

IMPACT REPORT 2021-2022

INVISIBLE TO INVINCIBLE

BC WOMEN'S
HEALTH
FOUNDATION



When women's health is overlooked, **researchers like Daniela Palombo** step up to find answers.





MEET THE COVER

“There are many health topics unique to women and that are deserving of more attention from funders, researchers, and society at large.”

Daniela Palombo is an Assistant Professor at the UBC Department of Psychology and a Researcher through the Women's Health Research Institute (WHRI).

Daniela recognized that women's health topics span many important areas but, historically, are often overlooked so it was important to incorporate into her research. When Daniela had her own experience with infertility a few years ago, she had the chance to meet other individuals and couples who were on their own infertility journey. “I realized that each of us had our own unique autobiographical memories of our own fertility experiences — memories that are mostly kept away because of stigma.” It was then that she realized that her personal and professional life had intersected, and she wondered if her expertise in memory could be used to better understand this difficult time for so many.

See page 6 to read more about the research that Daniela is doing on how fertility treatments affect mental wellbeing for women, thanks to a donor-funded Catalyst Grant.

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Find citations and further resources for this report at bcwomensfoundation.org/impact-resources

2021 IMPACT OVERVIEW

BY THE NUMBERS

STATISTICS PROVIDED FOR PATIENT VISITS TO THE HOSPITAL IN 2021 (JANUARY TO DECEMBER)



11,777 maternity patients and 48,748 visits to maternity



7,169 births at BCWH, and 1,131 babies in the NICU



10,751 surgical cases and 6,820 hours spent conducting surgeries



**34,395 PATIENTS*
106,075 VISITS**

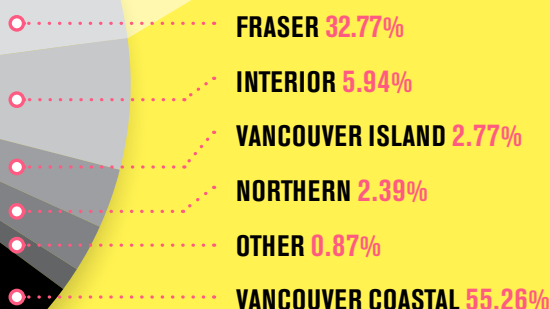
**Unique patients, including adults, newborns, and neonates*

WHRI has over **450 investigators** embedded in hospitals and academic institutions across BC. **18% of WHRI researchers** are also **healthcare providers** at BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre (BCWH).



BC PATIENT LOCATIONS

Percentage by Health Authority



DATA SOURCES:

Discharge Abstract Database (DAD)

Hospital Admit/discharge/Transfer (ADT) Cerner System

LETTER FROM THE CEO + BOARD CHAIR

I couldn't be more excited to have joined BC Women's Health Foundation this year as the President and CEO. While I knew I was joining an incredible community transforming women's health, I have been blown away by the life-changing work happening at BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre and the Women's Health Research Institute (WHRI).

It was my first tour of the NICU that showed me that BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre was leading the way for neonatal care across the province and beyond. As I walked around, seeing the equipment that many of you supported, I met healthcare leaders who had developed protocols for bringing moms, babies, and their family together in one room. This changed how care was delivered in the NICU as these protocols were adopted provincially.

It didn't take much time for me to learn that BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre is always leading the way for improved care for women. The new Leslie, Lauri + Jill Diamond Surgical Suites, funded by the Diamond Family, made way for innovative surgical procedures for women that use sedation instead of anesthetics. The new space helped increase capacity and during the pandemic, BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre was able to keep waitlists short and ensure women received the care they needed in a timely manner.

The Women's Health Research Institute, which is comprised of more than 450 researchers across the province, focuses on advancing women's health by tackling real health issues women face. This year's Illuminations Luncheon successfully raised funds to help support the WHRI's ground-breaking Catalyst Grants, which provides seed money to researchers to investigate topics in women's health. For the past two years, we have received a total of 45 applications to Catalyst Grants for research topics in women's health and only 12 were funded.



While we are grateful to be able to fund some of these thanks to your support, many topics that are never researched still need funding to be explored. To me, this speaks to why we are all here: There is much work to be done to ensure women's health is top of mind for everyone. As we move forward together, we will continue to fund projects that ensure equity and ensure BC Women's Hospital + Health Care Centre has the resources they need to continue leading and improving care for women, newborns, and their families across the province.

