strategic plan that will guide us through to 2030. We will continue to identify and address service gaps to ensure no one is left behind, while building a collaborative and productive relationship with our union as we move forward together.

Although this past year brought many changes, it also demonstrated the resilience, adaptability, and unwavering commitment of everyone connected to Women's Resources. I am excited for what lies ahead. Whatever challenges the future may bring, I have every confidence that, with our exceptional staff, dedicated Board of Directors, committed volunteers, and supportive community partners, Women's Resources will continue to grow, adapt, and make a lasting difference in the lives of those we serve.

Penny Chatson

Executive Director

Finance Committee Report

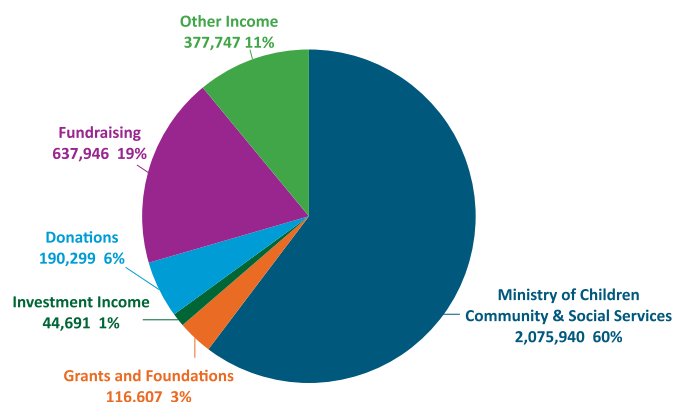
Committee Members:

Johnine Harris, Chair, Samantha Burke, Kim Pongo, Diane Ingram, WR Finance Director, Penny Chatson, ED

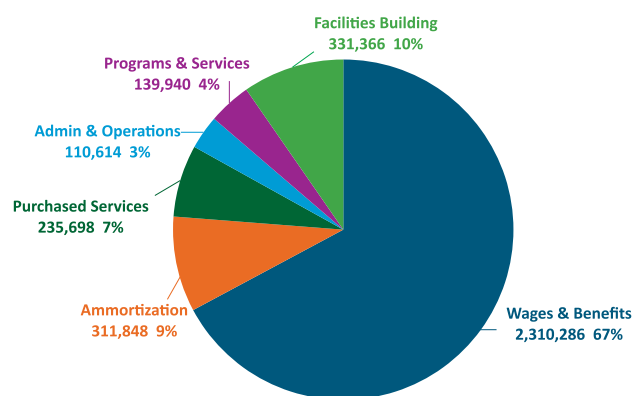
Fiscal Year 2025/2026 — Year End Results

Overall, the 2025–2026 financial results were essentially balanced, with the organization ending the year with a small surplus of \$3,478, compared with a \$233,917 deficit in 2024–2025. Revenue increased to \$3.44 million, while expenses were \$3.44 million, indicating a significant improvement in the organization's operating position. At year-end, cash and cash equivalents declined substantially, from \$1.13 million to \$168,058, largely reflecting increased investment activity and capital expenditures. Income growth exceeded the increase in expenses. Total income was above budget, driven by healthy Vicky's Sales, donations exceeding budget, strong grants and foundation contributions, and rental income from Lori's Place. Total expenses were \$331,846 over budget, primarily due to higher union costs, salaries, building occupancy costs, and supplies. Despite these increased expenses, the stronger-than-anticipated income resulted in an actual net surplus of \$10,243, compared with a budgeted deficit of \$17,170—a \$27,413 improvement over budget. Overall, the year-end results reflect strong financial stewardship and solid community and funding support, with the organization finishing the year in a better position than anticipated.

