



# 2016 Annual Report

*A review of activities from the 2015-2016 fiscal year*



*Developing Talent, Embracing Diversity*

## President's Report



Over the past year, Working Skills Centre continued to impact the lives of hundreds of Torontonians, especially immigrant women, through career training, work transition assistance, settlement services, and by creating a hub of support in the community.

I know that the whole Board of Directors joins me in thanking the staff team, now

led by Marina Nikova, for pulling together to deliver so many programs with so few resources. Our biggest challenge continues to be the need for more core funding and this means that staff have to keep a constant eye on expenses while always seeking opportunities for new support.

I am also very grateful this year for the expertise and commitment of our Board of Directors – all volunteers – who have spent countless hours working on fund raising, human resource management, strategic planning, policy development, financial oversight, and much more. Many of the board members are new this year and each have jumped in with a remarkable investment of

their energy and time. I am very pleased to say that almost all of them have committed to remain with WSC for another year.

Of particular importance, the Board has worked with the staff to improve our financial reporting and measurement; created better communication materials for our fund raising; refined our strategic vision; and, developed new human resources policies to ensure the fair and respectful management and support of the WSC staff.

Of course, all of this work in the background is to support the results we see each time a client becomes successfully settled in the community, or as the members of each graduating class secure new employment opportunities. We know that the positive impact on each individual radiates out through their families, friends and neighbours adding strength to our community every day.

Thank you to all of you who support the outcomes of Working Skills Centre with your investment of money, time and care. Every effort, small and big, has an exponential effect on the lives of our clients and students.

*Graham Donald, President  
September 2016*

## Management Report



The past year has been one of significant change, adaptation to budget realities and agency/partner collaboration for Working Skills Centre. The organization renewed its focus to the provision of workplace skills to those seeking to improve their ability to gain meaningful employment. This report summarizes some of the more significant milestones of 2015-16.

New funding policies for the Purchase of Employment Services within Toronto Employment & Social Services (TESS) required significant changes to the delivery of services by WSC. The new format for service delivery involved improved pre-screening of program candidates, ongoing monitoring of classroom participation and stronger preparation of candidates for work placements.

The WSC Team is pleased to report that the above changes were a success and have solidified our reputation as a reliable partner with TESS. Currently, there is minimal program attrition, compared to previous years. In addition, we are in the process of rolling out improved student withdrawal management services.

In the area of Social Enterprise, WSC initiated partnerships with Link Up and Gateway Café which allowed us to diversify our program offerings and reach a wider audience for the services that we offer. To accomplish this, we redesigned and updated some of our part-time programs to meet today's market demand. Total revenue generated as a result of the partnership was \$20,000. In the fiscal year 2016-17 we will look to partner with a new set of agencies in Toronto to replicate the success of those initiatives.

New partnerships were also established with Toronto Public Library Northern District Branch, Living City Health,

Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario and Association of Administrative Assistants. Some of our new partners provided letters of support that we were able to attach with our proposal for Newcomer Settlement Program funding.

WSC also participated in the BIZ Shot project in affiliation with a group of GTA community leaders. This one-day event, designed to share specific workplace skills and to create employment access opportunities for unemployed women, also introduced the services offered by WSC to a broader clientele in the GTA.

Budget challenges in 2015-16 required a renewed focus on additional fundraising. The March 2016 Achilles Walk achieved a historical record, thanks to extensive Board and staff participation. A fundraising project was included in the Essential Skills program.

The Coyote Indigenous Youth Training and Employment Program, launched in partnership with Toronto Council Fire, faced numerous administrative and delivery challenges. These were successfully resolved through extensive consultation with our partners, as well as revision of curriculum, program delivery, and leveraging the project budget. The program finished the year on target in all categories.

In conclusion, the 2015-16 fiscal year was a major challenge in terms of providing a solid financial foundation and core program service delivery platform from which to move forward. It would not have been possible without the efforts of our dedicated core staff team and volunteers, all of whom consistently worked additional unpaid hours. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to them, as the viability of the services we provided is 100% dependent on their extra effort. The focus of the WSC Board in providing support, advice, and strategic direction is also greatly appreciated by the entire organization.

