



She Flourishes

In support of women fleeing violence

15th Annual Red and White: She Flourishes!

Join us for a multi-chef cocktail party experience, live music, an online and in-person silent auction, inspirational speakers, entertainment and other surprises!

The sold-out last Red & White edition took place just before the pandemic lockdown. This event is Harmony House's largest and most highly anticipated annual fundraiser. This year marks an in-person return after two years of pivoting to virtual events to continue raising critical funds to support women and children fleeing violence. Over its history, what started as a modest wine and cheese-tasting event at St. Brigid's Hall has grown. When we outgrew St. Brigid's, we moved to Ashbury College, taking on more wineries and featuring some of Ottawa's most popular chefs.

She Flourishes, 2023 Red and White edition, is an important fundraiser that helps raise funds for women fleeing violence. The goal of the fundraiser is to provide financial assistance to women who need help escaping dangerous situations, transitioning to a new life, and enabling them to gain a sense of

purpose, safety and security.

The funds raised cover programming, education, and other necessities that can help women and their families transition to a new life.

One of our residents called, Patricia, who the *She Flourishes* fund helped, shared her story. She was in an abusive relationship for many years and had nowhere to turn. With the help of Harmony House through the *She Flourishes* fund, she could afford her online certification to become an Event Planner and the legal assistance she needed to get a restraining order. With newfound freedom and safety, she was able to start a new job and begin to rebuild her life.

Patricia found a sense of purpose in helping other women in similar situations and was able to use her story to motivate and empower them. Thanks to

the support provided by *She Flourishes*, this woman was able to rise above her situation and flourish. It is stories like hers that demonstrate the importance of raising funds for women fleeing violence. With the help of generous donors and community partners, we can make this event successful, making a difference in women's and children's lives.

“ A woman's courage and determination can shine through in the face of violence. Thanks to your support, they can take the next step forward and let their life flourish. ”

For sponsorship inquiries and action items please contact:

Francesca Davila

C: 613.608.3199

E: fundraising@harmonyhousews.com



Date: Thursday, May 18th

Time: 6 pm - 10 pm

Location: 50 Sussex Dr, Ottawa Ontario K1M 2K1

Ticket sales: harmonyhousews.com





Welcome Jessica our NEW Mental Health Worker



I really appreciate the chance to 'meet' so many friends and supporters of Harmony House in this way. My name is Jessica Breault, and I have the honour of working with Harmony House to offer counselling to residents. I operate from a feminist and strengths-based perspective, which means I focus on helping people explore and develop their inner strengths, knowledge and insights. I'm a Registered Psychotherapist,

and I've gotten to work in a variety of settings over the last 7 years, including crisis lines, community mental health centres, and a family health team. I'm very excited to be working with an organization whose values feel so aligned with my own. Ray asked in my interview if I was comfortable working with a feminist team that's involved in advocating for social and systemic change. I think I just stared for a few moments, trying to find a professional way to say "HELL YES".

Residents at Harmony House are going through a major time of transition in their lives. Leaving a harmful relationship means making a huge change in your life, and that requires an enormous amount of courage and energy. Going through a transition like this may cause you to take stock of where you're at, what you've learned, how you've survived, what coping mechanisms or practices you want to leave in the past and what you want to bring forward into

your future. I hope counselling is a safe place for folks to process where they've been and want to go. I offer an open and non-judgmental space for clients to slow down and focus on themselves for a little while.

I am passionate about offering counselling services that are as accessible and inclusive as possible. I will be offering services both virtually and in-person (at the lovely outreach office). If a client wants a counsellor with a different specialty than I offer or from a different cultural background from myself, I will make every effort to find and connect that client with appropriate support.

“ I look forward to learning more about the unique needs of current residents so that I can continue to adapt and offer relevant and meaningful services. - Jessica Breault



The importance of respite for children at Harmony House

By Roxanne Poudrier, Family Support and Children's Advocate

During the last few months, lots of different events have taken place. When women come to the shelter, it may be challenging to take care of themselves if they have children to support. It is important for them to remember to take care of themselves and to practice self-care. This can be very difficult to do while being a mother, oftentimes having to do it without any outside support.

