



A YEAR OF PROGRESS

2018-2019





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BOARD CHAIR **JILL POULTON**

Have you noticed the waves of influence WESK is having in our province for women entrepreneurs? When envisioning the future of WESK, we see opportunities to support and advance all entrepreneurs, from start-up to scale-up. With a strong foundation of resources for the beginning stages of business, we decided to revisit our relevancy to mature businesses. Our mission at WESK has been refueled with advocating on behalf of women entrepreneurs to close the economic gender gap in Saskatchewan.

To further our mission to close the gender entrepreneurship gap through economic and social empowerment of women in Saskatchewan, WESK continued its valuable work with the Indigenous Women Entrepreneurs through Matchstick with encouraging results. With the support of key partners, we hope to continue this work into 2020 and beyond.

With the move of the Regina office into PATH Cowork last summer, and a revamping of local programming, WESK also saw increased engagement and activity in the Regina area.

It has been a joy and an honour serving as Board Chair for WESK - connecting with members, government officials, and other entrepreneurs at various events this past year. Supporting an organization that is making such a positive impact for so many women is inspiring and motivating. Bows of gratitude to Prabha and her team for the passionate work they do every day in making a difference for women entrepreneurs in this province.

WESK has an incredible team serving on the Board of Directors with diverse experiences, knowledge, and skills. Their commitment to the organization is often quietly happening behind the scenes, but their contributions are greatly appreciated! We are in a rare position of being at full complement on the board with no exits this year. This will allow us to further gel as a team, and gain traction as a Board.

Being a woman entrepreneur is empowering, and when we come together as women entrepreneurs in the spirit of collaboration, inspiration, and forward movement we are powerful. Be a part of the change you wish to see. Challenge the status quo, be a champion for other women-led businesses, and keep thinking outside the box.

On behalf of WESK's Board of Directors, thank you to all our members and supporters.

CEO **PRABHA MITCHELL**

From the launch of our new Brand two years ago to advancing gender equality in the creation of economic activity; the evolution and growth has been exciting, challenging and gratifying.

Delivering on our Brand promise of creating an inclusive organization, the Matchstick program for Indigenous entrepreneurs currently in Phase II of the multi-phased project, has connected approximately 250 women with us. WESK in partnership with the Advisory Council of Matchstick has been able to mobilize engagement and interest in our communities regarding entrepreneurship. I want to thank the Advisory Council of Matchstick for their partnership and support in igniting the “spark” for Indigenous Entrepreneurs.

While supporting women entrepreneurs to start and grow a business remains the fundamental priority of WESK; the inequities of experience between male and female entrepreneurs in scaling up their businesses warranted attention and action. As such, WESK launched a concerted effort and strategy to educate and inform stakeholders including the Government of Saskatchewan of the lost “economic development opportunity” by this disparity. This included commissioning a Research Report by PwC Canada related to Women Entrepreneurship in Canada.

The aggregate revenue of female majority-owned businesses was \$148 billion in 2011; a 10% increase in number of female-owned firms can increase this to \$198 billion by 2021. Addressing some of the barriers such as access to: capital, networks, venture capital investments can significantly enhance the economic contributions of women entrepreneurs and the growth of the economy.

We are committed to deliver as promised programs in the new fiscal year to support women in their efforts to scale up their businesses. Supporting women entrepreneurs is not only about gender equity and diversity but should also be pivotal in the development of a strong and comprehensive economic development policy.

To our 700 plus members – whether it is starting a business or scaling; WESK is committed to supporting you. To every woman entrepreneur in Saskatchewan – WESK is your voice to build a business climate that support women to scale up their businesses.

Nancy Duarte said: “Future is not a place we are going, but a place we are creating.” The future we want to create is one where every entrepreneur in Saskatchewan has an equal opportunity to succeed and be recognized; a future where it is simply ENTREPRENEURS not women entrepreneurs.





WE BELIEVE IN
YOUR DREAM.
WE BELIEVE IN
YOU.

LET'S SPARK
SOMETHING
AMAZING
TOGETHER.

PROGRAM:
MATCHSTICK

WESK wants ALL Saskatchewan entrepreneurs to have an equal opportunity to succeed. We've launched Matchstick, a spark for indigenous entrepreneurs to help make it happen!



With investments of more than \$300,000 from Western Economic Diversification Canada, FSIN, Government of Saskatchewan and in collaboration with other Advisory Council partners, WESK has provided training to 271 Indigenous women in 7 communities - Saskatoon, Regina, Fort Qu'Appelle, North Battleford, Prince Albert, Pelican Narrows, and Onion Lake. This multi-phased project will be completed in March 2020.



Our women are the life givers and caregivers in our nations. You are the heart and soul of all our families and communities. When you succeed we all succeed.