*Marina Nikova, Senior Operations Manager  
September 2016*

## Treasurer's Report

Financial information has been extracted from the Audited Financial Statement as @ March 31, 2016 (David Burkes, C.A.)

<b><u>CURRENT ASSETS</u></b>	<b><u>2016</u></b>	<b><u>2015</u></b>
Cash	\$ 0	\$ 16,787
Accounts Receivable	56,184	45,479
Grant Contributions Receivable	38,700	11,310
HST Recoverable	14,321	12,789
Prepaid Expenses and Deposits	<u>11,282</u>	<u>9,279</u>
	120,487	95,644
Equipment/Capital Assets	<u>146,632</u>	<u>125,048</u>
	<u>\$ 269,119</u>	<u>\$ 220,692</u>
<b><u>CURRENT LIABILITIES</u></b>		
Bank Indebtedness	\$ 48,261	\$ 85,000
A/P & Accrued Liabilities	36,016	42,222
Source Deductions Payable	0	173
Deferred Revenue	8637	6,534
Deferred Capital Grant	83,770	0
Deferred Operating Grant Revenue	0	8691
	<u>\$ 176,384</u>	<u>\$ 220,692</u>
<b>DEFERRED CONTRIBUTIONS RELATED TO CAPITAL ASSETS</b>		
	<u>123,140</u>	<u>79669</u>
	299,824	222,289
	<b><u>2016</u></b>	<b><u>2015</u></b>
<b><u>REVENUE</u></b>		
Government/Foundation Contributions	\$ 274,805	\$ 353,857
TESS Skills Training Contract	279,979	297,993
Skills Training Diploma Programs	16,323	8,150
Skills Training Certificate Programs	58,666	70,415
Fundraising Donations & Other Income	40,049	38,151
Donations & Other Income	<u>6,701</u>	<u>15,488</u>
	<b><u>\$ 676,523</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 784,054</u></b>
<b><u>EXPENSES</u></b>		
Salaries	408,437	516,649
Employee Benefits	31,002	34,353
Occupancy Costs	103,272	123,882
Outreach/ Marketing	6,002	8,330
Bad Debts	3,017	1,868
Bank Charges & Interest	5002	6,470
Computer Software, Supplies & Tech Services	6,059	14,853
Equipment Leasing/Maintenance	8519	10,315
Donations-in-Kind	6,701	15,488
Insurance	17,182	16,904
Office Supplies	22,093	13,036
Professional Fees	28,007	13,185
Program Resource Materials	33,068	49,153
Telephone	4,032	3,621
Travel & Participant TTC	<u>4,011</u>	<u>12,197</u>
	<b><u>\$ 686,404</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 840,304</u></b>
Revenue over Expenses Operations:	(9,881)	(56,250)
Amortization	(19,227)	(12,600)
<b><u>Net Assets</u></b>	<b><u>\$ (30,705)</u></b>	<b><u>\$ (68,850)</u></b>

## Skills Training

### Purchase of Employment Services (POES)

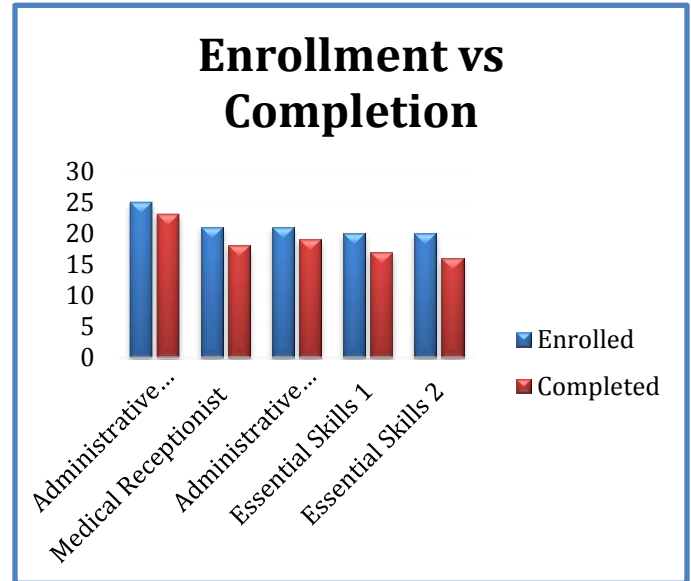
In 2015 the City of Toronto changed its focus and created new program categories and a post-program component to enhance employability. WSC continues to provide the following programs:

