

Driven to Overcome

Annual Report

2023-24

Child
Witness
Centre



Our Vision

Building resiliency and creating strong futures with children, youth, and their families in our communities.

Our Mission

Child Witness Centre provides caring and compassionate support, education, and advocacy for children, youth, and their families in our communities as they journey through the criminal justice system.

Our Values

At Child Witness Centre, we are a team of compassionate and diverse members who utilize trauma-informed practices to provide tailored support to children, youth, and their families.

We are guided by the following values in all the work that we do: inclusivity, integrity, collaboration, respect, and resiliency.



2023-24 Fiscal Year

1,011 Children and Youth
+ 793 Parents and Caregivers
= **1,804 Total Supported**

Together, we are changing the lives of young victims – their trauma is reduced and futures are brighter!

“Thank you for helping me realize the power and courage I had within.”

— **Client**

2023-24 Board of Directors

Child Witness Centre is led by a diverse group of individuals whose dedication and guidance is outstanding! Thank you for bringing your passion, insights, experience, and resources to keep our mission going strong.

Officers

Bernadette Behm (Chair)
Tomas Blazejowski (Vice-Chair)
Ryan Selves (Treasurer)
Paula Fecteau (Secretary)

Directors

Kendra Abraham	Matthew Demarte	Reid Pridham
Mallory Allan	Nicole Dietz	Dianne Romano
Lisa DeBaets	Lisa Goertz	Alice Schmidt Hanbidge
Alexis De Leon	Danny Joseph	Chris Warden

Board Chair Message

Our 2023-24 year certainly brought about a lot of change at Child Witness Centre. We were able to accomplish some important Strategic Plan goals despite significant changes in staffing.

In the area of organizational development, our agency invested in training and initiatives on the path to our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) goals. With a mindset of reconciliation, we underwent Indigenous training with Sixties Scoop Network facilitators. We also used a grant to better examine our role in the 94 Calls to Action and updated our space by bringing in Indigenous art, as well as Indigenous activities and books for our clients.



Bernadette Behm
Board Chair

Indeed, we are moving towards instilling a more just environment in our wraparound services. Our take-aways from our Indigenous training and our successful secondments with Coalition of Muslim Women helped us realize many of our EDI goals. These learnings

have been transferable to better serving many of the marginalized populations we support.

A major challenge we face is receiving adequate funding to meet the critical needs of local young victims and their families. A growth in federal and provincial funding has helped with our continued economic recovery. Our 1,000 Challenge launch has helped to raise awareness that the average cost of supporting each child for a year is \$1,000. Mid-year, we launched a five-year Child Victims Can't Wait campaign to raise \$2.5 million, in striving to wipe out our waitlist. \$211,400 was raised toward this goal this fiscal year.

Our Governance Committee has worked to ensure we meet new requirements of the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act. This included updating our bylaws, governance policy, and articles of amendment.

We have overcome many challenges and look forward to what the new fiscal year brings. We are committed to serving our most vulnerable when they need it most.

*We are Overcoming Battles
& Pushing Forward for Kids*

Executive Director Message

As a former child victim and witness, I know what it is like to walk through the judicial process without any support. That is why I joined Child Witness Centre in June 2023 and advocate so strongly for our work.

We are incredibly grateful to have a dedicated team of staff, partners, and volunteers, who work tirelessly to provide wraparound care and support to break the cycle of abuse and trauma for so many families. This is done by recognizing each client's needs and offering resources best suited for their age and developmental stage. This maximizes the likelihood of their successful outcome and ability to thrive once again.

We supported over one thousand young victims in



Robin Heald
Executive Director

Waterloo Region, Guelph, and Wellington County this past fiscal year. The gap between sustainable funding and the growing need in victim services continues to grow and has reached a funding crisis for our organization that has resulted in our continued waitlist that started in 2022.

The waitlist did improve considerably this year – starting at 180 children, and ending at 122. Grants and year-end funding allocations helped in moving this along and allowed us to begin de-siloing our frontline program staff. The ability to add to our staffing capacity through much needed grants increased the number of clients we were able to support effectively, and provide continuity of care.

Coordinated lobbying for government funding brought us 53% of our total revenue coming from all levels of government. Less than half of that is annually allotted funding with the remainder competitively allotted – where we compete with other deserving organizations for those funding dollars. Our goal is moving our allotted annual government revenue to 50%, with the remainder raised through competitive grants and community support. There are great efficiencies found in sustainable funding, as we strive to make plans and have our greatest impact.

