



2013 Annual Report



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EcoEquitable: Recycling Fabric, Changing Lives.

Introduction

Welcome to EcoEquitable's 2013 Annual Report.

EcoEquitable (EE) is a non-profit organization providing a bridge to social and economic integration for people in need, especially immigrant women, while greening the community. EcoEquitable offers intensive five-month sewing programs to immigrant women and people in need, allowing them to join the Canadian work force. We raise revenue for these programs by selling recycled fabric and fashion accessories in our boutique, and by offering contract sewing for conference bags and small designer lines on site at 404 McArthur Avenue, Ottawa.

We have never created an annual report before so this is our first document created exclusively to tell our story. We wanted to share a snapshot of where we are as an organization, and tell you where we are going. We hope that you enjoy reading this document and get as excited about EE as we are!

Message from Robert Nassrallah, President of the Board of Directors

I am pleased to present EcoEquitable's Annual Report for 2013. This represents the first report since the release of both our 2013 Business Plan and five-year 2013–17 Strategic Plan.

I have been involved with this great organization since 2009. From where we started, to where we are now, I am happy to see the significant progress we have accomplished. Our mission in "providing a bridge to social and economic integration for people in need, especially immigrant women, while greening our community" is a passion that is shared among all staff and board members.

While we continue to grow in key areas, we realize that there is still much to do. We hope to increase our revenue base to further develop our capacity in helping immigrant women. We also hope to refine our programming and services so we can better help our clients participate within the Canadian labour market.

Our strategic goal to become more financially resilient and sustainable is what drives us. With the hard work of dedicated staff and volunteers, and the support from our funders and community, I am happy to report that we are moving in the right direction. As a social enterprise, the products we produce and sell to the public allow us to better help our clients by further financing our programs. In moving forward with this goal, we will continue to market our locally made, high quality products so that more immigrant women can be given a better opportunity to integrate within Canada.

Our ability to leverage key partnerships with other community and social service groups make it possible for us to fully support our clients at achieving more self-sufficiency. With



the help of members from our partner organization “Heartwood House” as well as others, I am thrilled to see that we are identifying and addressing various barriers that immigrant women encounter, which includes language, financial literacy, and self-esteem.

What makes this organization special is that we also place a high value in incorporating an environmental factor to our mandate by using textiles that are destined for landfills. Using environmentally sustainable means through recycling fabric has given us an extra dimension to position ourselves as a both positive and progressive organization. Our work for economic, social and environmental change within the Ottawa community is the motivating fuel that guides us in our pursuit of excellence.

I would like to conclude that there is not a moment in which we do not appreciate or take for granted the support of our staff, volunteers, funders and community. It is with this support that we are able to successfully deliver on our mandate and position EcoEquitable to succeed in the future. We will continue to make you proud of our work. Together, we can work to change the lives of two important women groups: immigrant women and “mother earth”.

Thank you,
Robert Nassrallah

Message from Tara Templin, Executive Director

2013 was an amazing year of transformation. We began the year with a 5 year strategic planning process, then expanded our Sowing for Jobs program by including a beginner’s level and establishing satellite sites, and finally, ended the year with a move into a brand new, specially designed space, doubling our physical size. As we grew so much in 2013, it is important to both celebrate this growth and at the same time, reflect on EcoEquitable’s history and development. EE’s first transformation took place in 2006, when, as a small cooperative for immigrant women, the entire space was flooded with fabric donations. As our founder Lucile Champagne recounts, “when we couldn’t see each other over the fabric, we knew it was time to do something!” This prompted the creation of the first recycled fabric boutique in the basement of Heartwood House on Chapel Street. After a lot of work and support from donors and the community, the boutique was established and the EE community announced, “It goes!” This was the first turning point in the history of EE – when there was a realization that if something didn’t change, we would have to close our doors. EcoEquitable met the challenge by growing and creating something new.

