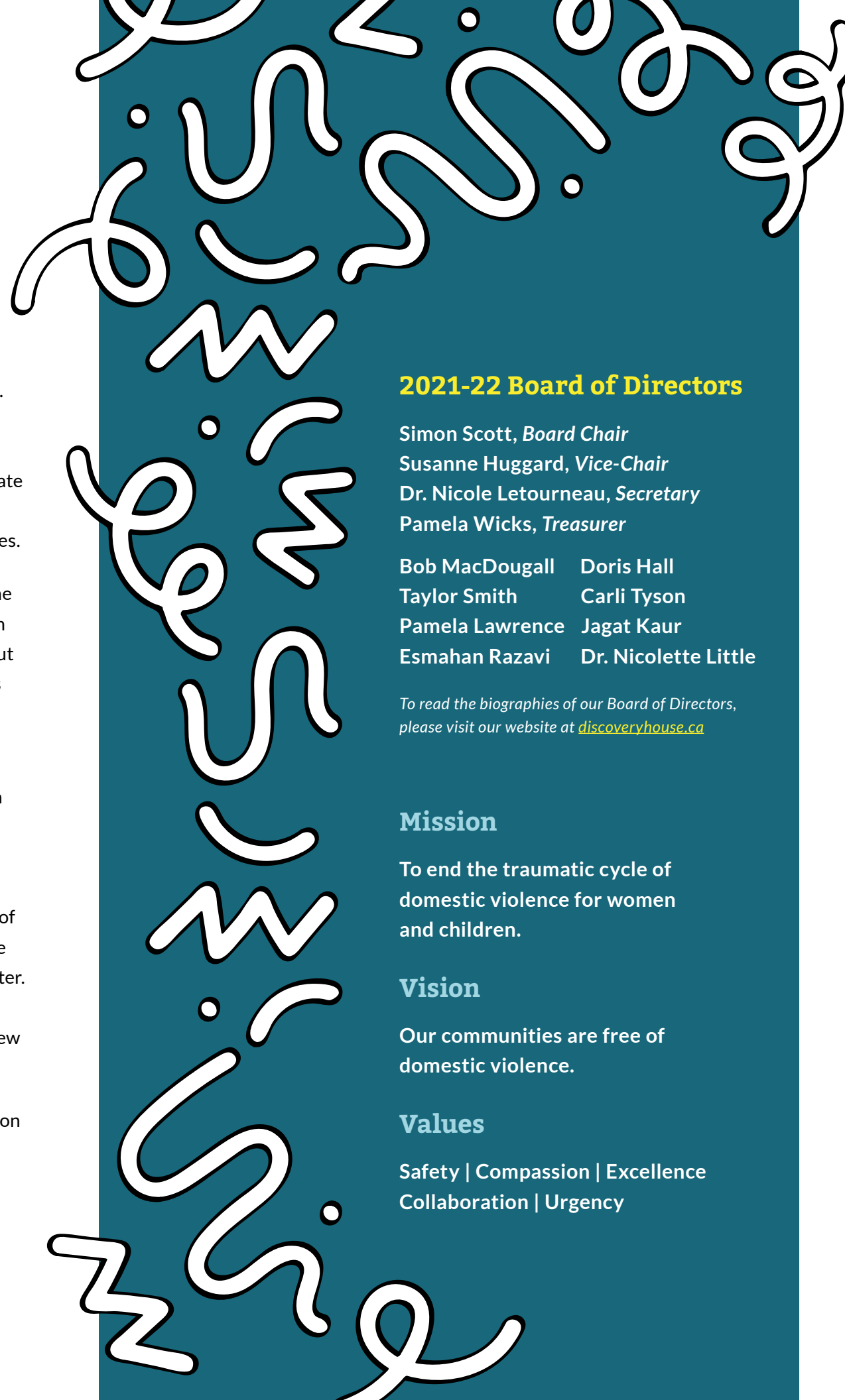


2021-2022

Annual Report to the Community



Discovery  House
domestic violence ends here.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR

Executive Director & Board Chair

The women and children we work with at Discovery House meet crisis with courage. In 2021-2022 we emulated just a fraction of this strength to better support our Discovery House families through trying times. Some of that support was simply maintaining the ongoing, life-saving work of creating a safe space full of compassionate care, stewarding community collaborations, and advocating for the women and children in our care, all while having excellent operations in challenging circumstances.

