

# WAVE

## Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton

**Making an Impact with an Inclusive Lens**



Year 6 Report    May 2019 - April 2020

**from WAVE Chair, Sandra Woitas**



“Let's continue to be the woman who fixes another woman's crown without telling the world that it is crooked.”

As I think back on my six years with WAVE, there have been many accomplishments and important learnings. It has been an exciting time of empowerment, growth and change for WAVE and women in Edmonton. Like many Canadians, I grew up with Little Golden Books. Most recently I came upon A New York Times Bestseller, "Everything I Need to Know I Learned From a Little Golden Book (2013)." Practical advice for getting the most out of life paired with iconic images from the best loved children's books provides an interesting guide to life.

Look up and savor the seasons as they roll round. Stay curious. Learn something new. Do no harm. Think big! Toot your own horn! Soon you will be on your way. Give thanks! All these lessons were revisited over the past six years with an incredible group of women who gently taught me a thing or two and reminded me of the potential to be wise, find joy and bring joy.

As the year ends, I'd like to thank all our members for their significant contributions to WAVE and women in Edmonton. I would like to especially thank members who are leaving this year:

Beatrice Ghattuba, Debra Jakubec and Joyce Labriola as well as our four remaining inaugural members: Jennifer Jennax, Angelica Hernandez, and Dilara Yegani. They helped shape the development of WAVE and are all to be commended for their outstanding work.

As my role as chair and on the WAVE committee ends, I feel grateful and honoured to have had an opportunity to be part of this important journey to help establish WAVE and support women in Edmonton. It has been a tremendous learning opportunity for me to learn from a diverse group of women and be part of an exciting transformational committee that values and empowers women. I look forward to the future by hearing how WAVE continues to make a difference to support women in Edmonton.

## **Who is WAVE?**

**Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton (WAVE)** is comprised of 15 community volunteers from diverse backgrounds and experiences who provide Edmonton City Council with advice on affairs relevant to municipal jurisdiction. In February 2014, the Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton Committee Bylaw was approved by the City Council and the WAVE Committee was formally established in spring 2014.

### **Our Mandate is to:**

- make recommendations to Council about women's gender-based issues and opportunities in relation to Council policies, priorities, and decisions;
- promote leadership development to empower Edmonton women to fully participate in civic life; and
- research and provide information on resources about women's gender-based issues and opportunities in Edmonton.

## **Women's Equality work at the City of Edmonton**

The City of Edmonton affirms its commitment to municipal leadership on women's issues, engagement and leadership. This has been advanced by three elements;

1. a City Council initiative on gender equity known as Edmonton's Women's Initiative,
2. an internal workforce development campaign called Women at the City,
3. an external Community Advisory committee called WAVE, the Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton.

Collectively these three distinct elements play unique roles to advance gender based issues and opportunities on behalf of women in municipal life. The City of Edmonton's gender equality efforts aim to foster and promote opportunity, access to services, justice and inclusion for women in Edmonton.

Among the first of its kind in Canada, these three elements are helping to ensure the unique perspectives of women and girls are included in the conversations that shape the city.

WAVE is a key pillar in these efforts and as a community-based committee that reports directly to Edmonton City Council, brings invaluable perspective to City Council and the Civic Administration.

## **Our Dedicated WAVE Team 2019-2020**



In alphabetical order; Abby Aiyeleye, Bailey Dawn Coty, Kourtney Boucher, Councillor Bev Esslinger, Angelica Hernandez, Jennifer Jennax, Joyce Labriola, Angelika Madson, Kristina Midbo, Hersharon Sandu (vice chair), Elyssa Teslyk, Julianne Threfall, Sandra Woitas (chair).

Absent: Dilara Yegani, Beatrice Ghattuba, Debra Jakubec.

### **City Council Sponsor**

Councillor Bev Esslinger

### **WAVE Support Team, Citizen Services, Social Development**

Marian Bruin, Supervisor

Kaylin Betteridge, Women's Initiative Coordinator

Brenda Wong, Strategic Planner

**“WAVE is imperative to the City’s goals of diversity and inclusion. It’s important to have the voice of Edmonton women advocating and providing women’s perspectives to help ensure Edmonton is advancing towards gender equality in all aspects of the City”**

- Councillor Bev Esslinger, City Council Advisor to the WAVE Committee



## **What WAVE Accomplished in 2019-2020**

### **1. WAVE’s Strategic Plan 2019-2021**

In 2018, WAVE updated and revised our strategic plan and finalized an annual work plan. Six goals were identified:

**Goal 1:** We will apply an intersectional gender lens to policy and issues, and provide recommendations to City Council and City Departments.