Over the holidays, I was able to provide support for a woman who was looking for extracurricular activities and respite for her child. We registered her child for Boy's and Girl's Club in person. She felt nervous as her child had behavioral challenges, especially in a new setting. I was able to advocate and support her through this by engaging in conversation with

the staff. For a few months, her daughter has been attending Boy's and Girl's club and our afterschool program, Kid's Club. She's significantly improving her behaviors and desires to do her homework. She's successfully created and maintained healthy boundaries, friendships, social development, and emotional regulation.

This is one of the reasons the shelter is so important in building strong connections and partnerships with our community.





In loving memory of Teresa Craig

On January 11th, 2023, Teresa Craig/ Poh Choo Low, long-time board member and former resident of Harmony House, passed away. She is survived by her son Martyn, his partner Jessica, and her grandson Niyko Seguin.

Teresa was a part of the Harmony House community for nearly 20 years, serving 14 years on the board as the Resident Liaison. She was a fierce advocate for the women residing at Harmony House and never failed to speak the truth to power. She was dedicated to her community, volunteering with several organizations, fundraising, organizing events and ever ready with personal one-on-one support. She will be missed for her spirit, kind-

ness, honesty, and great love for others.

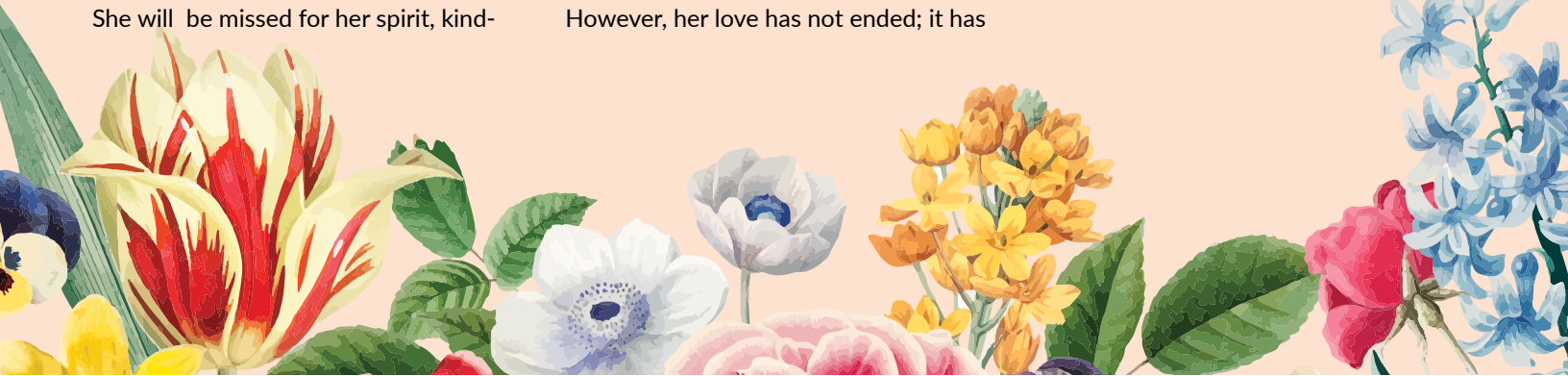
Teresa leaves a powerful legacy. The events that brought Teresa to Harmony House were not easy to comprehend, and her life was far from easy. Her passing leaves us with turbulent emotions of sadness, disbelief, anger, confusion and hurt. Yet, Teresa's memory will stand with us, with everyone who was blessed to know her and experience her light.

We will carry her in our hearts as we work towards a world without abuse, a world where Teresa's life could have looked and ended much differently. However, her love has not ended; it has



transformed and now lives inside us all. We will not be afraid to use that love as fuel in our fight to protect women and children in Ottawa.

We miss you, Teresa. Travel well, our sister; we will see you on the other side.



Thank you!