- **Occupation-Specific Skills Training in Medical Reception and Office Administration**
- **Essential Skills for Office Professionals**
- **Sector-Specific Career Development (SAP for Financial Professionals)**

Another change in 2015 demanded a more complete career assessment and referrals to other programs if WSC's training is not a match. Our assessments have always included: demographic confirmation, academic and computer skills screening, and a career direction interview, so this was not a change for us but recognition of an established process.

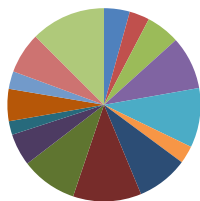
All of the programs have been filled and had waiting lists with 21 registered in Medical Reception; 44 in Office Administration and 43 in Essential Skills. SAP operates on continuous intake basis.

Working Skills Centre has established a partnership with Gateway Café. Through this partnership four Gateway Café clients were able to attend programs at WSC.



## City of Toronto - Referring Offices

- |                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| ■ Atwell          | ■ Beaches            |
| ■ Chesswood       | ■ Consilium Place    |
| ■ Golden Mile     | ■ High Park/Parkdale |
| ■ Kennedy         | ■ Lawrence Square    |
| ■ Lesmill         | ■ Malvern            |
| ■ Metro Hall      | ■ The Queensway      |
| ■ Wellesley Place | ■ Yonge Eglinton     |



### Part time Programs

In 2015-16 WSC redesigned the part time courses. Medical billing students are able to learn hands on billing with AbelMed software to enhance their employment prospects. In total 82 students attended part time individual certificate courses mostly on Saturdays and in the evenings.

## Academy of Computer & Employment Skills (A.C.E.S.)

Since 2008, our community based skills training programs have been licensed as a career college, Academy of Computer & Employment Skills (A.C.E.S.), which now operates as a social enterprise. A.C.E.S. offers six Diploma options, approved as vocational programs under the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005:

- **Computerized Accounting**
- **Computerized Office Administration**
- **Office Clerk**
- **Medical Receptionist**
- **Administrative Assistant with Desktop Publishing**
- **Supply Chain Clerk**

In 2011, the Charitable Career Colleges Network (CCCN) was established to clearly set us apart from other for-profit private career colleges. In 2015-2016, 3 fee payers successfully completed Diploma programs.

The City of Toronto purchases Diploma courses for OW Clients as a 3<sup>rd</sup> party funder, however seats in the Diploma programs are available to fee paying clients who are not eligible for City funding. Other 3<sup>rd</sup> party funding is available to assist individuals including Second Career for those on EI, Aboriginal Assets Funds, and a purchase by an employer. Financial assistance is also available from WSC through the Scholarship and Bursary Fund. WSC has never applied to be OSAP eligible as we do not believe that marginalized individuals should go into debt to obtain educational programs.

## Career Opportunities for Youth, Training and Work Experience (COYOTE)

Career Opportunities for Youth, Training and Work Experience (COYOTE) was a program for Indigenous and newcomer youth (age 18-29) who have significant employment barriers. 2015-16 was the second year of a two year grant from the Ministry of Economic Development, Infrastructure and Employment.

