

Wellbeing Waterloo Region

Spring 2020 Update – May 8 2020

Hello Friends of Wellbeing Waterloo Region!

We hope that everyone is well during this unprecedented time. This update provides some highlights of the important work and activities that have taken place over the past several months – both before and after physical distancing measures were put in place.

Pulse Check

WWR undertook a “pulse check” to check in with WWR working group members to gain insights into what is working and not working with the enabling structure and to find out how members are feeling about the WWR initiative.

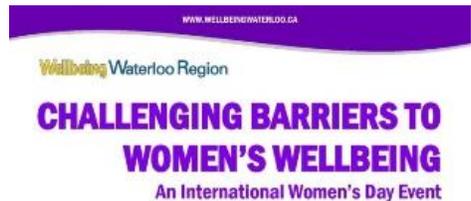
WWR members provided valuable feedback in a variety of ways (e.g. survey, work group feedback sessions, individual interviews) and WWR is using the feedback to inform future priorities, build on strengths and address areas for improvement. Work to revise the enabling structure will need to take place in order to respond to the pulse check input as well as respond to the pandemic impacts.

International Women’s Day Event and Woman’s Wellbeing Fair

On March 4, 2020 Wellbeing Waterloo Region hosted Challenging Barriers to Women’s Wellbeing: An International Women’s Day Event. Over 250 people participated in the event. Event participants:



- Heard from an inspiring panel of local women leaders about women’s wellbeing and the intersections of identity.
- Helped officially launch Wellbeing Waterloo Region’s “Challenging Systemic Barriers: The Equity Lens” video series and discussion guide
- Networked and shared knowledge with numerous organizations and service providers at the Women’s Wellbeing Fair.



Asset Mapping of Existing Collaboratives and Networks in Waterloo Region

Waterloo Region has many assets that contribute to improving community safety and enhancing wellbeing. To help with Community Safety and Wellbeing Planning, WWR put together a comprehensive list of collaboratives and networks in Waterloo Region.

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Dr. Jane Philpott Lecture: The State of Indigenous Health in Canada

On a snowy winter night in February, some WWR members attended a lecture by Dr. Jane Philpott, former Minister of Health and Minister of Indigenous Affairs in the Trudeau government. This lecture was part of the University of Waterloo, Applied Health Sciences Spring lecture series, and Dr. Philpott spoke about *The State of Indigenous Health in Canada: Causes and Consequences* using her experience as medical doctor and special advisor on health for Nishnawbe Aski Nation – an organization representing 49 First Nation communities in northern Ontario – Jane Philpott examined the causes and consequences of the main health issues in Indigenous communities.

Recent WWR Working Group Meetings

Measurement and Monitoring

In February, a Measurement and Monitoring working group took place. The group discussed the pulse check results, and presentations were delivered to the group to showcase data and an example of an interactive dashboard related to mental health and wellbeing. Updates were also provided on the group's potential role in Community Safety and Wellbeing planning.

Connectors Hub

A Connectors Hub meeting took place on March 9. The group received updates on the three priority areas, and the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan legislation and design team meeting. Meeting participants considered the pulse check feedback and provided valuable input on potential models for a future enabling structure.



Social Inclusion

The Social Inclusion group met in January and March to discuss the rollout of The Equity Lens video. There was also dialogue on “third spaces” and public spaces to bring focus to the inequities as it relates to Wellbeing. The group discussed community of practice and how to use the discussion guide when talking about equity. A presentation was made in March by the Crime Prevention Council on their history and work in the community.

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First Nations, Metis and Inuit Advocacy and Advisory Circle



The First Nations, Metis and Inuit Advocacy and Advisory Circle continues to grow. The circle has met three times since January. Circle members had started participating and having conversations with public health to work on an “Our Health Counts’ report. It has now been put on hold due to the current pandemic.

WWR also attended and supported 10th Annual Powwow at Conestoga College on February 8, 2020.



