



Your Involvement...

Support the work of the Centre by:

- Becoming a member
- Participating in programs and activities;
- Volunteering your time;
- Be a Board or committee member;
- Support our fundraising efforts;
- Help out in any way you can; and
- sharing our skills, expertise and interests we can learn from each other and become stronger

OUR MISSION

The purpose of the South Asian Women's Centre is all encompassing and ambitious. Our primary focus is to increase women's awareness of themselves, and assist them to develop their full potential by increasing their economic, social, cultural and political standing in society. Through the provision of programs and services, the South Asian Women's Centre strives to provide an environment where women can work together to promote their well being

OUR OBJECTIVES

- Nurturing the economic independence and self-esteem of women.
- Breaking the isolation and alienation of women by providing social/support activities.
- Promoting access to full participation in society by addressing barriers to women's equality such as underemployment, unemployment, violence prevention, language and training opportunities, poverty, access to housing and other issues faced by women.
- Empowering women and the larger community through information dissemination and educational activities.

OUR VALUES

The Centre takes a holistic approach to the services we provide. Our goal is to enable and empower women. We work to build the skills of women and enable them to participate more fully in Canadian society.

The Centre is committed to providing services within an anti-discriminatory, anti-oppressive framework. We represent the diversity of south Asian cultures and respond to serve our unique client and member needs in a suitable way. We work towards the empowerment of women and the overall development of the community.

OUR APPRECIATION

To our community partners and supporters for their commitment & collaboration to ensure ongoing and effective programs and services for South Asian Women...

- Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention
- Assaulted Women's Helpline
- Bloor Information and Life Skills Centre
- Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA)
- Children Aid Society – Scarborough Branch
- The Dancing Damsels
- Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Centre
- Earth Day Canada
- Eriterean Canadian Community Centre, Toronto
- Family Service Association of Toronto
- Lotus Ladies Club in Oakville
- Malvern Family Resource Centre
- METRAC
- Multilingual Community Interpreter Services
- Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI)
- Parkdale Community Health Centre
- Parkdale Community Legal Services
- The Redwood Shelter
- Sandgate Shelter for Women
- Skills for Change
- South Asian Legal Clinic Ontario
- Toronto District School Board
- Toronto Public Health

OUR SINCERE THANKS

To our funders for their valued support:

- Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Ontario
- City of Toronto
- New Horizons for Seniors
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- Rainbow Foundation
- Trillium Foundation
- Provincial Seniors Directorate

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR 2015-2016

Dear members of SAWC:

I would like to welcome everybody to another Annual General Meeting of the South Asian Women's Center. Let me begin by giving you some good news this year SAWC not only balanced its budget, but is able to build on our reserves. I would like to extend my sincere appreciations to:

Firstly, to Kripa Sekhar for her outstanding leadership, dedication and selfless work over the past year. Secondly, to the Staff and Volunteers who are an invaluable part of our Center and whose tremendous efforts has been the largest contributing factor in sustaining and growing this agency year after year. Thirdly, to all our Funders for their continuous support and partnership with SAWC. And finally, I would like to commend our Board of Directors for their cooperation and team work. I would like to thank the outgoing board members Anjum Bhaktula the treasurer, Thavam Sunderalingam and Luxmi Sri Pathmarajah for their tremendous support and devotion to the work that SAWC does!!!!

We are pleased to report that we continue to expand and maintain programs. SAWC has also been able to maintain all its programs. SAWC continues to receive funding from Status of Women Canada, New Horizons for Seniors, and last from the Trillium Foundation, Newcomer Settlement Program, Seniors Directorate, City of Toronto and Investment in Neighbourhood.

As the South Asian population grows in Canada, it is vital that we have a voice to articulate our thoughts and experiences. To date we have served approximately 16500 clients, and anticipate serving many more in the next year. SAWC has to date over the last two years served close to 875 women in abusive situations, and many cases are still ongoing.

We thank the members for their trust in our work, and their involvement in the centres direction. We have ensured our accountability to that trust, and in order to ensure a strong SAWC. Here are some highlights, we hosted a successful Yogathon with We are Your Sisters, the Lotus Ladies Club in Oakville gave us a donation of a little of \$3000.

SAWC was founded because no other organization was able to give our community the support needed; we developed our own solutions to try to resolve our issues, based on our knowledge, expertise and experience in the south Asian community. In closing, I am privileged and honored to serve my colleagues as Chair. We thank you for placing your confidence.

