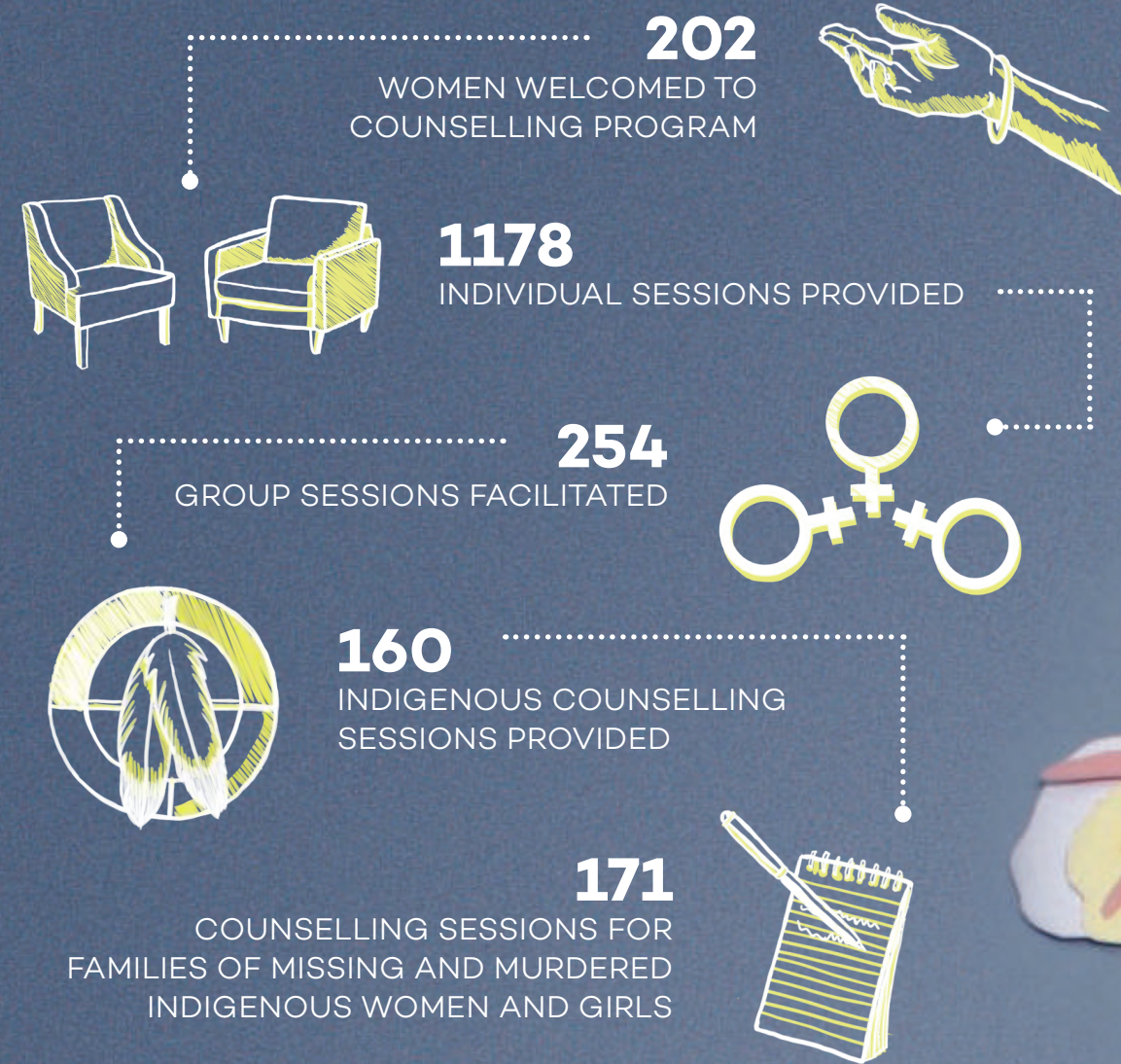


## COUNSELLING PROGRAM



## THE IMPACT OF FEMINIST COUNSELLING

“During [counselling] sessions, I was introduced to the sad concept of institutionalised misogyny. I have been able to call out behaviours that result from this pervasive way of thinking. It has helped me to realize I am worth more than the establishment values.” – Karyn



“Healing is possible for me and anyone who wants it!” – Megan

## WAVAW'S COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

As a grassroots organization, WAVAW relies on the generosity of our community to sustain and grow our critical services. Our community keeps our doors open, our crisis line answered, and our counselling rooms available for women seeking healing after sexual assault.