**Goal 2:** We will promote leadership opportunities for women.

**Goal 3:** We will see an increase in the number of women running for public office.

**Goal 4:** We will communicate to and engage with Edmontonians on issues related to women’s issues.

**Goal 5:** We will gather and analyze research to ensure decisions are evidence based.

**Goal 6:** We will employ best governance and organizational practises in our work.

Five ongoing WAVE Working Groups were established to implement the work plan and strategic goals. The working groups were Executive, Engagement and Communication, Leadership and Research, Policy, and a new group was formed, Reconciliation and Allyship.

## **2. WAVE Working Group Updates**

### **Executive Working Group**

This working group interviewed and selected seven new members for the WAVE Committee in spring 2020. The Executive team and Administration provided an orientation package for new members on the roles and responsibilities of WAVE members.

### **Policy Working Group**

During consultations at WAVE meetings this year, feedback was provided on nine City plans/initiatives and City Council reports. This included:

- Bus Redesign/Transit Strategy
- Disabled Adult Transit System (DATS)
- City Plan
- Spaces for Early Learning and Care
- LRT Station Security update and progress report
- Vehicle for Hire
- First Kilometer, Last Kilometer Community Solutions
- Diversity and Inclusion Framework
- Edmonton Safe Cities Tool

### **Research and Leadership Working Group**

The Research and Leadership Working Group's mandate is leadership development and promotion to empower Edmonton women to fully participate in civic life.

- Research was completed and a paper was written about Women in Politics. This information will help inform the Women's Initiative and partners about strategies to engage and encourage women to enter politics as it gets closer to the municipal election. Recommendations include working with partners such as Parity YEG.
- A blog post was developed for the Provincial Election, encouraging women to get involved.
- Presentation content was developed to encourage women and girls to get involved or to develop leadership skills.
- Work was completed with the developers of the Equal Voice Impact Bot and The Parity Bot to see how they can be used in the upcoming municipal election. This is a free ChatBot that allows citizens to find information and ways to get involved, and allows candidates to share information and track volunteers and engagements.
- Relationships were developed with Norquest and BCW (Black Canadian Women) in Action to support their Black History Month Events.

### **Engage and Outreach Working Group**

A key focus for the engagement and outreach working group continues to be outreach to the community, focusing on reaching targeted groups not fully aware of WAVE and its mandate.

- On June 10th, 2019 WAVE hosted an Evening with Thorgy Thor. It was an all ages event for Pride Month with the support of Evolution, Thorgy Thor, and the Winspear. Thorgy Thor spoke on leadership and LGBTQIA rights and her experiences.
- Participated in two Black History Month February events; Norquest College Allyship event and BCW in Action event.
- Edmonton's International Women's Day event was hosted at the Edmonton Inn on March 8, 2020. This event included a panel of women in male dominated employment settings and Senator Paula Simons as the keynote speaker.
- A screening of the documentary film "The Great Disconnect" is being hosted. The film speaks on how we are less connected to our neighbours and society even though we are connected online.
- Connected with Edmonton Public Library to host a speaker panel event, highlighting successful Indigenous women for spring 2020.
- An event is planned for October 19, 2020 highlighting the one year countdown to Edmonton's next municipal election. Councillor Bev Esslinger, Councillor Sarah Hamilton and Trisha Estabrooks (Edmonton Public School Board Trustee) will be on the panel. Parity YEG will also be in attendance to promote their training sessions for women to prepare for the next election.

### **Reconciliation and Allyship Working Group**

A new working group was formed with the goal of recognizing the importance of reconciliation and working towards it by concentrating on WAVE members' education and awareness in order to become allies with Indigenous Communities.

