



The Power of Story

WCC Year in Review 2023
10th Anniversary Edition

**Writing together, we empower every
voice, celebrate every story, and
change the world.**

2023 marks our 10th year as a
registered not-for-profit organization.

This is our why and our how



URGENT NEED



Human connection is at an unprecedented low



Demands on our social and health support systems are at an overwhelming high



Marginalized, vulnerable, and racialized populations are at the highest risk of experiencing significant mental health challenges

“As humans, we need each other in order to be well.”

– Jake Ernst, Straight Up Health, Toronto

**“Loneliness will reach epidemic proportions by
2030 unless action is taken.”**

– Brigham Young University research



Writers Collective of Canada (WCC) is a
social innovation

Through careful administration of our unique
community writing workshops, we:

- ✓ create connection
- ✓ reduce isolation
- ✓ empower healing

one story at a time.

WCC celebrates authentic voice & innate creative genius

“Writers Collective of Canada gives an invaluable gift. They give people the means and tools to come together to make stories... They show why creativity is fundamental to health and wellbeing.”

– Roland Gulliver, Director, Toronto International Festival of Authors

“Writers Collective of Canada ... strives to spark a connection between privileged and the unheard and the divide between us. Without you, our stories remain as cautionary tales, our lives just statistics. Through you, we become faces, we become people.”

*– Ellise Ramos,
WCC Writer & Facilitator*

MEASURABLE PROGRAM BENEFITS *



Connection



Empowerment



Healing



Creativity



Hope



Community



Courage



Affirmation



Confidence

** Proven through multiple independent evaluations*

WHY WE WRITE

WCC has given me an opportunity ... I'm finding that **more positivity is being expressed in all facets of my life.**



Wrecks Ricardus

Writing **brought me back to myself.**



Shirin Tobie-Paul

Writing ... is **for healing, transformation, imagination.** It's to also relay a message of things that have happened to me so I'm not alone, and others are not alone.



Christina Walsh

CONSISTENT DELIVERY

TO ALL PEOPLE

2SLGBTQQIIAAP

BIPOC & ACB

Women at risk

Living with psychosis

Differently abled

Trauma survivors

Underhoused

Caregivers

**First responders &
uniformed personnel**

**Youth, seniors &
adult learners**

**Living with addiction
& in recovery**

**Involved with criminal
justice system**

Newcomers

WHEREVER THEY ARE

Libraries

Community & cultural centres

Online at home

Clinics

Shelters & drop-in centres

Workplaces

Churches

Universities



Writers Collective of Canada (WCC) is a leader in community arts-health

- ✓ Unique community writing workshops provide connection, community, and empowerment
- ✓ Accessible model of community care
- ✓ Adaptable to a broad spectrum of partners and populations
- ✓ Augments overburdened social systems
- ✓ WCC expertise is sought after by agencies and partners
- ✓ Practiced, measured, and proven over 10+ years→

WHAT WE MEASURE impact on people

An independent, multi-year evaluation identifies and measures the impacts of WCC workshops in the lives of *Facilitators and Writers*.



WHAT WE MEASURE impact on people

“Writing within the safe, comforting, supportive space of a WCC workshop ... has allowed me to reach back and access parts of my life which were difficult.

With the support of fellow writers and facilitators, I found a place where I can explore the beauty of these places, which I was unable to access alone.”

- Steven Belanger,
WCC Writer & Facilitator

“People in the [WCC workshops] feel more self-confidence, more self-efficacy, a greater connection to others, a sense of personal identity, and acknowledgement of creative gift.

They see improvement in time management, sleep, self-worth, regular daily routine, listening, communication and writing skills, along with creativity and productivity.”

- Carrie Anne Hamilton, Chair, Board of Directors, Mood Disorders Ottawa (MDO)

WHAT WE MEASURE

impact on populations

In 2023, WCC conducted evaluations of two pilot projects to understand how WCC workshops benefit people in *specific populations*.



WHAT WE MEASURE impact on populations

“

For some, this [WCC writing workshop] has been their first experience in expressing emotions by putting pen to paper and having their work so positively affirmed.

My heart has been warmed in witnessing this creative growth in individuals who struggle to have their voices heard.”