Our community's belief in the transformative power of sexual assault services provides thousands of women with the support they need.

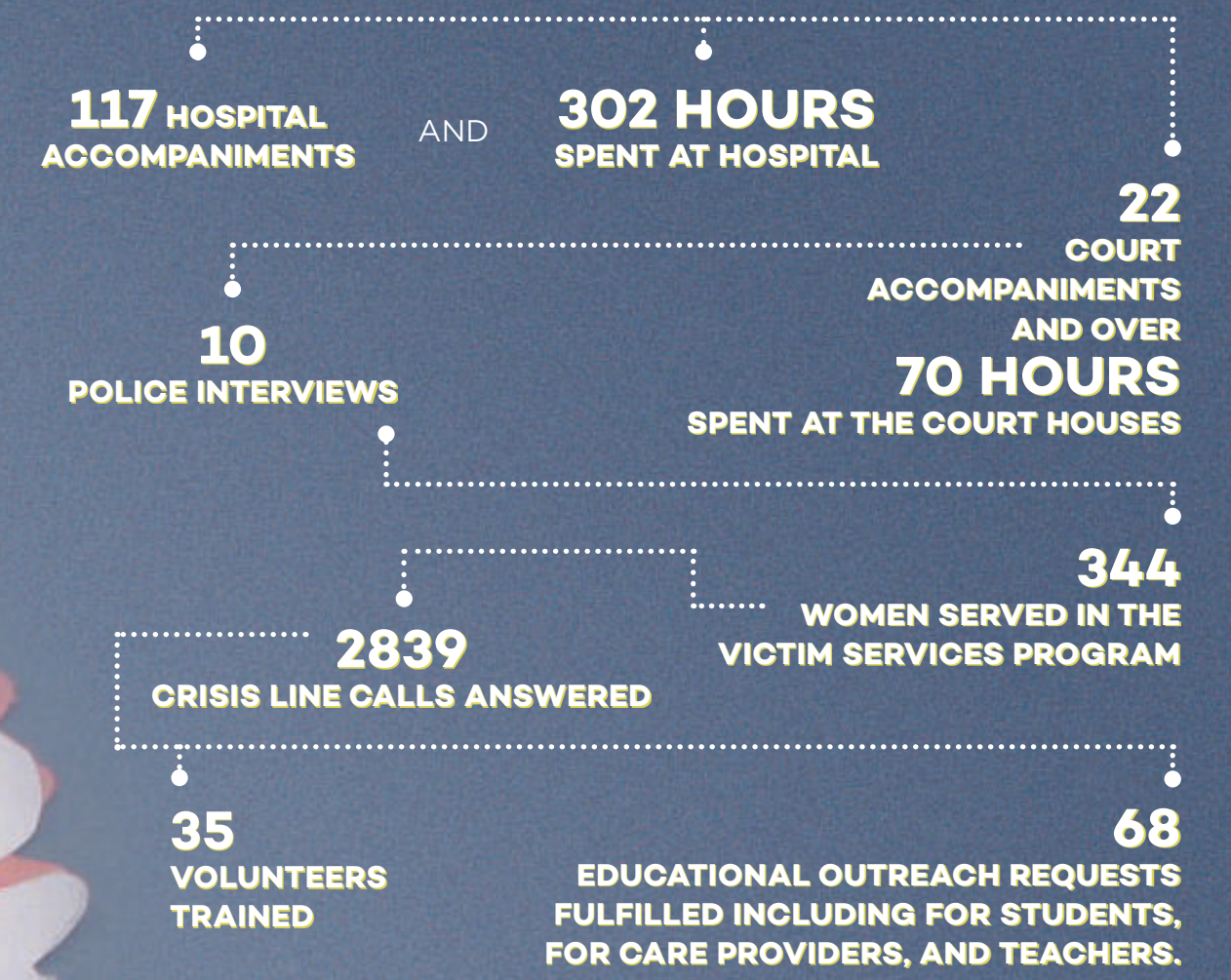
Our services are, and will always be, free of charge. Our donors' generosity makes this possible. This year, 10,529 individual donors and 481 monthly donors supported WAVAW, giving over \$615,000 to support our programming.