The circles membership, (almost 30 members) have gathered together (in person and on zoom during the pandemic), to share information and resources that support our most vulnerable members in the community. Advocacy around access to technology, Covid testing, and wellness initiatives. We continue to work on a draft toolkit for agencies and community groups for indigenous engagement and a live list of Wellbeing Resources for the First Nations, Metis and Inuit residents of Waterloo Region continues to grow. <http://www.wellbeingwaterloo.ca/blog/indigenous-engagement/>. Our Journey to Reconciliation training, phase two has been put on hold due to COVID-19. There are many Educational Resources are posted on our website.

Another great training resource <https://www.coursera.org/learn/indigenous-canada> available at this time, free of charge for those of you who have an opportunity to do coursework.

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Leadership Waterloo Region Virtual Café on Affordable Housing

Leadership Waterloo Region hosted their first ever virtual World Café on Affordable Housing on May 5, 2020.

Leadership Waterloo Region's Core Program Class of 2020 has, through the teaching and facilitation from the Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience, collectively taken on one issue as identified by Wellbeing Waterloo Region: Affordable Housing.

There were 53 people that attended the virtual café. During the café, Leadership Waterloo Region members presented their ideas for solutions to affordable housing issues, and meeting participants had an opportunity to ask questions and dive deeper into the ideas presented. The class also asked for additional information from participants on how COVID-19 has changed the realities of the affordable housing challenges we face, and how solutions may need to pivot to address these ongoing changes. In June, the class will be presenting their final prototype ideas to the community.

Leadership Waterloo Region is putting a call out for volunteers to provide feedback (via zoom) to two groups that due to their work situations were unable to present their ideas at the virtual café. This volunteer opportunity would take one hour. Please contact Bethan Llewellyn at bethan@leadershipwvr.org if you are interested in this volunteer opportunity.

Coffee Chats



Wellbeing Waterloo Region has offered virtual coffee chats. The opportunity to connect, and have some informal time to talk and share a cup of coffee together has been appreciated. At the coffee chats, when issues or needs are shared related to COVID-19, these issues and needs are passed along to the appropriate Pandemic Control Group.

Resource Inventories

WWR backbone staff are collecting and documenting resources to help inform future planning and to keep informed about current emerging issues related to equity in COVID 19 times. Resources being collected include:

- Inventory of data articles and resources related to COVID-19
- Inventory of resources related to planning after transformational change
- List of “keeper” ideas – includes ideas and learnings that we want to hold onto post COVID-19
- Inventory of articles related to the impacts on equity in COVID-19 times.

WWR Newsletters

Following the provincial and municipal closures due to COVID-19, WWR began circulating weekly newsletters in order to keep our network updated on changes to events, services, and programming in the community. There was no shortage of new stories and promotions as Waterloo Region rallied collaborative efforts to adapt services and programming for all residents in response to the pandemic. Among our newsletter stories were events and programs that had become completely virtual, information about brand-new supports responding to emerging community needs, and where to find key information about COVID-19 and related resources. Starting in May, WWR will go back to our regular schedule of bi-weekly newsletters.

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WWR Website and Social Media

Similar to communities across the globe following physical distancing guidelines, WWR has had an increased presence on online platforms. We have made lots of updates to the [WWR website](#) to reflect new information about community services and programming during COVID-19, and connected with our network on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)! By the numbers:

- WWR's Facebook traffic has increased 625%
- WWR's website has reached up to 667 visits in one day!
- We have added a translation widget which can translate our website into 104 languages at the click of a button.
- We have over 50 new subscribers to our WWR newsletter (Welcome!)

New Resources available

WWR has been supporting the work of the COVID-19 pandemic response group coordinating psychosocial and spiritual supports in Waterloo Region. As a result of this collaboration, the [WWR website](#) has become a platform for new resources related to spiritual and mental wellbeing. These resources will continue to evolve as pandemic responses develop, so check the WWR website for updates and new information.