In 2013, the same type of transformation was upon on as the Heartwood community faced the impending demolition of our building on Chapel Street, and given notice to move out by the end of the year. This precarious situation sparked the Heartwood organizations to unite and find a viable home to purchase and renovate. With a new home established, we planned an attractive fabric and fashion boutique, an expanded and upgraded production space, and a welcoming classroom for immigrant women in the new location. In addition to preparing for the move, 2013 marked EcoEquitable’s comprehensive strategic planning process. We created a 5-year strategic plan, an associated action plan and a comprehensive business plan. These planning documents allowed us to overcome obstacles to our growth by having clear, long term plans for our



business lines and charitable activities. The new strategic and business plans set the stage for our move and the launch of several new programs, including 3 satellite sewing programs with Wabano, Maison Marie Louise and Minwaashin. In addition to training 84 immigrant and marginalized women, both our business and charitable revenue grew, amounting to a total growth of 165% in 2013. As our Sowing for Jobs expands, we have continued to evaluate outcomes such as employment, self-esteem, social networks, health, and sewing skills using a Social Return on Investment (SROI) tool. We are thrilled to report that, after surveying Sowing for Jobs graduates from 2012 and 2013, our SROI ratio is \$5.12:\$1.00. This means that for every dollar invested in Sowing for Jobs, we return \$5.12 to the community through a reduction in use of services such as Ontario Works, Food Banks, medical services, etc. In 2013, these numbers were illustrated on a regular basis, as participants walked into the classroom and announced: “I got the job!,” “Wow – this is my very first paycheck.” “I love coming here – it is one of the only positive things in my life right now” “Now that I have a job, I can sponsor my husband from Pakistan” “I just got my work permit – I can’t wait to start working at EE!” After this amazing year of transformation, we are happy to say again- “it goes!” We are grateful to our volunteers, funders, donors, staff, board of directors and especially our participants who supported EcoEquitable through this period of transformation. Onwards and upwards!

Staff & Volunteers

Staff

Anouk Bertner, Interim Executive Director
Azam Kazemiyani, Project Coordinator
Belkis Navas, Instructor
Mitra Vaezi, Production Manager and Instructor
Tara Templin, Executive Director

JCP Contracts (November 2013-June 2014)

Aysheh Rasoulnejad, Home Décor Assistant
Masoumeh Gooya, Public Relations Developer
Sandra Sawers, Boutique Business Developer

Key Volunteers

Fatma Maged
Stanislava Jetic (Stanka)
ShaeShae Kahil
Susan Sarrasin
You Rahn Choi

Board Members

Robert Nassrallah, President (2010-)
Heather George, Secretary (2012 -)
Christine Searle, Treasurer – Strategy (2013 -)
Mikael Swirp, Treasurer – Operations (2010 -)
Alison Sue-Ping (2012-)
Hilary Hove, VP (2012 -)
Naima Bode (2012 -)



Donors & Community Support

EcoEquitable could not do what we do without the incredible support of donors and volunteers. EE is a social enterprise, an organization that seeks to grow our business lines in order to create our own financial sustainability—all in support of our mission. We are so grateful to our donors for believing in the work that we do and supporting us!

We would like to extend a special thank you to our 2013 funders and donors, and our wonderful community partners:

Funders

Trillium Foundation
The Co-operators
MTCU
Crabtree Foundation
City of Ottawa
United Way of Ottawa
Community Foundation of Ottawa
Fondation franco-ontarienne

Individual Cash Donors

Anonymous
Anonymous
Les Soeurs Du Sacré-Coeur De Jésus
Sandra Stevenson
Hilary Hove
Heather George
Robert Nassrallah
Nadine Eskander
Fatma Maged

Community Partners

ALSO
Dress for Success
Enactus uOttawa
Fancyboys
Heartwood House
Carlton University
University of Ottawa
YMCA
CISED
Vanier CSC
OCISO
NCC
People, Words and Change

While it is impossible to list all in-kind donors in this report, we want to recognize and thank the many, many, fabric and material donors who make our sewing training and fabric recycling possible!



Snapshot of the Organization

EcoEquitable evaluates program effectiveness in part by conducting an evaluation of social return on investment (SROI) for our Sowing for Jobs program. This evaluation measures how participating in the Sowing for Jobs program changes reliance on public services such as Ontario Works, food banks, medical services, etc. and applies a dollar figure to that change.