As a local charity, we simply cannot do it alone. Thank you for your support so we can be there for all young victims and make our community stronger and healthier for everyone.

Driven to Make an Impact for Local Kids

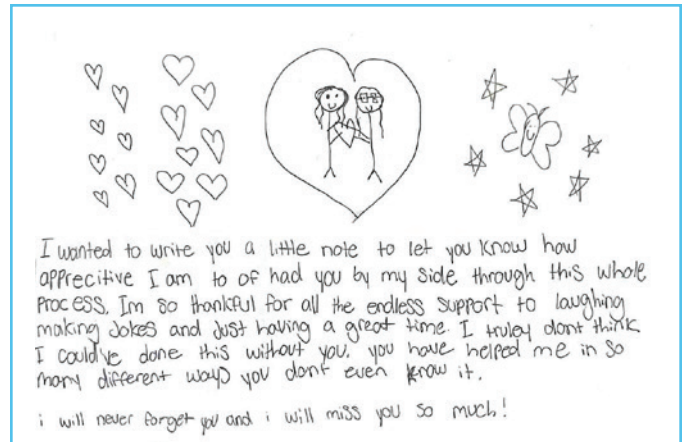
Statistics show child victims are far more likely to face a host of negative outcomes in life, including mental health issues, addictions, homelessness, violence, and more. But when we support them through the criminal justice system, their trajectory becomes brighter. They form healthier relationships, stay in school, reach greater career success, and more.

From our Frontline

"I completed trial proceedings with a client who had a lot of anxiety and fears about court. Seeing her transformation over the year and a half, from the beginning of the process to the end, was an honour. Not only did her confidence grow, but the anxiety she had about going through trial disappeared. Once trial was over, she wrote me a note (*shown at right*) thanking me for being by her side through this process and supporting her. Being there for our clients during some of their most difficult times and knowing we are a positive light and influence in their life is the biggest reward and inspiration." – **Sadiya** | System Navigator

"I prepped and supported an adolescent through a preliminary hearing a year before we finally went through the trial together. When the youth got done testifying, they asked me if it was bad that they were going to miss this. I asked them to explain a little more. They said they wouldn't miss court and dealing with the charges, but would miss having somewhere to go and someone to talk to who they felt comfortable with and accepted by." – **Krista** | Caseworker

"I recently supported a teenager who needed to know she was heard and believed even though charges were not laid against her accused. I provided affirmation so she knew she was strong and did the right thing by speaking up. My hope is her better understanding of healthy boundaries will be a protective factor for her going forward in life." – **Munazza** | System Navigator



"You do a great job helping people going through hard times, who are unsure of next steps, and need someone to hear them. Thank you for everything. It really meant a lot to my family having you behind us!"

— Parent of Client



"The work done by the Child Witness Centre and agency partners is instrumental in providing services that assist in providing comfort to victims, witnesses, and families. The Waterloo Regional Police Service is proud to partner with the Child Witness Centre to ensure children and youth who have been impacted by the trauma of abuse and crime are able to feel safe and supported."

Mark Crowell | Chief of Police, Waterloo Regional Police Service

Child & Youth Advocacy Centre of Waterloo Region (CYAC)

We are proudly the lead agency in this child and youth friendly collaborative, providing wraparound support under one roof. This collaboration ensures a wholistic experience for clients – and builds a broader focus around child abuse in our community. The time and talents invested by our partners at the CYAC is greatly appreciated. It was also exciting to see the number of partners grow during this past year, to expand our impact.

Within this co-located facility, the strong multidisciplinary team supported **948** children and youth involved in **651** investigations this past year. **365** of them received support from one of our System Navigators.

Growing Impact

Through Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada funding, we are better serving the growing number of gender-based violence victims we are seeing. We have taken steps to expand our support to parents of intimate partner violence and their children who are witnesses. In seeking to be part of the solution to these issues, we have become a proud member of the Family Violence Project. There is great strength in working with these partners, in our defined roles.



To provide greater trauma-informed support to racialized communities, our staff has become more equipped through secondments, training, and partnerships. Having team members who speak different languages and a strong understanding of cultural qualities has been hugely beneficial.



At an Indigenous Partners Knowledge Sharing Day we held (pictured above), we learned more about vital supports available to local Indigenous children, youth, and families. We also discussed intersections of our programs and how we can enhance our services for greater effectiveness in the community.

Best Practice Model

The 8th Annual National Meeting for Child Advocacy Centres took place in Ottawa in February 2024. Four members of our wraparound team, along with professionals from 39 other centres, gained invaluable insights on evidence-based best practices for serving victims of crime. How to better meet equity, diversity, and inclusion goals was a large theme.



