

2021

ANNUAL REPORT

Building Peace & Transforming Community



LETTER FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Friends,

For nearly three decades the Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center (WDRC) has served as a conduit for resolution - a place (now both virtual and physical) and a resource in service to the community. With a pool of compassionate volunteer mediators, trainers, facilitators, a dedicated staff, and a committed Board, the WDRC has remained rooted in its mission of providing and promoting constructive and collaborative approaches to conflict.

During the course of 2021 as social, economic, and public health challenges continued to impact our community, the need for accessible, effective, and innovative conflict resolution services grew.

To meet those needs, we have maintained a steadfast strategic focus on Relevancy, Relationships, and Resilience. These concepts have been the driving force behind our efforts to increase our visibility and accessibility as a community resource, to maintain exemplary services and strong partnerships, and to strengthen our external and internal resources to ensure a vibrant future. Grounding ourselves in this strategic vision, we have navigated through the past year with an intent to show up where we were needed most, and to ensure those most in need could access our services.

A few examples of our activities include:

- Integration of equity, diversity, and inclusion principles across our organization through dedicated staff and board efforts, to organizational wide trauma-informed training, to the growth of a mediation training scholarship fund for BIPOC and multi-lingual community members.
- In partnership with local and statewide stakeholders, development and implementation of the Eviction Resolution Pilot Program to help stabilize housing and avoid the need for litigation by linking landlords and tenants to civil legal aid, rental assistance, and alternative dispute resolution process.
- Hosting free online workshops for youth and families to build conflict resolution skills to use at home and school.

With conflict continuing to occur, as it naturally does, within homes, workplaces, and the community at large, and manifesting itself on a continuum from strained interpersonal relationships to international violence, the necessity to stay rooted in principles and practices of peace building remains essential.

In the world's grief from the past few years lies the loss of peace activist Thich Nhat Hahn, who once wrote "It is my conviction that there is no way to peace—peace is the way." This sentiment, of moving through the world in a good way, resonates deeply with us here at the WDRC. In order to do so effectively though, we must bring a level of intentionality to how we individually and collectively show up—in our relationships, and our actions.

To invite that intention, and in honor of our 30th anniversary, we have launched a campaign all about peace and what it means to us as a community. Visit us at whatcomdrc.org/tell-us-your-story to share what peace means to you. Peace building work is a collaborative endeavor, and together we will continue to move toward our vision of Whatcom County being a community in which people approach conflict in creative and healthy ways.

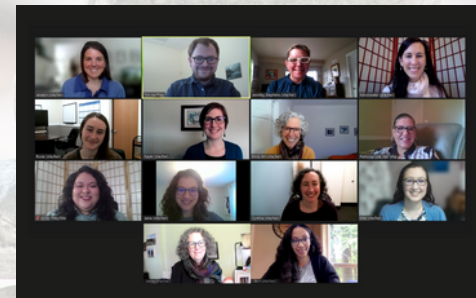
With warmth,
Moonwater, *Executive Director*

Matt Paxton, *Board President*



OUR TEAM


Moonwater
Executive Director
Emily Barnett-Highleyman
Programs Director
Jaina Gemin
Office Manager
Jennifer Stephens
Community Engagement Manager
Tim Campbell
Community Engagement Associate
Gayle LaCroix
Mediation Program Manager
Cynthia Moore
Mediation Case Manager
Britt Sullateskee
Mediation Case Manager
Ramona Garcia-Slagle
Mediation Case Manager
Mia Gover
Eviction Resolution Specialist
Rosie O'Neil
ERPP Intake Specialist
Cynthia Ward
ERPP Intake Specialist
Emily Machin-Mayes
Education Program Manager
Kristy Gallagos
Youth Program Coordinator
Janne Sleeper
*Supervised Visitation
Program Manager*
Jenilyn Brown
Lead Visit Supervisor
Devin DiBernardo
Program Staff
Luke Wiesner
Program Staff



Not pictured: Emily Machin-Mayes, Cynthia Moore, Devin DiBernardo, and Luke Wiesner

reframing conflict as a transformative force

Conflict happens every day. Community members, families, youth, and small businesses are given the tools to resolve these conflicts thanks to our dedicated staff and incredible volunteers.



