WIS

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

WIS

Land Acknowledgement

At WIS, we respect the treaties that were made on these lands and we acknowledge that WIS has offices located on Treaty 1 and 2 territories, which are the ancestral lands of the Dakota, Anishanabek, Oji-Cree, Cree, Dene peoples and is the homeland of the Metis nation. We respect and acknowledge the history, land and the people of this area, and are committed to move forward in partnership with Indigenous communities in a spirit of reconciliation.

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Message from the Chair

Let me start by saying thank you to everyone who supports Westman Immigrant Services. Together, we continue to welcome and provide support for newcomers and their families who choose to settle in this corner of the province.

I am grateful to my fellow Board of Directors members and to all the volunteers who contribute their valuable time to the agency.

My heartfelt appreciation to our CEO Enver Naidoo and WIS staff members who bring a fantastic combination of dedication and enthusiasm to their work.

Thank you to our funders and the community members who support the goals and endeavors that our team passionately pursues.

The last year has been busy.

Along with our comprehensive settlement, language, and employment services, our new Entrepreneur Service Centre has opened.

We also opened the WIS Multicultural Centre, which played host to the Mauritian pavilion at the Multicultural Pavilions over winter.

We are focused on the needs of newcomers who want to find work or maybe start their own business in Western Manitoba – who want a safe place to raise their children and ultimately, create new dreams for their family in Canada.

Just like many of our parents, grandparents, or great grandparents before us, we all seek to pursue our life's goals.

It has been a privilege to be part of the WIS team who work so hard to support the current generation of newcomers and individuals who have arrived in our community to pursue their life's goals.

We hear many stories about the journeys newcomers have undertaken prior to their life in Manitoba. Many have endured tremendous difficulties along the way – bringing very few belongings, but bringing with them a great deal of strength, experience, resilience and courage.

These attributes are what bring energy to WIS and drive us towards meeting needs in our community and striving to reach our goals.

WIS is a dynamic organization and being a volunteer here myself has been very fulfilling as many of my fellow Board members will attest.

We invite you to hear our stories, celebrate the cultures and continue our journey together.

Thank you.

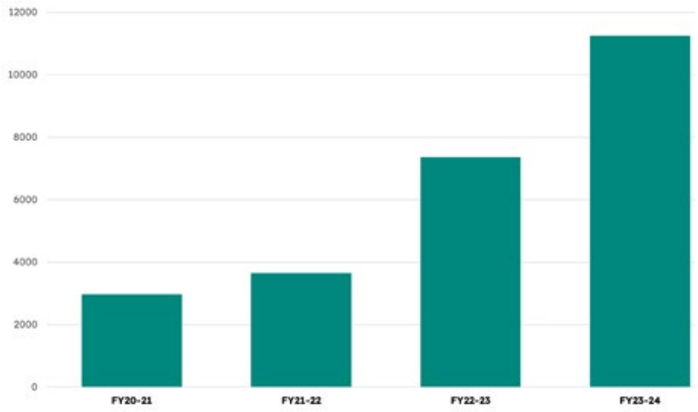
Katharine Mercredi

Thank you to our 2023-2024 Board of Directors

Katharine Mercredi	Chair
Matthew Blunt	Co-Vice Chair
Brendan White	Co-Vice Chair
Jeanette Hudon	Treasurer
John Pearen	
Deborah Berkan	
Tamra Rapsky	
Heather Karrouze	
Naseer Malik	
Abdalla Salih	
Premmal Patel-David	