Our hearts are filled with gratitude for each and every supporter. Thank you for standing with survivors.



# SUPPORTING SURVIVORS SHIFTING SOCIETY

## VICTIM SERVICES PROGRAM



Fun fact: Outside of the lower mainland, Raise it Up (WAVAW's anti-violence instructional framework for high schools) has been sent to educators in Australia, Japan, England, the US, Quebec and Ontario!

## WHAT DOES WAVAW'S VICTIM SERVICES TEAM DO?

WAVAW's Victim Services team answers our 24-Hour Crisis Line, accompanies women to the hospital, and supports them as they report to police and go to court. Survivors trust our Victim Services team to provide them with emotional support, resources, and guidance throughout their healing journeys.

Zoë, a Victim Services team member, wrote the following about her work accompanying survivors to the hospital.

“A few months ago, I was out for dinner with friends when I mentioned that I was on call [to accompany survivors to the hospital] so I would be leaving early. One of the men present asked me what I do on-call and I explained in a way I thought would resonate best with a group of men: I told him that I am called on to be a friend when a woman needs it most and can't turn to anyone else.

What I didn't tell him was that I am called on to hear a woman's story. I believe her, when others might doubt her. I honour her decisions. I support her to make sense of a world that has just been turned upside down. I show her that she is not alone, and remind her that the assault was not her fault.

I came into this line of work because so many women in my community fight daily for their safety, dignity, and freedom. I passionately wanted to be an ally for those women. I have learned that women hold more strength and resilience than I could ever have imagined – they consistently resist and triumph over violence in a system that stacks all odds against them. These are the amazing women survivors that I have the privilege to stand alongside. These are the women that give me hope and the strength to keep fighting.”

## FUNDRAISING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Every year, dozens of community members reach out to us to express interest in running fundraisers in support of WAVAW. Angela Kaida was one of these community members. She wrote about her fundraiser and what inspired her to take action.

“Over the last year, 5 of my friends and I had been meeting regularly to discuss how to resist misogyny, racism, and bigotry, ever-present and now on loud-speaker.

In January 2017, our discussions coalesced into a desire to support services and advocacy available for underserved women, particularly refugee and immigrant women, women of colour, Muslim women, and Indigenous women. We wanted to honour the organizations that have been at the forefront of these efforts for many decades.

We decided to fundraise for WAVAW and their support of a diverse community of women facing violence.

WAVAW's staff helped us design a simple and effective fundraising strategy, which we called #reSISTERS. The 6 founding members of the #reSISTERS then reached out to a close network of friends and family to ask them to (1) join our movement; (2) expand the discourse regarding women's rights and human dignity; and (3) contribute financially to services aimed at eliminating violence against women.

We were so heartened by the response. By International Women's Day on March 8, 2017, our community had raised **\$2,137** for WAVAW.

We were thrilled with the fundraising success but we were also deeply moved by our community's eagerness to engage in difficult and necessary conversations. We know that many people are deeply concerned about the current discourse regarding women's and minority rights but may not have a path to action.

We encourage others to form their own groups, identify local priorities, and act to influence positive change. There is no action too small to be considered a contribution to the huge challenges ahead.”



## ABOUT WAVAW

WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre was established in 1982 to provide support services to survivors of sexual assault. We are a grass-roots feminist organization. WAVAW supports survivors by providing direct services, including:

- 24-HOUR CRISIS LINE
- 24-HOUR HOSPITAL ACCOMPANIMENT
- POLICE AND COURT ACCOMPANIMENT
- ONE-TO-ONE COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT GROUPS
- COUNSELLING FOR FAMILIES OF MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN

In addition to supporting survivors, WAVAW is committed to shifting society. We are actively involved in educational outreach activities including forums, panels, and workshops.

Our vision is a world where all women are free from violence.



## OUR SPACE

It's likely that our space looks much different than what many people would imagine a rape crisis centre looks like.

We want our space to be a place of respite for survivors – a sanctuary from the chaos that brought them to us. Every decision we make about the design of our space takes women's care and wellness into account.

