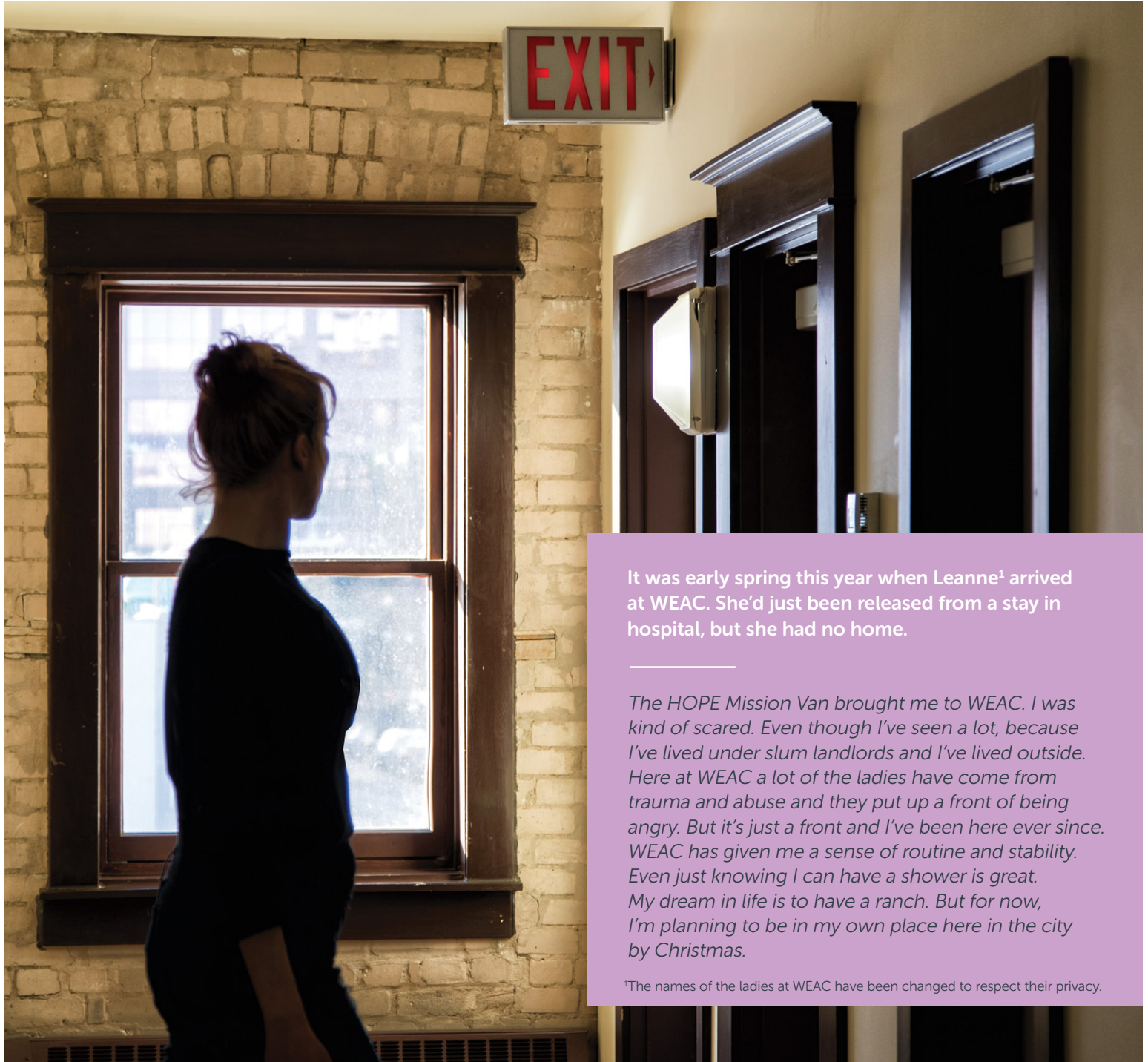


# e4cenvoy

Fall 2018



It was early spring this year when Leanne<sup>1</sup> arrived at WEAC. She'd just been released from a stay in hospital, but she had no home.

*The HOPE Mission Van brought me to WEAC. I was kind of scared. Even though I've seen a lot, because I've lived under slum landlords and I've lived outside. Here at WEAC a lot of the ladies have come from trauma and abuse and they put up a front of being angry. But it's just a front and I've been here ever since. WEAC has given me a sense of routine and stability. Even just knowing I can have a shower is great. My dream in life is to have a ranch. But for now, I'm planning to be in my own place here in the city by Christmas.*

<sup>1</sup>The names of the ladies at WEAC have been changed to respect their privacy.