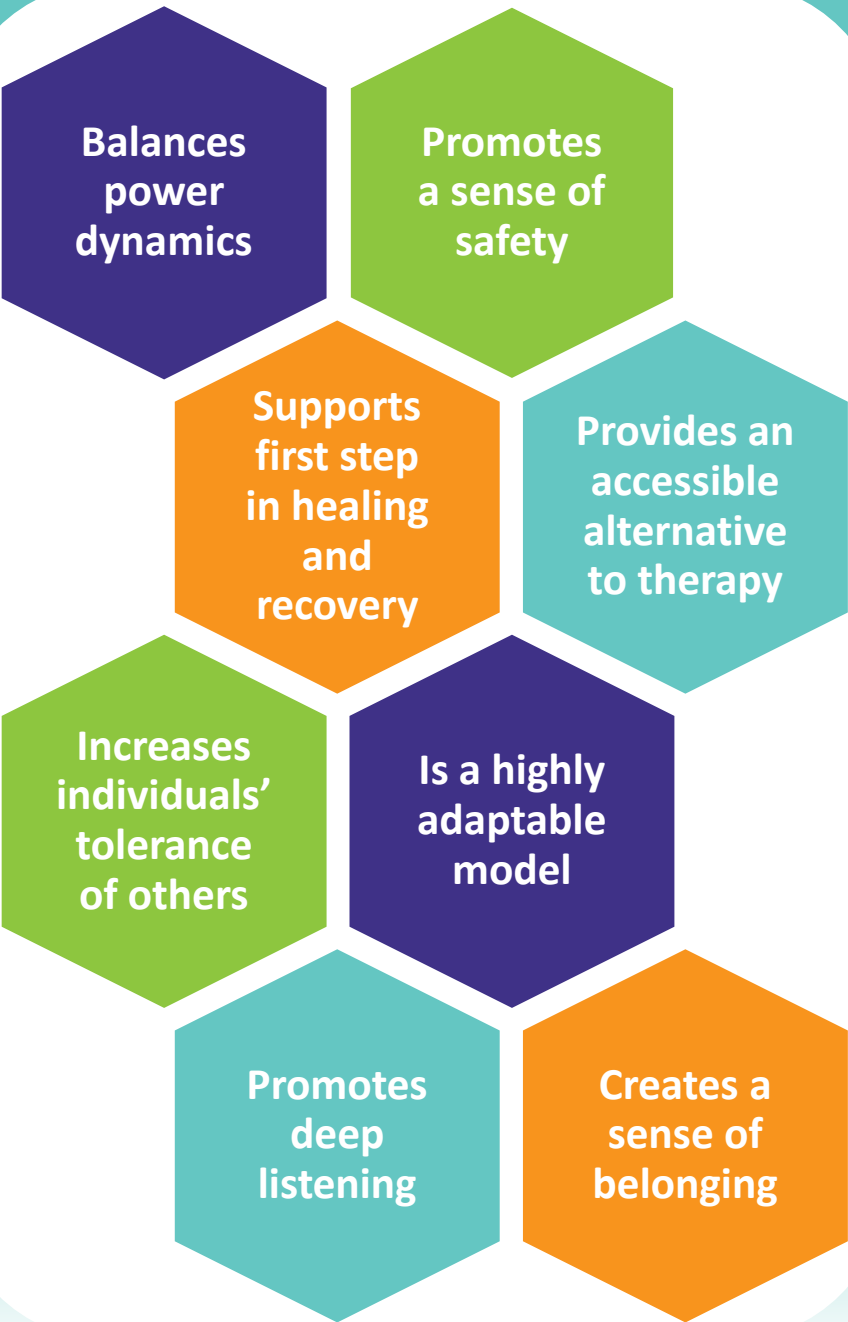
- Brenda Ewen,
Toronto East General Community
Outreach Services

“

Since many of the participants in this [WCC] program are from marginalized communities, the long-term impact of the findings from this evaluation could be far-reaching.”

- Dr. Kelly McShane,
Toronto Metropolitan University





WHY IT WORKS program theory

Impacts of the WCC program are reported consistently across diverse populations.

This is attributed directly to key elements of WCC's Program Theory and our Six Essential Practices.

“The work of the WCC is among the most important in today’s world: to help give the power of word and voice to those who need it most. I have seen first-hand how becoming the authors of their own stories can transform people’s lives, and those of their entire communities.”