The BC Women's Health Foundation team is beyond grateful for your continued support.

Thank you!

Cally Wesson

CALLY WESSON
President + CEO

Jennifer Randall-Nelson

JENNIFER RANDALL NELSON
Board Chair

OUR IMPACT PARTNERS

WE'RE PROUD TO BE THE PHILANTHROPIC PARTNER TO:



BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre, the only women's hospital in British Columbia, serving ~80,000 patients annually through over 60 specialized clinics and programs devoted to the health of women and newborns. It is a national leader in educating and training doctors, nurses and allied health professionals in all aspects of women's and newborn health, the provincial centre for the highest risk maternity and neonatal care, and home to the largest Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) in British Columbia.

YOUR IMPACT: Donor contributions have led to the development of transformational projects in 21/22 like the Skidmore Goodman PRIME Research Centre and Research Wet Lab (see pages 10-11), a renovated Provincial Milk Bank, the renovated Leslie, Lauri + Jill Diamond BC Women's Surgical Services, and more.



The world-renowned **Women's Health Research Institute (WHRI)** is a hub of over 450 researchers working to improve women's health outcomes. The WHRI is a leading academic women's and newborn health research centre that serves as a catalyst for research in women's health and supports a provincial and national network of women's health researchers, policy makers, and healthcare providers.

YOUR IMPACT: Donor support in 21/22 has enabled WHRI-affiliated researchers to test their innovative ideas, advance our understanding of women's health nationally, and develop cutting-edge treatment options through initiatives like Catalyst Grants (see page 6), Graduate Awards, and more.



1 in 6 Canadian couples
experience infertility

NAVIGATING INFERTILITY

HOW ONE CATALYST GRANT WINNER PLANS TO IMPROVE CARE

Women's health research has historically been, and continues to be, gravely understudied and underfunded — meaning that doctors often aren't equipped to provide patients the care they deserve.

Daniela Palombo, Assistant Professor at the UBC Department of Psychology, felt the impacts of this personally.

“I realized there wasn't enough research on how to help women navigate infertility while experiencing a difficult fertility journey of my own. When confronted with the intersection of these two parts of my life, I knew that I could apply my own expertise in psychology and cognitive science to make a difference.”

Daniela wanted to better understand how women process and remember challenging experiences related to infertility, the role social supports play in this, and how these memories might ultimately shape their self-identity and well-being.

Unfortunately, without promising preliminary findings — something that didn't exist because of the lack of prior research on this topic — all she had was the seed of an idea.

Enter, Catalyst Grants, a BC Women's Health Foundation donor-funded award offered by the Women's Health Research Institute (WHRI), these grants were created specifically to support the initial stages of innovative projects like Daniela's. The only of their kind in BC, Catalyst Grants kick start some of our provinces' most cutting-edge research on women's and newborn's health that otherwise would likely not be funded.

Daniela was awarded this funding in 2021 and is actively conducting her research project *“A Woman's Journey to Parenthood: Memory, Self-Schema, and Well-Being During Fertility Treatment”*, co-investigated by Dr. Samantha Dawson. And she's not alone, 6 grants are funded each year thanks to the generosity of our donors — fundamentally impacting the landscape of women's health for years to come.



While a relatively small investment, Catalyst Grants have an astronomical impact: one example translated into a 1284% return on investment by enabling a Federal Grant, ultimately changing how care is provided internationally.

Read more about Catalyst Grant projects at bcwomensfoundation.org/catalyst

REIMAGINING REALITIES FOR SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE

Almost half of all women in Canada experience intimate partner violence or sexual assault in their lifetime. Despite this, we live in a society where access to appropriate, culturally-safe care is currently the exception and not the norm.

Survivors often report not feeling comfortable or supported in disclosing what happened to them. In fact, just 5% of sexual assaults are reported to the police. This lack of disclosure, and resulting lack of adequate support can have a long-lasting and devastating impact on the health of women, families, and our community.

The BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre Sexual Assault Service is changing this reality, thanks to support from BC Women's Health Foundation and our donors.