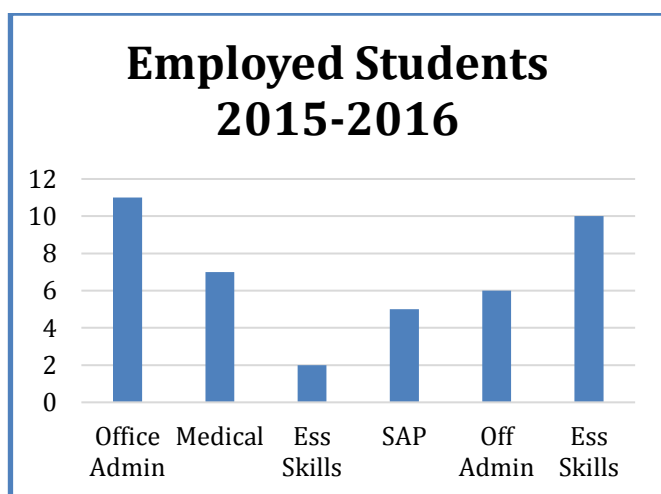
WSC provided certificate training based on modules from the Medical Receptionist Diploma program. In 2015 the program moved to WSC's main location.

The program included computer training, traditional learning, special ceremonies, practical work experience, and a work placement with an employer, job search assistance and job retention support. A sharing circle every Monday was an important part of the program, and was much valued by the youth participants.

In 2015-2016 two groups of COYOTE students totaling 21 participants completed the program. A completion award, a notebook computer, was given to each graduate.

### Employment Outcomes

In 2015-16, the primary goal of Graduate Services was to continue increasing the number of jobs obtained by graduates. In 2015 we worked with 7 graduating classes. The charts below show employment outcomes for each course with an overall average of 55% for 2015-16 clients



### 2015-2016 Challenges

- Lack of subsidized daycare places, transportation costs, and housing continued to be barriers for participants throughout the program. WSC saw a significant increase in letters of support written on behalf of participants.
- Keeping participants motivated to continue coming to meet with post program staff after the core program.

- Staff shortages, especially full-time counsellors.
- Controversy about unpaid placements necessitating a change in strategy to provide work trials or use wage subsidy programs.
- Labour market context characterized by a decrease in the number of full time and permanent jobs and increase in temporary contracts with no benefits or stability. This creates frustration for participants trying to find 'decent' work.

### 2015-2016 Strategies

#### *Integrate more essential /life skills workshops into the curriculum*

Essential skills workshops help students to build or further enhance communication and interpersonal skills. Students also develop teamwork and problem solving skills.

#### **Investigate alternative job search modules and methodology**

- Partner with Employment Ontario funded agencies to increase graduates' employment opportunities and explore the use of incentives.
- Given the trend toward non-permanent jobs, short contracts, and using temp agencies or staffing services, some graduates do start out by making contact with temporary employment. Our goal is to respond to this trend ensuring we are not creating precarious employment but rather are creating new and positive partnerships with staffing agencies suited to our grads by going to meet them and learn about their business.

#### **New strategies to promote job maintenance/job retention:**

- Include the cost for a police check and vaccinations as a necessary expense in order to obtain and retain employment with companies that work with finances or vulnerable populations.
- Consider changing the placement to an 8-week job trial with a stipend as opposed to the unpaid 6-week period, as many employers suggested that six weeks wasn't long enough for the students to understand and learn enough about their specific businesses.
- Start meeting with students right at the beginning of the core program in order to direct them more efficiently toward a successful completion of the core program.
- Start counselling students on their placement and employment process for having a clear idea what is going to be happen after the core program
- Conduct more employer visits to ensure that the workplace is in line with the students' studies and meets the participants' learning goals and workplace safety guidelines.
- Design and implement a pre-placement learning contract that will outline clear on-the-job learning goals and expectations for both graduate and employer.

## Settlement Services

### Newcomer Settlement Program

The Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade (MCIIT) through the Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP) funded the following settlement activities:

- One-on-one settlement assistance to newcomers including: client needs assessment, goal setting and service planning; assistance with applying for government services; and information and referral to other community and government services.
- Weekly information sessions on WSC's services and community resources
- Settlement-related group sessions on topics such as communication in the workplace, coping with stress, tenants rights, employee rights, healthy eating on a budget, continuous learning resources, life skills and caring for the environment.