I volunteer with the WDRC because I see the difference they make in our community, and the power of bringing people together.

- WDRC Volunteer

Board of Directors

Matt Paxton, Board President
Cynthia Clay, Vice President
Michael Riber, Treasurer
Amy Rydel, Co-Secretary
Kirsten Drickey, Co-Secretary
Sarah Chan
Donna Loken
Therese Norton
Donnell Tanksley
Shasta Cano-Martin
Andy Day
Elke Stevens

And thank you to former Board President Stephen Gockley for his leadership in 2021

Advisory Board

Masa DeLara
Marian Exall
Dave Grant
Leon Henley
Phil Montgomery
CJ Nathon
Mary Sass

Creating a Space for Healing: The Exceptional Role of Our Volunteers

A volunteer at the WDRC walks into conflict willingly, and with curiosity and respect--regularly giving their time to support peace-making in our community.

55
volunteers

3197
volunteer
hours

- Volunteers help families develop parenting plans through mediation and;
- In small claims court, they help neighbors resolve disputes, businesses and clients agree on outstanding debts, and friends repair relationships;
- They teach classes which help to heal rifts and cultural misunderstandings;
- They supervise visits between non-custodial parents and their children.

empowerment *We value empowerment. We share knowledge about effective practices and models for dispute resolution; we promote and nurture community resilience.*

Safe Spaces: Honoring the Concerns of Community Members

In recognition that barriers to direct communication between community members and the City of Bellingham do exist, Safe Spaces was created to provide a neutral, alternative access point for individuals to voice concerns about their experiences within the City of Bellingham or about the City's services. We provide an avenue for those who feel unable, unwilling, or previously unsuccessful in bringing their complaint directly to the City. In its first year and half, the Safe Spaces Program received a total of 59 inquiries, resulting in 25 formal complaints being forwarded to the City. The complaints have addressed a wide range of topics including interactions with police, the city's homeless encampments, traffic safety, and issues involving race and social justice.

“After experiencing a racist incident, a Safe Spaces client shared:
I felt seen and heard with you listening to my recounting of the events that occurred, and that's immensely important when reliving these kinds of situations, as I'm sure you're aware. I just wanted to thank you again. It really did mean a lot to me.”

Exploring Equity & Cultural Humility

“Masa & Julie conducted the workshop with a wealth of knowledge & compassion. After taking many "surface level" workshops on social justice & racism, it was great to have this deeper dive and talk about subjects such as white supremacy, white privilege, and learn how to recognize them in action. Highly recommend - I just wish it had been longer!”
- Workshop participant

Regardless of race, class, gender, or the myriad of other differences among us, we each need safety, connection, respect, and to be heard. Our six Exploring Equity & Cultural Humility workshops, made possible with support from the Whatcom Community Foundation and PSE, equipped participants with tools to honor human diversity and engage in cross-cultural learning activities to gain in depth knowledge and break down barriers.

We had

233 participants

including participation from many organizations and coalition groups.



collaboration *We value collaboration. We welcome multiple perspectives—it is our strength. Our mediation process is interest based and supportive of mutually agreeable resolutions. Our facilitation services encourage collaborative engagement. Our trainings emphasize strategies for working effectively with others. We remain open-minded, creative, and innovative as we serve our clients.*