A CYAC training manual that will be used throughout Canada is underway, and we have been happy to participate in its development. This best practice tool will assist with training all new staff in CYACs. It is exciting to see the momentum across our country to better help young victims and to come together in creating resources for all.

We are exploring with our partners the qualities of a new CYAC location that would better meet the needs of our ever-expanding collaborative in the future. The space crisis that all of our wraparound partners are feeling has led us to visit exemplary models such as the Peel Region Safe Centre. Together, we are leveraging the experience of those that have come before us in other regions to help us create an ideal vision of a new space.



Child & Youth Advocacy Centre

WATERLOO REGION

Our Partners at the CYAC



Kitchener Crown Attorney's Office



Critical Help for Young Victims

This past year, we supported **1,011** children and youth who were victims or witnesses of abuse or crime, along with **793** caregivers. This helped them experience healing and resiliency to overcome many difficulties they faced. Unfortunately, **318** young people had to spend time on our waitlist – and some of them did not receive support at all.

Far too many young people are hurt and harmed here in our communities! Were you aware that:

- On average, **nearly 12** children and youth become our new clients every week (doesn't include waitlist).
- For decades, **1 in 10** children reported their abuse. But the "Me Too" movement has increased the number of children who report abuse to **1 in 7**.
- No one else does the work we do – which would leave young victims to fall through the cracks.
- The earlier that trauma-informed care is provided, the better the outcome of the young victim.

We are committed to walking with local child and youth victims and witnesses through the criminal justice system. Our services are provided at no cost because no barrier should exist to receive support.



When young victims receive our trauma-informed services, they are provided with specialized support to better navigate their journey. They are given the necessary tools, resources, and community connections to strengthen their mental health and healing journey for improved long-term outcomes.

Enhancing our Client Services

We're evolving our frontline staff by transitioning some of them to become System Navigators. In this new hybrid-style role, they are equipped to support clients through both criminal investigations and court proceedings (rather than solely one or the other).

We also added an Intake Worker to our frontline staffing roster, resulting in better service for our clients on the waitlist. The Intake Worker provides one-on-one support tailored to their needs. Consistent and regular check-ins provides them the opportunity to further process their feelings about their involvement in the court process, builds better working relationships with our staff, and provides better outcomes.



Monet gifted our clients and team with another phenomenal year at Child Witness Centre. She joined our team in March 2020 as an accredited facility dog and became the first working dog in criminal court in Waterloo Region. A facility dog fulfills what research identifies was a missing link in supporting the mental and emotional health of young victims of crime.

With the success of Monet, we are delighted to have started the application for a facility dog at the CYAC! This will undoubtedly bolster our services to clients and the wellbeing of our CYAC staff and partners.



 [Follow Monet on Instagram @nsdmonetthefacilitydog](https://www.instagram.com/nsdmonetthefacilitydog)



Young people from racialized communities are increasingly coming into our services. We have built a strong partnership with Coalition of Muslim Women of Kitchener-Waterloo, seconding two of their staff, both of whom have now become employees of Child Witness Centre. These staff speak a variety of languages and diversify our staff to better reflect the cultural background of our client base. They have been of huge benefit to our clients, our wraparound team, and other partners. We have been able to enhance our internal understanding and capacity of working with racialized and equity seeking communities and are applying these learnings to expand our partnerships with even more marginalized groups.

Indigenous trauma-informed training by the Sixties Scoop Network was a priceless investment of our time. We underwent two days of powerful training which was made possible by a grant from the Department of Justice Canada to better serve Indigenous clients. Our team and several partner organizations benefitted with knowledge on Indigenous history in Canada, intergenerational trauma, physiology of trauma, and how to better foster healing. We look forward to continuing on this journey of reconciliation.



Breaking the Cycle of Hurt and Pain

Victims of crime are either entering this cycle for the first time or circling through the cycle repeatedly during their lifetime and sometimes for many generations. With adequate services, we can break the cycle of trauma for each client that we serve by recognizing their individual needs and offering a variety of resources suited to their age and developmental stage. This maximizes the likelihood of their successful outcome and ability to thrive again.



Out and About in the Community



Campaigns

Launch of Major Campaign to Overcome our Waitlist

Not being able to support kids from the moment they need help is devastating because gaps in our



services have serious consequences for them. The primary goal of our “Child Victims Can’t Wait” campaign is to overcome our waitlist, so that no child in crisis has to wait for our support. To do that, we need to raise \$2.5 million over the next five years.