Services are delivered by a team of three part-time settlement counsellors. Eligible clients include permanent residents, convention refugees, refugee claimants, naturalized Canadian citizens and foreign domestic workers admitted under the Live-in Caregiver Program. For the fiscal year 2015-2016 we achieved the following:

- Served 483 unique clients
- Conducted 1385 individual meetings with clients
- Held 86 settlement related workshops and group sessions
- Achieved a combined attendance for workshops and group sessions of 655 clients

The profile of NSP clients accessing settlement services is provided below:

#### Gender

Gender	% of Clients
Male	21%
Female	79%

#### Top Ten Countries of Origin

Ranking	Country of Origin
1	India
2	Philippines
3	Iran
4	Jamaica
5	Bangladesh
6	Pakistan
7	Russia
8	China
9	Guyana
10	Afghanistan

#### Immigrant Status

Immigrant Status	% of Clients
Permanent Residents	42%
Convention Refugees	4%
Refugee Claimants	5%
Canadian Citizens	47%
Other	2%

#### Age

Age Category	% of Clients
15 to 24 years	5%
25 to 44 years	59%
45 to 64 years	36%
65+ years	1%

#### Length of time in Canada

Age Category	% of Clients
Less than 1 year	10%
1 to 3 years	16%
4 to 5 years	15%
Over 5 years	59%

### Social Café Program

In the 2015-2016 year Working Skills Centre (WSC) held 42 Social Café sessions consisting of a wide variety of activities such as introductory sessions on languages like French and Spanish, cake decorating, scavenger hunts, conversation circles and arts and crafts sessions. 78 clients participated in the sessions. A grant from RBC foundation helped cover the costs of coordinating the program, and providing TTC tokens and refreshments for participants



Vida and Victoria Arshad from one of our community partners, ILFO delivered this wonderful craft class and environmental awareness session in April. A group of 14 immigrant women were introduced to "Reduce Reuse Recycle" practices learnt how to create gift boxes and booklets from recyclable materials.

An exciting development in this year was a series of sessions led by participants themselves. Here social café participants were showcasing their language skills and sharing their culture with other participants. WSC staff, volunteers and students also contributed several useful workshops. There is never a dull moment in the Social Café program. Social capital is continually being built not just from the contributions of guest presenters but also from the contributions of WSC's client community.

## Playing for Keeps

WSC became a Playing for Keeps Community Ambassador Hub in 2013 and continued to play this role in the 2015-16 year. The WSC Playing for Keeps coordinator Silva Maridrossian has played a key role in managing the program and supporting community leaders. For the 2015-16 year we achieved the following:

- Organized 24 community events including games in the park, a walk in Edward Gardens, pumpkin carving, dance sessions and physical exercise sessions
- Brought together 297 community members
- Recruited 16 volunteer community leaders

Volunteer community leaders attended a free leadership training program delivered by Toronto Foundation working in partnership with George Brown College. Community leaders play a key role in organizing small events that bring people together, promote health and fitness and build community. Micro grants of up to \$50 per event are provided by Toronto Foundation.



*One of our Playing for Keeps community leaders, organized this pumpkin carving session in October. 15 people attended. This was new experience for some community members. We awarded prizes for the best pumpkins.*

## Volunteers

In the 2015-16 year WSC's programs services and administrative functions were supported by 42 volunteers contributing over 4030 volunteer hours. WSC recognizes the many volunteers who so generously and willingly give of their time. You are an important part of this organization - we couldn't do it without you. On behalf of the staff of Working Skills Centre, thank you. Your contribution is greatly appreciated and we wish you all the best in your future endeavors!

***We would like to pay special tribute to one of our dear volunteers Terri-Ann Morgan who passed away suddenly in May 2016. Terri-Ann contributed many hours to supporting our intake team. We will miss her dearly.***

## List of Staff 2015-2016

Marina Nikova	Senior Operations Manager
Matilda Thevasagayam	Financial Manager
Natalia Tanceva	Program Coordinator
Ansuya Chetty	Settlement Counsellor
Claudia Bargellini	Employment Counsellor
Gladys Merino	Program Admin Assistant
Debra Yeung	Lead Microsoft Instructor
Mark Trumble	Microsoft Instructor
Jennifer Kim	Employment Counsellor
Shodhan Nadkarni	Instructor - SAP
Silva Maridrossian	Instructor
Samira Awrang	Coordinator of Student & Alumni Support
Mary Diaz Cedeno	Volunteer Coordinator (up to Feb 2016)
Claire Kirk-Cape	Intercultural Facilitator
Julia O'Loughlin	Volunteer Coordinator
Diane England	Instructor
Mobaswar Hossain	Instructor
Lynn Wolverton	Employment Counsellor