Beyond this, we were able to use this year to create a better vision for our future. The distance of the past few years has reinforced our desire to make Discovery House an even more nurturing and vibrant place where people feel connected and at home, but also have easy access to the very best supports that bring families the opportunities for the healing needed to create a life free of domestic violence.

The women who walk through our doors come from many diverse backgrounds, communities, and circumstances. In the past year, we have focused on ensuring each client's voice is heard and that they find their individual needs recognized within Discovery House. Part of this work has been creating a new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee who will bring new ideas and insights that will help us deliver better programs and services, but also a culture of belonging. This includes a future of trauma-informed and culturally appropriate programs and spaces. As part of this, we will be embarking on upgrades and renovations to our 20-year-old, much-loved shelter. As we have been planning for these improvements, we have collaborated with our clients on how the shelter can better serve their needs, including the creation of a new cultural healing space.

In the past year, our Indigenous Committee was reignited. As part of our reconciliation work and to better meet the needs of our Indigenous clients, we sought out a very special Elder to help us create spaces and programming focused on more traditional methods of healing, and to deliver grandmother teachings to clients.

2021-22 Board of Directors

Simon Scott, *Board Chair*
Susanne Huggard, *Vice-Chair*
Dr. Nicole Letourneau, *Secretary*
Pamela Wicks, *Treasurer*

Bob MacDougall Doris Hall
Taylor Smith Carli Tyson
Pamela Lawrence Jagat Kaur
Esmahan Razavi Dr. Nicolette Little

To read the biographies of our Board of Directors, please visit our website at discoveryhouse.ca

Mission

To end the traumatic cycle of domestic violence for women and children.

Vision

Our communities are free of domestic violence.

Values

Safety | Compassion | Excellence
Collaboration | Urgency

With this critical year of foundation laid, we are excited to identify future possibilities for the organization. We are cautiously optimistic that the worst of COVID is behind us, allowing us to be more focused and strengthen our relationships with collaborative partners, build stronger relationships with donors, engage in more research initiatives, and increase our volunteer base.

As you review this year's report, we hope that you are as inspired as we are about this incredible year. It is with hope and optimism, that healing, and recovery happen. The future is bright. There is much to be grateful for, and we are especially thankful to those who support our vision.

Simon Scott, *Board Chair*

Leslie Hill, *Executive Director*

Kali is one of

597 WOMEN & CHILDREN

who walked through our yellow door in 2021-22

65% of women at Discovery House have experienced **physical abuse**, and

75% of women reported **emotional, psychological, or verbal abuse**

In 2021-2022, Discovery House served

399 CHILDREN

Like Kali's child, 220 of those children were **8 years old or younger**.

52% OF WOMEN

arriving at Discovery House were at **severe or extreme risk of homicide**.

Families at Discovery House have the **support of caseworkers, mental health staff, housing liaisons, outreach workers, shelter workers and more**.

A Letter of Hope From Kali

Hello, my name is Kali, and I came to Discovery House in the fall.

I was married to a much older man in my early 20s. He remains the biggest regret of my life.

He abused me all through our 10 years together. When I say abuse, I mean in every sense possible. Mentally, financially, emotionally, sexually, physically, and otherwise. I lost 3 unborn babies to domestic violence. I eventually had my miracle baby, my firstborn child - the one who became my "WHY". Having grown up in an abusive environment myself, I knew that raising my son in such a toxic environment would damage him, so I became determined to break the cycle.

It was the beginning of a whole new journey.

I had been in fight or flight mode due to the abuse I went through, something I learned about more in my time at Discovery House. The first time I stepped into Discovery House after our stay at the women's shelter, I was met by Irene, the Outreach Worker. She was so warm and kind to me. **I immediately felt at home** and was happy to move into the apartment.

I was assigned a caseworker, Duniya, who became like a member of my family. She is simply amazing. Duniya, Sam, Linda, Ida, Irene, Ameeta, Brady, and every member of the Discovery House team became our safe place.

These wonderful people went over and above for us. They provided clothes, food, gift cards, counseling sessions, support,

50% OF YOUTH

had maintained or improved self-esteem and confidence, as well as their **ability to cope effectively with challenges**.

love, and kindness, and provided the necessary information, connections, transportation, baby supplies, organized birthday parties, baby shower, women's meetings, childcare, and activities for us for the whole year we spent at Discovery House.