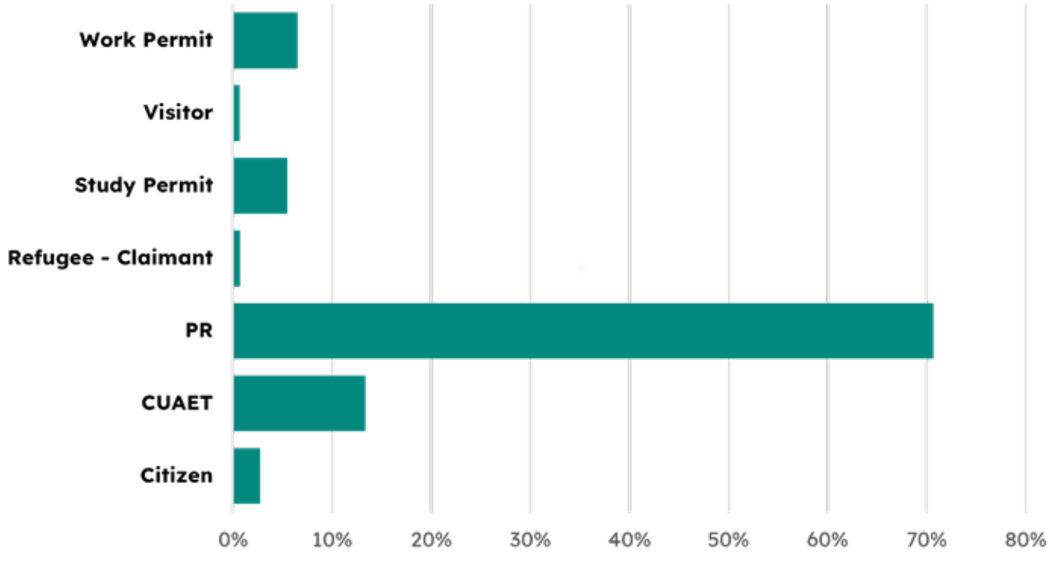
Settlement and Case Management

As the number of newcomers continues to grow in our communities, this in turn has also seen an uptake in Settlement and Case Management appointments.



Settlement & Case Management Growth Apr 2020 - Mar 2024

This year, our Settlement and Case Management team, provided over 11,000 services and appointments to clients.



Immigration Status Breakdown

We have a team of Settlement Facilitators across Western Manitoba that provides newcomers with a comprehensive intake and needs assessment that helps to shape their settlement plan. We connect and refer newcomers to internal and external services, depending on their need.

Our Case Management team continued to assist newcomers in crisis and high need life situations. They help the newcomers get back to being independent by providing intensive supports. We have seen a higher demand for Case Management services with the increased number of Refugees and Refugee Claimants in our communities.

Top 10 Country of Birth of our newcomers

India	16%	Eritrea	5%
Ukraine	15%	El Salvador	5%
Nigeria	12%	Ethiopia	3%
Philippines	11%	Colombia	3%
China, People's Republic	7%	Honduras	3%

Refugee Resettlement

Our team was recognised for their support during the Afghanistan Resettlement Initiative.

This fiscal year saw the highest number of Refugees arrive, with almost 300 refugees arrive into our community.

Government Assisted Refugees (GAR) are provided initial intensive supports from our team during their first 6-8 weeks of being in Manitoba.

Our team also played a crucial role in the Afghanistan Resettlement Initiative, which as well as GAR refugees arriving throughout the year, saw us assisting with two charter flights of arrivals into Manitoba.

We are extremely appreciative for the number of community partners we work with to help refugee newcomers become adjusted into their new life.

Employment and Training

Supporting newcomers in gaining employment

Our Employment team helps newcomers with employment supports to help them find the right job. This year, we saw over 400 newcomers seeking employment assistance.

Some newcomers decided to pursue other opportunities, such as post-secondary education to further their career goals.

Bridging to Employment program

Over 90% of participants gained meaningful employment.

Our Bridging to Employment Customer Service program continues to be a successful avenue for newcomers to learn about working in Canada and learning fundamental skills to help them in their new community.

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Workshops and Training

Our Training team supported newcomers by offering 166 workshops and training opportunities.

We strengthened our service offering by partnering with Workplace Education Manitoba to offer a larger suite of opportunities to clients at no cost.

The Welcome to Brandon session continues to support newcomers when they first arrive by giving them an overview of their new community.

English for Work

Through discussions with community stakeholders, a significant gap in our community is English training for Temporary Foreign Workers.