It was wonderful kicking off this campaign in tandem with our annual **Holiday Campaign** with an **Open House** at our main office on Giving Tuesday (November 28).



We really appreciate the excellent quantity and quality of media coverage we received, which led to more support – including new donors.

It was amazing to receive **over \$100,000** during November and December of 2023 alone.

This included \$20,000 in donations being matched by William Knell & Company Limited. **Thank you** for providing more kids with vital support.

“Hope for Child Victims”

Tomas Blazejowski, Board Vice-Chair, ran a year-end peer-to-peer fundraiser for the second year in a row. He raised **\$9,070** from 62 thoughtful donors. This means Tomas has raised **\$21,855** in two years!



Spring Appeal

Over \$13,000 was raised by our annual Spring Appeal campaign in 2023. We are grateful for the generosity of every single donor! Our sincere appreciation to Josslin Insurance and Septimatech for your large gifts which helped to meet our fundraising goal for kids.

Volunteers

We feel incredibly fortunate for the gifts of time and talent each and every one of our volunteers brings to our organization. This includes serving on our Board, landscaping, building maintenance, administrative tasks, supporting events, and much more!

Shown at right: Dennis Koebel and Nelu Banda volunteered to paint at the CYAC. These three rooms are the spaces we use most there when meeting with children and youth, and their caregivers, during criminal investigations. Along with these rooms, Dennis and Nelu went above and beyond by painting two hallways, two interview rooms, and another room that is used by Family & Children’s Services of the Waterloo Region and Waterloo Regional Police Service.



The genuine care and support of our volunteers for young victims is **deeply appreciated!** Discover how you can volunteer at childwitness.com/volunteer-with-us.

Events

2024 Pancake Lunch

It was amazing to welcome **over 425** guests at St. George Banquet Hall on Shrove Tuesday (February 13, 2024). We are grateful **over \$56,500** was raised to support child victims.

It is because of the generous people in our community that the 26th annual edition of our signature fundraising event was incredibly successful. This includes everyone who sponsored, purchased tickets, donated, and bought silent auction items and books. **Thank You!**

Special thanks to Angie Hill of Bounce 99.5 for being our emcee and SagePath Consulting Ltd. for being our media sponsor. We are also thankful for the support of Septimatech and Waterloo IT, as our top event sponsors.



Fundraising Events Hosted by Supporters

We greatly appreciate everyone involved in making these events happen! You have made more of a difference than you know. Vital funds were raised to help more kids and families in need. And more people became aware of the issues we're overcoming together!



Elmira Maple Syrup Festival (Grant Disbursement Evening)

\$1,000 in June 2023



Springfield Golf Club's 3rd Annual Charity Tournament

\$15,602 in July 2023



Widows Sons Grand River Chapter's 3rd Annual Charity Ride

\$4,680 in August 2023



IBEW Local 804 Charity Golf Tournament

\$1,845 in September 2023



Kitchener Conestoga Rotary Club Inaugural Charity Golf Tournament

\$18,323.28 in September 2023



17th Annual Elvis Birthday Show (run by Shon Carroll)

\$4,625 in January 2024

Community Generosity

Waterloo District Masons

The Waterloo District Masons provided amazing support for our mission over the past few years! In total, we received **\$18,250** to serve child victims and their families!

We are so grateful that Phil Munroe (*third from right in photo*) chose Child Witness Centre to be the district's supported charity during his term as District Deputy Grand Master (DDGM). The funds were raised through golf tournaments, curling bonspiels, euchre parties, official lodge visits by the DDGM, and more! The Masonic Foundation of Ontario gave additional financial support for an even greater impact.



Waterloo District Masonic Golf Tournament 2023
One of Many Ways Funds were Raised

Our heartfelt thanks to Phil, the district lodges, and the foundation, for all your hard work and generosity! You have transformed at least 18 young lives and made our entire community stronger for decades to come.

Generous Contributions

Here are more examples of incredible support from our community. Every gift makes a big difference towards bringing hope, healing, and a stronger tomorrow.



