



# Sowing Seeds of Change

A Project Chronicle in Anti-Trafficking Endeavours for Women

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*“My favorite part of the retreat was meeting other survivors, the Refuge staff and volunteers, and the art therapy was the best. It provided a moment to connect deeply with myself....”*

(Survivor)

*“I wonder how I can take this peace, even a piece of it with me home.”*

(Survivor)

*“Bringing the work of the Respite and Recovery Retreats to the attention of parish and community members has deepened the local concern for those who have been trafficked, as well as increasing their interest in becoming more educated about this issue. Over the past two years since the beginning of this journey, I am aware of Church groups who have hosted presentations and discussions. Learning both the causes and the impact of trafficking naturally gives rise to a more caring, compassionate community which seeks to listen and accept, rather than judge.”*

(Madoc community volunteer)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

About St. Mary of Egypt Refuge	1
Executive Summary	3
The Program Description	6
The Networks and Relationships Built	7
The Events Hosted	9
The Resources Developed	11
Impact Experienced	14
For Survivors	14
For Madoc, Ontario (St. Mary's Refuge Community)	15
For St. Mary of Egypt Refuge	16
Challenges and Limitations	18
Lessons Learned	21
About Survivors of Human Trafficking	21
About Working with Organizations Fighting against Human Trafficking	23
About Human Trafficking in General	24
Questions for Future Consideration	25
Recommendations	26
For St. Mary of Egypt Refuge	26
For Canadian Churches	26
For the Canadian Public	26
For the Canadian Government	27
For Hastings County	27
Appendix	29
Social Media Communications - <i>A Sample</i>	29
Event Posters - <i>A Sample</i>	29
Awareness Raising Event Agenda - <i>A Sample</i>	30
Retreat Agenda - <i>A Sample</i>	31



# ABOUT ST. MARY OF EGYPT REFUGE

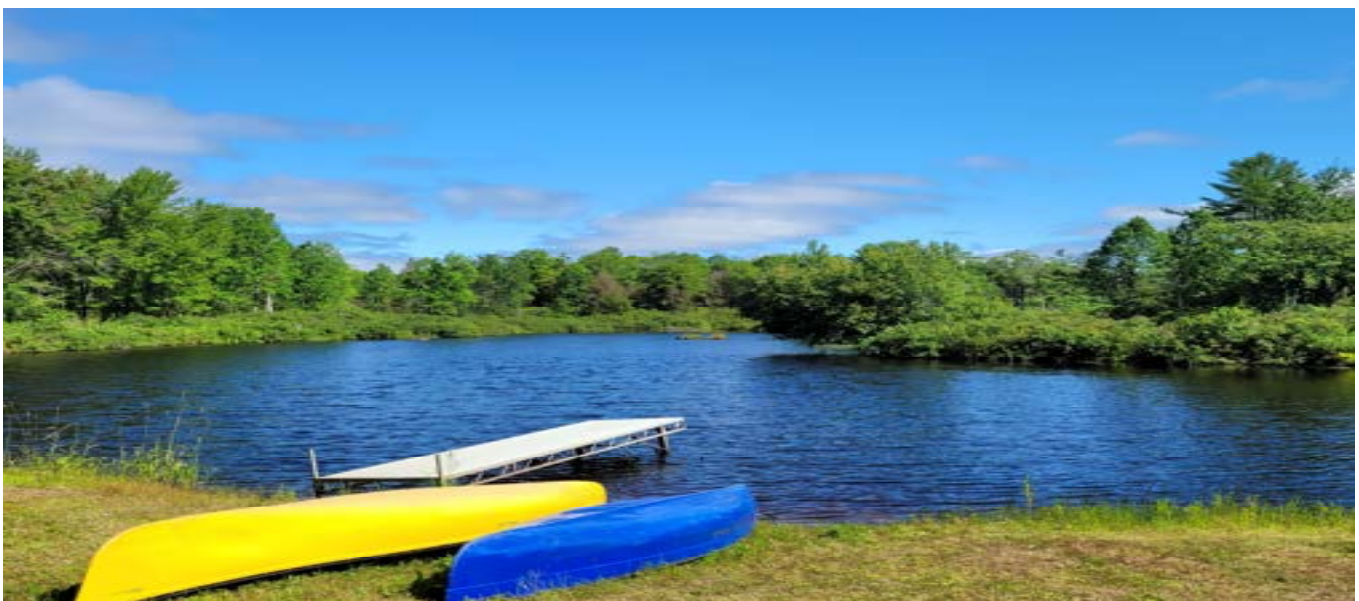
Established in 2001, St. Mary's Refuge stands as a testament to the transformative power of compassion and community. Rooted in the values of solidarity, empathy, and love, St. Mary's Refuge has become a sanctuary for individuals and families facing adversity, offering shelter, warmth, and hope amidst the tranquil beauty of nature.