Sources of Revenue 2026



Expenditures 2026



HR Committee Report

Committee Members: Jen Lee (Chair), Tricia Cresswell, Tara Upshaw, Doreen Bekintis (HR Manager), Penny Chatson (ED)



Jennifer Lee
Chair HR Committee

This past year has been a period of transition and growth for Women's Resources. The Human Resource Committee focus was to continue supporting staff while ensuring our organizational infrastructure evolves to meet the complex demands of our sector. Several long-term employees advanced into new roles with positive results, allowing us to maintain valuable experience while introducing fresh perspectives. Together, the HR Committee and Executive Director managed these transitions ensuring service delivery remained seamless for our clients. The staff Collective Agreement was ratified and we continue to maintain a transparent and collaborative relationship with the union, fostering a healthy workplace and commitment to fair, equitable working conditions for all employees. A Staff Retreat was planned in June, 2026 that included team building and professional development – another step for collective healing. The Executive Director and the HR Manager have been working on an overhaul of all Job Descriptions across the agency to ensure that every role is clearly defined and reflects industry standards while aligning with strategic objectives. The HR Committee reviews and updates agency policies annually to align with changing provincial legislation and HR best practices. Our goal is to offer stability, safety, and a sense of belonging for every employee. The tireless dedication of our Executive Director and HR Manager is proven through many accomplishments. Their leadership ensures that the human element of our work is never lost in the administrative requirements of the agency.

Advocacy Committee Report 2025-2026

Advocacy Committee Members: Denise Williams (Chair), Johnine Harris, Sarah Menezes, Penny Chatson (Executive Director)



*Denise Williams
Chair Advocacy Committee*

Women's Resources' Strategic Plan identifies the work undertaken by the Advocacy Committee. Dedicated to promoting safety, equality, and empowerment for women through public policy involvement, education, and collaboration, the Advocacy Committee is a small but mighty team that includes three board members and the Executive Director.

Key activities include:

- Engagement with City Staff: Through engagement with the CAO, the committee has successfully advocated for a seat at the table when the City of Kawartha Lakes renews their Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan.
- Board Development: The committee is working to develop a Board Speaker Bureau.
- Communications: The committee plans to enhance collaboration opportunities with other local agency boards to solidify Women's Resources as a top-of-mind expert in Violence Against Women issues. The Women's Resources Board will have a presence on the organization's website to outline its role as a governance body, and highlight the professional profiles of board members.
- WR Period Purse Project: Now a formalized program of the board, the project has grown considerably and is welcoming new partners and sites to distribute period products across the City of Kawartha Lakes. We thank Johnine Harris for her continued leadership in promoting and growing this program.

The work of the Advocacy Committee is ceaseless as we continue to strive for equality, safety, and empowerment for all women. An exciting year is ahead.

Governance Report 2025-2026

Shirley Norman, Chair; Sarah Menezes; Denise Williams, Penny Chatson, ED

This year, at the direction of the Board, the Governance Committee continued to serve as a standing committee of the Board.

The Committee's primary role is to provide oversight and review to support compliance with the organization's policies and practices, ensuring they align with the current strategic plan.



*Shirley Norman,
Chair Governance*

As part of its annual responsibilities, the Committee reviewed its Terms of Reference and established its annual work plan. It also continued to follow governance best practices, monitor action items, and complete tasks assigned by the Executive Committee.

A major focus this year was the comprehensive review of the organization's Policies and Procedures Manual.

In accordance with the organization's policy review cycle, all policies are reviewed every five years to ensure they remain current and reflect Board updates. This extensive review, together with the completion of the Board Procedures Manual for subsequent Board review and approval, occupied much of the Committee's work throughout the year.

Fund Development Report

Things are never boring in the world of Fundraising! With a budget of \$841,500 for 2025/26, including revenue from Vicky's Values, we had our work cut out for us. Ultimately, we did raise \$922,710 with the bulk of the funding raised at Vicky's and we couldn't have done this without help from our generous community.