Keeping Families in Their Homes: Bringing Landlords and Tenants Together

In addition to sorting out neighbor disputes, helping families navigate divorce, and educating our youth, we have played an essential role in the Eviction Resolution Pilot Project (ERPP) that launched in 2021. This invaluable program successfully resolves issues for both landlords and tenants, resulting in families staying in their homes and landlords keeping their properties. During a recent ERPP mediation, a tenant joined the session hoping to work with her landlord to negotiate a repayment plan and new lease to remain in her home of 20 years. She'd raised her three children there but lost her job earlier in the year, contracted COVID-19, and was struggling to get back on her feet. The landlord had been trying to connect with the tenant for months about their plan to sell the home but had been unsuccessful in coming up with a resolution. They were concerned about losing a prospective buyer if the tenant didn't pay and move out. The conversation between the landlord and tenant started on rocky ground, but our mediators were able to acknowledge the emotionality of the situation and, step by step, help them reach an agreement. To their relief, we led them to services that covered the rent, finalized the sale of the property and, through a private conversation with the prospective buyer, allowed the family to stay in their home.

Overall
84%
resolution rate

cases opened:
350

arrears for closed cases:
>\$500,000



"Finally, someone who just listens to me and doesn't judge me or tell me what I did wrong. I haven't had an opportunity to tell someone my perspective before. I had lost all hope of repairing my professional relationship with [my landlord] until this mediation process started."

-ERPP Client

A Summer of Building Relationships

After a challenging and disconnected year, in July of 2021 we were able to work with East Whatcom communities at the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center in Maple Falls for their annual Kidz Dayz summer camp and with the Mount Baker Boys and Girls Club at Mount Baker Senior Highschool at their day camp.

We had group discussions that helped generate ideas about conflict resolution and maintaining peace in day to day interactions, focusing on conflict, conflict styles, managing strong feelings and communication. The activities were well received and we had active participation from nearly all of the students. By the end of our time with both groups, they were sharing their ideas freely in class and were doing an excellent job of holding space for each other's sharing. Students had great questions about communication and conflict and relevant stories from their everyday lives and interactions with others.

communication *We value communication. We are approachable and compassionate. We are thoughtful with our words, and intentional in our actions. We promote communication skills and active listening and interactions both for ourselves and our community.*

Creating Space for Productive Neighborhood Conversations

Community conflict can erupt in a variety of places, and for a multitude of reasons – particularly when searching for solutions to systemic issues. Large community projects can often raise a myriad of concerns, especially when they have the potential to impact neighborhood activity, aesthetics, and access. This past spring, a local organization reached out to the WDRC for assistance in moderating a neighborhood forum to share information and answer questions about a redevelopment proposal in regard to their downtown property. There were a variety of differing viewpoints on the merits and potential impacts, and the conveners wanted to ensure the sharing of accurate information and key stakeholders could answer the public's questions. As impartial facilitators, our role was to ensure productive time together, adherence to the agenda, and most importantly help each attendee be able to participate, be heard, and be informed. We moderated the meeting over Zoom and more than 80 people joined in real time.



Our Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) Committee provided opportunities to learn, explore, and grow awareness among the WDRC community including staff, board members, and volunteers.

Resolving Conflict Through Thoughtful Mediation

Our mediators supported our clients through many important issues including elder care, intra-family concerns, Covid-19 vaccinations, divorce, and development and modifications of parenting plans. One story epitomized the conflicts faced during these trying times: two parents, separated for eight years, had found a simple verbal agreement sufficient for co-parenting. As they connected with new partners, however, they recognized that developing a more structured plan to include the new partners in visitation schedules, medical decisions, and other relevant matters would be most beneficial to all involved parties.

“Blessed are the peacemakers. People who have the skill of conflict resolution are a true gem and a service to the community. Having conversations like this gives me hope for humanity that we can resolve our differences peacefully.” -WDRC Client

integrity *We value integrity. We are curious and seek new ways to improve ourselves and the organization and we cherish that our clients trust us. At all times we conduct ourselves with the highest integrity.*

Connecting Parents and Children

Our Supervised Visitation program provides a safe and comfortable environment for parents and kids to connect. Our volunteers build trust with the kids, creating a space for the development of kids' skills and relationships with their parents. During 2020 we continued to bring parents and children together in a safe and secure virtual space. Recognizing that video does not replace a child's hug or the same ability to wipe away tears, children and parents spent time together virtually regardless of location and distance. Gratefully, in July of 2021, the program opened in a hybrid format, offering limited in-person visits.



