



# COMING INTO OUR OWN GIRLSPACE CELEBRATES SIX YEARS “IT’S MORE FUN EVERY YEAR.”

That’s Shiri MacPherson’s assessment of YWCA Yellowknife’s GIRLSPACE program. Fourteen-year old Shiri has been a participant all six years it has been offered. “The girls are like a family, we have so much fun together,” says Shiri, now in the senior group.

Shiri’s mom, Sheila MacPherson, is as enthusiastic about GIRLSPACE as her daughter is. “It’s a forum for girls to talk openly and candidly in a way they may not at school or even at home about all kinds of topics,” she says. “I see the learning experiences stick and resonate through Shiri’s life. I wish they had it when I was growing up!”

GIRLSPACE offers girls opportunities to talk about the challenges they face as they grow up, in a safe, supportive, girl-only environment. No question is too dumb, no situation too embarrassing to talk about with other girls, and the co-ordinator, Ashley MacDonald, a registered social worker. Groups meet weekly during the school year: junior (ages 9 to 10), intermediate (ages 11 to 13) and senior (ages 14 to 17).

The program works, according to an evaluation published in 2014 by the primary funder, the Canadian Women’s Foundation. Girls reported gains in self-confidence, critical thinking, connectedness and their school experience. In a word, the girls are more resilient.

Parents were similarly impressed. They rated program staff, the girls-only membership and the supportive environment created as the key reasons for the program’s success.

GIRLSPACE follows a curriculum developed by YWCA Canada. Tucked in between the fun and friendships is some serious business. Girls discuss their hyper-sexualization in the media, how puberty changes their bodies and how to keep themselves safe from bullies, among other topics. But there’s more to GIRLSPACE than talking: girls are physically active, cook and make crafts, and volunteer their time to community organizations.

Take, for example, the Canadian Cancer Society’s annual Relay for Life. Shiri is a cancer survivor. Her relay team has partnered with GIRLSPACE, and the results have been inspiring. Not only did the team raise over \$5,000 in 2015, but over the years the team has forged strong bonds. “These are tough years and to see them taking action and sharing is very remarkable,” says Shiri’s mom, Sheila.

Now Shiri is giving back by getting involved in the new Y MENTORS program. She’s a junior mentor to a group of girls ages 11 to 13, along with an adult. “GIRLSPACE and Ashley inspired me to take this on. It’s part of the great circle of life where I can provide support for kids who really need the support,” she says.

Y MENTORS provides more individual attention for girls. Groups meet once every two weeks and are in email contact in between. The introductory Y MENTORS meet and greet for the new school year will take place on September 22 at 6 pm at YWCA Rockhill (4904-54 Ave.) Girls who want to be mentored, as well as youth and adults who want to mentor are welcome to come and ask questions.

Meanwhile, Shiri is going in to Grade 10 at Sir John Franklin High School, and she’s ready for more GIRLSPACE. “I’m looking forward to seeing everyone, and learning new things from Ashley, and having new adventures,” she says. ■



## ANNUAL REPORT 2014–2015

# YWCA YELLOWKNIFE

**ANNUAL MEETING**  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19,  
2015 at 11AM

NORTHERN UNITED PLACE  
ROOM 205

*Parking available at Lynn's Place.*

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MESSAGE FROM THE

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND PRESIDENT *Lyda Fuller and Yasemin Heyck*

# WOMEN & GIRLS EMPOWERED...

YWCA Yellowknife made a decision to invest in girls six years ago — and it might be one of the best things we ever did.

We were — and still are — concerned about the impact of our hyper-sexualized environment on girls. The message to them is clear: their value is tied to their physical appearance. When, inevitably, they don't live up to these impossible standards, they lose confidence and self-esteem. They can become lonely and isolated despite the best efforts of helpful and loving adults.

As young women, they may end up in our family violence programs. The biggest user group, by age, of Sutherland House in Fort Smith, is women ages 25 to 29. The same is true at Alison McAteer House in Yellowknife. In both shelters, they report psychological and emotional abuse more often than physical abuse. Violence against young women is pervasive and deeply entrenched.

