



NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO WOMEN'S CENTRE
EMPOWERING WOMEN BY PROVIDING A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT TO EXPLORE THEIR NEEDS

feminist DISPATCH



The Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre is a non-profit, community-based feminist organization in Thunder Bay, Ontario. We work with self-identified women to increase their access to knowledge, skills and resources so they can make informed choices.

From the Desk of the ED: “Feminism, for us, is not a slogan. It is a practice”:



This spring, the Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre marked a big transition with the hiring of our **new Executive Director, Katie Bortolin**. Katie shared her vision for the future of the Women's Centre at the **International Women's Day Flag Raising on March 5th**, here is an excerpt below:

*For decades, this Centre has been more than a building or a service provider. It has been a lifeline. A gathering place. A site of resistance and renewal. It has been shaped by grassroots organizers, survivors, advocates, and women who believed that we deserve justice, dignity, and safety. Today, I want to share my vision for where we go next. **First, we will remain unapologetically feminist.** Feminism, for us, is not a slogan. It is a practice. It means recognizing that gender-based violence is rooted in systems of inequality. It means understanding how sexism intersects with racism, colonialism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, and poverty. It means listening—especially to Indigenous women, Two-Spirit people, racialized women, disabled women, newcomers, and young women—whose voices have too often been marginalized.*

[Read Katie's full speech here](#)

After 35 years as our stalwart Coordinator & Executive Director at the Women's Centre, Gwen O'Reilly officially retired at the end of March!

Read [Gwen's reflections](#) on her time at the Women's Centre or view the photos from the [March 26th retirement gathering](#)

[Read more on our NOWC blog!](#)



[Upcoming Community Events](#)

Feminisms at the Lakehead 2026

Reproductive Justice Deserts: Indigenous & Queer Futures

When & Where

Thursday, April 9th, 2026
Faculty Lounge

Doors open at 8:30 a.m. for Coffee, Tea and Muffins
Presentations from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Vegetarian and Non-vegetarian food options
will be available.

Drumming | Dance | Craftivisms | Vendors

Registration Required

To **register** or if you have
questions
Email:
rkimani@lakeheadu.ca

Keynote Speakers

Visiting Keynote Speaker

Dr. Bailey Gerrits (she/her) is a feminist political scientist whose work explores how feminist activism, media, and state power intersect to shape Canada's responses to gender-based violence. She holds the inaugural Mila Mulrone Research Chair at St. Francis Xavier University, has led national and international projects on anti-violence policy and governance, has published widely on gender-based violence, policing, and media, and draws on years of community based anti-violence work.

Regional Keynote Speakers

Christy Tashjian (they/them) provides all sexual health care and strives to provide queer affirming, trauma-informed, preventive and educational sexual health care at Thunder Bay Naturopathic Clinic. Christy leans into her background as a home-birth midwife and works using a collaborative, informed choice model of care, often calling herself a midwife with an Nurse Practitioner license, midwifing people through varied health issues.

Jenni Huntly (they/them), MSc., is a registered midwife with NorWest Community Health Centres. Jenni has worked as a midwife in Quebec and Texas as well as in Ontario and Haiti. Their particular research interests are in perinatal substance abuse and program evaluation in midwifery models of care.

Local Keynote Speaker

Bobby Hudon (We/Our) is a proud Queer person born and raised in Manitoba. Through educational presentations, drag performances, and a safe online space, they help build community and support queer individuals. With 18+ years of lived experience in 2SGBTQIAP+ communities, Bobby has dedicated their adult life to creating safer spaces in Treaty 1 and now in Fort Frances, Ontario, in Treaty 3 as a Helper.

Featuring — Kwetu Youth Hub with Jendayah Hopkins

Orillia & Beyond

All are welcome! We'll
send you a **Zoom link**
upon registration



Lakehead
UNIVERSITY

Department of
Gender and
Women's Studies



Feminisms at the Lakehead 2026

The Department of Gender and Women's Studies, in collaboration with Lakehead University's Gender Equity Centre and the SSH Dean's Office, present the annual "Feminisms at the Lakehead 2026: Reproductive Justice Deserts – Indigenous & Queer Futures" event. Join **Thursday, April 9th from 9am – 4pm in the Faculty Lounge Lakehead University on Thunder Bay campus (UC 1029G, directly under the Residence Cafeteria)**. Guests can also attend on Zoom.

Events & Programming updates from NOWC



At the Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre, we believe survivors of sexual violence.