For once in a very long time, I felt safe again.

I was diagnosed with PTSD and had previously contemplated suicide. Ida, my counsellor, equipped me with skills and knowledge on how to tackle the periodic depressive bouts that I suffered from. **I learned a lot about how to take charge of my feelings.**

Nicholas worked with my son as a Child and Youth Case Manager and became his advocate. I have noticed that my son's confidence has improved since his time spent with Nicholas. Previously, he struggled with low self-esteem, had constant nightmares, and could not express himself. This affected him in forming relationships, but he is now able to make friends, communicate his feelings, and has formed strong bonds. His academic performance has greatly improved. He has even won awards at his school.

When it was time for us to transition into the community, Discovery House didn't leave us to figure it out. **They were with us all the way.**

Bruno worked with me when it came to housing support. He liaised with the new landlord, ensured that every problem that arose was resolved, and accompanied me to the viewing and for the move as well. It felt like I had a village working with me.

146 FAMILIES OUTSIDE OF OUR SHELTER

were helped by Discovery House in 2021-22 through our **Community Housing and Outreach programs**

Even after we moved out, we were not left alone. Irene became my go-to person. She checked in regularly with me. We received referrals for food hampers, immigration consultations, and more.

I got a job recently as a healthcare aide and I intend to pursue a career in helping others because I have been so inspired by the Discovery House team. I would like to be a ray of hope to someone, having been a recipient of great support myself. I was awarded a bursary for school through Discovery House and I intend to actualize my dream.

In 2021-22 Discovery House gave **scholarships and bursaries to 3 different women,**

FOR A TOTAL OF \$40,000

There is no way I can write my story without mentioning Discovery House. I thank all donors and wish to let them know that because of the love they spread, people like me got our voices back.

My biggest lessons from Discovery House are: Everyone deserves kindness. You get in life what you have the courage to ask for. It takes nothing to show love.

Thanks for reading.

Kali

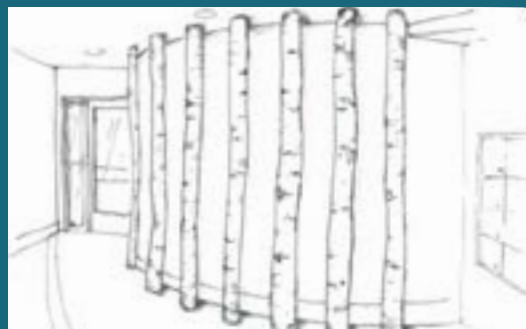
Kali's name, the names of staff, and any identifying information has been changed to protect her, but her story is very real, and told in her own words, with minimal changes.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

At Discovery House, the diversity of families within the walls of our shelter, and in our care in the community, has led us to prioritize work on diversity, equity, and inclusion in our programming and services. The numbers currently show that 83% of our clients come from racially marginalized backgrounds, with the largest numbers in our care being Indigenous.

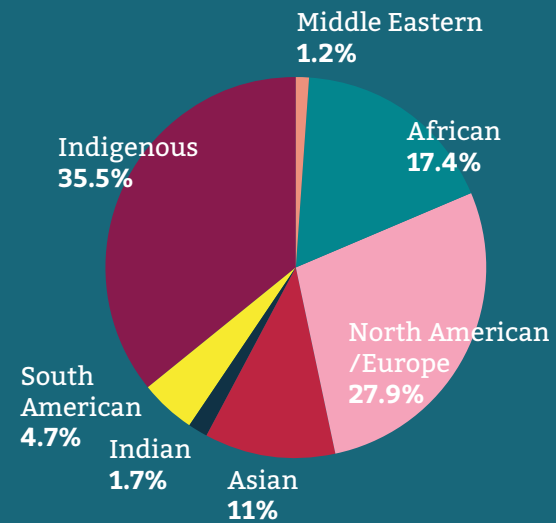
Discovery House is charting a direction that is increasingly, intentionally focusing on how we support the diversity and uniqueness of each family's situation, cultural context, and goals towards healing. We are forging partnerships with and learning from culturally diverse groups and agencies to enable us to support women to heal in culturally safe and appropriate ways.