Most recently, the Sexual Assault Service collaborated with the Ending Violence Association of BC on a 4-year community-based research project, "Changing Perceptions: Reimagining Sexual Assaults".

The project, made possible by a Vancouver Foundation Grant acquired by BCWHF, investigated how public perceptions of sexual assault impact survivors, and how they can be shifted to create more accessible care.

The BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre Sexual Assault Service provides free and confidential care to patients who visit the Vancouver General Hospital Emergency Department or UBC Hospital Urgent Care Centre after experiencing sexual assault.

By working in direct consultation with survivors, care providers, and healthcare leaders, the researchers have learned how a lack of training contributes to practices like 'victim-blaming' in the provincial health system. Additionally, results show that many providers are unaware of what specialized resources exist for survivors — meaning they are unable to offer them to a patient who discloses assault.

The project illuminated how to educate care providers across BC to offer, or direct survivors to, the trauma-informed supports needed. Today, our donors are helping the research team put these findings into action and create training programs that will improve the quality of care available across the province.

If you (or someone you know) are experiencing violence and are in immediate danger, please call 911. Otherwise, call VictimLinkBC at 1-800-563-0808 or visit endingviolence.org to learn about services available to you.



“MY BODY WAS FAILING, NO ONE KNEW WHY”

HOW ONE PROGRAM AT BC WOMEN'S HOSPITAL + HEALTH CENTRE IS UNCOVERING THE ANSWERS TO SOME OF THE WORLD'S MOST DEBILITATING + MYSTERIOUS DISEASES.

Imagine it, everything in your body seems to be failing. You are forced to leave your job and miss out on time with loved ones. You're just too tired, in too much pain to do anything that once brought you joy.

You **know** something is wrong, but your test results keep coming back negative. Some of your physicians might even start to question if you're making it all up.

For Hilary Robertson, and **100,000 other British Columbians** with complex chronic diseases this isn't just a nightmare — it's their reality.

“I had neurological impact, difficulty speaking and swallowing, muscular dysfunction and no one knew what was wrong. I had CTs, MRIs, colonoscopies, a bronchoscopy, ultrasounds; was referred to neurosurgeons, gastro-enterologist, ENTs, dietitians, immunologists... One neurologist suggested I ‘get on with life’.”

These individuals, **80% of whom are women**, suffer from life-long diseases that can't be directly identified by any tests and many **doctors were never trained to look for**.

“I pushed myself to complete collapse trying to find an answer — I was virtually bedbound. 7 years of searching and I still had nothing.”



“Finally, I discovered the Complex + Chronic Disease Program at BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre. They diagnosed me with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (also known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) and Fibromyalgia and I qualified for permanent disability status.”

The BC Women's Health Foundation donor-funded Complex + Chronic Disease Program (CCDP) is the first of its kind in Canada dedicated to treating patients with diseases like Hilary's. The team, led by internationally renowned clinician-scientist, Dr. Luis Nacul, works tirelessly to provide patients with the answers, and care, they so desperately need.

Recently, our donors joined forces with the Canadian Institute of Health Research to help accelerate the program's ground-breaking work by funding a CCDP Research Fellowship. The fellow, Dr. Zaya Chuluunbaatar, will help lead research on a national scale to further uncover the mysteries of these diseases.

And Hilary? She reports that she is back to enjoying life. While she knows that an earlier diagnosis may have prevented her from having a permanent disability, she feels fortunate to have been able to make some recovery.

“While my life is very different than before my disease or in contrast to others my age, I am content and, in many ways, live a rewarding life.”



You've seen the headlines, or maybe you know from personal experience, 'Long COVID' is real and **impacting people at staggering rates**. A complex chronic disease itself, its symptoms share a concerning resemblance to Hilary's illness: Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME/CFS).

Of those with COVID-19, it is estimated that **10% will be left with an illness that meets the definition of ME/CFS** — functionally doubling the global rate of this life-altering disease. Even more alarming? Early data suggests women are more likely to experience it and the effects may be worse for people of colour.

We need answers on how to care for this growing population **now**. Thankfully, our province already has one of the best teams in the world prepared to do this work right here at BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre. There's just one missing piece — funding.