In 2012/2013, the SROI ratio for the Sowing for Jobs program was \$5.12:\$1.00; for every dollar invested, we return \$5.12 to the community. In 2011, the first time the Sowing for Jobs program was offered, the SROI ratio was \$1.53:\$1.00.

Key facts for 2013

- 84 immigrant women or people in need were served
- 83% of participants surveyed expressed an increase in self-confidence and financial independence
- 65% of participants surveyed obtained employment or enrolled in continuing education
- 90% of SFJ participants accessed volunteer opportunities at EE
- 5,000 lbs. of fabric were recycled
- 50 volunteers contributed over 1,500 volunteer hours

History of the Organization (2002—2013)

EcoEquitable started spontaneously in 2001 when a woman was reflecting on her life story and realized how she was blessed with plenty of work all of her life. As a Catholic nun, teacher, and therapist, she felt a calling to invest in women's worth. She saw so many women entering Ottawa from countries at war and other difficult situations. She had worked on many projects to support newcomers to Canada but never around sewing. During a move, a sewing machine was donated and added into the mover's truck to a new location. Two volunteer seamstresses checked and installed the sewing machine in a small room; donated fabric came in no time and one day, a passerby asked what the group would be: "A co-operative!" the group spontaneously replied! All present looked at each other, gladly supporting the clear answer. The woman at the center of this story is Lucile Champagne, now a retired Catholic nun: a true visionary led by her compassion, "Let's do it" attitude, and genuine warm and loving generosity.

Lucile shared: "Our vision was to build a world in which the dignity and unique gifts of each person are valued and promoted, a community whose members stand with one another in justice and hope". These are the values of EE.

From September to December 2001, she searched for a follow-up project to pursue the results of her last five-year project: "To consolidate a core of work-committed people to build up a cooperative able to include the newcomers." She rented a 110-square-foot room to locate the "Master Sewing Machine", EE's industrial sewing machines as the group called them. Every Thursday, five women would come together to create clown costumes for Heartwood House's celebration in November. The number of groups in the centre attracted



many visitors who became agents of change for us in telling their neighbours about our project. Many long-time seamstresses joyfully directed their complete load of fabric and sewing tools to us. They knew all their material would be used for a good cause. A friend from Orleans contacted EE about a fabric storeowner who had to empty their basement in the next twenty-four hours. A van was hired and a significant amount of raw material attracted many women to create dresses, bags, and skirts. EcoEquitable was born.

In 2009, Lucile Champagne, EcoEquitable's founder, was introduced through a mutual acquaintance to Tara Templin, who was working for a local community health and resource center. Tara, with her experience in grassroots community development and international women's issues, was immediately drawn to EcoEquitable and offered her support in grant writing and development. Lucile and Tara worked closely throughout 2009 to solidify EE's training program Sowing for Jobs and to expand EE's business lines. The rapport and mutual respect between Lucile and Tara grew, and in January 2010 Lucile happily passed the reigns of EcoEquitable to Tara. Since that time, Tara has acted in the role of Executive Director; as such, she has formed the current board, hired further staff and overseen operations and growth. The organization has expanded to include both funded and for-profit lines of programming. A board has been assembled from volunteer community members to help guide and support the organization. The contract operations for EE use program alumni to fulfill sewing contracts; these contracts provide income as well as a steady supply of high-quality labour for EE. Further, EE has recently worked with CISED, a Social Enterprise resource group, to complete an SROI analysis which demonstrated that for every dollar spent on Sowing for Jobs, the flagship funded program at EE, \$1.38 is generated in social returns for its participants and the Canadian public. EE continues to grow and in 2013, will move to a new, larger space with display windows in the developing neighbourhood of Vanier.

Mission, Vision, & Strategic Goals

Vision: An inclusive and sustainable society where all can realize their full potential within their community.

The vision is significantly broader than sewing or financial independence—it speaks to the holistic possibility of each person. It also allows for easy partnership with like-minded organizations.

Mission: Providing a bridge to social and economic integration for people in need, especially immigrant women, while greening our community.

Over 80% of EE's program participants are immigrant women; there will be an emphasis on continuing to support this specific group which is why they are specifically named in this mission statement. "Providing a bridge" allows for the concept of responsibility and autonomy. EE will provide the tools and programs but ultimately each program participant must take advantage of them. Finally, EE has a strong environmental mandate.