This year we began delivering these classes in Brandon and Russell.

Rural Manitoba Immigrant Employment Council

Rural Manitoba Immigrant Employment Council (RMIEC) provides Rural MB employers with solutions, tools, and resources they need to attract, hire, and retain qualified immigrant talent.

We believe that the successful integration of skilled newcomers into the Rural MB labour force is critical to both their success and the province's long-term economic performance.

RMIEC ran Workforce Development Summits to 14 communities across Rural MB. During these events, we interacted with over 300 attendees.

These sessions were focused on gaining local understanding to challenges employers, municipalities, economic development and other stakeholders were facing.

Entrepreneur Hub

We officially launched our Entrepreneur Hub! This exciting new department focuses on helping to empower newcomers to launch or grow their business.

We have seen some early successes, with helping 45 newcomers with looking at how they can open their business.

We offer a range of services from individual consultations; to workshops that entrepreneurs can harness to support their business.

In March, we hosted three successful panel discussion events. These events highlighted local entrepreneurs who shared their journey, challenges and successes.

For two of these events, we partnered with Assiniboine College and Brandon University Student Union to connect with students looking into starting their own businesses.

Email from a client

Good morning,

I trust this mail finds you well. I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for the exceptional support so far. Your commitment has truly left a lasting impression, and I felt compelled to extend my appreciation.

From the outset, it was evident that your team is dedicated to delivering not only a support but an experience that exceeds expectations. The attention to detail, professionalism, and unwavering commitment have not gone unnoticed.

Once again, thank you for your dedication to providing me all the support to start my home in care business, that will not only meet but exceed customer's expectations. I look forward to launching and a successful 6 month start.

Have a great day.

regards,

Entreprenuership Hub client

Integration

Following on from the successful outreach trips to ACC in the previous year, we developed new roles to enhance these services.

We now go on site to multiple locations such as, ACC, BU, Maple Leaf, Superstore, and attend a variety of multicultural events to provide integration supports to newcomers. With this initiative, we spoke to over 800 newcomers!

WIS Multicultural Centre

A very special thank you to City of Brandon Councillor Shaun Cameron, and His Worship Jeff Fawcett, for connecting WIS with the team at St Matthews Cathedral.

Through this partnership, we officially gained a space dedicated to Multiculturalism.
We officially opened the WIS Multicultural Centre in December 2023.

In the future, we are actively working with multiple stakeholders in Brandon to open a daycare to help support the over 400 spot waitlist with at least a 2 year waiting period.

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Regional Supports

Kids cooking classes were a big hit in Russell

Our team of English Assessors travelled to our Russell and Virden location to deliver Language Assessments.

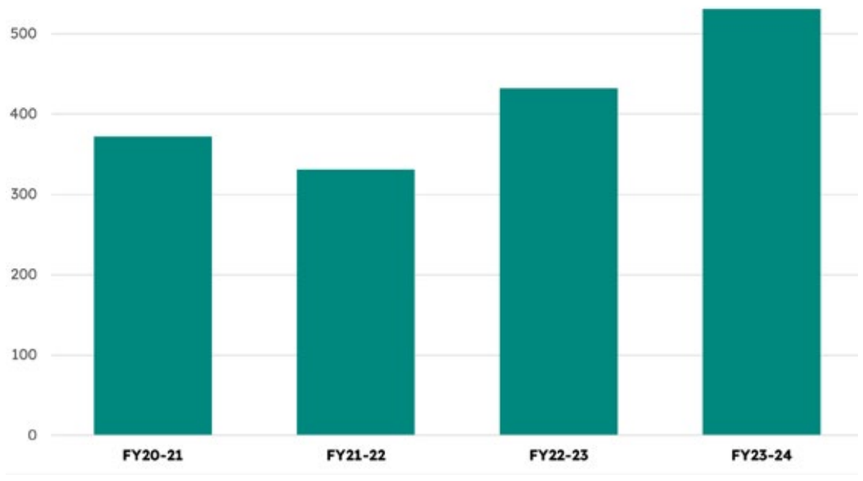
Kids had a great time with Zumba sessions in Killarney!