Dr. Nacul and the CCDP needs donors like you to continue their cutting-edge research into Post-COVID-19 Fatigue Syndrome, or 'Long COVID'.

**BE A PART OF LIFE-CHANGING ADVANCEMENTS
BY INVESTING TODAY.**

Image: ME in BC Report, 2021. Art credit: Drawing Change Consulting

CLEARING THE PATH FOR INNOVATION

HOW THE SKIDMORE GOODMAN RESEARCH WET LAB IS SHAPING A NEW FUTURE FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH

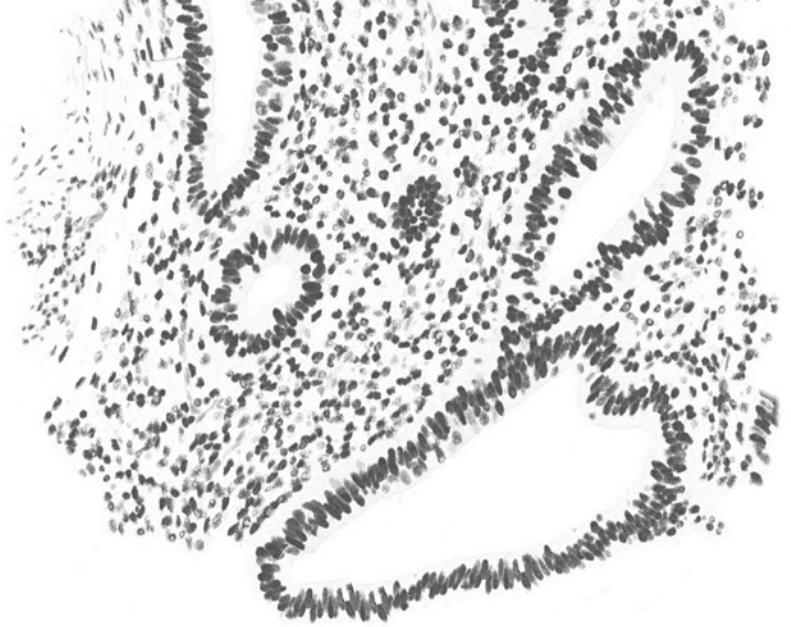
Clinician-researchers caring for women's unique health at BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre are constantly inspired with new ways to improve care. However historically, a lack of equipment and dedicated space have prohibited them from testing their ideas.


The Skidmore Goodman Research Wet Lab at BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre is addressing these barriers to innovation. The first and only of its kind in British Columbia dedicated to women's health research, it is accelerating cutting-edge advancements like never before.

Wet labs, as opposed to dry labs, handle biological and chemical research — or simply put, anything that involves 'the wet stuff'. They are traditionally much harder to build due to a requirement for unique infrastructure like special plumbing and HVAC systems.

Take for example, the endometriosis research currently underway in this lab led by Dr. Paul Yong and PhD candidate Dwayne Tucker. Endometriosis is a common cause of infertility and pelvic pain **impacting approximately 1 million individuals** in Canada. However, gaps in knowledge mean lack of timely diagnosis and effective treatment for many people. The new facility is allowing Yong and Tucker to investigate gene mutations and nerve growth in endometriosis, with a goal of ultimately changing standards of care.

"Without donor-funded supports like the new Wet Lab and Catalyst Grants, our research wouldn't be possible," says Dr. Yong. Their work is proof that, together with you, we are shaping an exciting new future for women's health.



A man with a beard, wearing a white lab coat over a blue and white checkered shirt, is working in a laboratory. He is wearing blue nitrile gloves and is using a pipette to transfer liquid from a yellow multi-well plate into a larger container. The container is part of a piece of laboratory equipment, possibly a centrifuge or a storage unit, with a lid that is open. Inside the container, there are several small vials with blue caps and orange labels. The background is a plain white wall.

BEHIND THE NAME: Thomas and Lorraine Skidmore partnered with BC Women's Health Foundation to generously fund this facility, and more, in honour of their mothers: Elsie Skidmore and Theadora Goodman. The legacy of these matriarchs will forever embed the life-changing advancements made possible by this transformational gift.

BIG SIBLINGS IN TRAINING

HOW THE SIBLING SUPPORT CENTRE IS EXPANDING THE HOSPITAL'S FAMILY-CENTRED MODEL OF CARE.