Working with Parents to Find Joy in Difficult Circumstances

Last summer, a group of parents gathered on Zoom for our Helping Children through Family Changes workshop. Their children varied in ages, but each was in the delicate process of figuring out how to best support their kids as they went through divorce or separation. Given the topic and circumstances, this seminar can often feel quite heavy. But the trainer asked parents how they found joy in connecting with their children. As parents shared playing with their kids in the city's spray parks, camping, reading, and playing video games together, the energy lightened, and when he asked the group how many believe that their kids will ultimately be ok, every single parent raised their hand. It was so inspiring to see how the trainer balanced hope and joy with grief and difficulties.



One parent, who had not seen her children in four years, started to see her kids through our virtual program. After initial hesitation and trepidation, it did not take long before they were sharing art projects, hobbies, school papers, stories of outings, and friends over their computer screens. When we shifted to some in-person visits, the three reunited in bursts of conversation, laughter and a few happy tears.

the return of peace builder awards & launch of dine out for peace

We were thrilled to bring back the Peace Builder Awards in a new virtual format, honoring six remarkable individuals, projects, and organizations who have helped build peace in our community. Each of the award winners represent unique and important efforts to build trust, promote healing for the community and environment, resolve conflicts, and contribute to a more peaceful world.

Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center's 18th annual
PEACE BUILDER AWARDS 

2021 Award Recipients:

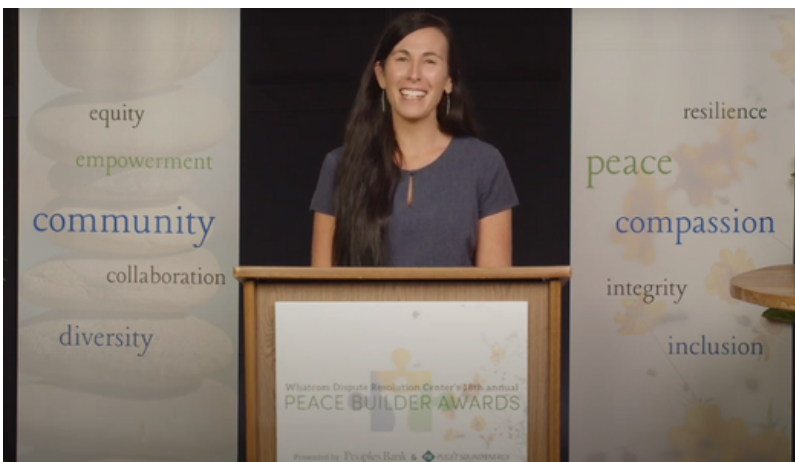
Social Justice: Shu-Ling Zhao, Kristina Michele Martens, and Heather Flaherty, Racial Equity Commission
Youth Equity: Vamos Outdoors Project
Health and Wellbeing: Jenny Lawrence and Nyla Thursday, Bellingham Public Schools COVID response
Empowerment: Monica Koller, Connecting Community
Environment: Jay Julius, Se'Si'Le & Red Road to D.C. Journey
Creative Conflict Resolution: Sandi Heinrich, Whatcom County Covid-19 Community Helpers

In October, 19 local restaurants, brewpubs, and coffee houses joined us in honoring Dispute Resolution Month in our first annual Dine Out for Peace. These businesses committed to donating a portion of their proceeds to help support our mission here in Whatcom County.