Seeing people not poverty.



## Welcome to WEAC

The e4c Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre, or WEAC, is a shelter providing emergency accommodation for women like Leanne who, for a variety of reasons, have no other place to go. They often arrive with nothing but the clothes on their back; many have no job, and no one in their lives to help or support them. WEAC's doors are always open: staff welcome women 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and its 64 beds are always full. WEAC welcomes all women including transgender individuals who identify as female. Some have addictions, some live with mental health issues, others just need a place to stay and help bringing stability back into their lives.

Women at WEAC don't have to leave during the day, as is the case at many other emergency shelters. They have a bed, three meals a day, laundry facilities and on-site access to nurses, mental health supports and Housing First staff to help them find a permanent home. Staff also provide supports and/or referrals to address other issues related to homelessness and sexual exploitation.

Some of the WEAC staff have lived experience of homelessness, sexual exploitation or other challenges. Their employment at WEAC speaks to e4c's commitment to eliminate poverty by working with people to help them cope with and recover from trauma, and to enhance their strengths and capabilities.

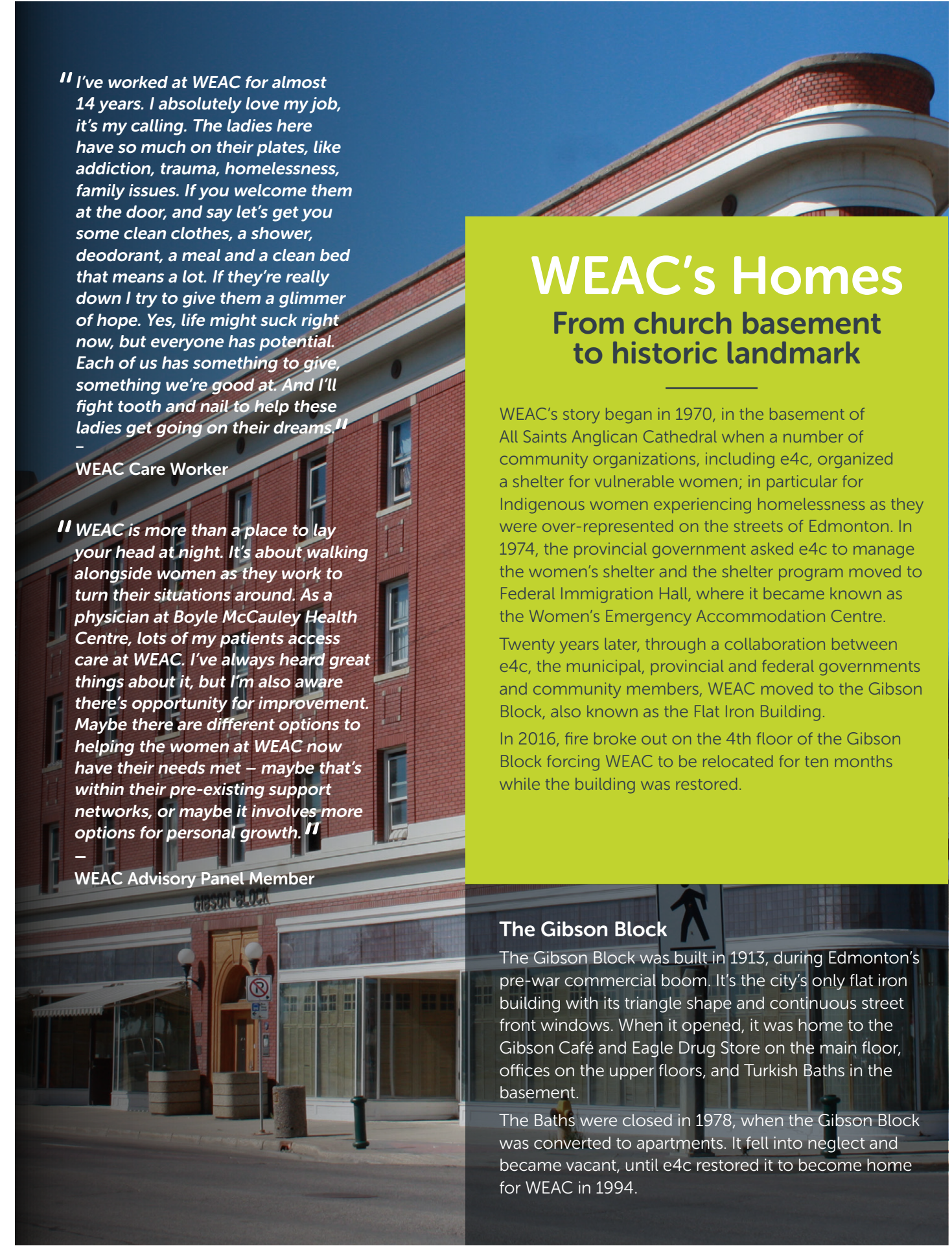
*"We are first come, first serve at WEAC. And we are always full. Our unfortunate reality is we have to turn away, on average, 15 women a day because we don't have a bed for them. In the first two weeks of October this year, we were turning away 20 women a day. We let them know about other places they can call, and where to find food or medical help. But that's not a guarantee of service. Having to say no to someone in need is one of the toughest parts of the job."*