Meet Noah. Colouring enthusiast. Imaginary play extraordinaire. Bestest big brother to former NICU patient, Lily.

When Noah's little sister was born she needed a lot of extra care. So much so she spent over several months receiving specialized support alongside her parents in the BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

The NICU provides the highest quality of care to parents and newborns, but what about siblings like Noah? For many families, providing the attention their other kids need while navigating appointments, a sick newborn, and other medical complications can add an extra layer of stress to an already challenging situation.



Luckily for Noah, and over 120 kids since 2021, this is exactly what the Sibling Support Centre is for. Primarily used by NICU siblings, the Centre opened during the pandemic as a collaborative pilot project between BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre and BC Children's Hospital—funded by their Auxiliaries. The volunteer-led space is dedicated to including siblings in the hospitals' family-centred model of care while creating fun and engaging experiences for them.

“The centre helps siblings know that they are seen and heard, and brings awareness that they are a part of the patient’s care team too,” says Rhiannon, the Centre’s Coordinator, on why she feels it is so important. “I see families looking relieved and siblings excited to have undivided attention, often asking ‘when can I come back?’”

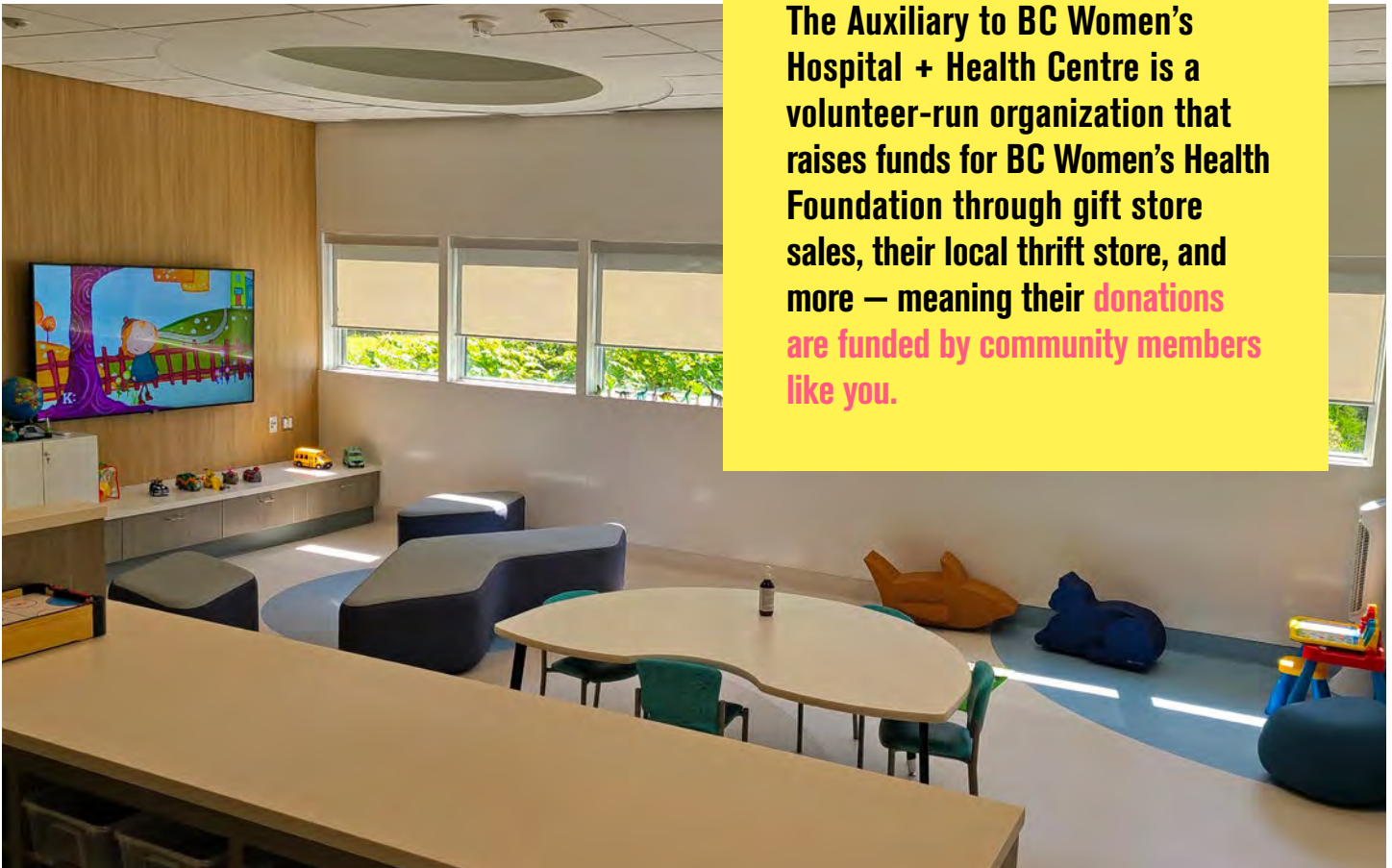
Noah visited the Sibling Support Centre 27 times during Lily's stay. It was an experience his parents are incredibly grateful for and one that he will likely never forget as part of his journey to becoming the best big brother ever.

