



WHATCOM DISPUTE  
RESOLUTION CENTER

2023

*Annual Report*

[whatcomdrc.org](http://whatcomdrc.org)

# OUR TEAM

## STAFF

### ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

**Moonwater**

*Executive Director*

**Emily Barnett Highleyman**

*Program Director*

**Jaina Gemin**

*Office Manager*

**Ariel Brownstein**

*Community Engagement Manager*

**Tanner Thompson**

*Community Engagement Coord.*

**Rosie O'Neil**

*Outreach Associate*

**Larayne Luthi**

*Development & Outreach VISTA*

**Aaron Foss**

*Administrative Assistant*

**Sarah Jenkins**

*Data Specialist*

### MEDIATION TEAM

**Cynthia Ward**

*Mediation Program Manager*

**Cynthia Moore**

*Family Case Manager*

**Ramona Garcia Slagle**

*Mediation Case Manager*

**Mia Gover**

*Housing Stability Program Coord.*

**Ryan Gutheil**

*Housing Stability Case Manager*

**Sarang Chernov**

*Housing Stability Intake Specialist*

**Megan Clay**

*Mediation Program Assistant*

### EDUCATION TEAM

**Darcy Calhoun**

*Youth Program Coordinator*

**Daniel Soloff**

*Community Links Program Coord.*

### SUPERVISED VISITATION TEAM

**Janne Sleeper**

*SV Program Manager*

**Gemma Roberts**

*SV Program Coordinator*

**Casey Coad**

*Lead Visit Supervisor*

**Devin DiBernardo**

*SV Staff*

# LETTER FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Friends,

This past year has been remarkable for the Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center. Buoyed by the state's investment in our services, we have been on a trajectory of continued growth - developing programs to meet emerging needs and increasing staff, volunteers, and contractors to bolster our responsiveness and accessibility. In tandem, our local community has helped elevate peace-building by leaning in to advance our mission through their precious time, wisdom, and resources.

A milestone of 2023 was the closure of the mandatory Eviction Resolution Pilot Program (ERPP). During the two years of ERPP, our staff was able to serve 3,770 tenants and landlords. This resulted in many creative solutions that avoided evictions for an astounding 90% of cases. When the state statute expired, our staff gracefully pivoted to voluntary Housing Stability services. This came with some challenges (such as a decrease in the availability of rental assistance) and opportunities, including training and educational initiatives to grow our community's shared knowledge of options outside of the courts.

A new beginning took form as Whatcom County Juvenile Court transitioned their longstanding Community Links program into our folds. We're proud to now serve as the home for this evidenced-based youth diversion program, connecting youth and the adults in their lives to local community resources, while building valuable skills and relationships along the way.

Another hallmark of this past year was an increase in community mediation and facilitation requests, and a corresponding rise in the complexities of issues at hand. It is simply inspiring to witness disparate groups coming together in a myriad of conversations to seek common ground.

Finally, we had the distinct pleasure of celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Peace Builder Awards, including a heartwarming reunion of peace builder awardees from the past two decades.

As our local community continues to face new and intensifying challenges, we are proud to be working alongside our clients and partners to build skills for navigating conflict with curiosity, seeking more effective and integrated ways to resolve conflict, and fostering peace throughout Whatcom County. We look forward to continuing on this journey in the years ahead.

With gratitude,



**Moonwater**  
Executive Director



**Matt Paxton**  
Board President

# CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF THE PEACE BUILDER AWARDS

2023 marked the **20th anniversary of WDRC's Peace Builder Awards.**

We invited Peace Builders from the past two decades to convene, *with the goal of fostering connections and building upon our community's shared values.*

With so many amazing individuals in the room, we took the opportunity to gather some Words of Wisdom to commemorate this milestone.