One of our newest and most meaningful community partnerships this year, has been with Elder Pam Heavy Head. Pam is an Indigenous Elder who has been an instrumental voice on a number of exciting new projects and programs here at Discovery House that are working towards better meeting the needs of the Indigenous women and children in our care. The largest project Pam has been a part of to date has been her consultation on the creation of our new cultural healing space. This will be a transformative area that will sit at the very heart of our shelter for families to come together, reflect and heal. Pam has hosted regular one-on-one meetings with any mother or staff member who is looking for her guidance on traditional Indigenous pathways of healing.



Design for the new Culture Room at Discovery House

Ethnicity (Year to Date)



Elder Pam Heavy Head



"After spending time with Pam and learning more about my culture, the medicines, and traditions used by my people, I feel stronger. I can be a better mom to my two daughters."

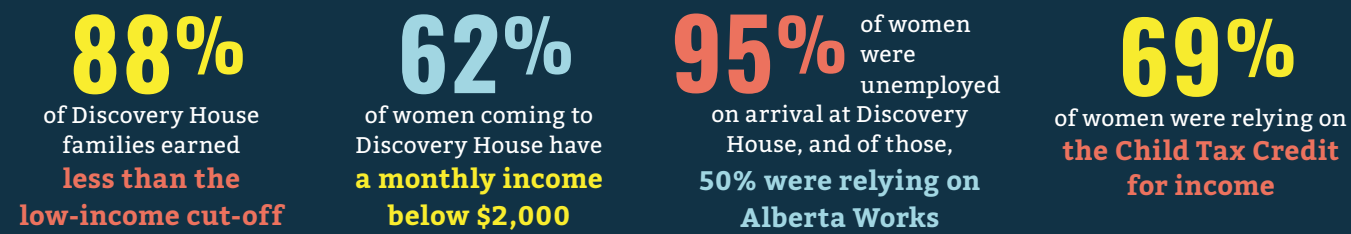
Discovery House client and mother of two



Financial Literacy Programs

Domestic violence isn't just physical. Forty-three percent of women at Discovery House reported experiencing financial abuse.

The low-income cut-off in Alberta for a family of 3 is \$40,444 or \$3,370 per month. In 2021-22



A crucial role played by Discovery House last year was the delivery of financial empowerment programming for our clients. The goal of this programming is to help women achieve financial literacy and independence. This programming includes a year-round tax clinic in partnership with the Canada Revenue Agency. This clinic supports women so they can receive federal and provincial benefits without interruption. Thank you to our partners in the Aspire Calgary Collective for helping make this possible.

“My client was able to save \$300 so far, and she’s on schedule to save \$1,000 by September. It’s the first time in her life she’s been able to save.”

Discovery House Employee, discussing the growth of one of her clients taking the Discovery House Financial Empowerment Courses

Operational Updates

Achieving Accreditation

Discovery House received three year accreditation for the Community Housing Program, through the monumental efforts of our staff. This means that our Community Housing Program will continue to be funded through the Calgary Homeless Foundation, successfully meeting the needs of our clients without any gaps in services! This process is a peer review by an objective third party and shows that our organization has achieved excellence in areas that include client program and services, internal processes, governance, financial responsibility and more.

100% of clients agreed or strongly agreed that the support services received at Discover House were appropriate for their needs.

100% of clients agreed or strongly agreed that they were connected to the government services they needed.

Renovations and Repairs

In 2020-21, we completed the construction of our Harvest Table room and community kitchen. The creation of this space will serve as a space of support and community building for Discovery House families.

In the last year, we began planning a multi-year capital improvement project for our entire building. As our space is now over 20 years old, many areas need to be updated to maintain functionality. While we make these repairs over the next few years, we are working to create spaces that will better promote healing and recovery. The improvements will not just be trauma-informed but beautiful and empowering.

“Senior management is very committed to providing leadership to promote the success of clients and for the program’s success through their commitment to sound policies and procedures that are reflective of the organization. Clients spoke very highly of the program and of the program staff.”

2021 Community Housing Program Accreditors





Building a Strong Team and a Strong Culture

OVER **95%** of Discovery House employees* believe that the **leaders in the organization are supportive.**

OVER **95%** of Discovery House employees* felt **safe and supported in their work environment.**

Discovery House is home to an outstanding group of passionate and dedicated employees. Throughout 2021-22, we have been making changes to make it easier for us to do exceptional work, maintain our team through the challenges of the pandemic, increase their skills to meet client needs, and to further strengthen our team's capacity as leaders in the organization and the community.