Our mission at St. Mary's Refuge is simple yet profound: to provide a home away from home where everyone, regardless of their circumstances, can experience safety, community, and belonging. Situated on a stunning 260-acre property in Hastings County, adorned with woods, rivers, and serenity, our vision is to create a space of healing and renewal, where hearts find solace and souls find sanctuary.

Central to our approach is the belief in the interconnectedness of all living beings and the environment. Through meaningful work with the land, participants engage in activities such as cultivating organic gardens, learning about animals, and embracing sustainable living practices. These activities not only nourish the body but also nurture the spirit, fostering a sense of connection and stewardship towards the Earth.

St. Mary's Refuge is more than just a place—it is a community. Here, amidst shared meals, shared tasks, and shared lives, individuals from diverse backgrounds come together, forming bonds of friendship and support that transcend boundaries of race, religion, and circumstance. The Refuge's impact extends far beyond its physical borders, through the interconnection of people who come here from so many places; they are part of the Refuge and the Refuge is part of their communities.

“Healing comes through presence with God, one another, nature, and ourselves. We know we are not the Healer. We know the Healer is among us.” (St. Mary's Refuge website)





## FORWARD

A Place of Respite and Recovery for Trafficked Women is the story of how something in our hearts at St. Mary's Refuge became reality.

What was the dream in our hearts?

St. Mary's is a place where ordinary people come together in a beautiful, natural setting for respite and support. Our desire is that any in need can experience safety, community, and belonging in the process of regaining strength and building healthy lives. The purpose of St. Mary's Refuge is to be a 'home away from home' for people who need a break: peace and silence, community meals, shared work, engagement with the natural environment, spirituality, fresh air and the beauty of the stars, and space to be oneself.

Through our loving connection with colleague and volunteer Mária Karajovanova, who worked with vulnerable young people, we came to know something of the anguish of women who have been trafficked. We became aware that trafficking is happening around us all the time, harms many lives, and creates deep wounds. We wondered if the Refuge might offer a way of responding to this situation, and countering the forces that work against women's flourishing.

And so, in 2020, this part of our journey began. This report lays out for you how the journey continues, where it has led us, the people we have encountered and how they have helped us, the collaboration with caring groups, what we have learned, and the new questions that have arisen. We are eager to hear and learn from you, dear readers and companions on the journey, and take together the next steps.

Thank you.

Bernadette Morishita-Miki, President

Mary Marrocco, Executive Director





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The "Respite & Recovery" project, launched in 2021 by St. Mary's Refuge and funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada, aimed to support survivors of human trafficking and raise community awareness. Through retreats, workshops, and engagement initiatives, the project empowered survivors and amplified awareness in Hasting County and Madoc, Ontario. Collaborations with stakeholders facilitated resource-sharing and fostered a supportive community. Despite challenges like limited funding and trust-building, the project achieved significant milestones. This summary provides insights into our journey, highlighting impacts, lessons learned, challenges faced, and recommendations.

Additionally, it's important to note that this initiative served as a pilot project, and over the two years of its implementation phase, significant progress has been achieved. Throughout this period, our emphasis has been not only on the quantity but also on the quality of services provided. While quantity is important, we prioritize quality in all aspects of our work, ensuring that each service and intervention meets the highest standards of effectiveness and impact.

### Impact Experienced

During the journey of the Respite & Recovery project, we witnessed profound impact on us, survivors and the communities we serve. Through therapeutic retreats, educational initiatives, and collaborative efforts, St. Mary's Refuge has contributed to survivors' healing journey, awareness raising, and advocacy in the fight against human trafficking. Outlined is the positive impact observed, underscoring the significance of collective efforts in fostering resilience, empowerment, and change.

#### For Survivors

1. Found a new space and place where survivors feel safe.
2. Experienced increased healing physically, emotionally and spiritually.
3. Felt empowered with more skills and confidence in managing their emotions.
4. Experienced increased appreciation and valuing of nature in their lives.
5. Experienced increased sense of belonging.

6. Experienced increased valuing and appreciation for sisterhood.

#### For Madoc, Ontario (St. Mary's Refuge Community)

1. Heightened awareness and community engagement.
2. Increased awareness of the need for community respite and recovery retreats.