- WAVE members have completed training and workshops (including a Blanket Exercise)
- Currently drafting a meaningful land acknowledgement to include in WAVE presentations and events
- Will engage with Indigenous women's groups to foster and develop relationships and support their work where appropriate.
- Will engage with an Elder to ensure they are undertaking the work in a good way and see if they have guidance or advice for the direction of this working group.
- Additional plans include a book/article/resource club for all WAVE members to participate, ongoing cultural training for WAVE members, and being open to other opportunities as they arise.



### **3. WAVE's Communication Platforms**

#### **Social Media**

Social media accounts had an excellent year. From March 1, 2019 to February 29, 2020, accounts put out 1279 posts that reached 2,156,000 people, with an average of 179,700 people reached every month. This is an increase of more than 25 per cent from last year. There were nearly 57,000 direct engagements this year, which is up by approximately 10 per cent.

Facebook continued to see strong recovery this year, frequently reaching 10 times the size of page audience every month, with an average of 125,999 people every month. This is up nearly 20 per cent from last year. Notably, October and November were huge months for this account, reaching nearly 250,000 people in each month. Facebook has been a very powerful platform for driving change-making conversations in the past year.

Twitter is also performing well, with similar reach and a slightly larger audience than last year. Average monthly reach is 70,000 to 80,000 people, with an annual total reach of 848,000. Twitter growth tends to be organic, with slow and steady increases. Qualitatively, there was lots of positive reinforcement of our messages and brand through local and national ambassadors and champions. In spite of Twitter's general negativity, the messages have been very well received.

#### **Blogs**

WAVE members and women in the community began writing blog posts on [womensinitiativeedmonton.ca](http://womensinitiativeedmonton.ca) in the fall of 2015, and in the last year, authored eight blog posts on a variety of topics. These blogs provide WAVE members, champions and other community leaders with a visible platform to share their ideas and stories, and to generate dialogue about gender equality and women's leadership in Edmonton. These blogs include:

- Black History Month
- Recruiting New WAVE Members
- Taking the Gender Equality Quest on the Road
- Your Vote Matters
- Preserving The History of Alberta's Early Women
- Be Heard - Cast Your Vote
- Navigating It
- How to Get Involved In The Election

#### **Presentations at WAVE meetings**



A variety of organizations presented and exchanged learnings at WAVE Committee meetings this year, discussing a variety of women's needs, interests and potential collaborative opportunities. They included the following:

- Women in Poverty in Canada
- City Plan Phase 3
- Transit Safety and Security - ETSAB
- Women and Leadership Research
- Transit Safety Project
- Alternative Transit Solutions report
- City Plan Update

## **Community Outreach**

WAVE was active in the community in 2019/ 2020 by connecting with over 2,000 people. Through reaching out and connecting with various organizations and groups, dialogue was encouraged and awareness of women's issues and concerns was increased. These groups included:

- Tamarack
- On Site Placement
- Empowering Girls Event
- City Hall School
- Inspiring Future: Accomplishments and Challenges of Women
- GROW Women Leaders
- Black Canadian Women in Action

## **2019/2020 WAVE Participation and Support of Events**

- Thorgy Thor event at Evolution
- Dr. Safiya Noble: Algorithms of Oppression - Edmonton Public Library
- It's Time, Conversation About Domestic Violence in Edmonton - Edmonton Public Library
- Daughters Day
- SkirtsAFire Festival
- Black History Month Event at Norquest College

Add event photo

## **WAVE's Focus 2020-2021**

### **Policy**

- Review and select some existing and relevant City policies to be updated. WAVE's focus will be priority issues women have identified such as public transportation and vehicles for hire.
- Continue to Administration as requested, as they utilize a GBA+ methodology in the development of new City Policies, procedures or programs.

### **Leadership and Research**

- Support the Annual International Women's Day event.
- Present to leadership classes within schools and community.
- Support women to become involved in the upcoming municipal election, by encouraging women to vote, volunteering on campaigns or asking candidates' questions.
- Partner and support the work being done with community partners to encourage more women to run in the 2021 municipal election.

### **Reconciliation and Allyship**

- Move forward some of the applicable Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action such as cultural training, incorporating an indigenous message in presentations, and reading Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

### **Engagement and Networking**

- Host a Women's Speaker Series in partnership with community groups.
- Outreach and engage with citizens and groups with a focus on reaching targeted diverse groups.
- Continue to support women's events, with an emphasis on reaching out to under represented groups.