—  
e4c OHS Manager

*"We never judge. We have some ladies who are in their own places now, and it's wonderful to see their success. And we have others who get out, get their own place and a few months later they're back because things just didn't work. That's where we say ok, come on back in. So many of our ladies have been traumatized; beaten down and told they're worth nothing. We meet them where they are and let them know that they are worthy of respect and understanding, and of our time and energy to help them get through that and reach their goals."*

—  
WEAC Care Worker





*"I've worked at WEAC for almost 14 years. I absolutely love my job, it's my calling. The ladies here have so much on their plates, like addiction, trauma, homelessness, family issues. If you welcome them at the door, and say let's get you some clean clothes, a shower, deodorant, a meal and a clean bed that means a lot. If they're really down I try to give them a glimmer of hope. Yes, life might suck right now, but everyone has potential. Each of us has something to give, something we're good at. And I'll fight tooth and nail to help these ladies get going on their dreams."*

—  
WEAC Care Worker

*"WEAC is more than a place to lay your head at night. It's about walking alongside women as they work to turn their situations around. As a physician at Boyle McCauley Health Centre, lots of my patients access care at WEAC. I've always heard great things about it, but I'm also aware there's opportunity for improvement. Maybe there are different options to helping the women at WEAC now have their needs met – maybe that's within their pre-existing support networks, or maybe it involves more options for personal growth."*

—  
WEAC Advisory Panel Member

## WEAC's Homes

### From church basement to historic landmark

WEAC's story began in 1970, in the basement of All Saints Anglican Cathedral when a number of community organizations, including e4c, organized a shelter for vulnerable women; in particular for Indigenous women experiencing homelessness as they were over-represented on the streets of Edmonton. In 1974, the provincial government asked e4c to manage the women's shelter and the shelter program moved to Federal Immigration Hall, where it became known as the Women's Emergency Accommodation Centre.

Twenty years later, through a collaboration between e4c, the municipal, provincial and federal governments and community members, WEAC moved to the Gibson Block, also known as the Flat Iron Building.

In 2016, fire broke out on the 4th floor of the Gibson Block forcing WEAC to be relocated for ten months while the building was restored.

### The Gibson Block

The Gibson Block was built in 1913, during Edmonton's pre-war commercial boom. It's the city's only flat iron building with its triangle shape and continuous street front windows. When it opened, it was home to the Gibson Café and Eagle Drug Store on the main floor, offices on the upper floors, and Turkish Baths in the basement.

The Baths were closed in 1978, when the Gibson Block was converted to apartments. It fell into neglect and became vacant, until e4c restored it to become home for WEAC in 1994.



## Top 2

reasons for women coming to WEAC:

Ladies at WEAC  
63% homelessness  
55% nowhere else to go

WEAC Staff perspective  
55% addictions  
48% gender-based violence

## Top 2

reasons women come back to WEAC:

Safe place to sleep  
Supports my needs



## An Afternoon for WEAC

*"I was with a group of friends at a fundraiser for WEAC a number of years ago. We were all struck by how hard people were working to raise a relatively small amount of money. We took on the challenge of raising more money, more efficiently."*

—  
Anne McLellan



Anne McLellan is no stranger to challenges, nor to reaching her goals. In 2001, she hosted the first of what has become an annual 'Afternoon for WEAC' at the Hotel MacDonald's Wedgewood Room.