We were motivated to provide programming that would help prevent girls from becoming our clients as young women. We wanted to provide a girls-only space where they could discuss their lives and experience, questions and worries, in a safe and caring environment. GIRLSPACE provides this, once a week, after school and free of charge.

A 2014 evaluation by our major GIRLSPACE funder, the Canadian Women's Foundation, shows that GIRLSPACE works. Using a survey before the groups started and when they ended, girls reported gains in self-confidence and related "protective factors" such as feeling good about being a girl, and feeling confident in their strengths and skills. Most girls also reported that they were more likely to avoid risky behaviors than when they started the program.

In the same evaluation, parents also gave the program high marks for delivering on its goals. They noted the same gains in self-confidence that the girls reported. One parent said, "The candid and open forum for discussing girls' issues has been amazing for her. I see her blossom and grow in confidence and self-esteem every day and this program is a HUGE part of that."

We've taken the next step in supporting girls by introducing a group mentoring program. Y MENTORS begins its second year this month, bringing girls ages 11 to 13 together with an older girl and an adult as mentors. It is so satisfying to know that GIRLSPACE girls like Shiri MacPherson (profiled on the front page) is now mentoring younger girls. There's a sense of the program coming full circle.

Our work with girls, with the family violence shelter and transitional housing comes together in our new mission statement, *Women and girls empowered in safe and equitable communities*. Girls helping girls, and women helping women, that's what YWCA Yellowknife is all about. ■

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## A DREAM BECOMES REALITY WHEN LYNN'S PLACE OPENS

YWCA Yellowknife welcomed single women and women with children to 18 new housing units in 2014, providing some much-needed relief for the daunting waiting list for singles and family housing.

The building located on 54 Street across from Aurora College was known as Betty House during construction. It opened with a new name, Lynn's Place, honoring family violence activist Lynn Brooks.

"Lynn's life embodies our hope for this building, that women will be able to turn their troubled past into lives of strength and independence," says YWCA Yellowknife executive director Lyda Fuller.

Lynn reflected on overcoming her own troubled beginnings and her hopes for the new building in an inspiring speech delivered at the grand opening on September 26. To read the speech, go to [www.ywcanwt.ca/sites/default/files/jan2015newsletter.pdf](http://www.ywcanwt.ca/sites/default/files/jan2015newsletter.pdf)

"The public support for Lynn's Place is tremendous and we are so grateful," says Fuller. Generous donors bought beds, tables and chairs, living room furniture, pots and pans, small appliances and finishing touches to furnish the suites. Service clubs, workplace teams and neighbors assembled beds, stocked cupboards and made the suites ready for tenants.

Lynn's Place includes six bed-sitting rooms for singles with a shared kitchen, 10 two-bedroom apartments and two three-bedroom apartments. Rents are set using CMHC affordability guidelines.

"Lynn's Place fills an important gap on the housing continuum in Yellowknife where safety is as important a need as a home," Fuller says.

Housing staff anticipated the building would fill quickly and it did. The demand for accommodation for single women is overwhelming because there is nothing else like it that's both safe and affordable.

The manager and family support worker at Lynn's Place offer support and programming to tenants, to help them stabilize their families and eventually move into either public housing or the private market.

While it's too early to talk about results, it's clear that Lynn's Place occupies an important spot on the housing continuum. ■

## FINDING THE WAY: NEW LEGAL RESOURCE AVAILABLE TO HELP WOMEN MOVE OUT OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

There has been strong demand from professionals to YWCA Yellowknife's new legal resource manual published in early April. Books from a second printing are now available for distribution free of charge to people who work with women experiencing family violence.

The new book is called *Legal Pathways – Spousal Violence in the NWT: A Resource for Women*. Author Lani Cooke reviews the laws in place to protect women and children from family violence. Legal Pathways also includes information about the resources available to women who are ready to move out of family violence.