Nisha Vaswani
Chair South Asian Women's Center

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers are representative of diversity of the South Asian community in Toronto. They are an invaluable part of our Centre and we thank them for their dedicated and selfless work. SAWC volunteers are a very valuable part of the centre. Their commitment and hard work have enhanced the agencies profile in the community.

OUR BOARD (2014-2015)

Nisha Vaswani (Chair). She is a Branch Manager of the Ryerson Branch of Alterna Savings, a socially responsible Financial Co-operative based in Ontario. She has been in the Financial Industry for almost 20 years, mostly back in Vancouver where she is originally from. She has a Business degree from Simon Fraser University – and is passionate about helping out in her local community, and especially within the South Asian community.

Nazeema Kassam (Vice Chair) Nazeema is an accredited family mediator and social worker. She possess her Masters in Clinical Social Work. She has been practicing psychotherapy, social work consulting and family mediation for the majority her career. She has been an active volunteer in many different causes. She has a passion for helping others, particularly women.

Yash Brar (Secretary) Yash holds a Bachelor of Commerce from McGill University and Certified Human Resources Leader (CHRL) designation from Human Resources Professionals Association in Ontario. She has over 10 years of progressive human resources experience in public service, private sector and non-for-profit organizations. She is an active volunteer in the GTA and brings to SAWC her expertise in human resources planning, events and operations management

Anjum Bakhula (Treasurer) joined the board in December 2011 is the Treasurer. She has been a reputed banker for over 15 years in India before immigrating to Canada. As a manager for Bank of Baroda, she has vast experience and expertise in finance, banking and corporate management. Anjum holds an undergraduate degree in commerce with an advanced certification in business management. She currently works for a not for profit organization as a coordinator.

Jayanti Chandra Highly praised for her interpersonal and communication skills, Jayanti has very strong teamwork skills. She is experienced in negotiation and conflict resolution in professional environments. She can independently and efficiently handle the management of a small business and other financial or administrative affairs. She has worked as a Public Relations Manager and Executive Assistant and liaised with numerous high profile clients.. Jayanti is fluent in English, Bengali, Hindi and Tamil.

Luxmi Sri Pathmanathan was a teacher in her native country of Sri Lanka. She came to Canada, and has been a strong volunteer and advocate for women. She has been an active member of the centre participating in group activities and events. She has also devoted numerous volunteer hours accompanying women to appointments, and assisting with language interpretation.

Thavan Sundaralingam has a Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) from Madras University. She worked as a teacher in Government Colleges in Sri Lanka, and in Fiji where her husband was a Judge. She worked in Ottawa as a legal assistant to a lawyer and now volunteers her time to assist members in the community with interpretation and translation support.

Reena Tandon: Reena Tandon is the co-author of, “Immigrant Women, Understanding the America Experience: Finding Agency, Negotiating Resistance and Bridging Cultures (<http://nyupress.org/books/bookdetails.aspx?bookid=1184>) Dr.Tandon’s areas of interest include gender, labor, marginalization, immigrant-rights and civic engagement in transnational contexts. She has extensive experience in community-based research, project development, community-engagement and advocacy. She brings knowledge and enthusiasm for social inclusion and participatory governance frameworks.

Deepa Mattoo: is a lawyer with the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario. She comes with expertise on legal issues and has a strong connection to the community. Deepa has been involved with issues at the international level and has been a leader on the issue of forced marriages.

SAWC STAFF (2015-2016)

Kripa Sekhar is the Executive Director. She has a Masters Degree and has decades of experience teaching and working with non-government organizations both at the local and international level, The focus of her work has been to strengthen the capacity of community-based agencies, and advocate for systemic change to ensure social, and economic justice for all women.

Subuhi Jaffrey is Employment/Settlement (Urdu, Arabic, Farsi) Counsellor and Volunteer Coordinator at SAWC. Her calm demeanor coupled with her ability to effectively resolve conflicts makes her an excellent counselor. She is sincere, hard working and committed to SAWC.

Dina Sousa is our warm and friendly Office Administrator who has a diploma in Social Work. She has a vast amount of experience working with non-profit organizations. As well, she has volunteered her time to women's shelters to help address issues of abuse and violence prevention. She is fluent in Portuguese and English.

Sabita Saha the Domestic Violence Against Women and Bengali ousnellor brings enthusiasm, strong people's skills and the ability to the job. She takes on increased responsibilities and roles as needed by the Centre. Sabita is hard working and passionate about her work.