In 2025 we introduced online 50/50 Raffles with thanks to Holly Medeiros, Fund Development Manager who was able to get this underway – Spring Fling in May, Christmas in July and Fun Fall in September/October. It was a great introduction to online platforms for raffles that works very well for the 50/50 draws. We also tried online for our Annual CASH PLUS RAFFLE! with 1st Prize \$5,000, 2nd Prize, \$1,000 and 3rd Prize, a \$500 Food Basics Gift Card (thank you for your donation!). We had a lot of feedback that people prefer the hard copy tickets for this raffle, so in October, when we have our next CASH PLUS RAFFLE! – our 9th year – we will switch back to this and see if we continue to get positive results. In total, all our raffles brought in \$19,362 – THANK YOU to all who purchased them!

On March 6, 2026, we hosted our 14th Annual Marquee Event featuring High Valley, a popular country/bluegrass group, originating in Canada. Recipients of a host of platinum and gold singles and albums as well as Country awards and nominations, they hold the honour of *the top-selling Canadian band in country music history*. Their repertoire of feet tapping music kept the audience enthralled throughout the concert. We raised over \$26,000 with thanks to our generous sponsors and our supporters who attended.

Other income received throughout the year to make up our fundraising total budget includes Unsolicited Donations, Memorials, the Christmas fund and Children's fund totaling \$82,951. We again thank our generous community for this as well as for the \$132,758 raised through Direct Mail, Third Party Events, Grants & Foundations and Break Open Tickets sold at The Open Grocery on Queen Street. There was also \$28,954 donated and restricted to Lori's Place.

Also, with Holly's experience and skills, she has better streamlined our social media posts to provide the information our community needs. Holly also oversees Vicky's Values Thrift Boutique social media which has grown very popular since its inception last year. Holly, along with Kelly Stockdale, Operations Supervisor of Vicky's Values, will be jointly reporting on Vicky's highlights last year. In the meantime, I will mention that they had a record year raising \$562,097 - Amazing!

With 116 volunteers, Women's Resources is so fortunate to have this support for our programs and services. Most do work at Vicky's, but we also have volunteers for fundraising and accounting help and, of course, our dedicated Board of Directors. We are so grateful to all who give their time to support our programs and services for women and children experiencing abuse. And of course, we must recognize our generous community donors, both businesses and individuals – without you, many of our essential programs and services may not even exist.

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

Carolyn Fox

Fund Development Giving Coordinator

High Valley, 14th Marquee Event



Photo Courtesy of Kim Magee Photography

Programs & Services

Women's resources provides safety planning for women. All services are free and confidential.

Residential Services

VICTORIA'S WOMEN'S SHELTER

Victoria's Shelter is a 24-hour emergency shelter providing safe, short-term accommodation for women and their children fleeing intimate partner violence. The crisis support line operates 24 hours a day. Our shelter offers a supportive environment where women can begin their journey toward safety, healing, and independence. Services include crisis intervention, counselling, family court support, housing support, children's programming, and community drop-in services. Through strong partnerships with community agencies, many essential services including mental health support and counselling, are available on-site allowing women to access the care they need while remaining in a safe environment.

Our staff provide trauma-informed, anti-racism, anti-oppression, and survivor-centred care, recognizing that every woman's journey is unique. We work alongside each woman to develop individualized goals, without placing arbitrary timelines on her progress. Our dedicated Child and Youth Worker supports children in a nurturing environment while giving mothers the time to attend appointments or focus on their own well-being. Beyond the emergency shelter, our team helps women move successfully into permanent housing, and this support continues long after they leave. Whether a former resident is in need of a referral, food, clothing, birthday gifts or simply someone to turn to, our doors remain open. At Victoria's, we are committed to removing barriers, empowering women and their families, and helping them build safe, healthy, and hopeful futures.

Women sheltered in 2026: 61 | Children: 55

Average Occupancy 91%

Women Sheltered since 1992: 3,081 | Children: 2,445

Crisis Support Calls in 2026: 1,297

Crisis Support Calls since 1992: 45,094

FOOD CUPBOARD

As a member of the Kawartha Lakes Food Source (KLFS), Women's Resources receives weekly and monthly food items for both WR Community Service clients and residents at Lori's Place Second Stage Housing. Based on a "fair-share" allotment of equitable distribution to all the member food banks, both perishable and non-perishable food items are provided. These items allow that "little extra" so women who need help, can supplement their regular grocery shopping. The Community Service clients are offered items when they attend appointments and at Lori's Place, the items are placed in a communal pantry and fridge so the women help themselves. We truly value our membership with the KLFS as we would not be able to offer this extra food security to the women we serve.