We are continuing our Sexual Violence Education series this spring with a series of upcoming workshops. Upcoming sessions include:

- “SV Kit Procedural: What to Know” *in partnership with the SADV Treatment Centre at TBRHSC*
- “Supporting Survivors: peer-to-peer support models” *in partnership with Human Rights & Equity office - Lakehead University*

Sessions are open to self-identified women and girls (ages 18+) and will take place from **6:30-8 pm** at the **Northwestern Ontario Women’s Centre (278 Bay St, Suite #201)**. **Dates and registration details to come!**

WE BELIEVE SURVIVORS



**Sexual Violence Education Group
for Self-Identified Women**



UPCOMING 2026 WORKSHOPS:

- "SV Kit Procedural: What to Know" in partnership with the SADV Treatment Centre at TBRHSC
- "Supporting Survivors: peer-to-peer support models" in partnership with Human Rights & Equity office - Lakehead University

**Dates & registration
details to come!**



**Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre
278 Bay Street, Suite #201**



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Become a NOWC Sustaining Donor

For 2026, the NOWC has a goal of securing 10 new monthly donors! The first ten new monthly donors will receive a beautiful pin hand-crafted by local artisan Feral Wife (featured in the photo!)

Become a Sustaining Donor today!

Why consider becoming a monthly or sustaining donor?

By giving a small amount each month, you help create a consistent source of revenue that allows us to respond quickly to requests from women using the Centre, such as hygiene supplies, water bottles, bus passes, grocery cards, Good Food Coupons, winter gloves/hats. Monthly support also allows us to meet our increased rent expense and other costs associated with moving, plan specific programs, keep our resource centre updated, and build our LU Bursary fund.

For more information on how to set up a monthly Donation through Canada Helps or by PAD through your financial institution, visit our ['Donate' page](#) or contact Lori at admin@nowoc.org to arrange



Craftivism at the Women's Centre

Stay tuned for upcoming programming in the spring!



GOOD FOOD BOX

April Orders

ORDER your GFB from your host site by **April 6th**

PICK UP from your host site on **April 15th**

[Order Online](#)

Thank you for supporting our spring 2026 fundraiser!

With gardening season fast approaching, the **Good Food Box Program** hosted a **SEED STARTING WORKSHOP**. Thank you to our attendees for supporting this 2026 spring fundraiser!

[Learn more about GFB Fundraisers](#)

in partnership with:
 **ROOT CELLAR GARDENS**

SEED STARTING WORKSHOP



APRIL 1ST
@ THE NOWC
(278 Bay St, Suite 201)

2026 SPRING FUNDRAISER IN SUPPORT OF THE GOOD FOOD BOX





The GFB will be at the Wilderland Market!

The Good Food Box Program will be set up at the Wilderland Market on Sunday, April 12th from 10am - 4pm at the Baggage Arts Building (at the Marina)

We will be talking to community members about the program and selling some one-of-a-kind silk-screened items made by GFB volunteers to fundraise for the program!

The market organizers will also be making a donation to the GFB Program - thank you for your ongoing support!

Community Events & Resources

Commemorations and Days of Recognition for this month:

- APRIL 2nd is **World Autism Awareness Day**
- APRIL 7th is **World Health Day (2026 theme: Together for health, Stand with science)**
- APRIL 9th is **International Day of Pink (Anti-homophobia + Anti-transphobia)**
- APRIL 22 is **World Earth Day**
- APRIL 27 - 30 is **National Volunteer Week (2026 theme: Ignite Volunteerism)**



Food Sovereignty Across Scales

Global Movements, Local Action

a series of free events collaboratively hosted by:



THURSDAY
APRIL 9

Indigenous Seed Gathering

6:30 - 8:30 PM | Co-Lab Art Gallery, 251 Red River Rd
Drop-in, come when you can and stay as long as you'd like!

FRIDAY
APRIL 10

Public Talk: Food Sovereignty as a Movement

7:00 - 9:00 PM | RFDA, 570 Syndicate Ave
Doors open at 6:30, registration appreciated

SATURDAY
APRIL 11

Farmers, Foodies, Growers & Gatherers Meet Up

2:00 - 5:00 PM | Red Lion Smokehouse, 16 Cumberland St
Drop-in, come when you can and stay as long as you'd like!

SUNDAY
APRIL 12

Workshop: Food Sovereignty in Action

1:00 - 5:00 PM | Roots CFC, 450 Fort William Rd
Pay-what-you-can. Spots are limited - registration required

info@nwofood.ca

www.nwofood.ca/get-involved/#events

Food Sovereignty Across Scales: Global Movements, Local Action is a collaborative series put on by the Food Action Network of Northwestern Ontario, the Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario, the National Farmers Union of Ontario, Gaagige Zaagibigaa, and the Thunder Bay District Health Unit.