This ability to work across the traditional lines of funded charitable sector and for-profit work makes EE unique, and its mandate for social and environmental change is impressive.

Strategic Goals

The Strategic Goals were created by the board and staff with the intention of having them be flexible and far-reaching enough to last for the next five years (next revision is in 2017). Interim goals for 2013 and 2015 were also listed as milestones.





Statement of Financial Position

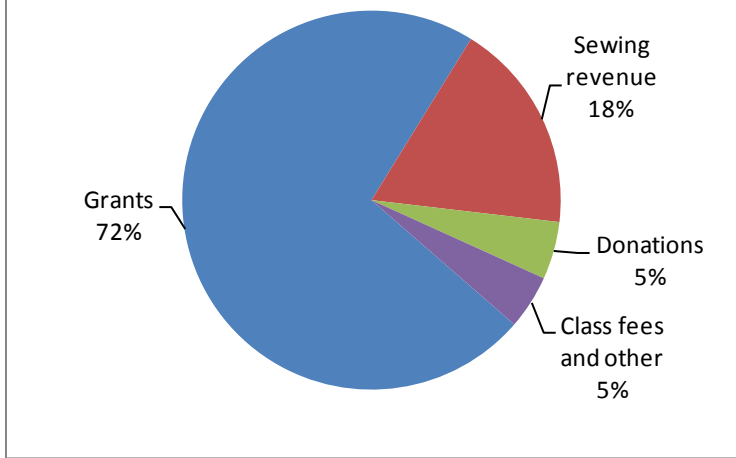
Statement of Operations

Revenue	2013	2012
Class fees and other	10,675	7,424
Donations	11,367	2,316
Grants	167,375	72,282
Sewing revenue	41,661	22,061
	231,078	104,083
Expenses		
Salary and contractors	171,233	96,964
Office expenses	15,641	4,758
Rent	15,385	14,128
Sewing material	2,558	1,771
Travel	703	767
Other	64	133
Promotion and publicity	167	1,576
Total	205,751	120,097
Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenses	25,327	(16,014)

Revenue Amounts in 2013

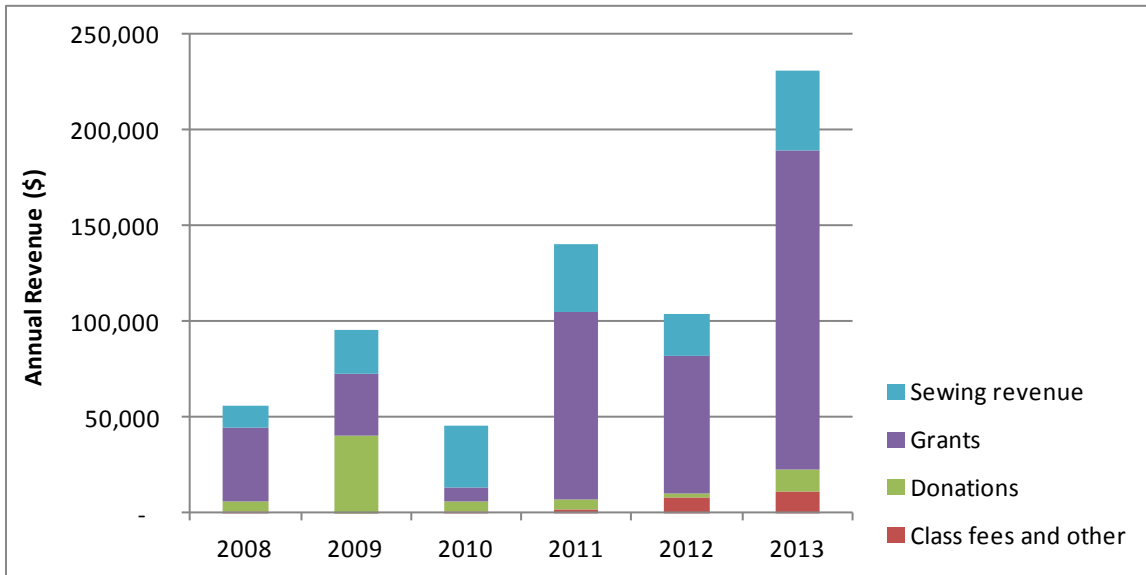
Item	Revenue (\$)
Grants	167,375
Sewing revenue	41,661
Donations	11,367
Class fees and other	10,675
Total	231,078