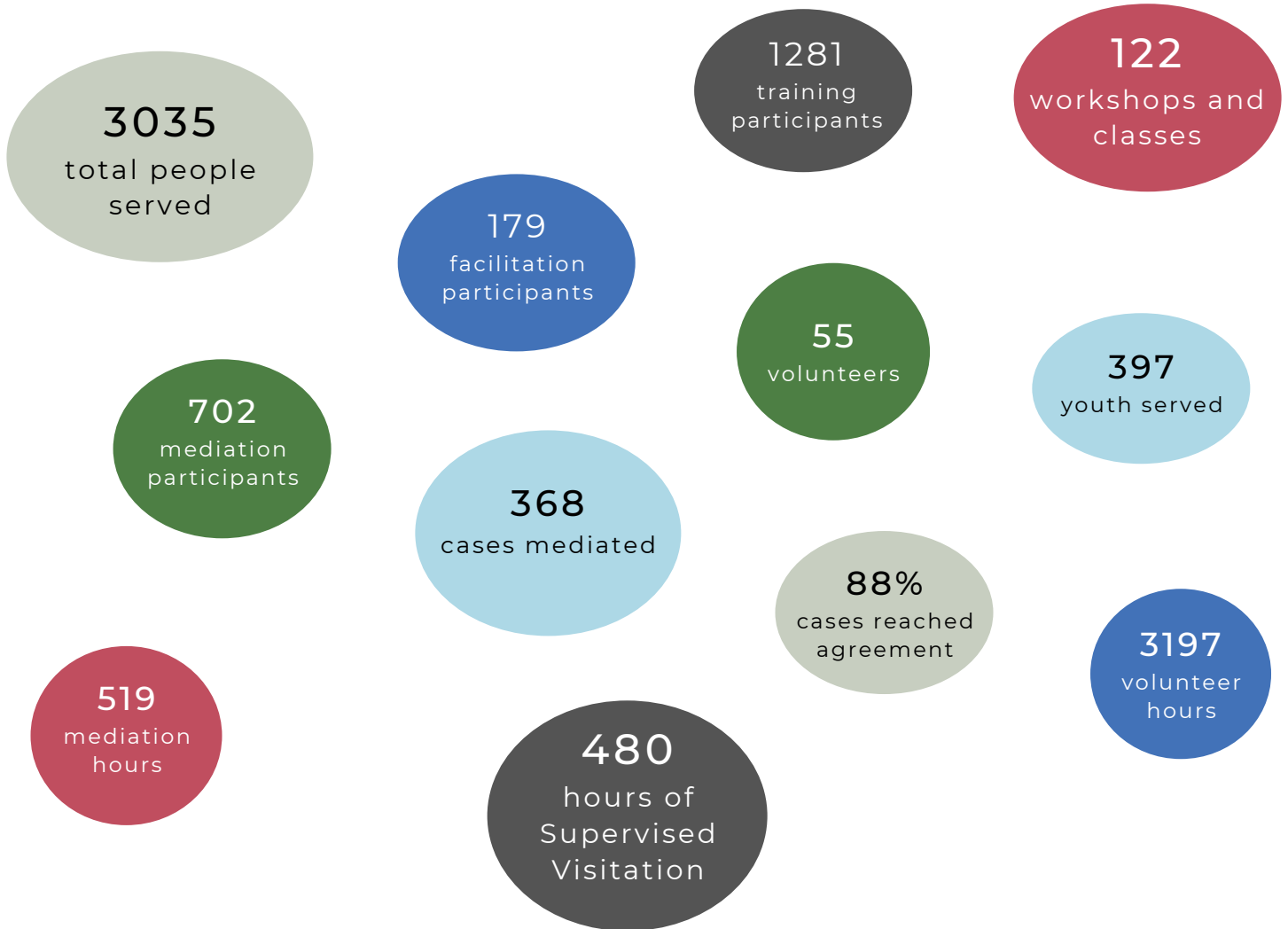
Participating Businesses:

Bellingham Cider Co.
The Black Cat
Boundary Bay Brewery
Cafe Velo
Elizabeth Station
Diamond Jim's Grill
Kulshan Sunnyland
Menace Brewing
Nelson's Market and Marlin's Cafe
Milanos Restaurant and Bar
The North Fork Brewery
Pepper Sisters
Pooties Grand AVE
The Annex
The Cabin
The Local Public House
The Waterfront Seafood and Bar
Wander Brewing
Zeeks Pizza



Moonwater, Executive Director
2021 Peace Builder Awards Virtual Event

2021 impact numbers



In 2021, our team of mediators received a Ken Gass Community Building Award for the excellent efforts of our mediation team, connecting people across differences to repair relationships and collaboratively reach agreements.