LORI'S PLACE

Lori's Place is a short-term, second-stage housing program for women fleeing abuse. This secure environment offers families a safe and supportive home to heal from the effects of violence. During their two-year residency, women receive services to help build the foundation for long-term independence and stability. The six units are self-contained and rent-geared-to-income. Women and children have access to a range of on-site supports, including counselling, legal advocacy, children's counselling, safety planning, and life-skills programming which are designed to help families rebuild their lives with confidence and resilience. More than a place to stay, it is the beginning of a journey towards healing, where breaking the cycle of violence truly begins.

We were thrilled to receive a generous grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The donation funded six raised garden planters, a gazebo and patio furniture. Together, residents and staff planted vegetables and flowers, transforming the outdoor space into a welcoming yard where families in residence gather, relax, and connect. Planned workshops teach hands-on experience in growing, maintaining, harvesting, and preserving homegrown vegetables, encouraging healthy eating. We are grateful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for investing in this worthwhile initiative.

We also want to offer our grateful thanks for the generous grant received from the Otto and Marie Pick Charitable Foundation (now the Pick Family Foundation). Their \$50,000 contribution helped to pay for an emergency generator. The ice storm in March 2025 left the residents without heat and hydro for six days, an experience we never want to repeat. We are forever grateful to the Pick Family Foundation for making this possible. Without community support to open the doors of Lori's Place Second Stage Housing in 2024 and subsequent gifts for additional growth and improvements since then, we would not have this beautiful home for the women and children to heal and rebuild. Thank you to all who contributed.

Women served in 2026: 8 | Children: 9



Programs & Services

Women's resources provides safety planning for women. All services are free and confidential.

Community Services

COUNSELLING & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Women's Resources provides crisis and support counselling, advocacy, information, and referral services from an anti-oppression perspective for women affected by abuse. We offer individual counselling and support groups to address the impacts of abuse on daily life. Our community-based supports focus on housing, employment, life skills, parenting, and wellness, helping women rebuild their lives through personalized and empowering guidance.

Women served in 2026: 573 | Women served since 1993: 19,567

FAMILY COURT SUPPORT

Our Family Court Support program provides trauma-informed, one-on-one assistance to women navigating the complexities of the family court system. The dedicated FCS worker offers court accompaniment and helps clients access legal resources, ensuring that women feel supported, informed, and empowered throughout the legal process.

COUNSELLING FOR TEENS

Women's Resources offers crisis and support counselling for teen girls and boys aged 10–16 who have been exposed to abuse. Our individual sessions address the unique challenges youth face, supporting the development of positive self-esteem and healthy relationships. In addition, we deliver a children's program that promotes safety, security, confidentiality, and holistic well-being within a feminist framework.

Teens served in 2026: 43

Teens served since 2007: 708

CHILD WITNESS

We provide a skill-building group program for children who have witnessed or experienced violence in the home, in partnership with a local children's mental health provider. Research shows that witnessing violence can impact a child's emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Through role-playing and play-based learning, children build conflict resolution skills. Our program integrates evidence-based strategies to break cycles of violence and promote resilience in families.

Women served in 2026: 28 | Children: 60

Women served since 2000: 658 | Children: 1,145



ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROGRAM

Women's Resources delivers a trauma-informed program for survivors of human trafficking, offering counselling, advocacy, referrals, and life skills development in a safe and confidential environment. We provide targeted education and outreach to adults and youth at risk of trafficking aimed at breaking the cycle of exploitation. We offer individualized support for survivors that includes job training and emotional healing. Community-based prevention and support initiatives help foster long-term resilience and recovery.