Connecting with local municipalities to discuss their labour market needs.

Language Program

This year, we taught over 500 newcomers!

English language skills are the foundation for success in so many areas of life in our communities. Our clients have education, employment, and personal goals that require the ability to use English, and ESL classes are key to moving clients towards these goals.



Student Number Growth April 2020 – March 2024

Our task-based language classes teach clients to use English in a wide range of real-life situations while increasing their proficiency across the 4 key skill areas: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Our integrated language courses also offer training in digital literacy.

The WIS Language Program offers CLB Classes from levels 1-4 along with targeted Literacy classes for learners with limited or no prior schooling, starting from Foundations Literacy.

Adjacent to our language classes, WIS hosts one of the three Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment Centres in Manitoba. Our assessment centre provides CLB placement referrals for clients with CLB levels Pre 1-8 and CLB Literacy levels for learners across the Westman Region.

Family Program

Family Program helps to support newcomer families and women get connected to the community services and helps to introduce parenting supports.

Our facilitators provided 136 sessions.

We had 316 unique clients attend our sessions – with 42% of clients attending more than 1 session.

One client even attended 11 different programs!

RBC Winter Fair

We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our friends at RBC for their contributions to an incredible Family Day event as part of the RBC Family Day at the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair.

RBC supported over 100 newcomer youth to join in the festivities, filled with fun activities, arts and crafts, a delicious pizza lunch, and even a trip to the winter fair!

A special thank you goes to Tracy, Joelle and the RBC team for their hard work and commitment in making this event such a memorable experience for everyone involved. Here's to many more moments of joy and togetherness in the future!

Youth Program

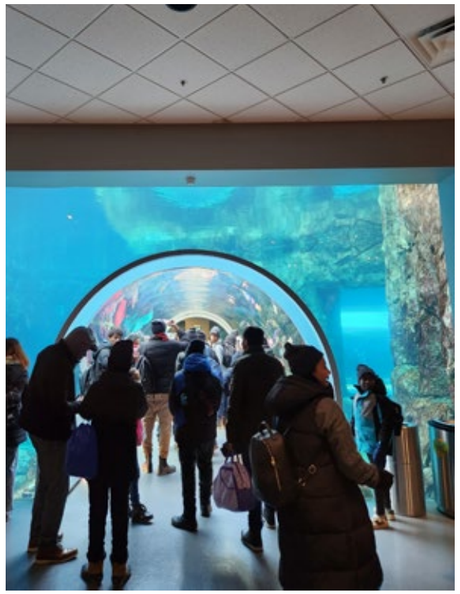
We offer a variety of programs that supports youth with their academic progression, make social connections, keep active, and feel a sense of belonging.

Our After School Program and Saturday homework club are fast becoming important programs to help youth in their academic development. Parents and teachers have both commented on progress newcomer youth are making academically thanks to the supports from our team.

Our summer camp program had 348 newcomer youth participate in our activities!

Our team supported newcomer youth with recreation, academic, employment building, crafts and life skills sessions over the summer camp program.

Visit to the Zoo



Our friends at MANSO gave us the opportunity to secure tickets to Assiniboine Park and Zoo. In November, we took two buses filled with over 80 newcomer youth for a day trip to the Zoo!

These newcomers had never been to Assiniboine Park and Zoo before, so this day was extra special. The youth enjoyed seeing a variety of new animals up close – including seeing the Polar Bears!

We are appreciative to MANSO for giving us the opportunity to help newcomers have these new experiences.

In November, we took two buses filled with over 80 newcomer youth for a day trip to the Zoo!

Supports in Schools

Our Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program aims to help newcomer youth be successful in their new school, support the parents in understanding the new system, with the aim to support the family unit as they adjust to the new culture.

Our team works directly in the 21 schools across Brandon School Division, helping over 2,000 newcomer youth.