—CHIEF BOBBY CAMERON,
FEDERATION OF SOVEREIGN
INDIGENOUS NATIONS

OUR MISSION

As part of our mission, with powerful input from Indigenous women, organizations, communities, chiefs, elders and other leaders, we are developing culturally relevant training, business advising and financing to foster entrepreneurship for all. WESK launched the MATCHSTICK, a program designed to spark Indigenous women entrepreneurs.

OUR GOALS

Our goals are to support Indigenous women in their entrepreneurial journey, create employment in their communities, fuel economic growth and develop a best practices model for continued support of entrepreneurial activity in Indigenous communities.

Thank you to our advisory council partners.



ADVISORY COMMITTEE

IT'S TIME TO CLOSE THE ECONOMIC GENDER GAP.

Last summer WESK commissioned a report by PwC Canada on Women Entrepreneurship in Canada. The report and its findings, including data pertaining to Saskatchewan, were released at a Media Conference October 29, 2018 in Regina. The Honourable Tina Beaudry-Mellor was in attendance for the conference.

WESK also developed a concerted strategy to educate and influence stakeholders including the Government of Saskatchewan and MLAs on the "lost economic development opportunities" as a result of the unique barriers women entrepreneurs experience in scaling their businesses. The focus was on building a business case for an Advisory Committee to examine and address the gender entrepreneurship gap in our province.



In Saskatchewan,

34,600 WOMEN
are self-employed, reflecting
16.5% GROWTH
over the last two years

**The third highest
growth rate in Canada.**

Saskatchewan's women entrepreneurs contribute to the economy in many sectors such as construction, manufacturing, health services, finance and technology.



WESK

FINANCING PROGRAM



FINANCING UP TO \$150K AVAILABLE THROUGH WESK

With loans of up to \$150,000, the WESK Financing Fund is proudly dedicated to helping women create jobs and grow sustainable businesses.

Since inception in 2012, the John and Bernice Williams and North Prairie Developments Equity Investment Fund, managed by WESK, has distributed 12 Equity Investment Loans totalling \$83,641.

SINCE 1995...

727

loans for women entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan

1,553

jobs created through our financing program

727 cumulative loans disbursed since 1995 totalling

\$37.6M

IN 2018-2019...

102

loans outstanding totalling \$6.0M

18%

of our members have outstanding loans with WESK

Our average loan was

\$87,783

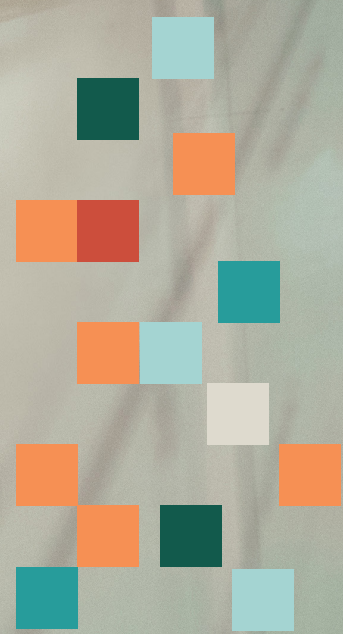
“

WE CARE.

WE COLLABORATE.

WE EMBRACE
THE POWER OF
COMMUNITY.

”





WESK AND YOU.

STRONGER TOGETHER.

PEOPLE

We care. We collaborate.

We embrace the power of community.

SPARK

We ignite passion. We seize opportunities.

We are catalysts for change.

ASPIRE

We dream big. We lead. We make an impact.

BOLD

We ask why not? We see possibilities. We act despite fear. We. Are. Resilient.

VISION

All Saskatchewan entrepreneurs have an equal opportunity to achieve success and recognition.

MISSION

To close the gender entrepreneurship gap through economic and social empowerment of women in Saskatchewan.



51,052
WOMEN HAVE
CONTACTED
WESK FOR
INFORMATION
SINCE 1995

WESK

BUSINESS ADVISING PROGRAM



ADVISING AND SUPPORT

Any entrepreneur will tell you:
It can be lonely at the top. With
WESK, women entrepreneurs
are never alone!

WESK Business Advisors give an unbiased source of expertise and experience to help entrepreneurs navigate, problem solve, and achieve their business goals.

They offer one-on-one coaching, facilitate workshops and mentoring programs, engage with the community, and are connected to the entrepreneurs of our province and beyond.

WESK Business Advisors do not just give information - they help entrepreneurs move their business to the next stage.

6,046
WOMEN

have accessed our business
advising program.

1,187

business advising
appointments
in **2018-2019**

262

new clients in
2018-2019

WESK TRAINING PROGRAM

TRAINING

WESK BUSINESS WORKSHOP PUT THE EARN IN LEARN!