In the future, the Centre hopes to expand their services so that even more kids can access the special care they provide.

Note: Names were replaced to protect patient and family confidentiality.



The Auxiliary to BC Women's Hospital + Health Centre is a volunteer-run organization that raises funds for BC Women's Health Foundation through gift store sales, their local thrift store, and more — meaning their **donations** are funded by community members like you.



FINANCIAL MEASURES 2021-2022

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

Total Revenue Received	10,630,930
Total Expenses	3,415,690
Surplus of Revenue over Expenses before Disbursements	7,215,240

DISBURSEMENTS

Programs + Equipment	1,274,709
Major Capital Campaigns	3,665,084
Research	301,989
Total Disbursements	5,241,782

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

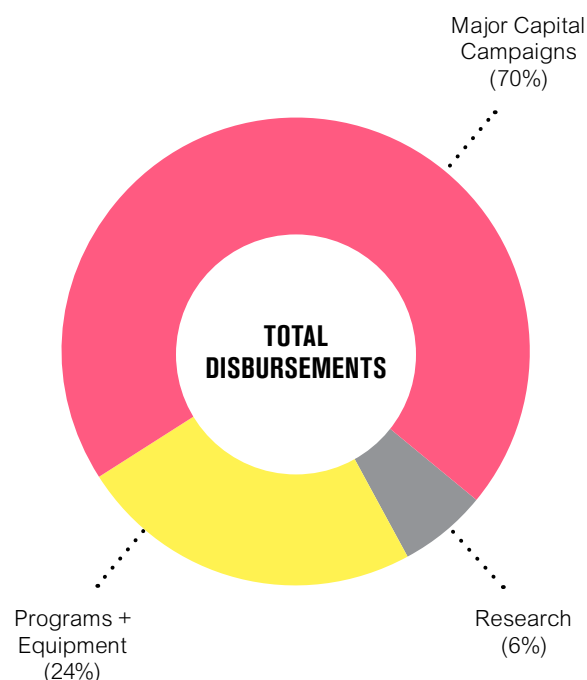
ASSETS	
Current Assets	4,455,676
Investments	16,961,074
Total Assets	21,416,750

LIABILITIES

Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	377,659
Designated funds held in trust	97,406
Deferred revenue	82,855
Total Liabilities	557,920

FUND BALANCES

Unrestricted	8,137,864
Externally restricted	5,769,519
Capital restricted	6,325,454
Endowment restricted	625,993
Total Liabilities + Funds	21,416,750





YOUR IMPACT

APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022

\$6,165,895

contributed by donors

2,275

individual donors, foundations,
and corporate donors

55

projects funded



BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR

**YOUR INVESTMENT WILL HELP ALL WOMEN
AT ALL LIFE STAGES IN BC HAVE ACCESS TO
THE HIGHEST QUALITY HEALTHCARE WHEN,
WHERE, AND HOW THEY NEED IT.**



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To learn more or make a donation please visit
bcwomensfoundation.org/donate-now**



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We acknowledge that we carry out our work on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Coast Salish peoples – xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and Səl̓íl̓wətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

When we refer to “women”, we are referring to women in all their diversity, inclusive of LGBTQ2SAI+ individuals.