***The thoughts, musings, and words of attendees can be viewed in this special e-book commemorating the event.***

## OUR TEAM

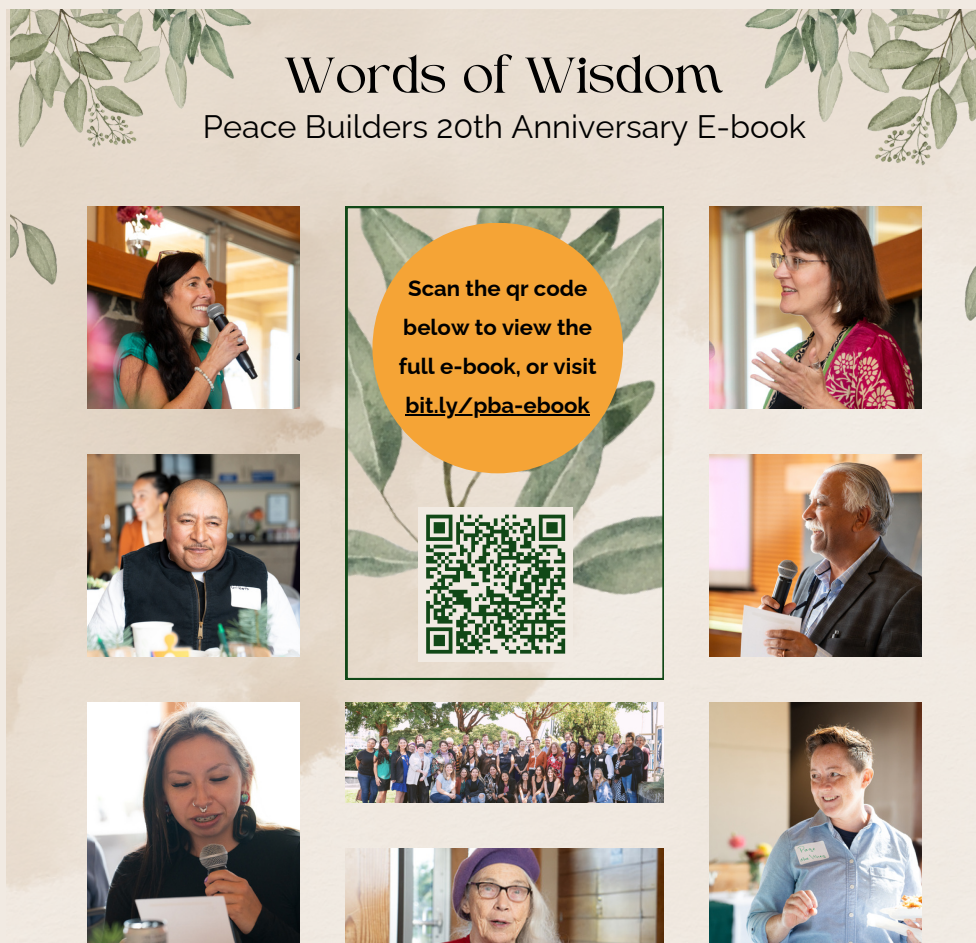
### BOARD

Matt Paxton, Board President  
Cynthia Clay, Board VP  
Michael Riber, Treasurer  
Elke Stevens, Secretary

Shasta Cano-Martin  
Morgan Foster  
Amia Froese  
Lisa Hefter  
Donnell "Tank" Tanksley  
Leah Wainman  
Sara Wilson

### ADVISORY BOARD

Masa DeLara  
Marian Exall  
Leon Henley  
Phil Montgomery  
CJ (Carlton) Nathon  
Mary Sass



The graphic features a central orange circle with a QR code and the text: "Scan the qr code below to view the full e-book, or visit [bit.ly/pba-ebook](https://bit.ly/pba-ebook)". Surrounding this are several small photographs of attendees speaking at the event, including a woman in a green top, a man in a black vest, a woman in a pink patterned top, a man in a grey suit, a woman in a black top, a group photo of attendees, and an older woman in a purple hat.

*Thank you to past board and staff for your support: Annabelle Stefanoff, Beth Girma, Britt Sullateskee, Donna Loken, Gayle LaCroix, Hilary Goode, Jenalyn Brown, Kristy Gallegos, and Therese Norton.*

# Community



## Housing Stability

In response to the depth of need surfaced during the Eviction Resolution Pilot Program, the WDRC bolstered our own voluntary Housing Stability programs. We are now providing free mediation, conciliation, and coaching services for tenants, housemates, neighbors, and landlords in order to increase housing security. We also offer no-cost trainings for landlords and tenants to equip them with useful skills for navigating housing related conflicts more productively.

People seek our assistance for a wide range of support. In one situation, a property manager reached out to us with concern about two of their residents who were having an ongoing conflict about common areas in their building. During the mediation, the residents had the space to share their perspectives, air their frustrations, offer apologies, and talk about how they would like to communicate moving forward.

One of the residents felt so satisfied with the outcome that he came back to invite another neighbor for mediation. He later shared how much his relationships with his neighbors had improved thanks to the conversations they were able to hold in mediation.