Success story

The family, including a parent with a disability, a stay-at-home mother, with multiple children, faced significant challenges in their new country. One of the children exhibited disruptive behavior at school, prompting the school to involve mental health professionals and the SWIS facilitator.

The SWIS facilitator formed a strong bond with the family, conducted home visits, and developed a summer plan to improve the students' social skills. Over the summer, the student's development was closely monitored at the summer camps, and two specialized sessions were arranged to enhance their social interactions. By the new school year, the child showed a remarkable transformation.

Seniors Program

Over the year, we have scaled up our programming for Seniors. This included showing them the great programming available at Seniors for Seniors in Brandon. We also provide them with coffee and chat sessions where they can come together and connect.

Care for Newcomer Children program

In July, we have a CNC Summer party where we invite parents and children we have cared for to a picnic and water fun in the park.

Our Care for Newcomer Children program helps to support our programs by providing childcare.

Our team of Early Childhood Educators and Child Care Assistants love to see the children engaging and having fun.

Interpretation Services

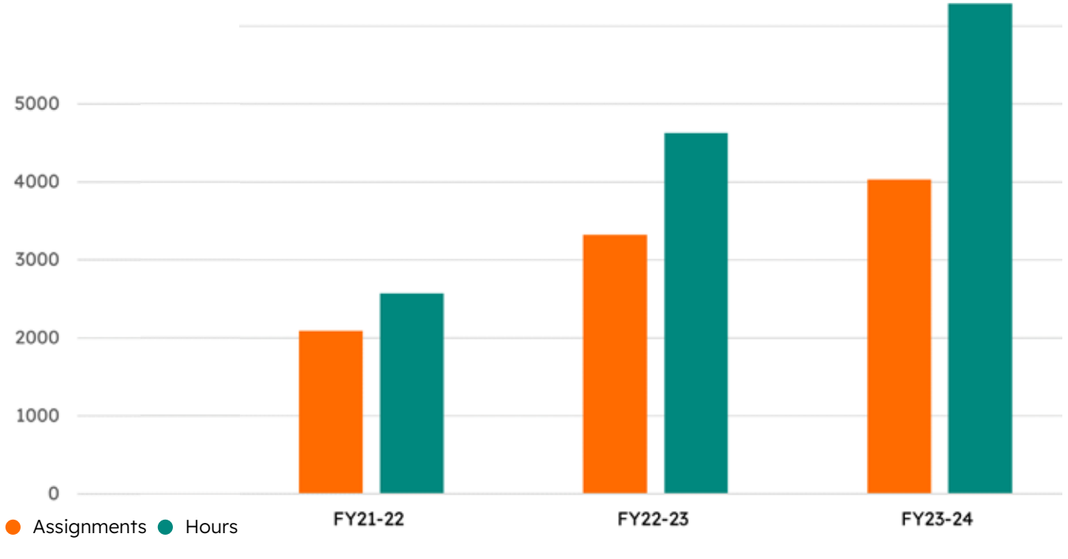
Our Interpretation Services continues to support the community by providing supports to newcomers and community services.

The need for the services increased again this year, with over 4,000 services completed.

With adding 10 languages into our mix, we now offer 36 languages!

Our team partnered with Shared Health and MANSO to provide training supports to Language Assistants getting trained as Community Interpreters.

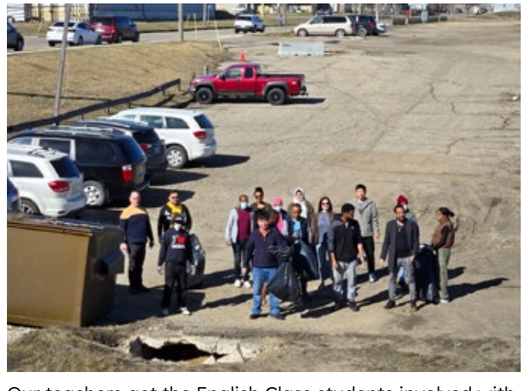
We assisted with getting all of the participants ready for their certification exams needed to become accredited. With this training program, we included 8 of our Language Assistants, who all successfully became certified Interpreters.