When women first step through our office doors they are greeted with a warm hello, a hot cup of tea or coffee, or a refreshing glass of water, and a soft couch to sit on. As gentle music plays in the background, women are invited to read, colour in our colouring books, or relax as they wait for their appointment. Live plants are dotted throughout the space, from reception to counselling rooms, to bring in fresh air and to reduce stress. The armchairs in the counselling rooms are made of smooth suede and soft leather for an added feeling of warmth.

It takes incredible bravery for women to walk through our doors and entrust us with their lived experiences. Every aspect of our space embodies our intention to support survivors through every step of their healing journeys.



## MESSAGE FROM IRENE TSEPOPOULOS-ELHAIMER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



In reflecting on the past year at WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre, three key ideas stand out to me: trust, growth and impact.

When survivors call WAVAW's crisis line they trust that they will be met with a compassionate, professional response. Later, when they come to our space to access counselling, they trust that they will experience acceptance and respect that supports them through their healing journeys.

WAVAW's donors show us their trust by offering their financial support, knowing that their donations will go towards essential services that make a difference for survivors. Our funders demonstrate their trust by continuing to support the growth of our programs.

The support of our community has allowed us to grow as an organization. WAVAW's work with our Indigenous community is an example of our growth. 2016 marked the beginning of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. WAVAW was awarded funds to expand our work supporting family members of MMIWG. We believe that families deserve support as they embark on this difficult process. Traditional practice and ceremony is an integral part of supporting participants.

We have also had an increased impact in the public's collective understanding of sexual violence. We participated in the inquiry into the behaviour of Judge Robin Camp, who gained notoriety for his comments in court that included asking a sexual assault survivor why she didn't "sink (her) bottom" into the bathroom sink to avoid being raped. WAVAW was granted intervener status in this inquiry: our credibility is such that we were called on to provide evidence about the harmful impacts of his words on survivors of sexual violence.

We have our community to thank for trusting us, supporting our growth, and increasing the impact of our work. Thank you for being a part of our success this year. Thank you for standing with survivors.



## GROWING. TRUSTING. HEALING.

ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017

## COLOURING WITH COMMUNITY

Every week, WAVAW's counselling team facilitates support groups, both at WAVAW's office and at partner organizations. This is a story from one of our counsellors about her experience facilitating a support group.

"I facilitate a group at an independent living program for women aged 55 and older. The women living in this program have experienced hardship in many ways. They struggle with pain, disconnection and the trauma of sexual violence.

At first, the women in the group were not engaging with me. There were some women who sat with me out of kindness and then slipped away when they had the chance. I began to feel discouraged.

One day, I decided to do an activity in group that I hadn't before. I printed out colouring pages for survivors of sexual violence. With the pages and a box of pencil crayons, I headed off to the group session.

When I arrived at the location of the group session, I sat down at a communal table. A woman who was sitting at the table started to gather her belongings as if to leave. When I pulled out my materials she paused, looked at the colouring pages, and sat back down, saying "well, I guess I can stay a little longer."

She started colouring. Another woman took notice, and sat down. One by one, women joined the group and soon the table was full of women colouring, chatting, and laughing. There was a glow around the table. Too soon, our time together that day came to an end.

When I came back, the following week, the women were waiting for me. As we sat colouring and talking with one another, we noticed a woman pass by the room.

A woman at our table called out to her: *'come colour with us...we're building community.'*"



## FROM A TEACHER

WAVAW works with teachers to weave anti-violence education into their classrooms through engaging, inquiry-based workshops and activities. We support teachers to make connections between social issues and students' lives by talking about the root causes of violence and how we can all be a part of shifting society!

Melanie Scheuer is a teacher at Frank Hurt Secondary School in Surrey, BC. Melanie shared her experience of our educational outreach workshops with us.

"I decided to become a high school teacher to share my knowledge on social justice issues and provide youth the means to make positive differences in their own and others' lives. I have a deep commitment to teaching my students about the injustices that persist in the 21st Century and how they can use their voices and bodies to resist.

Consequently, WAVAW has been an integral presence in my teacher education and in my classroom. They have provided me with the tools and support to enhance my social justice knowledge and activism through resources and teacher trainer sessions. I constantly encourage my colleagues to have WAVAW in their classrooms and take their workshops... Their impact has been instrumental as I have been inspired to persist in changing my school culture especially in regards to gender, sexism/misogyny, and their intersections with racialized identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, and (dis)ability.