2021 Donors and Supporters

Anonymous
Monica Anne Angel
Sydney Arndorfer
Astrid Aveledo
Cynthia Bach
Ray Ballweg
Michael and Susan Batcheller
Dorie Belisle
Elizabeth Bierman
Jenifer Bierman
Ronna Biggs
Nancy and John Blume
Debbie and Gary Bornzin
Stephanie and Rich Bowers
Kacey Bradt
John Bromet
Max and Vanessa Bronsema
Isabel Brooke
Dut Brown
Jenilyn Brown
Kim Brown
Beth Brownfield
Janet Brynjolfsson
Josh Burdick
Jamia Burns
Henry and Marilyn Burwell
Tim Campbell
Addie Candib
Joan Cervisi
Sarah Chan
Cynthia Clay
Patrick Gallery and Christine Coder
Connie Cogburn
Steve and Susanna Cornwell
Craig Robinson and MaryAnn Crawford
David and Jayme Curley
Susan and John D'Onofrio
Kaitlin Davis
Larry Davis
Dianna Del Giorgio
Deborah and Mary Dempsey - Durbrow
Tim and Joanne Douglas
Peter Drewes
Don and Jeanne Drickey
Kirsten Drickey and Kendall Whitney
Mary Dumas
Ann and Pug Edmonds
Lucy Morse and Paul Englesberg
Pamela Englett
Marian and Graham Exall
Kim Farmer
Rose Anne Featherston
Julia Findley
Seth M. Fleetwood
Deborah Forgays
Howard and Mary Francell-Sharfstein
Vermeda Fred
Amia Froese
Joe Fuller
Robert Gaeta
Rebecca Galvin
Jaina Gemin
Sylvia Gerry
James Goalder
Ellie Posel and Stephen Gockley
Hilary Goode
Karla Hall
Trina Hall
Margo Hammond
Therese Norton and Craig Haugen
Meredith and Eric Hayes
Laurie and Ken Heck
Lisa and Brian Heffer
Leon Henley
Virginia Herrick
Scott and Emily Highleyman
Alex Hildreth
Karen Hoelscher
Donna Holmes
Catalina and Greg Hope
Sandra Hughes
Kate Imus
Sarah Jenkins
Steven Johnson
Lewis Jones
Nancy Keyes
Daniel Kirkpatrick and Lisa Beck

Timothy Krell
Gayle Lacroix
Michael Langey
Robin Lawhorn
Ronna Loerch
Donna and Keith Loken
Don Lotze
Melinda Lunsford
Jack Macslarrow
Cindy Madigan
Jeff Maher
Amy Mann
Kay Marsh
Roy Martin
Camille Matern
Julie Mauermann
Mary Jo Maute
Iris Maute-Gibson
Shelley Macy
Kelcie Sheriff and Janet Mayr
Ann McCartney and Norm Lindquist
Amanda McCoy
Marissa McGrath
Lisa McReynolds
Lisa Melia
Ann Meyer
Denise Meyer
Phil Montgomery
Li Moon
Mary Lee Mooney
Geoffrey Morgan
Bob and Jeanette Morse
CJ and Margaret Nathon
Paul Neel and Jill Seager
Bryan and Jennifer Oen
Andrew and Amy Olive
Janet Ott
Stephen Paus
Matt Paxton
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Megan Watson
John and Kathryn Whitmer
Julie Wiesner
Allison Williams
Carolyn and Dean Withrow
Moonwater and Wes Withrow
Bob and Debbie Withrow
Susan Wright and Michelle Kopcha
Rhonda Younker
Andrew Zvilna