Women served in 2026: 37 | Youth served in 2026: 12

Women served since 2020: 114 | Youth served since 2020: 423



VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the cornerstone of Women's Resources. We rely on their dedication and commitment to support the services we provide. We are always in need of volunteers to assist in many areas. These include: Customer service and donation processing at Vicky's Values Thrift Boutique, children's programming, Fundraising, shopping and gardening at the shelter, administrative support, special events, Board member on our Board of Directors.

For more information about volunteer opportunities, email: volunteer@womensresources.ca

Volunteers in 2026: 107

Volunteer hours in 2026: 15,226

Total Volunteer hours since 1992: 323,413



**Ruth,
Long-Time
Volunteer**

VICKY'S VALUES Thrift Boutique

As we celebrate our 32nd year, Vicky's Values remains a vital part of both Women's Resources and our community. Founded on the belief in women supporting women, the store continues to offer quality thrift items at affordable prices, and we are thrilled that sales reached a record \$562,097 this year.

Beyond offering exceptional value to shoppers, Vicky's Values also plays an important role in supporting women accessing our services by providing free essentials through gift certificates and our housewares program for those rebuilding their lives after abuse. This year alone, more than \$8,300 in client gift certificates were redeemed, reflecting the store's ongoing commitment to affordability, respect, and community connection.

Vicky's Values is powered by a team of 5 committed staff members and the incredible support of more than 100 volunteers. Their passion, dedication, and wide range of talents are instrumental to the store's continued success. Throughout 2025–26, operational improvements were implemented to enhance efficiency and strengthen profitability. Additional special events were introduced to further connect with the community, alongside the launch of a dedicated Instagram page that expanded our reach to new online audiences.

Looking ahead, we are excited to continue growing and engaging the community through new initiatives such as the Upcycling Inspiration Challenge, which encourages people to “think thrift” by transforming potential landfill items into creative new pieces. We are also pleased to now offer Nevada Break-Open tickets at Vicky's Values, providing another fun and engaging way to connect with customers while generating additional funds to support Women's Resources programs and services.

To our volunteers, customers and supporters, we appreciate everything you do! **THANK YOU!**

Holly Medeiros
Fund Development Manager

Kelly Stockdale
Vicky's Values Operations Supervisor



Vicky's Surplus Sale
July 2026



Vicky's Upcycle Event
April 2026

VICKY'S
VALUES
THRIFT BOUTIQUE

Tuesday - Saturday, 10:00am - 4:00pm
50 Mary St. W., Lindsay, ON.



Donations gratefully accepted
at the purple donation door
Tuesday - Saturday, 10:00am - 2:00pm

  vickysvalues

Women's Resources **Milestones**

1983

Women's Resources began when local women recognized the need for community awareness and education around the issue of woman abuse.

1990

Successful in receiving funding for an 18-bed shelter.

1992

Victoria's 18-bed shelter and 24 hour crisis line for abused women and their children opens, the first in our community.

1993

Community Outreach and Vicky's Values Gently Used Clothing Store opens.

2000

Child Witness Program and Community Support Program begins.

2005

Vicky's Values Gently Used Clothing Store relocates to 50 Mary St. W. in Lindsay.

2007

Women's Resources instrumental in the start up of the Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton Domestic Violence Co-ordinating Committee to provide an integrated service response for abused women.

2019

Women's Resources celebrates 30 years of providing services and support to the community.

2022

Purchase of 30 Logie Street in Lindsay for relocation of Second Stage Housing.

2023

30th Anniversary of Vicky's Values. Open the Door Capital Campaign launched to support the Logie Street Second Stage Housing Project.

2024

Open House Second Stage Housing, Lori's Place, 30 Logie Street, Lindsay

2025

Lori Watson retires on June 30, 2025 after 30 years as ED. Penny Chatson, having been with WR for 25 years, is chosen as incoming ED.

2026

Negotiations completed and finalized for our first collective agreement.

WR