Vijaya Kula is the Settlement Counsellor at SAWC's Satellite office in Scarborough. She is fluent in Tamil and English, she is a recent graduate and has proved to be extremely active, and committed to the work and clients. She works hard and is loved by the clients she serves.

Manaal Farooqi is the Project Coordinator for the project, In My Mother's House: A Story of Sexual Violence, Marital Rape and Forced Marriage. She demonstrates a strong commitment to community development. Manaal lived in the Maritimes for 10 years prior to coming to Toronto. She brings extensive volunteer, activism and work experience in the social justice realm and an ability to speak several languages.

Marmitha Yogarajah is the both Project Coordinator for the Forced Marriages and Human Trafficking Project and Tamil Settlement Counsellor. Marmitha has gained academic and practical knowledge on anti-oppressive practice, feminist issues and crisis intervention. She has an undergraduate degree in Philosophy, a Professional Ethics Certificate, and a Social Service Work Diploma. On her free time you will find Marmitha reading fiction novels, hiking and listening to music.

Kelsang Tsering is the Community Outreach Coordinator. She did Nursing studies from Jamia Hamdard University, India, and worked as a Pediatric Nurse in Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, India. In Nepal, Kelsang took the opportunity to serve her community by working as Health Coordinator in the largest Tibetan NGO. She conducted numerous health camps, health trainings, and carried out many programs to support Mothers and Child's health, mental health, women's health, Hepatitis B & Tuberculosis. She also worked very close with people living with HIV and their family.

Kavitha Pillaiyinar is our Tamil speaking Peer Mentor Worker. She started her journey at the South Asian Women's Centre as a Volunteer. She helps facilitates many groups related to health and well being as a studying nurse. She actively participates in managing the Tax Clinic and assists with Tamil translation services.

Tsering Dolma is working as the Outreach Worker at SAWC. She has an educational background in immigrant women and counseling. She is a versatile young woman who speaks Tibetan, Nepalese, Hindi, Kanarese. Tsering is the new Group Coordinator.

Khalood Awad is the Peer Mentor Worker. As a refugee from Iraq she understands the needs of immigrant and refugee women. She is an extremely talented individual in the arts and helps out with the sewing project.

PROGRAM REPORT (2015-2016)

Let me begin by thanking the board, staff, volunteers, funders and partners for their tremendous and valuable support to SAWC. I am pleased to present this report because it has been a fabulous year with many opportunities, new partnerships and growth for SAWC. Here are some of our highlights, a great Yogathon, a trip for the seniors to the Falls and other sights, an opportunity to meet the Prime Minister elect Justin Trudeau, being part of an immigration forum to name a few. An audited financial report with a surplus, new funding We have received a number of supports from the community through in-kind donations of food, clothing and volunteer support.

OUR SETTLEMENT PROGRAM

Our core settlement services assist immigrant and refugee women in the process of settling into a new country in an environment that is respectful of their cultural beliefs and values. Services include but are not limited to interpretation and translation, individual solution focused counseling, support, information and referral, crisis intervention, client support, advocacy, employment counseling, health education, volunteering opportunities and violence prevention education. This year SAWC served approximately 15900 individuals and 50,000 units of service.. This is thanks to a small group of committed staff members, whose dedication, passion and hard work have served a very diversified community with complex needs.. SAWC has provided services to an emerging group of clients that are not south Asian. SAWC's satellite settlement services through the Malvern office, situated out of the Malvern Family Resource Centre ensures Tamil and Sinhalese women receive services. Through these partnerships we are able to connect with newcomers in isolated areas to ensure they are able to access services, These partnerships also expand SAWC's presence in Scarborough, where immigrant and refugees needs have rapidly increased.

An emerging need has been the dramatic rise in violence and abuse cases in the community, and SAWC staff have served approximately 875 women in these situations. Many cases are very complex and recent changes to the immigration act have also resulted in the deportation of new young brides because they fall into the Conditional Permanent Residency status. SAWC has also been successful in many cases, but many are still open because each file takes time to complete. Many clients are referred to us by other satisfied clients through word of mouth, as well as from other community agencies, including shelters, hospitals and Children's Aid.