By Trysh Smith, Outreach Advocate

We were overwhelmed by the support we received for our 2022 Holiday Sponsorship Program. Leaving an abusive relationship is difficult at any time of the year and can be even more so during the holiday season.

This program offered holiday gifts for women and children at our shelter through our Outreach services. We received overwhelming support from community members and donors, ensuring the success of reaching everyone in need—special thanks to the individuals, families and businesses who sponsored this season. You made the

holiday season much brighter for those who received your help. While you could not see the impact of your support, our team did – and it was inspiring.

The outreach worker works with women after they leave the shelter, as well as women who may not feel comfortable or ready to come to reside, providing one on one support and guidance, safety planning, family law court support, appropriate referrals and ensuring women understand their rights and options to make the best decisions for themselves and their child.





Igniting hidden treasures and rediscovering purpose!

By Nadia Ngoto, Peer Support Worker

The resident-led program was created to address women's expected loss of confidence after experiencing abuse and to combat the feeling that they have nothing to offer or teach. It allows women to teach their peers a skill they possess. We all have skills, whether it is cleaning, cutting hair, growing plants, math, organizing a space, cooking, drawing, etc.

Through this program, the woman rediscovered the "Gold" buried in their trauma. The residents-led program runs once a month, and the woman can sign up to lead at our monthly house meeting. In addition, they are given up to two hundred dollars to purchase what they need to run their program.

As peer support, I am there to help them as required. For example, one month, a woman taught us how to make lotion using different ingredients to help with the dry skin we often experience in the winter. Our residents put in a lot of effort learning to create this connection. She realized she has great organizational skills through her program and can share what she learned with a large group.

The following month, a woman offered to run a resident-led program, but she wasn't sure about her skills. I said you make such delicious food using fresh ingredients. She responded, "well, that's just something I do, no big deal!". I explained that many people do not know how to cook. Although for her, cooking is just something that she did in her home of origin, some women struggle with cooking if they had not been taught growing up. She agreed. She taught everyone how to make spring rolls from scratch for her program. Not only was it a learning experience, but it was also a bonding one and sharing of culture.

After these programs, the women are confident, more connected with their peers, and rediscover their natural skills, bringing so much to the table of learning and growing. They also learn the art of using their voice in public. Teaching helps with motivation, boosts confidence, beats boredom, and can benefit others. The resident-led program is one of my favorite programs because it allows women to shine bright like a diamond, which manifests itself in other areas of their lives in a positive way.



In need of more successful housing stories

By Lee-Ann Lee, House Advocate

Greetings, each season I am asked to provide a story to use in our newsletter. Most times I dread it because when working in housing, there are not a lot of feel-good success stories. Instead of trying to find such a story, I am going to try to help you understand just how difficult it is for women and children fleeing violence to secure safe affordable housing in the city of Ottawa, why **Harmony House** is such an important part of the puzzle, and why we need your help.

Currently, there are over 14,000 families on the subsidized housing wait list in Ottawa. Simply put, there are not enough rent-geared-to-income homes in the city of Ottawa. When I first started working at Harmony House many years ago, single women were housed in four to six months with three choices on where to live. At that time, very few families had to stay at Harmony House longer than one year. Recently we have had to relax our time lines to reflect the realities of social housing here in Ottawa, with many women residing at Harmony House for 2-4 years while they wait for housing that doesn't give them a choice at all. Now families receive the first unit available and they have to take it, or they won't receive any housing at all, regardless if the unit is in a safe place or meets their needs.

For many years Harmony House has been the only second

stage shelter for women and children fleeing violence in the Eastern region of the province, and its services are more critical than ever.

Today, women are given time limits when they use a first-stage shelter, usually they can only stay for four months. This means that they are not allowed to stay until they receive housing. The wait times to get a home are just too long. But when a woman is fleeing violence and has no time left to stay at a crisis shelter she can turn to Harmony House to help support her until a home can be found. During her stay, she may want some additional supports to help her rebuild life; she may want to grow her skills so she ready to take on her new life, or maybe her abuser damaged her previous home and she owes money to the landlord to repair it. (You can't apply for socialized housing if you owe money to a previous landlord). Or she may just need to rest and heal in a safe place for a moment. There is no end to the list of reasons a woman may need Harmony House in her life.