In addition, WAVAW embodies what all women need in an organization when dealing with gendered and sexualized violence. Their services are exceptional and I have referred students to WAVAW for support and volunteer opportunities. Indeed, WAVAW is invaluable."



WAVAW.CA  
@WAVAWRCC

## FROM A VOLUNTEER

Every year, WAVAW trains volunteers in our comprehensive volunteer training program. Our volunteers attend a 12-week training program for 8 hours per week. Once trained, our volunteers are equipped to answer our 24-Hour Crisis Line after-hours and on holidays, ensuring services are available to survivors 24 hours a day.

Amanda, one of our volunteers, had this to say about her experience in the volunteer training:

"I'll never forget an interaction I had after my first day in volunteer training. A close friend was picking me up after the training workshop, and they told me that I was beaming. I returned their enthusiasm and replied sincerely that I felt like I had found my people. I felt like I had come home.

It's difficult to put into words the energy and magic that is born when women come together to share their stories, wisdom, and questions in a safe space. WAVAW's volunteer training brought me deep learning and the opportunity to ground my feminism in a comprehensive understanding of patriarchy and the ways that it denigrates our bodies, knowledge, and experiences.

Working on the crisis line can be difficult. I don't have the ability to erase a woman's trauma. I can't always offer her exactly the answer she is hoping for. However, I am able to hold space for a woman who found the courage to pick up the phone and call. I am able to reassure her that she is believed, that her emotions in response to her experience of violence are valid, and that what happened to her wasn't her fault. I am able to recognize the gravity of our work when a woman voices, in her own words, how our conversation contributed a piece towards her healing."



## WHAT DOES WAVAW'S INDIGENOUS COUNSELLING TEAM DO?

Before colonization Indigenous people were a Matrilineal Society where women played a prominent part in political and cultural life. There were no hierarchical systems. With the arrival of colonization came colonial structures that were gendered. The subjugation of women to a patriarchal nuclear family and their children being sent to residential schools had a devastating effect on Indigenous women's cultural roles, values, and traditions.

WAVAW recognizes the longstanding discrimination against Indigenous women, and the role played in that discrimination by government policy, the Indian Act, and the actions of government. These actions resulted in systematic racism, cultural genocide and intergenerational trauma. Today, Indigenous women continue to face a number of unique challenges rooted in complex historical, social and economic factors. They are more likely to experience abuse both inside and outside of their homes and are more likely to become victims of homicide.

Our Indigenous counselling team understands that Indigenous healing is paramount in recovering from the lasting effects of oppression. Indigenous healing refers to a spiritual reconnection, with the aim of improving overall well-being through reintegration of spiritual, emotional, and physical elements. Our counsellors follow the traditional teachings of the Medicine Wheel, and some follow Anishnaabe Seven Grandfather teachings. We all contribute cultural teachings from our own Nations into individual and group work. Traditional practices, including hand drumming, singing and dancing are shared during group facilitation. We offer the opportunity to engage in ceremonies such as Sweat Lodge, Smudging, Cedar Brushing and ocean/river bathing and cleansing rituals. We believe that art is connection and connection is healing, providing the opportunity to engage in traditional crafts such as making dream catchers, medicine pouches, talking sticks and shakers.

We empower Indigenous women in reclaiming cultural traditions and recreating positive images of themselves for themselves.

## OUR GENEROUS FUNDERS

A heartfelt thank you to WAVAW's funders and grantors whose generous support of our Programs ensures that survivors have access to the connection, justice, and healing they seek. Their support sustains WAVAW's transformative services for survivors and outreach to our communities to create a society where all women are free from violence.