2013 Revenue Distribution



Revenue 2008–2013

Revenue Category	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Class fees and other	813	80	348	1,488	7,424	10,675
Donations	4,860	40,155	5,920	5,902	2,316	11,367
Grants	39,206	32,381	6,559	97,723	72,282	167,375
Sewing revenue	10,507	22,915	32,351	35,302	22,061	41,661
Total	55,386	95,531	45,178	140,415	104,083	231,078





Success Stories

Naima

Naima was in our 2012 class; she was born in Ethiopia and had to flee violence in her youth. She travelled to Djibouti and then onwards to Mogadishu. From there, she was able to travel to Italy to undergo treatments for polio. She eventually came to Canada to live with her sister. Naima has four beautiful children and has found a creative outlet in singing and in 2012, in sewing. She joined EcoEquitable and brought her joy and personality to the classes. Since graduating, Naima has been a teaching assistant, a boutique volunteer, and sits on the EE board.

Marie Louise

Marie-Louise, a recent immigrant from the Congo and an amazing entrepreneur, graduated from the Sowing for Jobs program in June 2012. Since that time, she has established a successful "traveling seamstress" business for which she employs EE's graduates and other seamstresses to go to people's homes to provide alterations. She also has designed and delivered numerous Couture Africaine training courses for those interested in learning how to sew African clothing. She was also the mastermind behind the "Miss Mama Africa" fashion show and fundraiser in 2013, with over 100 people in attendance. We are proud to have her as part of the team!

Aysheh

Aysheh was born in Iran, and as the eldest daughter, ran the family sewing shop. She was not able to finish school but she started sewing early. When she and her husband were living in Turkey with their two children, she worked in the textile industry. After coming to Canada, she sewed custom clothing, in addition to doing repairs and alterations for her family and friends. Through word of mouth, she began attracting more clients, allowing her to make some extra money and set up her own sewing space in her basement.

Aysheh always wanted to do what she loves—to sew! She used to say that her daughter would inspire her by asking her to make a "one of a kind party dress," and so Aysheh decided to come and learn more at EE. She learned and gained experience, particularly in sewing professionally, first in the Sowing for Jobs intermediate course, and then as the pilot participant of the advanced home décor course from January 2013 to June 2014.

The HR Manager for Airway Surgical, a partner employer with EE, met Aysheh at the Graduation Ceremony in June. Diane was very impressed by Aysheh's job readiness and neat work, and so offered her a full time position as a professional seamstress with the company. In Aysheh's own words, she was happy (Aysheh is always such a thankful person) that God made her come to EE and let her find her dream job. We at EE are so proud of her accomplishment!

Paykai

Paykai is currently completing our Intermediate program. Her dream is to find a job doing what she loves to do, and that's sewing! Paykai, a recent refugee from Afghanistan, was introduced to EE through Carty House. On her first day of class, Paykai was given a donated sewing machine and hasn't looked back. Paykai is working full time job at Airway Surgical Appliances, a company in EE's pool of potential employers. Paykai can now communicate in English, and looks forward to welcoming her husband (still currently in Afghanistan) whom



she was able to sponsor.

Conclusion

Where Are We in 2014, 2015 and Beyond?

2013 was a year of taking stock—understanding our current mission, and deliberately deciding where we wanted to grow. Armed with a new strategic plan as well as the support and blessing of our community, we are moving forward at a breakneck pace. In 2014, we moved to a new location, launched our EE Boutique, and increased our training capacity for our Sowing for Jobs program as well as our public classes. 2015 is right around the corner and we see it as an opportunity to professionalize and continue to scale up our programs. We ask you to join with us in any way that you would like: follow us on social media, subscribe to our newsletter, take our courses, volunteer in our boutique or in our production, introduce us to community partners or potential leads for our sewing production. We are excited for the future and look forward to seeing you there!