*"We choose an afternoon tea because it's not something people do every day. It's a time to come together, to share and in this case to learn about WEAC."*

There are too many women in our city who, but for WEAC, would have no place to live. WEAC is an emergency shelter and emergency speaks to the fact it's not a home. But for some women it is home, and that in some respects that's tragic.

Each of us involved in the Afternoon for WEAC has a big circle of friends who we invite every year, and I'm so grateful for their support, both financially and in other ways like delivering fresh fruits and vegetables from their gardens to WEAC and organizing a drive to collect pajamas and toiletries for the women there. A big thank you to all the people who have helped improve the quality of life for the women at WEAC."

—  
Anne McLellan

After the first year, Anne asked her friend Marc de La Bruyère to join her. Each year they've managed to top donations made in the previous year, with donations in 2018 totaling \$100,000.

*"Anne asked me to join her in hosting the WEAC annual tea seven years ago. She specifically asked me to handle the advance sponsorships – I enjoy asking for money for an important cause."*

Our guests each year are more than generous; they have huge hearts and realize the importance of the work being done at WEAC. Our speakers are inspiring; they help us to place the problem we're dealing with into context, to understand its roots, its effects on our society and what we can and need to do about it. They give insight to those of us lucky enough to live in privileged conditions.

I do this work every year because I believe each one of us – myself first – has a responsibility to walk alongside these women, to empower them to recover and build on their capabilities.

My hope for WEAC is that one day it will no longer be necessary. In the meantime, we need the resources to develop more robust programs to help women transition from lives of marginalized existence to lives where they can stand on their own and be proudly independent."

—  
Marc de La Bruyère



# WEAC

## Today

WEAC was one of Edmonton's first emergency shelters for women; designed for temporary care, to meet immediate needs, and help women find more permanent stability in their lives. That initial mission has never changed.

### Audrey's story

*WEAC has been my home on and off for 19 years. It's changed a lot – back then the rules weren't enforced as much, and the food wasn't as great as it is now. This is my safe place. I've left two or three times, but life happens, and I came back. The staff are what's best about WEAC. They've been with me through thick and thin and I know that whatever happens it's okay. I'm thinking now that I'm ready to get into treatment.*

Over its 48-year history, WEAC has morphed into both short-term and longer-term shelter in order to meet the changing and increasingly complex needs of women who are marginalized in our city. Many have lost their voice in our communities. They are targets of discrimination, racism, and harsh judgements. They survive as best they can, which for some means living outside, or engaging in survival sex to meet their basic needs. Addictions and mental health issues add to the complexity. The need for help and for supportive housing far outweighs the services and housing available.

WEAC is, for some women, the only home and the only community they have. It's where their friends are. For most, it's the safest place they know.

Meeting women's needs, beyond those that are immediate and temporary, presents significant challenges as WEAC's building, staffing, services and programs are not designed for longer-term housing. Despite the fact the majority of women feel they're residents of WEAC, staying there for longer periods of time than anywhere else, an emergency shelter is not a home. The women at WEAC are homeless. And e4c is committed to ending homelessness, in its work toward eliminating poverty.

*"The women at WEAC have built communities to support each other. They make sure each other are alright. They let staff know when someone's in trouble, they look out for each other on the streets. Women who are now housed on their own come back to visit because for many, this is their family. This is who they know. It's a powerful thing that is happening inside these walls."*

—  
e4c Housing Services Manager



## Josie's story

*I came to WEAC three months ago. I had recently moved to Edmonton and was living with a friend, but he had an alcohol problem which started to get out of hand. One night I ended up locked in the bathroom, scared for my safety. I called a friend who recommended a shelter. So I googled that and found WEAC. I felt so lucky there was a bed available for me, because I know there aren't enough beds for all the women who need some help from this place.*

*I felt welcomed here, like I wasn't alone. I have to admit the first two nights I slept with one eye open, but then I realized I was safe and I got to sleep and get over the stress of what had happened to me.*

*The staff have helped me find a new apartment which I'm moving into next week. I have a good job which I like. I never thought I'd end up living at a women's shelter. People think shelters are just for people who do drugs or the people we see on the streets who are homeless. But I've had my eyes opened and I know now that what happened to me can happen to anyone. Because of WEAC I didn't give up on my dream of making my home here in Alberta.*