"Women have legal options like emergency protection orders that will keep the abuser out of the home for 90 days, as well as long-term and permanent ways to deal with family violence," says Cooke.

Legal Pathways includes chapters on child protection, family law, criminal justice, housing and income support as well as a complete list of resources. Each chapter has been reviewed by the relevant service provider to ensure information is accurate.

"Our hope is to get Legal Pathways into as many hands as possible as well as having it available online," says Cooke. For more information, go to <http://www.ywcanwt.ca/family-violence/legal-pathways>

"Women who experience family violence are not alone. There is help available from family violence shelters like our Alison McAteer House in Yellowknife and Sutherland House in Fort Smith, along with the RCMP, victim service workers, lawyers and advocates," says YWCA Yellowknife executive director Lyda Fuller. "Family violence is not normal."

Funding for Legal Pathways was provided by the NWT Law Foundation and the Victims Assistance Fund. If you would like hard copy of the book, please order one through [giving@ywcanwt.ca](mailto:giving@ywcanwt.ca) ■

# YWCA PROGRAMS

## CHILD AND YOUTH SERVICES

### AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

Yellowknife offers a licensed, fee-for-service afterschool program for children ages 5 to 10 years old. The program is available at every school in Yellowknife from class dismissal until 5:45 p.m. The cost is \$280 per child, with discounts available if there are multiple children registered from the same family. YWCA Yellowknife also offers additional hours of programming for professional development days and March break. Each program is staffed by a qualified adult, assisted by a high school student. More spaces have been added at every school for the 2015-16 school year. For more information, go to [ywcanwt.ca/after\\_school.html](http://www.ywcanwt.ca/after_school.html) ■

### CHILD RESILIENCE

(formerly Project Child Recovery)

CHILD RESILIENCE is a proactive program that promotes healthy coping strategies for children who witness abuse. CHILD RESILIENCE ensures children and youth who have experienced violence will receive the support and services they need. YWCA Yellowknife offers age appropriate, supportive peer group sessions delivered by a social worker to address common concerns and promote choices that are non-violent. It is a free program accessible for youth ages 6 to 14 through YWCA and partner agencies, such as schools. In 2014-15, CHILD RESILIENCE was generously supported by RBC Children's Mental Health Project and by Green Shield Canada. To learn more, go to [www.ywcanwt.ca/projectchildrecovery.html](http://www.ywcanwt.ca/projectchildrecovery.html) ■

### GIRLSPACE

This free program provides a unique opportunity for girls to get together for fun, friendship and support. They discuss the issues they face day to day as girls. Groups meet weekly during the school year and are facilitated by a registered social worker. In 2014-15, there was one junior group (8 to 10 years old), two intermediate groups (ages 11-13), one senior group (ages 14-17) and a school group at William McDonald middle school with a total of 61 participants. GIRLSPACE also offered workshops through the summer. Note that in 2015-16, GIRLSPACE junior groups will include only 9 and 10 year olds. GIRLSPACE programming is generously supported by the Canadian Women's Foundation, the GNWT and United Way NWT. For more information, go to [www.ywcanwt.ca/children-and-youth/girlspace](http://www.ywcanwt.ca/children-and-youth/girlspace) or see the article on the front page of this report. ■



### Y MENTORS

This new program provides small group mentoring for girls ages 11 to 13. Participants get individual attention from older girls (ages 14 to 17) and adults. Together they work on social, personal and academic development. The groups meet every two weeks for two hour activities and stay in touch by email between meetings. Adult mentors are vetted and training is provided. In its first year, Y MENTORS had seven mentors and 21 mentees. A new season of Y MENTORS begins with a meet and greet on September 22 at 6 pm at YWCA Rockhill (4904 54 Ave). Y MENTORS is supported by the Canadian Women's Foundation. For more information, go to [www.ywcanwt.ca/children-and-youth/y-mentors](http://www.ywcanwt.ca/children-and-youth/y-mentors) ■