Business Supporters

8 Petals Yoga
Adventures Northwest
Alaska Gold Seafood
American Alpine Institute
Avenue Bread
Backcountry Essentials
Balladeer Studio
Banner Bank
Bellewood Acres
Bellingham Bells
Bellingham Grocery Outlet
Bellingham Chamber of Commerce
Bellingham Symphony
Bellingham Tennis
Bellingham Theater Guild
Bellingham Treehouse
Bio Bug Pest Management
Boundary Bay Brewery
Brazen
Brett McCandlis Brown & Conner
Bry's Filipino Cuisine
Burnt Ends BBQ
Calypto Kitchen
Chmelik, Sitkin, & Davis
City Gym
Community Boating Center
Community Food Coop
Creative Frog
Dakota Art Store
Dandelion Organic Delivery
Dog On Computer Repair
Fairhaven Runners and Walkers
Fairhaven Village Inn
Hampton Inn by Hilton Hotels
Hayden Construction and Woodworking
Highline Construction
Hotel Leo
Inn At Northrup Station
Intrinsic Flow
Jeff Braimes Real Estate
Joe's Automotive Repair
Keith Cox Autobahn
Kona Mountain Bikes
K'UL Chocolate
Lighthouse Bar and Grill
Louis Auto and Residential Glass
Madrone Massage
Mellissa's Holistic Skin Care
Menace Brewing
modsock
Mount Baker Theatre
Mt Baker Ski Area
Museum of Pop Culture
North Bellingham Golf
Northwest Corner Goods
Nuu-muu
Osprey Hill Farm
Pangea Ferments
Peoples Bank
Pickford Film Center
Pleasant Valley Creamery
Pozie by Natalie
Puget Sound Energy
Pure Bliss
Quicksilver Photo Lab
Reflexology
Rice Insurance
Salt Pepper Oil
Saltadena Bakery
Saratoga Real Estate
Savi Bank
Sea Witch Botanicals
Semiahmoo Golf and Resort
Shake and Shine
Sirena Gelato
Spark Museum
Still Life Massage and Float
Summitt Adventure Park
Sylvia Center for the Arts
The Chrysalis
The Local
Third Planet
US Forest Service

Veritas Media
Village Books
Whatcom Museum
Wild Whatcom
Willows Inn
Wonderland Herbs & Teas & Spices
YMCA

Foundations

Chuckanut Health Foundation
Dave Nelson Memorial Foundation
James Boskey Memorial Foundation
Lhaq'temish Foundation
Whatcom Community Foundation Resilience Fund & Passthrough Grant Fund

Grantors

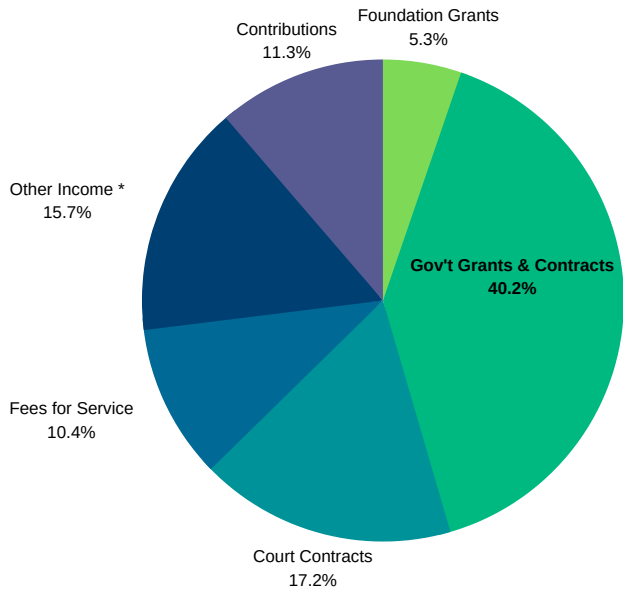
501 Commons
Administrative Office of the Courts
Bellingham Bay Rotary Club
Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship
City of Bellingham
Department of Social and Human Services
PSE
Seeking Health
St James Presbyterian Church
St Pauls Episcopal Church
Superfeet
Washington Service Corps
Whatcom Family and Community Network
WA State Dept of Commerce