As the complexity of our families has increased throughout the pandemic, so has the need for us to take care of our staff. This year, we placed additional care and attention on strengthening a cohesive culture of client-centered, ethical, and accountable practice. We do this through ensuring strong connection and communication across the organization, investing in training and development for our staff and our leadership, introducing flexibility in workspaces and hours, ensuring that supports are in place for our frontline team, and of course, by celebrating our successes!

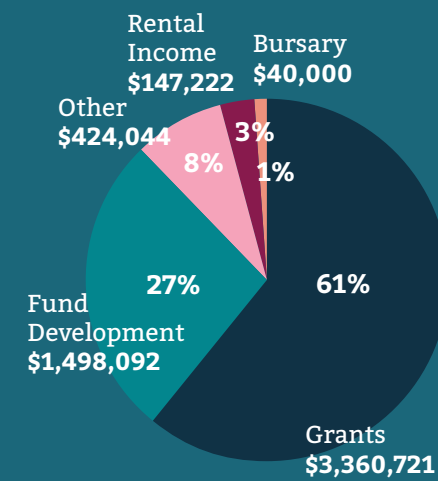
Across the organization, there is a strong desire for in-person connection as the pandemic subsides, and we are looking forward to this in the coming year.

**of employees who responded to the 2021 anonymous employee survey*

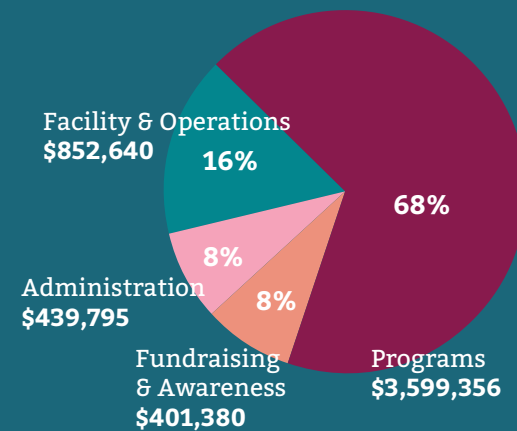
“Compassion is an attitude. It is a characteristic of how we treat people, both clients and colleagues.”

*Discovery House employee,
2021 Discovery House Employee Survey*

Funds Raised



Funds Allocated



Our Financial Picture

Financially, we had a strong finish to the year, raising \$1.64 million, which beat our target of \$1.2 million by 36%! This enabled us to finish the year in a strong financial position. We were also able to renew two of our major contracts totaling \$1.8 million and we strengthened relationships with funders for years to come.

Private donors and foundations were especially generous this year, in particular through our end-of-year Gift of Hope campaign. We want to give a special thank you to the Auxilium Foundation, who provided matching funds for the Gift of Hope, allowing us to raise a total of \$209,299, easily surpassing our \$100,000 target! This generosity allowed us to be creative and flexible with supporting the evolving needs of the families we work with.

We were thrilled to renew our funding from our partners at the Government of Alberta, the Calgary Homeless Foundation, and Family and Community Support Services - City of Calgary, some of our strongest and most consistent supporters over the years.

Generous Calgarians contributed over \$11,000 in goods and products including quilts, household items, food, and so much more.



Rangers Soccer Club, December 2021

Volunteers are always a big part of Discovery House too. Although volunteering has looked a lot different because of COVID-19, volunteers were still a big part of Discovery House in 2021-22, with 1,043 volunteer hours given. We are looking forward to welcoming more volunteers into our space in the coming year!

Discovery House

domestic violence ends here.

Discovery House is proud to be recognized as a Top 100 Impact Charity again this year.

This is a report, so numbers are necessary. But numbers are just part of the story. The bigger story is about supporting families and ending domestic violence. To watch videos about the impact on families, see discoveryhouse.ca. For our audited financial statements, visit discoveryhouse.ca

If you are a current donor or funder to Discovery House, thank you for your confidence in our work, and your dedication to ending domestic violence. If you'd like to learn more about the impact of Discovery House in the community and would like to invest in recovery, hope, and healing for women and their children, please connect with our Community Relations team by emailing us at donate@discoveryhouse.ca.



In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge that we live, work and play on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, the Îyâxe Nakoda Nations, the Métis Nation (Region 3), and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.

Discovery House

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