**Sigma Chi Fraternity:
Derby Days Fundraiser**
\$4,300 in April 2023



**University of Waterloo
REC 356: Fall Cafe**
\$253.45 in November 2023



**Cambridge Highlands
Lions Club Donation**
\$1,000 in December 2023



**Woodhouse Group: Larry Kelly
Christmas Toy Drive**
Wonderful gifts in December 2023



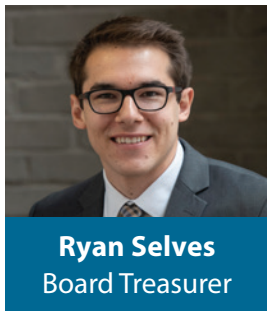
**Optimist Club of Stanley Park
Donation**
\$10,000 in February 2024



**Kyle Weatherall (Brenda & Dave
Walden Family Foundation)**
\$13,500 in March 2024

Our Community Can Overcome Every Challenge!

2023-24 Financial Summary



Treasurer's Report

Child Witness Centre finished our 2023-24 year in a strong financial position, despite the current tough economic climate. We were successful in receiving more competitive government funding through various project work aimed at enhancing our services to child victims and their families. In October 2023, we also started a 5-year \$2.5 million Child Victims Can't Wait pledge campaign to support local victimized young people now and into the future, so we can wipe out our waitlist and meet the growing demand. With your help, we raised \$211,400 this past fiscal year.

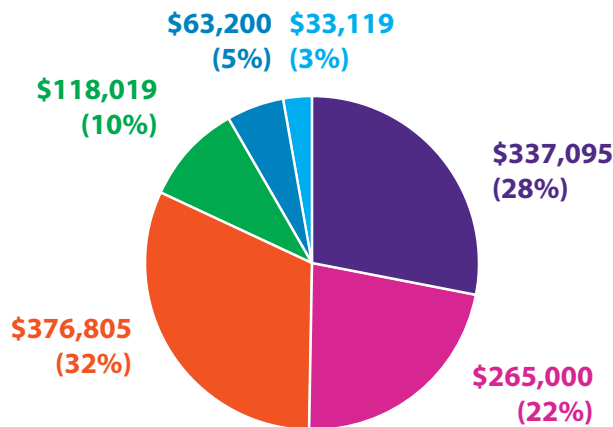
We want to express our deep gratitude to the community we passionately serve for the incredible support you provided this past year and over our 42-year history. We can only do the vital work we do with the generous giving of our donors and funders. In kind support from organizations like Waterloo IT also holds tremendous value – every dollar saved is a dollar gained. Together, we are truly making a difference.

As always, we want to extend our thanks to all levels of government, United Way Waterloo Region Communities, and United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin, for supporting our organization along with other local charitable organizations, that are so important to the collective health and wellbeing of our community.

We are focused on ensuring the financial support we receive is being used effectively to support the overwhelming number of children and families in dire need of our services.

This financial summary shares some highlights and information from our 2023-24 audited financial statements. Complete financial statements are available on our website (childwitness.com/annual-financial-reports).

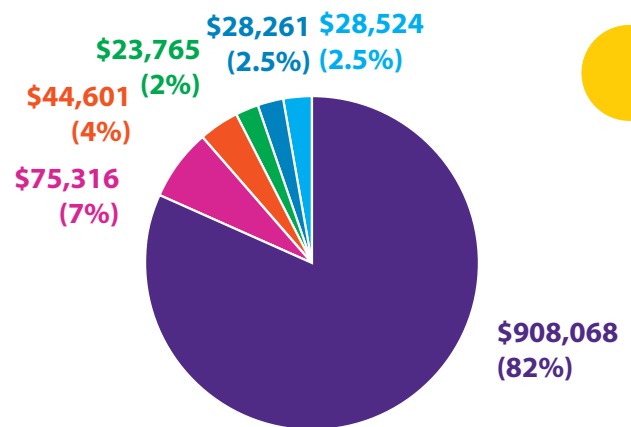
Revenue



Total Revenue: \$1,193,238

- Community Donations
- Government Funding (Annual)
- Government Funding (Competitively Allocated)
- Fundraising Events
- United Way
- Other

Expenses



Total Expenses: \$1,108,535

- Staffing
- Facility Expenses
- Administrative Expenses
- Amortization
- Direct Program Expenses
- Resource Development & Marketing



Certain funding is provided by the Ontario Ministry of Attorney General. Views expressed in the publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Province.

Change

Advocate

Push

Partner

Grow

Champion

Endure

Persevere

Reach

Persist

Thank You for Supporting Local Kids!

Child
Witness
Centre



Charitable registration # 10097 7180 RR0001

111 Duke Street East, Kitchener, ON N2H 1A4

Tel: 519-744-0904 | Toll-free: 1-888-544-0904

Fax: 519-744-5379 | admin@childwitness.com

childwitness.com