Your donations keep our doors open so that if a women and her children need a bit of extra time to feel ready to face the world again, we will always be there to provide the extra time and support they deserve.



'Girls Night Program'

By Amanda Van Geel, Women's Advocate

"I can love me better than you can" from Miley Cyrus' song 'Flowers' summarizes the theme for the new 'Girls Night Program' at Harmony House. Its focus is encouraging women to prioritize taking care of themselves and building their confidence in their abilities.

The first 'Girls Night' focused on coping strategies and self-care. We discussed how coping strategies might look different depending on the situation, whether it just be a bad day or a crisis. As well as the importance of keeping up with regular self-care so that when things go wrong, you have the resources to handle it. An added benefit of this was it allowed the women to share their passions and tips with each other, whether it be skin care tips or their favorite music to listen to.

We also had a 'Date Night with Yourself' themed Girls Night, where we journaled about topics someone might ask on a date (i.e., likes/dislikes, love languages, etc.). This allowed the women an opportunity to get to know themselves

again. Some women are not allowed to express who they are in abusive relationships or were so focused on what they must do to survive that they lost aspects of themselves, such as hobbies. This exercise aims to give them time and space to rediscover or redefine themselves. Why wait for a date to think about who you are and how much you have to offer?

However, 'Girl's night' is not always heavy and is sometimes just a chance for the women to share snacks, talk and take a break. Finding time for themselves can be difficult during this transition period with the responsibilities of being a single mother or other tasks needed to rebuild their lives. So, we've had a movie night as well as Day After Valentine's Day Sale Chocolate night.

Future 'Girls Nights' will explore healthy relationships, body image, self-esteem, and boundaries. We will also be practicing some coping strategies and self-care discussed in our first session. Some examples are coloring, meditation,



painting, and activities outside now that spring is around the corner. Overall, the goal of this program is to empower women and give them some well-deserved time on themselves away from their many responsibilities.



Meet Aédan, our new Environment and Safety and Volunteer Coordinator!