In the Community

WIS provided volunteer supports during Truth and Reconciliation Day events at Brandon Riverbank.

Our staff had some fun fueling vehicles and cleaning windows in support of Heritage Co-op's Fuel Good campaign!



Our teachers get the English Class students involved with Tidy Up Brandon as part of their lesson!

Leadership Brandon

WIS partnered with Brandon Chamber of Commerce to launch Leadership Brandon. A 10-month leadership program designed to foster growth, connection and an in-depth knowledge of Brandon.

Participants get to learn about a variety of industries and organisations, from government entities and key organisations, such as Brandon Downtown Biz, WIS, and Brandon Friendship Centre.

LIFT Strategic Reinvention Initiative

WIS was one of ten organisations selected across Canada to be part of the LIFT Strategic Reinvention Initiative.

Through this program, LIFT worked with us both individually and within the cohort, to help build new frameworks to support newcomers overcome barriers to meaningful employment.
.

We concluded the cohort in March 2024, and were invited to be part of a special event at the Deloitte Greenhouse looking at ways we can integrate AI to assist newcomers in their employment journey. Following that, selected members of the LIFT cohort, presented at the national Metropolis conference in Montreal.

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Supporting Multiculturalism

The Westman Multicultural Pavilions held their first event in a couple of year at the Brandon Riverbank over summer. 10 cultures were represented and showcased performances. WIS was present to provide volunteer support to the event and be a place newcomers could enquire about our services.

We were honoured to be invited to bring greetings at the Eid celebration.

The Hispanic Association of Manitoba held a celebration event over summer.

Both Mauritius and Philippines partnered with the City of Brandon to have a flag raising ceremony in recognition of their respective independence days.

Volunteering

We are extremely lucky to have a dedicated team of over 80 volunteers who support our programs and services. They play an essential role in multiple programs, including, English classes, Conversation Circles and Family, Youth and Seniors programming.

Our Settlement Partner program helps newcomers to grow connections in their new community, practise their English and get to experience new activities and community offerings through their partnership with a long term newcomer or Canadian.

> *"The relationships and friendships I've formed through volunteering are some of the most meaningful in my life. It's a true testament to the power of working together for a common cause."*
>
> *- WIS Volunteer*

Letter from one of our volunteers

When I began to volunteer at Westman Immigrant Services last fall, I thought that I'd be able to make use of 40 years as an educator to help newcomers acquire some of the language skills necessary to make their transition to life in Canada that much smoother. While I hope that this has proven to be somewhat true, I've discovered that the impact of being a volunteer at WIS is actually a two-way street and goes far beyond my initial thinking.

What I discovered immediately on that first morning in Oksana's Level One class was an incredible sense of community. Students arrived around nine o'clock. Every single one of them with a smile on their face. Excited to see each other. To see their teacher. Greetings were exchanged and class began. I was introduced as "Teacher Don" and was warmly accepted into the group.

By break time, roughly 90 minutes later, I texted my wife and tried to tell her how the morning was unfolding. But I found it incredibly hard to find the right words. How do you describe genuine community? What words do justice to the joy, acceptance and support I had just witnessed?

In the end, all I could come up with was "you gotta see this".

My one morning a week as a volunteer quickly morphed into two. Since then, I've volunteered in a level two class and have worked as a substitute teacher in a number of classrooms.

In each room, I have discovered the same thing. People brought together by circumstance. Accepting each other regardless of differences in age, culture and background. Supporting each other. Caring. Knowing that each person's path has been difficult and that sharing the load makes the journey easier.

So, how does the volunteer impact students?

The obvious answer is by providing more direct support to students. Enabling the teacher to plan for more one-on-one or small group instruction. To reduce the teacher-student ratio and allow for a more flexible teaching model.

The volunteer also delivers a clear message from the community. In essence, the volunteer's presence in the classroom tells students that their community cares.