Our funders:

BC ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDSHIP CENTRES, URBAN PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM

BC GAMING

CITY OF VANCOUVER

CIVIL FORFEITURE OFFICE, MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND SOLICITOR GENERAL

COAST CAPITAL SAVINGS

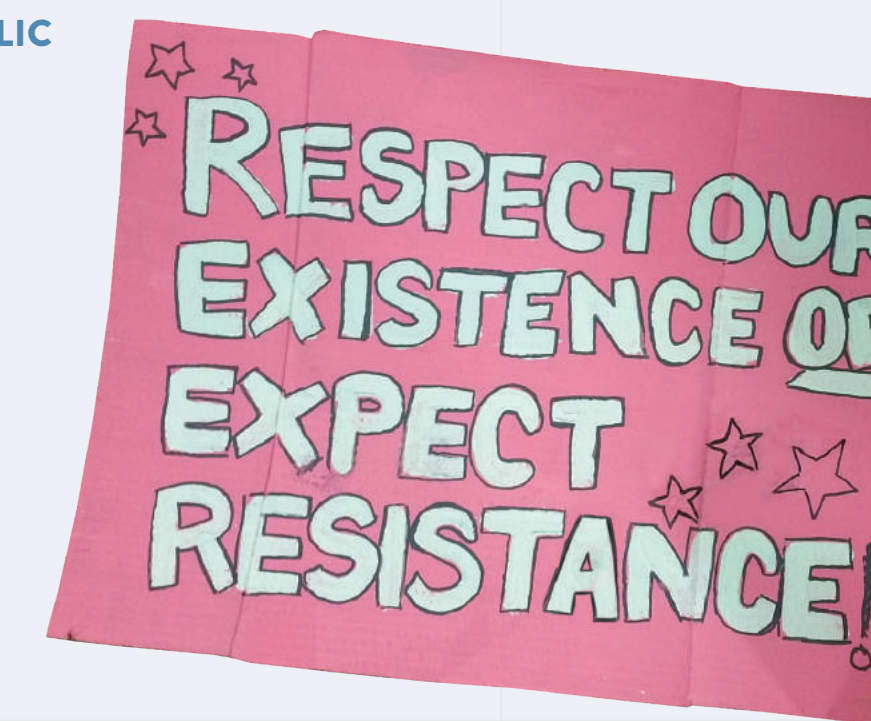
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE CANADA

HEALTH SCIENCES ASSOCIATION

VICTIM SERVICES AND CRIME

PREVENTION DIVISION, MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND SOLICITOR GENERAL

Special thanks to **Cadillac Fairview** for making a matched gift as part of our Giving Tuesday campaign.



## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

"Growth" and "impact" are powerful words that help describe the amazing change, support, and efforts that WAVAW's Board of Directors and the entire organization has experienced this year. With three new members joining the board in September, a new Board Chair, and new Board-led initiatives, the board has definitely seen a lot of wonderful growth. The board revamped the policies and procedures of WAVAW, organized a networking and fundraising event for International Women's Day, and spent a number of hours working on ways to improve our own processes to really enhance our, and the organization's, future impact.

With growth comes change and this can lead to a positive impact throughout the organization and community. From the moment I became a member of the board I have been extremely appreciative and in awe of the diverse skill set, passion and commitment the board members demonstrate.

Together, the board does everything it can to support the amazing work that the staff at WAVAW do. We have worked to become closer as a board, which then allows us to have a greater outcome on the work that we do for WAVAW.

We truly are fortunate to volunteer our time for such a phenomenal organization. We as the board are excited to see the amazing impact that WAVAW will continue to make on the community in the coming year and beyond.

Looking forward to lots of future success at WAVAW.

Trina Prince  
Board Chair  
WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre

## WHAT IS FEMINIST COUNSELLING?

WAVAW's counselling team provides one-to-one and group counselling for survivors of sexual assault. Counsellors at WAVAW work within a feminist, anti-oppressive framework. Feminist counselling is rooted in the understanding that we are not responsible for the violence perpetrated against us.

This is vital for survivors. This understanding helps to place responsibility where it belongs: on the perpetrators. Feminist counselling pushes back against society's imposed shame and blame. As feminist counsellors, we are not neutral. We are on the side of those who have been hurt.

The work we do as feminist counsellors is deeply relational and it is profoundly personal. Sexual assault is one of the biggest violations of trust that someone can experience. We work with women to rebuild trust.

We are all surviving rape culture, patriarchy and colonial systems, which are on their own and collectively oppressive and violent. One of the most insidious impacts of violence is disconnection and interruption from sources of support: our friends, family, community, ceremony and Nation. Connection is central to the work we do with women. We support them to connect with themselves and others.

At the core of healing is connection: knowing that you have people standing with you who will have your back. Few things are more powerful than knowing you are part of a community that supports you and believes in you.