## FAMILY VIOLENCE PROGRAMS

### ALISON MCATEER HOUSE

Spousal violence is a persistent problem in the NWT, occurring at nine times the national average, according to Statistics Canada. It's not a surprise that the 12-bed Alison McAteer House family violence shelter is often full, so full that women are occasionally turned away. In 2014-15, Alison McAteer was home to 120 women and 96 children, with most clients staying less than a month. Women most often reported being abused emotionally or psychologically by their partner. Physical abuse and financial abuse are also common complaints. Staff at Alison McAteer House answered over 1,500 crisis line calls and assisted 59 women to apply for emergency protection orders. When granted by the court, emergency protection orders keep abusers away for up to 90 days. For more information, go to [www.ywcanwt.ca/family-violence/alison-mcateer-house](http://www.ywcanwt.ca/family-violence/alison-mcateer-house) ■

### SUTHERLAND HOUSE

YWCA Yellowknife began operating Sutherland House family violence shelter in Fort Smith in October 2014 at the invitation of the local health authority. Sutherland House is an eight-bed shelter that provides both safety from violence and emergency housing for women. In 2014-15, 114 women and 81 children stayed at Sutherland House. Women most often reported psychological and emotional abuse from a partner or relative, followed by physical abuse and being unable to find housing as the reason they needed services. On average, they stayed one to four weeks. Sutherland House operates a 24-hour crisis line that fielded almost 400 calls last year. For more information, go to [www.ywcanwt.ca/family-violence/sutherland-house-fort-smith](http://www.ywcanwt.ca/family-violence/sutherland-house-fort-smith) ■



## HOUSING PROGRAMS

### FAMILY HOUSING PROGRAM AT ROCKHILL

YWCA Yellowknife offers emergency and transitional housing to families who would otherwise be homeless, living in overcrowded or unsafe conditions, or split up because of a lack of space. In the last fiscal year, 27 families lived in the short-term emergency units, while 37 lived in the transitional suites. Demand for this affordable, staff-supported housing is strong, with the waiting list topping 100 families through the winter. The family housing program is supported by the GNWT and Dominion Diamond Ekati Corporation. For more information go to [www.ywcanwt.ca/temporary-housing/rockhill](http://www.ywcanwt.ca/temporary-housing/rockhill) ■

### WOMEN'S SAFE HOUSING AT LYNN'S PLACE

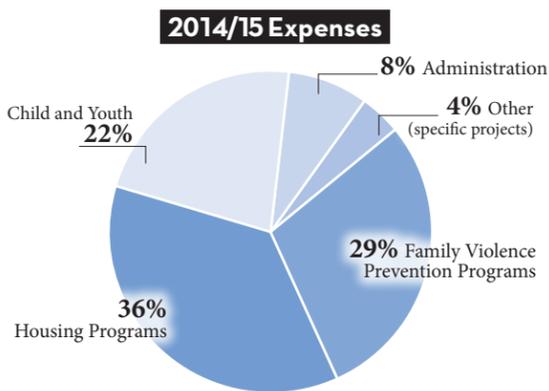
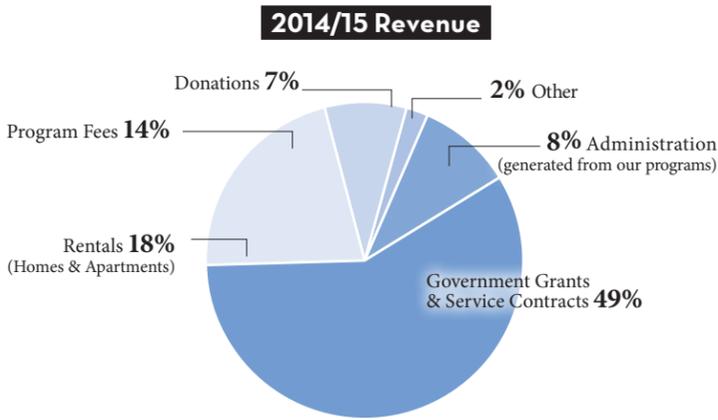
Lynn's Place is an 18-unit building that provides safety for women, and women with children, who have experienced family violence. It is not an emergency shelter like Alison McAteer House, but transitional housing where tenants pay rent. Residents are welcome to stay until their circumstances improve. Lynn's Place began taking tenants in October 2014. Since then a total of 29 women and 32 children have called the building home. Of those, 11 people have already moved on to public housing in Yellowknife, or back to their home community. Programming at Lynn's Place is supported by the GNWT. For more information, go to [www.ywcanwt.ca/temporary-housing/lynn-place](http://www.ywcanwt.ca/temporary-housing/lynn-place) and see the article on the previous page. ■