OUTREACH & MENTORING

SAWC's has managed to contract an Outreach Worker and a Mentoring Worker through the Investment in Neighbourhoods program. Through SAWC's outreach work, we are able to build new partnerships and sustain and develop existing ones. The Mentoring Worker works with student placements, staff and volunteers to mentor women in different areas like gaining Canadian experience, assisting staff in workshops etc. SAWC has been able to hire one of the IIN staff as the Groups Coordinator. Subuhi Jaffrey the Urdu /Punjabi/Arabic Counsellor also recruits and trains volunteers at the centre. Volunteers assist with the food bank, reception duties, tax clinics, group facilitation support to name a few. SAWC has also started to utilize other venues of Media for outreach, such as the Internet. SAWC is in the process of re- vamping the website. In addition, SAWC has a Facebook Group with over 70 members, and a Twitter account, @SAWCCanada. Both sites raise awareness of the agency and are a medium for communication with the South Asian Community. SAWC has also utilized the media to reach out to clients. The Executive Director has continued to maintain a strong connection with media networks, both ethnic and mainstream. SAWC continues to be featured as a key agency serving South Asians in Toronto. This year the staff went to Ottawa at the invitation of Senator Seth and the ED presented on the issues related to the agency, and the work that we do in the community to help women and their families.

THE SEWING PROJECT

The Sewing Project function as a volunteer group. It is a success story and participants have established a sewing collective running the group by themselves with support from SAWC. They have been recycling used south Asian clothing into table cloths, bags, organizers etc.

SENIORS/WELLNESS GROUP & YOUTH GROUP

SAWC's Seniors and Youth groups continues to be a key activity of the South Asian Women's Centre, and this year through partnerships the groups have enhanced some level of community engagement. Funding from the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), New Horizon for Seniors and the City of Toronto, funds these group activities. The groups explore issues affecting the quality of life and health south Asian women from South Asia. In addition through partnerships with other service agencies, we have been able to provide sessions on health like diabetes prevention, and aging well.. This project is supported by young women who assist with the project. SAWC has trained many young women into leadership roles, some through the student placement program, others through group sessions that provide opportunities for conversations and other activities like dance and role playing. This was so well demonstrated at the at SAWC events.

TAX CLINICS

Tsering Dolma headed up the tax clinic and brought together a dedicated volunteer team. She has trained many volunteers to assist with the clinic. Last year SAWC served around 300 individuals and families.

LEGAL SUPPORT

With support from Legal Aid Ontario SAWC provides scheduled legal support to clients twice a month through a legal advice clinic. However SAWC refers clients to SALCO and a number of individual lawyers who have offered help to clients.

STUDENT PLACEMENTS

SAWC was privileged to host four Student Placements from various colleges during the 2014 – 2015 term, Student placements are a welcome presence at SAWC and assist the agency in many activities and tasks with Administration support, group facilitation and job shadowing. SAWC has been able to hire one of the students for the Trillium Project.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

A key strategy of the Centre is to expand its activities and reach a larger number of women by strengthening existing relationships and building new partnerships. The Food Sharing Program started in collaboration with Daily Bread Food bank, and continues to provide low-income women with food. SAWC partners with Skills for Change, St Christopher House, Punjabi Health Community Services, ASAAP, METRAC, The Lotus Ladies Club, The Dancing Damsels, the Tamil Service Providers Coalition as well as the Tamil Reference Group of the Children's Aid Society – Scarborough Branch. As a result of these partnerships SAWC provides services in Malvern and Scarborough via satellite offices at the Malvern Family Resource Centre.

The Centre has been an active member of the Partnership Project, OCASI, CASSA, SALCO, Daily Bread Food bank and other women's coalitions and partnerships, The ED is also a member of the Provincial Advisory Forum on Partnerships.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SAWC has completed an important partnership with three other agencies, the partnership focused on community engagement, fundraising and capacity building.

SAWC continues to see increased client numbers, many clients are referred by satisfied and returning clients. However, as an agency serving marginalized populations that are vulnerable because of poverty, language barriers, isolation and other barriers we encounter systemic challenges and discrimination, linked to the needs of a unique client population. We have seen an increase in the number of non-South Asian women and their families accessing our services, but more startling is the fact that we have seen a rise in the number of incidences of violence and abuse among south Asian women..

I close my report with my sincerest thanks to all the staff, students and volunteers whose dedication and hard work makes the centre a warm and caring place for south Asian women and their families. Finally, on behalf of the staff I would like to thank the Chair and board who have provided leadership and support to ensure SAWC's progress.

Kripa Sekhar
Executive Director



**800 Lansdowne Avenue, Unit 1
Toronto, Ontario
M6H 4K3**

**T: 416-537-2276
F: 416-537-9472
www.sawc.org**