*– Shaughnessy Bishop-Stall,
award-winning journalist and author.*



BY THE NUMBERS

Active
in 2023

94

330

Volunteer Facilitators
trained since 2012

2

Population-specific
pilot projects &
evaluations

5

Years of longitudinal
impact assessments

8,000+

Writers reached

35,000+

Writing experiences
delivered

3

Chapters: Peel,
Ottawa, Montreal

130

Partner agencies
engaged since 2023

SUPPORTED BY



Generous funders,
sponsors & donors

4

Full-time
staff

6

Part-time
staff

5

Contractor
experts

9

Board
members

5

Advisory
Council



WRITERS COLLECTIVE
OF CANADA

2023 MILESTONES

Amplification



- Toronto International Festival of Authors (TIFA)
- Koffler Centre of the Arts
- Theater of War

Sustainability



- Three committed chapter leaders in place
- Established long-term hybrid delivery model
- Established cross-functional teamwork

Reach



- Full year of quarterly *Wildfire Write* events
- Sustained social media outreach
- Monthly newsletter, guest blogs & video segments

Leadership



- Launched impact-based storytelling initiative
- Delivered presentations & knowledge transfer to several third parties (True Patriot Love; OISE; etc.)

Alignment



- Program Theory as strategic underpinning
- Monthly Facilitator Engagement program
- Strategic partner engagement & volunteer recruitment

Evaluation



- Completed two population-specific pilot projects with two independent evaluations
- Established groundwork to measure societal impact

INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS



Mississauga-based social enterprise providing innovative employment strategies to **individuals who have an intellectual disability**.

We worked with Options to pilot our program for its community, then trained several of their staff and community members as WCC Facilitators, **establishing** the WCC program there.



Ottawa-based organization offering supportive housing for **adults with serious mental illness and concurrent challenges**.

Two trained WCC Facilitators who are Salus staff members spearheaded WCC's first **hybrid** (virtual + onsite) writing workshops for clients and staff, connecting diverse writers across several sites.



Toronto Public Library (TPL) is one of the world's busiest urban public library systems, with 100 branches across the city.

Since 2013, WCC has collaborated with several TPL branches to provide **free, low-barrier** community writing workshops to members of the public throughout the metropolis.



Montreal's L'annexe is a diverse, **LGBTQ-affirming** Jewish social service and community space open to everyone aged 16-35.

We worked with L'annexe to adapt and pilot our program for **youth**, then trained youth from L'annexe as WCC Facilitators to deliver our community writing program to the greater Montreal area.

2024 GOALS – BUILD MOMENTUM

Measure social impact



Launch new phase of research to measure widespread social impact of WCC program

Increase capacity



Continue expansion of Facilitator recruitment & support; sustain partner engagement

Expand onsite delivery



Achieve or exceed pre-pandemic onsite program delivery to reach the most vulnerable populations

Leverage community



Leverage knowledge held by partners, Facilitators, Board, Advisory Council, and funders to deliver tailored programming to underserved communities nationwide

WHAT WE NEED TO GET THERE

Sustaining funding



A mandate to push ahead in bringing our program to more people, populations, and organization in need

Strategic partners



Community partners with aligned mandates and capacity to serve populations in need

Key Facilitators



Volunteers to deliver our program in geographies and organizations with the greatest need

Your support has exceptional **reach & impact**

- ✓ **Transforms healthcare** in Canada through accessible and innovative arts-health programming
- ✓ **Increases societal impact** among underserved populations
- ✓ Trains, supports, and **empowers facilitators** from populations served
- ✓ **Cultivates innovation** and collaboration between health and social programming
- ✓ **Expands research** and leadership in the societal impact of arts-health programming

“The [WCC] writing group demonstrates what is possible when we cross social borders to collaborate with and listen to groups who are usually ignored. It kindles moments ... of dialogue that can transcend the barriers that usually divide us ...

[It] demonstrates a way to honour dignity that, applied more broadly – in our workplaces, our government, our culture, and our communities – could reduce the need for places like Fred Victor.”

- Andrew Mindszenty, Community Development Housing Worker, Fred Victor



WHY WE WRITE

Writing gives me
a sense of purpose
and that's why I'm
here in the world.



Roberta Taylor

I used to think I was just an
addict, now I see that I am more
than that. ... today I saw that I am
creative, that I am a writer, and
that **I just might have something
to give back after all.**



WCC Writer

With writing,
I can **come
unabashedly
forward.**



Kan Cheung

Write with us, partner with us, support us

get in touch

wcc-cec.org

contact@wcc-cec.org



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