*I came to Edmonton about 10 years ago. I was in my transition from male to female and getting treatment here when I developed health issues. I used to be a cabinet maker, but I couldn't do that anymore, so I got a student loan to go to university and get a degree in psychology. Since then I've been in and out of various housing; subsidized, Housing First, Elizabeth House, and I had my own place last year but there were lots of drug dealers around and police being called, so I didn't feel safe.*

*WEAC is the organization that's been there throughout this whole time, when things were the very worst. It wasn't always perfect here, but it's been my safety net. Being a transgender woman, you don't always feel safe, but here I do feel safe. And when you're ready to move forward the staff here support you and have your back.*

*I'm moving to my own new place this week. I want my housing revolving door to stop. I want a home where I can afford to live, and where I can have my cat.*

*WEAC has been my refueling depot – helping me get everything in order and get back on my feet, and to figure out what's going to work and what's not. I'm not a victim. I've experienced wrongdoing and tough times and I've worked my hardest to get through it. I'm thankful for WEAC. Just give me a little help and I'll do the rest.*

## Gloria's story



## The Deep Dive: Exploring WEAC's Future

In response to these and other challenges, e4c has launched a review of WEAC's mandate and future direction. An advisory panel, consisting of eight volunteers from the community at large who have various skills, knowledge and experiences, is now visioning what needs to be created to better serve women who come to WEAC.

### WEAC Advisory Panel

Dr. Kathryn Dong    Dr. Jessica Kirkwood    Jane Slessor  
John Goode    Marcia McCall    Rachelle Venne  
Shawna Hohendorff    Robin Murray

### Join the WEAC Journey

The WEAC Advisory Panel will finalize its report and make recommendations in the new year. This will result in WEAC's story changing, once again. What will not change is e4c's commitment to walking alongside vulnerable women to help them feel confident; to find hope, belief in their capability to turn their lives around, and to build on their capacity to enhance their personal wellness.

*"I approach our work on the WEAC Advisory Panel thinking how would I want this person to be treated if they were me, or my sister or aunt? And what would I want my care to look like, and be perceived? We can get caught up in wanting to be everything for everyone, but in order to be more successful and to help more people we may need to focus our energies a bit differently."*

*This work has been really motivating. Every time we meet I leave feeling more passionate about the work I do, and I can't wait for the next meeting."*

**WEAC Advisory Panel Member**

*"When I was asked to join the WEAC Advisory Panel my first question was 'why me?'. I have no hands-on experience with emergency shelters. e4c said that's exactly why they wanted me to join, because I could represent the 'community' who is less aware of WEAC's work and maybe bring new thoughts and questions to the table."*

*I was born and raised in Edmonton, and I had what I thought was a very good awareness of the great work being done in our city. But I've been surprised to learn the extent of work being done at WEAC and e4c. It's impressive and I want to be part of it. Now I spend lots of time asking friends and associates if they're aware of WEAC. Once they know more they too become very supportive."*

*We know there is need for more emergency accommodations in our city, and we know there are incredible caring, knowledgeable and talented people in our community doing their best to help those who really need help. We're now working on creating the vision of what WEAC could and should be in the future, so that we can further enhance the value it brings to the women who need it most."*

### Chair, WEAC Advisory Panel

For close to 50 years, e4c has been helping Edmontonians get what they need to tackle life's challenges. e4c believes that people deserve to be listened to and respected, no matter what their circumstances or challenges. We see people and welcome them without judgment or bias. **e4c's vision is to limit, alleviate and ultimately eliminate poverty.**

**e4calberta.org**



**780.424.7543**

9321 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5H 3T7



Seeing people not poverty.

# Yes

**I/we want to support the work of e4c and make an impact on ending poverty in the community!**

☐ My/our gift supports the area of greatest need. ☐ Please direct my gift to \_\_\_\_\_  
**\$50** ☐ **\$100** ☐ **\$250** ☐ **\$500** ☐ **Other** ☐ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

To find out more about e4c's focus areas check out the website at **e4calberta.org**

Cheque ☐ (payable to e4c)    Credit Card: Visa ☐    Mastercard ☐

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry: \_\_\_\_\_ CSV: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return this completed form with your gift to: e4c, 9321 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton AB T5H 3T7**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
First Initial Last

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Prov: \_\_\_\_\_ P/C: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Gifts can also be made securely online through Canada Helps, by calling e4c Fund Development at 780.424.7543, or in person at e4c, 9321 Jasper Avenue.

**Thank you for your support!**

Charity Registration # 131558140RR0001