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

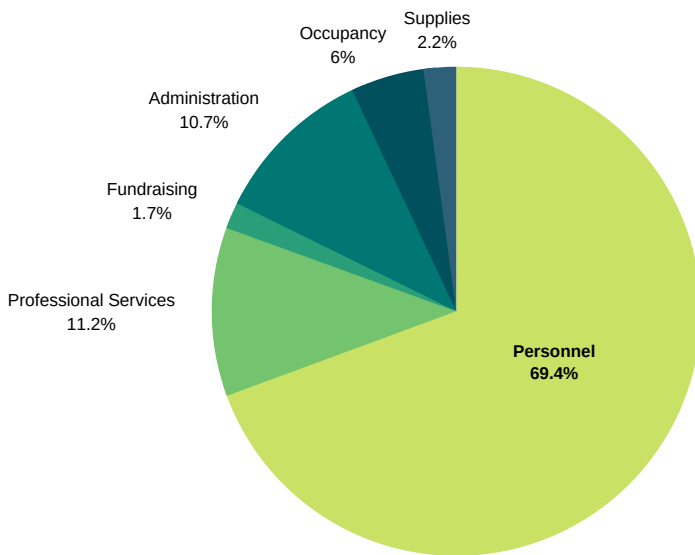
Income



Total Income: \$1,075,520

**Includes 2020 and 2021 Forgiven PPP Loans*

Expenses



Total Expenses: \$845,631

Net Income: \$208,341

Balance Sheet

Assets

Current Assets

Cash & cash equivalents	\$581,413
Accounts receivable	\$78,182
Other	-\$2820
Total current assets	\$656,775

Fixed Assets

Building & land	\$616,244
Building improvements	\$366,413
Other fixed assets	\$60,033
Depreciation	\$-119,826
Total fixed assets	\$922,864

Total Assets

\$1,579,639

Liabilities & Equity

Liabilities

Accounts payable	\$7,573
Accrued expenses	\$16,216
Long-term loan payable	\$0
Mortgage payable	\$334,302
Capital loans payable	\$250,000
Total liabilities	\$608,091

Equity

Unrestricted net assets	\$751,996
Temp. restricted net assets	\$11,207
Net Income	\$208,345
Total Equity	\$758,013

Total Liabilities & Equity

\$1,579,639



what does peace mean to you?

WDRC's 30th anniversary
#wdrceace

Our story began in 1992: volunteers, committed to helping our community re-humanize conflict, formed our nonprofit here in Whatcom County. Since that beginning, we have evolved and adapted to meet the changing needs of the community.

For the last 30 years, we have mediated delicate, powerful agreements, we have educated and empowered our youth, and we have launched programs that foster and encourage constructive, collaborative approaches to conflict and relationships.


Now, in celebration of our 30th year in 2022, we want to highlight stories of those we serve:

our community.



tell us your story

#wdrceace




At the heart of what we do is community.
And at the heart of community are our stories.
Stories of collaboration, stories of setbacks and growth,
and stories of working toward peace.


For this anniversary year, to honor this wonderful community in which we serve, and which in turn supports and sustains us, we're asking community members to submit their own stories of peace and how the WDRC has impacted them.

Submit stories at www.whatcomdrc.org/tell-us-your-story





with the Peace comes happyness,
with happyness comes Peace
we help each other and that is
me. That is what matters! we need
Peace. Peace needs us.



Stella S., age 8



The **MISSION** of the WDRC is to provide and promote constructive and collaborative approaches to conflict.



The **VISION** of the WDRC is for Whatcom County to be a community in which people approach conflict in creative and healthy ways.

The WDRC **VALUES** impartiality, accessibility, empowerment, collaboration, communication and integrity.