- **Indigenous Seed Gathering** | Thursday, April 9 | 6:30-8:30pm @ Co-Lab Art Gallery (251 Red River Rd) Join Celeste Smith of Cultural Seeds for an evening centred on Indigenous seed knowledge, relationships, and stories. Drop-in, no registration required
- **Public Talk: Food Sovereignty as a Movement** | Friday, April 10 | 7-9pm (doors at 6) | @ the Regional Food Distribution Association (570 Syndicate Ave) What does food sovereignty look like across the world, and what does it mean for us here in Northwestern Ontario? Join delegates from the Nyéléni Forum alongside local organizers for a conversation that bridges global movements and local realities. **Register today!**
- **Farmers & Growers Meet Up** | Saturday, April 11 | 2:00 – 5:00 pm | Red Lion Smokehouse (16 Cumberland St S) Calling all farmers and growers! Come join us for a relaxed afternoon

to connect, catch up, and build relationships across the region. Drop in when you can and stay as long as you'd like.

- **Community Workshop: Food Sovereignty in Action** | *Sunday, April 12th | 1-5pm @ Roots Community Food Centre (450 Fort William Road)* This workshop is for those asking “what do we do next?” Together, we’ll build connections, share skills, and explore how food sovereignty takes shape across scales, from our own communities to global movements. This is a participatory, small-group space limited to 30 participants (first-come, first-served) - [register today!](#) Attendance for the full workshop is required to support a meaningful and respectful shared space

Community Events

- **April 9th | Feminisms at the Lakehead 2026** (details shared above)
- **April 9th to April 12th | Food Sovereignty Across Scales: Global Movements, Local Action** event series is taking place this month (event details shared above)
- **April 16th | Candidate Information Session** The [City of Thunder Bay](#) will be hosting a session from **6:30-8:30pm at City Hall** for potential candidates to receive information about running in the **2026 Municipal and School Board Election**. Registration is required for in-person attendance – please email ThunderBayVotes@thunderbay.ca to register
- **April 16th | Canada Reads Watch Party** Join folks from CBC Radio at **Mary J Black Library from 5:30-7:30pm** to watch the final [Canada Reads](#) debate and see who will be crowned 2026’s champion. Light refreshments will be provided. Admittance guaranteed to the first 50 attendees
- **April 22nd | Earth Day Family Activities** Join the [Northwest Climate Gathering](#) at the **Centennial Botanical Conservatory (1601 Dease Street)** from **6-8pm** to enjoy a FREE screening of *The Lorax*, explore the Conservatory with guided tours, shop a seed sale, take part in hands-on art activities, and connect with local community exhibitors.

Resources

- **Interested in municipal politics or running for office?** [ElectHERNOW](#) is dedicated to increasing the number of women elected to municipal office to more fully represent the population it serves. They are offering a 4-part [Campaign School](#) for women interested in running for office, [registration](#) is open now on a pay-what-you-can sliding scale.
- [Statistics Canada](#) is hiring in our community for the **2026 Census!** The time frame for census jobs is between March and July 2026, depending on the position and location. Learn more on their [website!](#)
- [Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses](#) reviews mainstream media reports of femicides and shares a snapshot of their research monthly. The recently shared their [February Femicide Snapshot](#), additional insights can be found on their [website](#)
- **Abortion is healthcare, and we want Canadians to know it":** [Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada](#) is launching a national advertising campaign, with billboards and digital mobile ads that speak the truth: “Abortion is Healthcare”. [Learn more here](#) and consider [donating](#) to the advertising campaign.
- [Steps to Justice](#) has [updated information](#) about the [federal minimum wage](#) increase that takes effect on April 1, 2026. The new federal minimum wage is \$18.15 an hour.
- Join [EAPO](#) to learn how to protect your devices and online accounts using simple, effective digital safety tools in their upcoming webinar, ["Digital Safety](#)

Tools - Building Your Personal Cyber Security Toolkit" on Wednesday, April 8th from 1 - 2pm EST. This webinar is provided with ASL interpretation.

Register today!

- In early March, **CLEO Connect** hosted a webinar outlining how to use their **Guided Pathways resources** to help support clients to prepare the documents they need to start a family law court case. The **recording of the webinar** is now available, as well as downloadable resources

Gender Based Violence: We Can Help

Our Gender Based Violence Navigation Advocate provides support for women who are experiencing (or at risk of experiencing) physical and/or sexual violence or coercive control by a partner, family member or acquaintance. Women navigating various court systems may also access court advocacy.

We can help by:

- Ensuring that women who are experiencing or at high risk of gender-based violence have access to ongoing and appropriate support and referrals
- Coordinating with Violence Against Women service providers to ensure that critical information is shared
- Assisting with preparing for court
- Ensuring coordination between legal sectors (criminal, family, immigration etc.)
- Providing court accompaniment and emotional support

This service is intended to enhance the effectiveness of the existing VAW response, not duplicate or replace it. For more information or to make a referral, contact Caro at navigator@nwowc.org or by phone (807) 935-8042.