## History and Mandate

Working Skills Centre (WSC) was established in 1978, incorporated on May 1, 1980, and received charitable status in March 2003. Originally mandated to serve immigrant women from Spanish and Portuguese speaking communities, the organization quickly expanded to serve immigrant women from any country of origin. The Letters Patent were revised in 2005 to expand the mandate to serve individuals, primarily immigrants, who are unemployed or underemployed, and to assist them to obtain skills needed to become self-sufficient. While mandated to serve a broader clientele throughout the Greater Toronto Area, the Mission Statement reflects the emphasis on programs for immigrant women:

*Working Skills Centre (WSC) is an innovative, community-based, non-profit, charitable organization that empowers immigrants, primarily women. Our purpose is to prepare our clients to fully participate in Canadian society by providing education, work experience, and settlement services that ultimately lead to employment.*

## Location and Contact Information.

Location	2015-2016 Directors & Officers			
Address: 55 Eglinton Ave. East, Suite 703 Toronto, ON M4P 1G8 Phone: (416) 703-7770 Fax: (416) 703-1610 Website: www.workingskillscentre.com	<b>Graham Donald</b>	President	<b>Cherith Muir</b>	Member at Large
	<b>Shamima Adam</b>	Secretary	<b>Victoria Bozinovski</b>	Member at Large
	<b>Junaid Mirza</b>	Treasurer	<b>Gayle Fisher</b>	Member at Large
	<b>Kien Lam</b>	Member at Large	<b>Nicholas Georgakakis</b>	Member at Large
	<b>Shannon Leo</b>	Member at Large	<b>Rita Kumar</b>	Member at Large
	<b>Christine Margie</b>	Member at Large	<b>Julie Lafford</b>	Member at Large

## Acknowledgements Working Skills Centre would like to acknowledge our 2015-2016 funders and partners.

### Grants and Contributions were received from:

- City of Toronto
  - Toronto Employment and Social Services
  - Investing in Neighbourhoods
- Service Canada, Canada Summer Jobs Strategy
- Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade
  - Newcomer Settlement Program
- Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Infrastructure and Employment
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- RBC Foundation
- Toronto Community Foundation
  - Playing for Keeps Program

### Businesses who provided cash & in kind donations

- Mandarin Restaurant, Yonge & Eglinton
- Metro Supermarket, Yonge & Eglinton
- Indigo Bookstore, Yonge & Eglinton
- Local Gest Parliament \$ Carlton
- Cineplex Odeon, Yonge & Eglinton
- McDonalds, Yonge & Eglinton
- Shopper's Drug Mart, Yonge & Eglinton
- Starbucks, Yonge & Eglinton
- Chef of India, Yonge & Eglinton
- Sobey's Yonge & St Clair

### Service Delivery Partners

- Anne Johnston Health Station
- Credit Canada Debt Solutions
- Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Services at Flemingdon Park
- Institute of Leadership for Women in Ontario
- JobStart
- Learning Enrichment Foundation
- Living City Health
- People & Organizations in North Toronto (POINT)
- The Career Foundations
- Toronto Community Employment Services
- Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre
- Toronto Public Library, North Toronto Branch
- Toronto Workers' Health & Safety Legal Clinic
- Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario
- Working Women Community Centre
- Volunteer Toronto
- Canadian Mental Health Association (Opening Doors Project)
- Gateway Café

*And the many employers who provided work experience for our graduates, especially those who hired a graduate.*

### The umbrella groups who provide valuable information and lobby for systemic change on behalf of our clients:

- Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants
- Social Enterprise Toronto
- Toronto Workforce Innovation Group
- Toronto North & South LIPs
- Yonge-Eglinton Services Network