## Adult Education

Our adult education program provides workshops for community members to build skills for navigating conflict and difficult conversations more constructively. We offer a variety of classes, ranging from shorter introductory courses, to our 40 hour Professional Mediation Training, to customized workshops for businesses and organizations, including nonprofits and tribal, city, and county governments.

## Facilitation

Facilitation provides a space for groups to hold important conversations. We provide customized structures and empower participants to share what matters most. Facilitation can be used for a variety of issues, from improving relationships to navigating organizational change. Among many positive outcomes, clients have shared that they were able to deepen mutual understanding, develop shared goals and agreements, and strengthen relationships to support their ongoing work.

## Safe Spaces

Through the Safe Spaces Program we are privileged to hear how deeply people care about the City of Bellingham - the place they live, work, do business, visit, or get their education. At times, people may experience issues and not feel safe or comfortable contacting the City directly.

Safe Spaces provides an impartial, alternative access point for community members to have their concerns heard and submitted directly to City leadership. Some complaints are easily rectified, while others are more complex. We value giving the opportunity for each client to feel heard and to facilitate an exchange with the City around their concern.



**“ The way I perceive conflict and the approaches I use to resolve it are forever changed. I am leaving this program more aware of my own biases, behaviors, and motivations. The training provided me with tangible skills that I can use in almost every area of my life. Thank you so much for helping me to become a stronger peace builder, better listener, and more conscious person.”**

-Professional Mediation Training participant

## Supervised Visitation

When conflict close to home results in separation from your children, it can be devastating. Healing and creating the path forward takes many forms. For some families, providing needed space, time, and safety can help children and parents to envision what next steps might look like.

Supervised Visitation isn't a concept that comes easily to parents, especially when mandated by the court. It can be uncomfortable to have to parent in front of strangers, to have imposed limitations for precious time with your children, and to need to adhere to constraints on conversation topics and gifts.

In the space that we create for our families, though, there comes *connection*. Parents show up for their children. The children have time to talk, play, be themselves and build a relationship with their parent, a person who will always be part of them. Our program is here to ensure that this space is a safe one and that parents have a chance to foster relationships and build a new future.



“ This program has given me peace of mind while still allowing my son to see his father. I appreciate this program so much, and the care and respect the staff has shown me.” - SV Client

## Family Mediation

Our family mediation program sees a wide variety of families navigating change and we support them as they work through difficult times in their lives. One family of four came to us after years of tension in their relationship. After the added stress of suffering major damage to their home from natural causes, there was a physical altercation that led to a separation and a protection order being put in place. For the next year, the parents were unable to work together to make plans for moving forward. The protection order was amended to allow for mediation, and they were able to come together, with the support of their mediator, to sort through detailed plans of repairing their damaged home for sale. Most importantly, they were able to address how to support their children through this time, and their hopes for their own futures working together as co-parents.

## Youth Programs

Our Youth Program empowers young people throughout Whatcom County to navigate conflict in healthy ways. In addition to our preventative conflict education workshops, we also offer diversion workshops for teens that have been involved in the justice system. Our school-based programming brings workshops to K-12 schools throughout the entire county. During these sessions we share key concepts and interactive exercises that lead to deeper discussions about communication and problem-solving strategies, and invite students to choose positive alternatives to maladaptive approaches. Before taking the workshop, a number of students reported that conflict gave them feelings of anxiety or overwhelm, and that they had no coping tools for stress. After the workshop, students identified that it had been helpful to talk about social-emotional needs and shared that they learned not to blame others while expressing their own needs.