## **How WAVE is Making a Difference**

### **Founding and outgoing WAVE member, Dilara Yegani**

"As one of the founding members of WAVE it truly was a privilege to witness what started as a concept to come to fruition. The brainchild of visionary leadership and passionate women, WAVE has now become a strong voice in the community as an advocate for gender-based equality and an influencer of City's policies. Along this eight year journey, I met wonderful women from different backgrounds and generations, who I have learned so much from. I truly am grateful for all the learnings, connections, friendships and many memories I am taking with me. I proudly and fondly remember the day we named WAVE, how we created our first strategic plan, Christina Stasia's first gender training, truly eye-opener presentations from many non-profits, women's groups, plus many other memorable events. Through this journey, City folks who worked in WAVE with us, Councillors, our Mayor have all been exceptional and a huge part of WAVE's success.

To this day, I have carried with me our Bylaw to every WAVE meeting to validate what we do and what we decide against our three mandates. I can confidently say we genuinely stayed true to our purpose and mission and that feels great. Being a WAVE member has been a very enriching and uplifting experience for me overall. WAVE will continue to bring together talented and caring individuals to do amazing work and will continue empowering Edmonton's women in

the years to come and I am very glad I was able to contribute to a few chapters of a tremendous story.”

**WAVE Vice Chair, Hersharon Sandhu**

“As the Vice Chair for WAVE, I am privileged to be able to support and give voice to women’s issues in Edmonton. The people that I work with—whether those serving on the board with me or those I encounter through engagements, events, or initiatives—are incredibly inspiring and diverse. Every day in this role is a learning opportunity, whether as Vice Chair in a WAVE meeting, an MC at an event, or just as a WAVE representative at a City Council meeting.

I am indebted to the opportunities and support WAVE has awarded me. This role has challenged me to grow in more ways than one, and I am humbled by the experiences and stories I hear daily—they push me to work harder to make the world just a little more kinder and easier for all people to live in. In particular, I am proud of the work WAVE has accomplished around Edmonton’s transportation systems (transit, vehicle for hire, etc.). Witnessing my fellow board members rally around policy in order to enact positive change for all Edmontonians has been emotional and inspiring. As our Board Chair, Dr. Sandra Woitas, often says, ‘There’s nothing that can’t be done by capable women.’”

**WAVE member, Abby Adeton**

‘In my first year of being a WAVE Committee Member, I’ve provided insight on City policies, the federal election, opportunities for women empowerment, and innovative ideas for new initiatives. I’ve also met women in leadership doing great things and paving the way toward building a better City. I enjoy being a part of this Committee, working with great women, and providing an intersectional lens so that no one is left behind on our journey toward a greater Edmonton.

In this role, I feel more connected to our City than ever before and I personally think that’s a great feeling!”

## **4. Other Key Women’s Initiative Projects**

### **2020 International Women’s Day**

WAVE and the Women’s Initiative co-hosted an event on Sunday March 8 to recognize 2020 International Women’s Day, with the theme **Each for Equal**. International Women’s Day is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women - this year was a call to action for accelerating gender equality. Equality is not a women’s issue, it’s a business issue. Gender equality is essential for economies and communities to thrive.

Other event highlights included:

- Greetings by Councillor Bev Esslinger;

- Presentation of City Council's 2020 International Women's Day Proclamation to Healing Her Home Fires;
- A dynamic panel of women sharing their work experiences in unique occupations (in trades, science, agriculture and politics);
- Keynote address by Senator Paula Simons;
- ParityYEG's video and message encouraging women to get involved in civic politics;
- Edmonton Transit's presentation on transit safety initiatives and the new Kathleen Andrews garage-dedicated to the first female transit driver;
- Performances by Carla Jayne, musician, and Timiro Mohamed, youth poet laureate; and
- Fifteen displays showcasing women's resources and initiatives.

Leave spaces for pictures of event

For more information contact:

[edmonton.ca/women](http://edmonton.ca/women)

[womensinitiativeedmonton.ca](http://womensinitiativeedmonton.ca)

[facebook.com/womensinitiativeedmonton](https://facebook.com/womensinitiativeedmonton)

Twitter: @equalityYEG