WWR is supporting and housing a new resource titled: [Grief, Dying, and Death During a Pandemic](#). At the request of the Region-wide COVID-19 pandemic response group coordinating psychosocial and spiritual supports in Waterloo Region, this resource was crafted by practitioners and scholars in the areas of social work, palliative care, counselling, bereavement, spiritual care, death education, and funeral service. It expands on the topics of sadness, grief, and stress during the pandemic. The resource answers many questions about death, dying, and the process of grief within the context of COVID-19. The resource also links to a multitude of online and community supports related to grief and bereavement. This resource has been well received thus far and it will evolve as new information becomes available.

[Wellbeing Waterloo Region's Mental and Spiritual Wellbeing During COVID-19 page](#) has up-to-date contact information to approximately 100 services related to spiritual and mental wellbeing. This list was developed in collaboration with Interfaith Waterloo Region and denominations include Buddhism, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Spiritual First Nations, Metis and Inuit groups, Christian faith groups including Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Mennonite, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, United and it continues to grow.

Educational Seminars

In partnership with Carizon, Wellbeing Waterloo Region has been offering online educational seminars. These seminars provide an opportunity to tune in, listen and learn. The information covered is psycho-educational in nature, covering several topics including mindfulness, dealing with anxiety, isolation, worries about the future, managing stress, and coping strategies for working from home.

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Professional Zoom Accounts and Connectivity

WWR's supported professional 20 organizations to connect virtually on Zoom accounts. This tool was provided in order to enable small organizations to connect with their clients and staff. Hundreds of people quickly adapted to this new technology and quickly learned how to use it. There are some challenges and advantages of the technology.

Community Calendar, Events and Network

Wellbeing Waterloo Region supported the Rhythm & Blues: Celebrating Black History Month. This event was hosted by the Accessibility & Diversity Services in the City of Cambridge. The topic was Reflecting on the historical and contemporary struggles and triumphs of the Black communities in Waterloo Region.

This year WWR developed Black History Month, and Holy Posters that were shared through our network in print and on social media. The Wellbeing Calendar and blog promoted local events that celebrated our diversity.

Our [Wellbeing Waterloo Calendar](#) lists a number of services and events that are still occurring and we would love for you to submit your current and/or adapted programming that on the following link: [Calendar submission](#). WWR adapted quickly to showcase links to COVID related online events to support community Wellbeing, while in collaboration with other community calendars.

A big thank you to WWR students!



WWR would like to extend a big thank you to our Conestoga College students - Killian Cuppage, Lily Wankomo and Justine Kennedy from Wilfrid Laurier University – Masters of Indigenous Studies. Due to COVID-19, Lily and Killian's student placements ended early. Justine continues to work on a First Nation, Metis and Inuit resource guide and "Two-Eyed" seeing report. We are so thankful for the enthusiasm, fresh ideas, and positive contributions our students made



as members of the WWR backbone team.

WWR Backbone Staff Changes

In February, Emma Dunn, WWR backbone staff began a new position at the University of Waterloo, and she looks forward to staying involved with WWR as a community member.

In March, WWR welcomed Elizabeth Rankin to the WWR backbone team. Elizabeth helps us to keep virtually connected at this time through the WWR newsletters, social media posts, and website updates. In March, Julie Hill was deployed back full-time to Public Health to assist with Covid measures. We miss you Julie!

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StrongerTogetherWR

Wellbeing Waterloo Region, along with our partners at the Children and Youth Planning Table of Waterloo Region, Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council, Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership, have been supporting the #StrongerTogetherWR campaign.

For many of us, the families we serve, and the neighbours we care about, these days can be difficult to get through. And things can feel better when we hear, see and feel a connection with others. The #StrongerTogetherWR campaign has spurred many messages of hope and positivity during a difficult time, and it has been wonderful to see your special videos and social media posts. We certainly are stronger together.



#StrongerTogetherWR

Thank you for your continued support!



The WWR backbone staff would like to thank each and every community member for the continued support during this time. It has been very meaningful to stay connected and continue the work we do during this challenging and ever-changing time. We look forward to staying connected with you. Remember to follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) for regular updates from us, or drop us a line at wellbeingwr@regionofwaterloo.ca.