Family & Youth

# Thank You

## Individuals

Anonymous  
 Mark Allyn  
 Kirsten Anderson  
 Maren Anderson  
 Ray Ballweg  
 Michael & Susan Batcheller  
 Lisa Beck  
 Dorie Belisle  
 Lydia Bennett  
 Drew & Mike Betz  
 Ronna Biggs  
 Iris & Andrew Bodman  
 Sarah Bolton  
 Elizabeth & Jim Boyle  
 Jim Britain  
 Max Bronsema  
 Priscilla Brotherton  
 Jodi Broughton  
 Beth Brownfield  
 Ariel Brownstein  
 Ann & Florian Burfeind  
 Henry & Marilyn Burwell  
 Addie Candib  
 Hannah Cano  
 Shasta Cano-Martin  
 Lauralee Carbone  
 Rocio Castillo-Foell  
 Christian Christensen  
 Richard & Karen Clark  
 Cynthia Clay & Leo Brodie  
 Paris Coleman  
 Craig Robinson & MaryAnn Crawford  
 David & Jayme Curley  
 Kaitlin Davis  
 Andy Day  
 Mark DeMan & Ken Smith  
 Atul Deshmane  
 Ravinder Dhillon  
 Ann & Pug Edmonds  
 Elizabeth Purdy  
 Jennifer Evans-Thompson  
 Marian & Graham Exall  
 John Fairbanks  
 Fay Farkas  
 Jayme Fergoda  
 Seth M. Fleetwood  
 Pat Fleming  
 Charles Foell III  
 Morgan Foster  
 Lindsey Frallic  
 Howard & Mary Francell-Sharfstein  
 Randy Fredlund  
 Robert Friske  
 Amia Froese  
 Brendan Gaff  
 Jaina Gemin  
 Darbie Hall  
 Margo Hammond  
 Michelle Harmeier  
 Meg Harris  
 Laurie & Ken Heck  
 Lisa & Brian Hefter  
 Emily & Scott Highleyman  
 Nell Highleyman  
 Lacey Hill  
 The Hilmoe Family  
 Patti Hoelzle  
 Catalina & Greg Hope  
 Jolyn & Vance Hunt  
 Kate Imus  
 Kristen Ingman  
 Sarah Jenkins  
 Emily Johnson  
 Joel Johnson  
 Pamela Jons  
 Nancy Jordan  
 Kari Jung  
 Janice Keller  
 Gayle Kinney  
 Cheryl & Dale Kinsley  
 Monica Koller  
 Michelle Kopcha & Susan Wright  
 Jim & Tracy Korby  
 Linda Lambert  
 Michael Langey  
 Rose Lathrop  
 Erika Lautenbach  
 Jean LaValley & Rick Hill  
 Jason Laclair  
 Kalish Leviel  
 Cherie & Richard Little  
 Donna & Keith Loken  
 Don & Joan Lotze  
 Howard Lowe

Melinda Lunsford  
 Colleen & Bob MacGilchrist  
 Emily Machin-Mayes  
 Cindy Madigan  
 Michele Majors  
 Amy Mann  
 Katherine Marsh  
 Toby Marston  
 Camille Matern  
 Iris Maute-Gibson  
 Mary Jo Maute  
 Sebastian Mayotte  
 Nancy & Sumner McAllister  
 Paula McCandlis Dozal  
 Ann McCartney & Norm Lindquist  
 Tandie McClellan  
 Kirsten McDade  
 Lydia McKay  
 Mary & James McKenna  
 Amy McKinley  
 Kate McLean & Lewis Jones  
 Mary Mele  
 Julie Mellick  
 Karl Micka-Foos  
 Diane Miltenberger  
 Chris Moench  
 Kamyar Monsef  
 Phil Montgomery  
 Moonwater  
 Geof Morgan  
 Bob & Jeanette Morse  
 Heather Munro-Hildreth  
 Thomas Murphy  
 David Namba  
 CJ & Margaret Nathon  
 Tammy Neyens  
 Kenny & Jessica Nichol  
 Therese Norton & Craig Haugen  
 Sara O'Connor  
 Constance & Henry Ohana  
 Seana Olberg  
 Mark Olson  
 Rebekah Paci-Green  
 Craig Paoli  
 Matt Paxton  
 Cynthia Petersen  
 Sandra Portz  
 Frances Posel  
 Tara Race  
 Ian Rae  
 Barbara Rappaport & Mark Irvine  
 Dan Rappaport  
 Dianne Rappaport  
 Ronald & Jeannie Reafs  
 Janiece Reilly  
 Ken Reinschmidt  
 Michael & Cathy Riber  
 Genissa Richardson  
 Garland Richmond  
 Jennifer Rick  
 Laura Ridenour  
 Catherine Riordan & Phil Thompson  
 Spencer Robbins  
 Chuck Robinson  
 Barbara Rofkar  
 Ander Russell  
 Paul Sarvasy  
 Cayley Schmid  
 Karen Schwallie  
 Kurtis & Amanda Scoby  
 Jill Seager & Paul Neel  
 Kathy Settem  
 Sharon Shewmake  
 Naomi Siegel  
 Laura Singletary  
 John Slagle  
 Jualannee Sleeper  
 Elli Smith  
 Tristan Smith  
 Rebecca Snearly  
 Rick Steele  
 Elke Stevens & Casey Diggs  
 Matthew Stuckey  
 Kevin Swain  
 Marsha Swain  
 Trevor Swezey & Priscilla Carey-Cordoba  
 Andrea Tafoya  
 Donnell Tanksley  
 Richard Thody  
 Kelly Thompson  
 Anna Thornton  
 Derek Thornton  
 Virginia Tucker