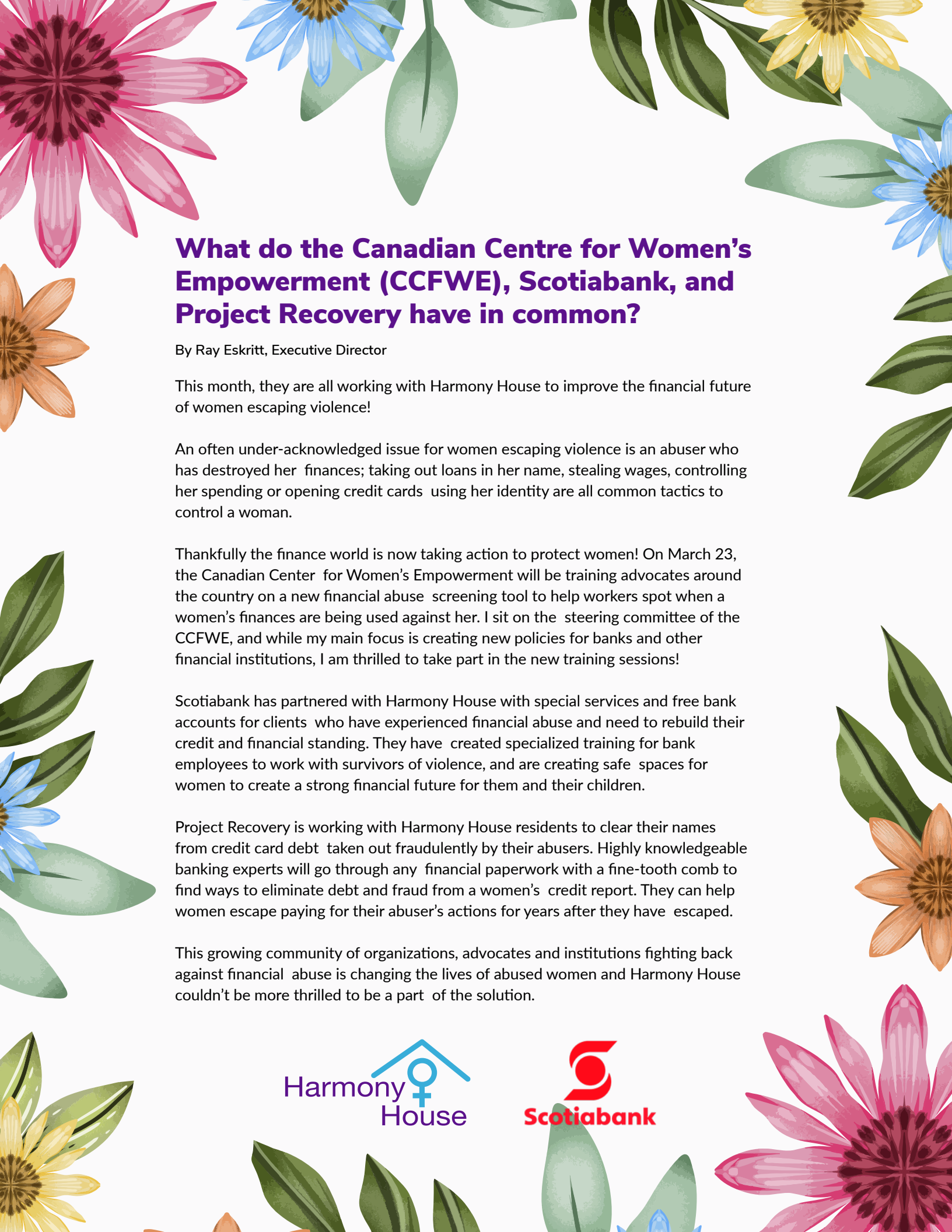
Having moved to Ottawa in 2021, closer to their ancestral lands, Aédan has been passionate about reconnecting with their Francophone and Métis heritage as well as working with the land and learning its medicines.

Aédan is a graduate from College Boréal's Social Services program (2013-2015) as well as Fitness and Health Promotion with George Brown College. They have gained much experience in community work through their past employment and volunteer

positions with a community arts organization and their local Pride committee back in Sudbury.

As the Environment and Safety Officer, Aédan's role is to make sure the resident's units are up to code, safe and welcoming. As the Volunteer Coordinator, they are responsible for recruiting and managing volunteers.





What do the Canadian Centre for Women's Empowerment (CCFWE), Scotiabank, and Project Recovery have in common?

By Ray Eskritt, Executive Director

This month, they are all working with Harmony House to improve the financial future of women escaping violence!

An often under-acknowledged issue for women escaping violence is an abuser who has destroyed her finances; taking out loans in her name, stealing wages, controlling her spending or opening credit cards using her identity are all common tactics to control a woman.

Thankfully the finance world is now taking action to protect women! On March 23, the Canadian Center for Women's Empowerment will be training advocates around the country on a new financial abuse screening tool to help workers spot when a women's finances are being used against her. I sit on the steering committee of the CCFWE, and while my main focus is creating new policies for banks and other financial institutions, I am thrilled to take part in the new training sessions!

Scotiabank has partnered with Harmony House with special services and free bank accounts for clients who have experienced financial abuse and need to rebuild their credit and financial standing. They have created specialized training for bank employees to work with survivors of violence, and are creating safe spaces for women to create a strong financial future for them and their children.

Project Recovery is working with Harmony House residents to clear their names from credit card debt taken out fraudulently by their abusers. Highly knowledgeable banking experts will go through any financial paperwork with a fine-tooth comb to find ways to eliminate debt and fraud from a women's credit report. They can help women escape paying for their abuser's actions for years after they have escaped.

This growing community of organizations, advocates and institutions fighting back against financial abuse is changing the lives of abused women and Harmony House couldn't be more thrilled to be a part of the solution.