## REVENUE AND EXPENSES

Audited financial statements will be available at the annual meeting on September 19 at 11 am in Room 205 at Northern United Place. Parking is available at Lynn's Place.



Member of Imagine Canada's Ethical Code program. The program ensures the highest standards of accountability and transparency.

## YES! I WANT TO HELP YWCA YELLOWKNIFE CONTINUE TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF NORTHERN WOMEN AND FAMILIES

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## LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING ONGOING

In last year's annual report, we described housing availability for low-income people as gridlock, and little has changed in the last 12 months.

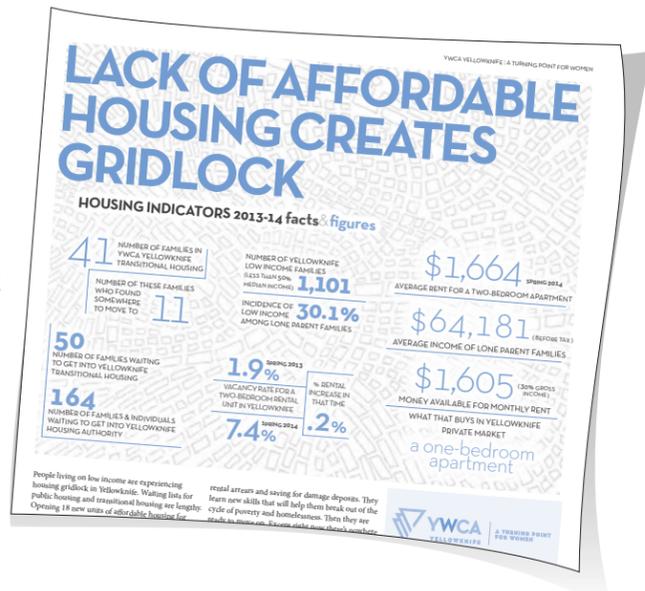
Families remain stuck on the housing continuum, finding it difficult to leave one housing type for another because of high cost and limited availability. A total of 13 families moved out of YWCA Rockhill's emergency units to live with other, long-term housing providers. An additional 12 families moved out of the transitional housing suites, half to the private market, and half to public housing.

Sadly, waiting lists for affordable housing are still lengthy. The addition of 55 units to the Yellowknife Housing Authority's (YHA) stock enabled them to bring their waiting list down from 164 to 152. The YHA list includes almost one hundred single people. They are lower priority for public housing than families and their wait times are exceptionally long.

The addition of 18 units of safe and affordable housing at Lynn's Place opened up six new bed-sitting rooms for single women and 12 apartments for families. Lynn's Place filled up quickly and now maintains its own waiting list. Meanwhile, at YWCA Rockhill, the waiting list for the family housing is so long, housing staff are overwhelmed by the need. They could fill another building the size of Rockhill (31 suites for rent) immediately.

In the private market, CMHC has reported a decline in the vacancy rate for a two-bedroom apartment in Yellowknife from 7.4 per cent to 2.8 per cent. Rents for the two-bedroom units have increased \$18 per month in the last year.

In short, affordable housing needs continue to outstrip the supply. With elections on the horizon for all three levels of public government, ask the candidates who come to your door how they will to work toward a solution. ■



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