Marilu Veliz  
 Jan & Lindsey Vereen  
 Randall Wade  
 Leah Wainman  
 Heather Whitaker  
 Candace White  
 John & Kathryn Whitmer  
 Janet Wild  
 Javari Wilder  
 Liz Williams  
 Sonja Wingard  
 Carolyn & Dean Withrow  
 Robert & Debbie Withrow  
 Wesley Withrow  
 Andrea Wood  
 Tim Woods  
 Norma Wright  
 Rhonda Younker

## Business Supporters

Azamon Smile  
 Adored  
 Babygreens  
 Balladeer Studio  
 Barre3  
 Barron Quinn Blackwood  
 Bellingham Bells  
 Bellingham Cider Company  
 Bellingham Circus Guild  
 Bellingham Symphony  
 Bellingham Tennis  
 Bellingham Theater Guild  
 Bellingham Treehouse  
 Ben Mann Art  
 Betty Be Good  
 Boeing Matching Funds  
 The Black Cat  
 Brazen  
 Brett McCandlis Brown & Conner  
 Cafe Adagio  
 Chmelik Sitkin & Davis  
 The Chrysalis  
 Chuckanut Builders  
 Community Boating Center  
 Confluence Fly Shop  
 Corner Taphouse, Fairhaven  
 Creative Frog  
 Cruisin' Coffee  
 Dakota Art Store  
 Dandelion Organic Delivery  
 Earthworks Tree Service  
 Ethos West Construction, Inc.  
 Fairhaven Runners and Walkers  
 Flax4Life  
 Four Points by Sheraton  
 Funky's Hot Sauce  
 Garden Room  
 Good Time Girls Tours  
 Hammerhead Coffee  
 Hardware Sales  
 Hayden Construction & Woodworking  
 Highline Construction  
 Hindman Construction  
 Hyatt Olive 8 Hotel  
 Ideal Carefully Curated Goods  
 Inn At Lynden  
 JD Elite  
 Jessie Tanksley Art Pieces  
 Joe's Automotive Repair  
 Kite Paddle Surf  
 K'UL Chocolate  
 Kara's Beauty Barn  
 Keith Cox Autobahn  
 Kristen Ingman Art  
 Kroger  
 Laura Burch  
 Lautenbach Recycling  
 Lemaster Graphics  
 The Loft Restaurant  
 Lookout Studio  
 Lost Giants Cider Co  
 Louis Auto & Residential Glass  
 Mako Reels  
 Maniac Coffee  
 Mindport  
 Moodance SeaKayaking Tours  
 Mount Baker Theatre  
 Neko Cafe  
 NetSpeed Learning  
 North Bellingham Golf  
 Northcoast Gymnastics  
 Nuu-muu

Oxford Suites  
 Pacific Northwest ProWash  
 Peoples Bank  
 Pickford Film Center  
 The Plant Collective  
 Plum Hair Studio  
 Puget Sound Energy  
 Pumped Bellingham  
 Rachel Belly Dances  
 Reference Media  
 Salon Bellissima  
 Samson Rope  
 Samuel's Furniture  
 Saratoga Realty  
 SaviBank  
 Shake & Shine  
 Shel Drake Pilates & Movement  
 SilverReef Casino  
 Sirena Gelato  
 Spark Museum  
 Spincycle Yarns  
 Stemma Brewing  
 Still Life Massage & Float  
 Summit Adventure Park  
 Summit Bookkeeping  
 Sundara Joon  
 Third Planet  
 Tony's Coffee  
 Uprising Organics  
 Vital Climbing Gym  
 Volli Bellingham  
 Whatcom Museum  
 Whatcom Sports & Recreation  
 WECU  
 Windsor Plywood

## Grantors

Bellingham Bay Rotary Club  
 Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship  
 Chuckanut Health Foundation  
 Dave Nelson Memorial Foundation  
 First Congregational Church  
 High5 Family Fund  
 Jerry H. Walton Foundation  
 Kaiser Foundation  
 Puget Sound Energy  
 TeamTrio Fund  
 Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund  
 United Way of Whatcom County  
 Whatcom Family and Community Network  
 Whatcom Community Foundation  
 Project Neighborly  
 Posel Gockley Fund  
 Donor Advised Funds