Sexual Violence Program: Supporting Survivors

To help meet the needs of survivors since the Thunder Bay Sexual Abuse Centre closed, **Faye Peterson House** has developed a Sexual Violence Program. There is currently one Sexual Violence Counsellor working out of Faye Peterson offering a 20-week individual counselling program.

To access counselling for any kind of sexual violence (recent or past), you can call Faye Peterson House's 24/7 Crisis Line: (807) 345-045. **You do not need to access shelter services or report to police to access counselling.**



Sexual Violence Program

Our Sexual Violence Program supports self-identified women aged 16+ who have experienced any form of sexual violence in person or online: sexual abuse, sexual assault, sexual harassment, non-consensual distribution of intimate images, stalking or sex trafficking.

We aim to provide survivors with:

- a space to be heard, believed, and supported
- legal and systems advocacy, when appropriate
- free supportive counselling and other resources to rebuild their lives from the negative impacts of sexual violence

www.fayepeterson.org

SVP supports available at no cost:

- 24/7 crisis line: (807) 345-0450
- 10-week support groups
- Accompaniments (hospital, police, court), where appropriate
- Advocacy
- Referrals
- Public education
- 20-week individual counselling offered at two locations:
 - Faye Peterson House (807) 345-0450
 - Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre (807) 620-9156

Our SVP is designed to serve the diverse experiences of members of our communities, including, but not limited to, Indigenous/Metis/Inuit, 2-Spirited, non-binary, LGBTQ, Black/racialized, disabled, sex workers, and sex trafficking survivors.



For more details about all of our programs and services, please visit:

www.fayepeterson.org



In partnership with:
Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre

www.nwowomenscentre.org



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Mutual Aid Opportunity

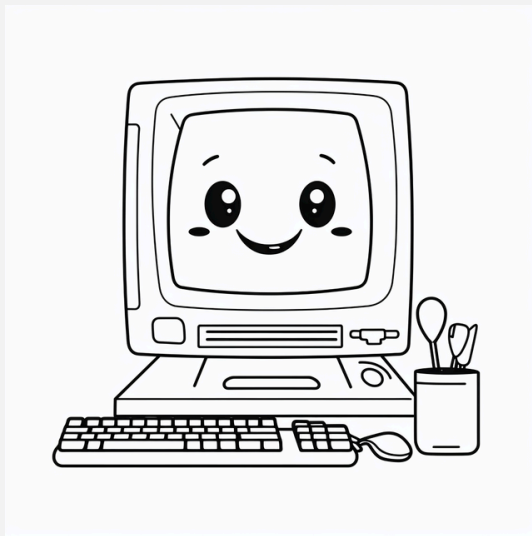


While we continue to advocate for changes to policies and practices that make women disproportionately vulnerable to violence and poverty, we know that access to some basic material items can still be helpful. We also recognize the importance of taking care of one another, and we know that many NOWC supporters might appreciate an opportunity to extend support to women in our community in other ways. Informed by our conversations with women who visit the Centre, these items would be especially helpful lately:

- Small, travel-sized lotions (scented and scent-free)
- Bus tickets, such as a **10 Ride Multipass**

- Large Ziploc bags, for carrying and storing to-go items
- New socks (individuals, in packs) - unworn please
- Fresh Co. or Tim Hortons gift cards
- mini first aid kits (or packs of Band-Aids)
- Oral hygiene: toothbrushes, toothpaste, floss, lip balm (travel-sized)
- Menstrual pads (light or regular)
- Depends (MED-LRG size) and Poise pads (for incontinence)

If you'd like to donate any of these items, please drop by the Women's Centre (M-Th between 9:30am and 5pm) or get in touch with Steph to make alternate arrangements: communications@nwowc.org.



Computer Resources Available

Women can access a computer or video conferencing at the Women's Centre for:

- Printing forms
- Job Interviews
- Virtual Legal Clinic
- Lawyer's Appointments
- Virtual Court Matters

To book an appointment, please contact Caro at navigator@nwowc.org

Contribute to the Feminist Dispatch!

Submit a photo of your original artwork, a short piece of writing, a helpful resource, or a link to a community event that aligns with our **mission!** All newsletter-related inquiries and submissions can be directed to communications@nwowc.org.

Helping Women Find Their Way Since 1973!

The Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre relies on government funding and private donations to continue our work. We gratefully acknowledge the support of volunteers, donors, and the Investing in Women's Future Program of the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada, Canadian Women's Foundation, and the Johnson Scholarship Foundation.

Support Our Work

[AAGBV](#) [Advocacy](#) [Good Food Box](#) [Public Education](#) [What's New](#)



Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre

278 Bay Street, Suite #201, Thunder Bay, ON P7B 1R8

(807) 345-7802 | ed@nwowc.org

www.nwowomenscentre.org



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