That they are recognized and that their new neighbours are offering encouragement and support.

But the volunteer is impacted as well.

As a volunteer, I am rewarded by having the privilege of being a part of such a community.

I regularly tell family, friends and anyone else that will listen that if they want to see how the world should work, how countries and cultures should get along, then head down to Pacific Avenue in Brandon.

The courage, strength and resilience of every student is remarkable.

It is an honour to have been welcomed into the program at Westman Immigrant Services.

Sincerely,

WIS Volunteer

Conferences

Our CEO, Enver Naidoo, was invited to present on two panels at the national Metropolis Conference in Montreal in March.

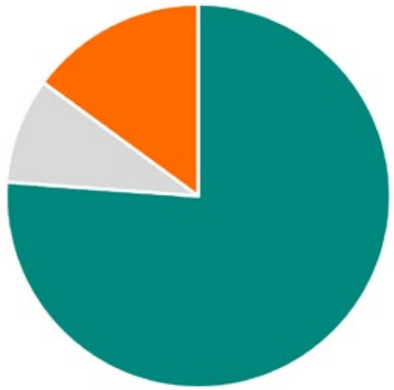
Our Family Program Facilitator, Ana Evangelista, participated in a panel discussion at the national Mothers Matter Conference in Vancouver.

Our team of department leads, and leadership team all went to Portage La Prairie for the MANSO Small Centre Gathering in November.

Highlight of Financials 2023-2024*

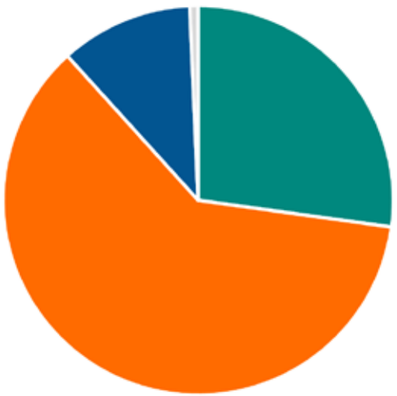
Income Apr 23 - Mar 24

Federal Revenue	$4,479,586.58
Provincial Revenue	$638,485.71
Other Funding	$350,576.15
Total Income	**$5,468,648.44**



Expense Apr 23 - Mar 24

Program Delivery	$1,353,583.34
Salaries and Benefits	$3,378,907.66
Overhead	$543,823.37
Training & Prof. Development	$29,248.50
Total Expense	**$5,305,562.87**



* Unaudited

Funders

We would like to thank our funders for their investment in our communities and care for our clients.

Government

Federal

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
Employment and Social Development Canada
PrairiesCan

The Manitoba Government

Labour and Immigration
Economic Development, Investment and Trade

Municipal

City of Brandon

Funders

Calgary Catholic Immigrant Services
Manitoba Dental
Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association
Royal Bank of Canada
United Way Brandon & District