Calling on industry experts inside and outside our organization, WESK is working hard to bring our members new and exciting one-of-a-kind workshops - all to deliver maximum bang for their business buck! (Or for no bucks at all. Many of our programs are free!)

Each month, we bring fun and unique luncheons so they can stay up-to-date and informed about the latest tips and tricks in the business world.

Every month, WESK teams up with local industry experts to provide entrepreneurs with the opportunity to learn from the comfort of their own home (or office, or any other stop on their entrepreneurial adventure).

WESK webinars are **1-hour** in length and are **absolutely free** (yes, you read that right).



2,106

entrepreneurs participated in...

112

workshops in **2018-2019**

23,793

women have attended WESK workshops since 1995.



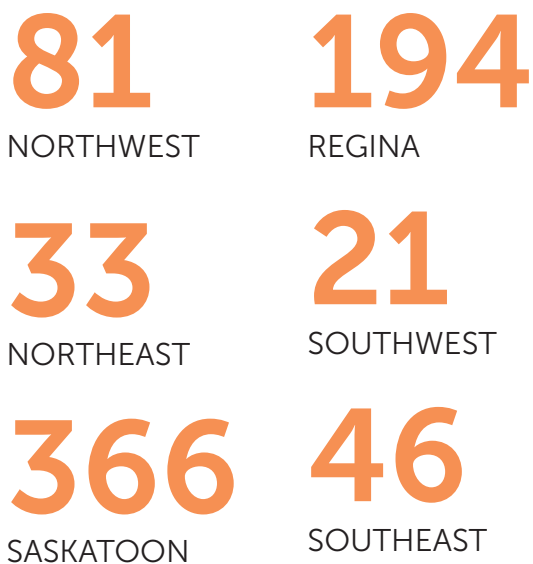
WESK TRAINING PROGRAM: A YEAR OF PROGRESS

MEMBERSHIP STATISTICS

Our membership is diverse with members located all over our province. In addition, our members operate businesses in all sectors such as Construction, Manufacturing, Retail, Transportation, Real Estate, Health and Wellness, Health Services, Management, Consulting, Food Services, Hospitality, Professional, Scientific and Technological Services, and Finance and Insurance to name a few.

In the future, WESK will continue to focus on enhancing membership engagement, quality of programs and services, and supporting members to pursue business growth.

Over the 23 years, WESK has grown from a six-member organization to a credible and successful organization with more than 750 members **strong!**



IT TAKES A VILLAGE

TO OUR MEMBERS, BOARD, STAFF AND PARTNERS: **THANK YOU!**

WESK is a non-profit organization working with women who are starting, buying, or operating a business. Our priority is supporting women throughout Saskatchewan to achieve their entrepreneurial goals. With invaluable advising, one-of-a-kind training, and a distinct and supportive financing program, WESK is dedicated to guiding women on their entrepreneurial journey.

From start up to success, WESK means business!



JILL POULTON
CHAIR



AIMEE SCHULHAUSER
PAST CHAIR



DANIELLE GRAFF
VICE CHAIR



LEIGH KAUFMANN



KELLY BANNISTER



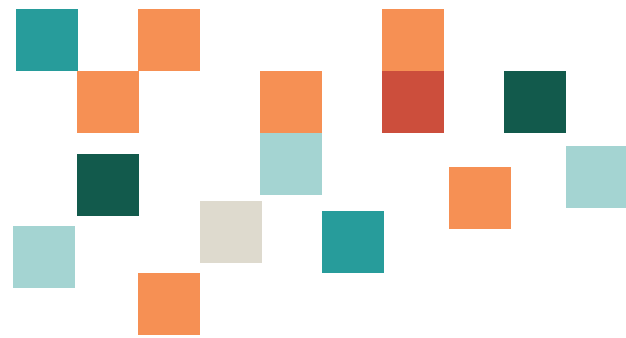
LEANNE JOHNSON



COLLEEN YATES



MARCIA MIRASTY



OUR TEAM

SASKATOON TEAM

Prabha Mitchell
Chief Executive Officer

Kaurie May
Manager of Finance
and Administration

Lori Jestin-Knaus
Manager of Programs

Danielle Grimes
Business Advisor

Nick Kochar
Contract Business Advisor

Grace Lam
Loans Advisor

Josie Fries
Marketing Coordinator

REGINA TEAM

Mona Bates
Manager of Operations

Diane Souillet
Training Coordinator

OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Conexus Credit Union

Economic Development Regina

Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN)

FHQ Developments

First Nations University of Canada

NSBA

Regina Chamber of Commerce

Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce

Saskatchewan Indian Equity
Foundation (SIEF)

Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce

SquareOne

SREDA

RBC

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY WESTERN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION.



Western Economic
Diversification Canada

Diversification de l'économie
de l'Ouest Canada

Canada

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