## Government Funders

Administrative Office of the Courts  
 City of Bellingham  
 Lummi Nation Charitable Contributions  
 WA Department of Social and Human Services  
 Whatcom County Health Department  
 Whatcom County District Court  
 Whatcom County Juvenile Court  
 Whatcom County Superior Court  
 WA State Department of Commerce

## Associations & Coalitions

Association for Conflict Resolution  
 Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce  
 Birch Bay Thrives  
 Building Healthy Communities Task Force  
 Community Resource Network  
 Downtown Bellingham Partnership  
 Ferndale Chamber of Commerce  
 Ferndale Community Coalition  
 Healthy Whatcom/Community Health Improvement Planning  
 Mt Baker Community Coalition  
 National Association for Community Mediation  
 Project Safer  
 Resolution Washington  
 Supervised Visitation Network  
 Sustainable Connections  
 Washington Mediation Association  
 Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic and Sexual Violence  
 Whatcom County Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force  
 Whatcom Family and Community Network  
 Whatcom Prevention Coalition

# Financials

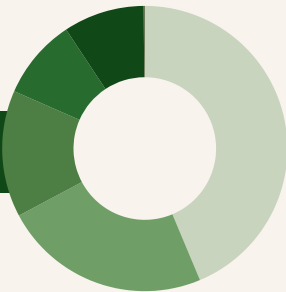
**Total Income: \$1,568,054**

**Total Expense: \$1,391,636**

**Net Income: \$155,999**

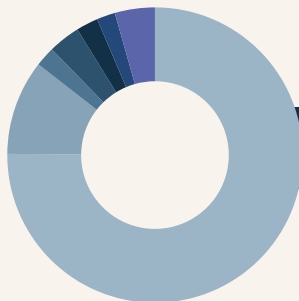
*(Includes annual depreciation)*

## INCOME



- State Government 43.7%
- Local Government 23.5%
- Grants 14.5%
- Contributions 9.1%
- Fees for Service 9.2%

- Technology 4.4%
- Supplies 2.0%
- Fundraising & Outreach 2.4%
- Occupancy 3.5%
- Administration 2.2%
- Professional Services 10.4%
- Personnel 75.1%



## EXPENSE

## Balance Sheet

### Assets

#### Current Assets

Cash & cash equivalents	\$709,810
Accounts receivable	\$149,778
Other	\$1,000
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>\$860,589</b>

#### Fixed Assets

Building & land	\$616,244
Building improvements	\$374,630
Other fixed assets	\$ 60,033
Depreciation	\$(161,037)
<b>Total fixed assets</b>	<b>\$889,870</b>

**Total Assets** **\$1,750,422**

### Liabilities & Equity

#### Liabilities

Accounts payable	\$24,342
Other Current Liabilities	\$33,816
Mortgage payable	\$310,190
Capital loans payable	\$250,000
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>\$618,348</b>

#### Equity

Unrestricted net assets	\$970,154
Temp. restricted net assets	\$5,957
Net Income	\$155,999
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>\$1,132,110</b>

**Total Liabilities & Equity** **\$1,750,458**

**65%** of clients reported extremely or very low income.

Contributions help make our services more accessible for those who need it

# WDRC 2023 Impact

## Mediation



Resolved during intake: **876 cases**

Mediation Sessions: **352**

Hours in Mediation: **629**

Reached Resolution: **78%**

## Supervised Visitation



Children connected with a parent: **53**

Hours of family visits: **490**

## Training



Workshops: **100**

Adults reached: **959**

Youth reached: **580**

**5,981**  
People  
Served

“ Thank you guys, I appreciate you, now I know how to stay calm in a bad situation when I get mad.” - Youth Program Participant

“ It was nice having a structured and fair process to collaborate on issues rather than going to court. In my situation, mediation really helped me see the other side of the disagreement and "make it more human", with less resentment. I went into mediation quite frustrated with the situation, but came out really respecting the other party. We would not have had the opportunity to communicate like this in the court system. It's a much more helpful way to resolve disputes.” - Small Claims Mediation Client

Sessions: **42**  
Participants: **203**

## Facilitation



Number: **54**  
Volunteer Hours: **1,802**

## Volunteers



Presentations: **126**  
People reached: **2,720**

## Community