Community Partners

7th Street Health Access Centre
Addictions Foundation of Manitoba
AJS Law
APPLE Virden
Art Gallery of Southwestern MB
Assiniboine Park and Zoo
Brandon Chamber of Commerce
Brandon Downtown Development Corporation
Brandon Fire & Emergency Services
Brandon First
Brandon Friendship Centre
Brandon General Museum and Archives
Brandon Literacy Council
Brandon Local Immigration Partnership
Brandon MCC Thrift Shop
Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation
Brandon Police Service
Brandon Public Library
Brandon School Division
Brandon Sun
Brandon Tourism
Brandon University Cares Research Centre
Brandon University Student Union
Brandon Wheat Kings
Bushel Plus
Canada Revenue Agency
Canadian Red Cross
Canadian Tire
Career Connections
Cartwright-Roblin Community Development Corporation
CBC Manitoba
CELPIP
Center for Critical Studies of Rural Mental Health
Chez Angela Bakery and Cafe
Child & Family Services of Western MB
Chilli Chutney
Christie's Office Plus
City of Brandon
Days Inn Brandon
Economic Development Brandon
Epp Law Office`
Ethnocultural Council of Manitoba
Family Dynamics
Fit Kids, Healthy Kids
Fun Time Pottery
Fusion Credit Union
Habitat for Humanity ReStore
Healthy Together Now
Heritage Co-op
IntriTech
Jacobson & Greiner
John Howard Society
Life's Journey Inc
MANSO
Manitoba Corrections
Manitoba Hydro
Manitoba Ombudsman
Manitoba Possible
Manitoba Public Insurance
Manitoba Tourism Education Council
Mariachi Mexican Tacos & Cantina
Mazergroup
McCallum Roofing Ltd
Meighen Haddad, LLP
Midwest Teleservices International
Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba
Municipality of Russell Binscarth
New Journey Housing
Patersons LLP
PPD Law Office
Pregnancy Support Centre of Westman
Prairie Mountain Health
Precision Dental
Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba
Real Canadian Superstore
Regional Employment Resource Centre
Riverbank Discovery Centre
Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Russell & Area Chamber of Commerce
Russell Banner
Samaritan House Literacy Training Centre
Samaritan House Ministries
Scotia Bank
Seniors 4 Seniors
Service Canada
Sexuality Education Resource Centre
Shoppers Mall Brandon
Suicide Prevention Implementation Network
The Green Spot
The Learning Company
Trident Event Group
United for Literacy
United Way Brandon & Area
Vionell Holdings Partnership
Virden Chamber of Commerce
Virden Employment Skills Center
Visa2Canada
Weddings by Abby
West-Can HR
Western Financial Group
Western Manitoba Regional Library
West-Fit Physiotherapy & Sports Injury Clinic
Westoba Credit Union
WELARC
Women's Resource Centre
Workplace Education Manitoba
YMCA
YWCA—Westman Women's Shelter

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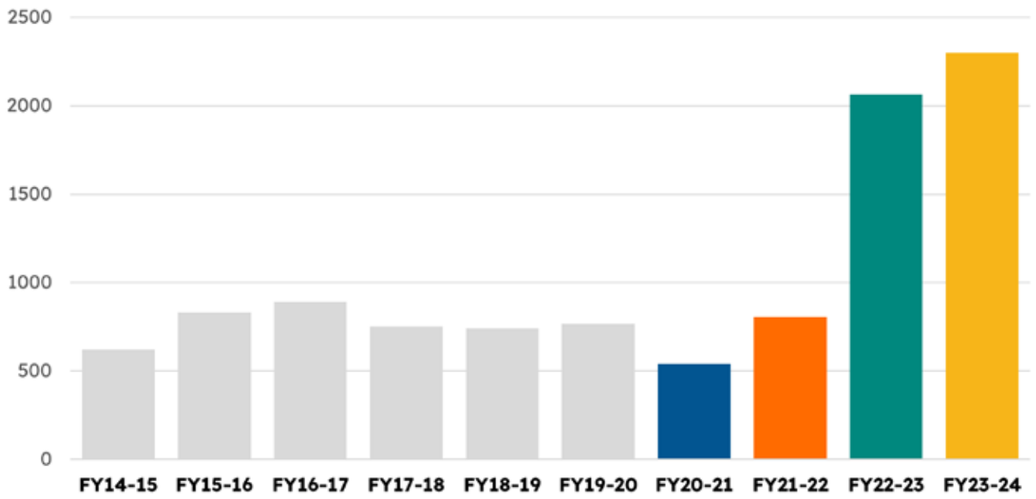
Client Growth

We are in a season of unprecedented immigration growth and WIS is grateful for the leadership of our Board, the commitment of our Staff, the passion of our Volunteers, the support of our Partners, and the investment from our Funders.

Collectively, we are creating positive generational impact for our Clients, our Communities, and our Province.



2014 - 2020 New Client Growth

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Our Staff

We invested over 1,000 hours in professional development training this year!

With the passion and dedication of our incredible team, we are able to achieve our mission, we are here to help.