#### For St. Mary's Refuge

1. Deepened the Refuge's mission and values.
2. Built new and important partnerships and collaborations.
3. Seen as a valuable and trusted ally in the fight against human trafficking in Canada.
4. Learned from action.

### Challenges and Limitations

Despite the notable successes achieved, our project encountered various challenges and limitations that required careful navigation and



strategic solutions. Accessing survivors posed an initial hurdle, as building trust within the community was essential and time-consuming, given our newcomer status. Additionally, misconceptions about faith-based organizations hindered collaborative efforts and limited participant engagement in retreats. Building and maintaining trust with survivors proved challenging due to their complex traumas and individual needs. Partnering with organizations also presented obstacles, including resource constraints and communication barriers. Furthermore, limited funding constrained geographical reach and delayed key aspects of the project, raising concerns about long-term sustainability. However, despite these challenges, we successfully achieved our phase one goals, laying a strong foundation for future endeavours while actively seeking funding opportunities to sustain our impactful work.

### Lessons Learned

Over the course of three years (2021-2024), our journey has been a profound learning experience. We gained insights into the needs of survivors of human trafficking, navigated collaborations with the community and anti-human trafficking and faith-based organizations, delved into the complexities of human trafficking as a global issue, and underwent personal growth. This learning journey has been enriching, offering invaluable lessons that have shaped our understanding and approach. We are grateful for the experience gained and hope to inspire others with the lessons we've learned.

#### About Survivors of Human Trafficking

1. Trust takes a long time to build.

2. The needs of survivors are complex.
3. Trauma-informed retreats are crucial for healing.
4. Cultural sensitivity is essential in providing services to survivors.
5. Adaptability is key in working with programs for survivors.
6. It is important to prioritize quality over quantity when providing services to survivors of human trafficking.
7. Radical hospitality is needed when serving and working with survivors.
8. Survivors have faced many complex challenges which have altered their lives.
9. The spiritual dimension is important for healing and wellness.
10. Clear and healthy boundaries are important for healing.
11. Embracing vulnerability fosters empathy and resilience.

#### About Working with Organizations Fighting Human Trafficking

1. Trust takes time to build.
2. Clarify neutrality of events.
3. Credibility needs to be earned.
4. Partnerships are necessary.
5. Faith-based organizations are keen to support the project.

#### About Human Trafficking in General

1. International cooperation is essential in addressing the complexities of human trafficking.
2. There is a need to address the divide between rural and urban areas.



## Recommendations

The following are some of the recommendations offered in this report.

### For St. Mary of Egypt Refuge

1. Extend outreach efforts beyond Ontario.
2. Collaborate with local schools.
3. Expand the frequency and variety of educational and awareness events to cover a broader range of topics related to human trafficking prevention.
4. Forge partnerships with faith leaders and religious institutions.
5. Foster collaboration with Indigenous leaders and volunteer groups.
6. Maintain the momentum of retreat initiatives.

### For Canadian Churches

1. Foster collaboration with local organizations fighting human trafficking, law enforcement agencies, and community groups.
2. Create safe and supportive environments where survivors of human trafficking feel comfortable seeking help and accessing resources.
3. Play a more proactive role in prevention efforts by implementing programs and initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of human trafficking.
4. Advocate for policies and legislations at the local, national, and international levels.

### For the Canadian Public

1. Get educated about the signs, prevalence, and impact of human trafficking.
2. Remain vigilant and report any suspected instances of human trafficking.
3. Provide support and assistance to victims of human trafficking.
4. Address the demand for trafficking.
5. Build resilient and supportive communities.

### For Hastings County

1. Learn about trafficking of migrants for farms in Hastings and surrounding counties.
2. Consider seeking individuals/organizations in the 'corridor' (401 area near Belleville) for learning and collaboration.
3. Learn about needed services presently being offered in this county, such as ESL and cooking, to have referrals ready.

### For the Canadian Government

1. Enhance consistent funding and support for victim-centred services.
2. Improve coordination and collaboration among government agencies, law enforcement, civil society organizations, and international partners.
3. Increase investment in prevention initiatives, public awareness campaigns, and educational programs.
4. Develop strategies to address the demand for trafficked persons.



# THE PROGRAM DESCRIPTION



**Project Title:** A Place of Respite and Recovery for Trafficked Women

### Project Objectives

- Respectfully gather and listen to the voices of women who have been trafficked.
- Pilot a program to support their empowerment.
- Work with community organizations and individuals to develop or enhance practices and policies based on the learning gathered.

### Project Description

In 2021, St. Mary of Egypt Refuge (aka 'St. Mary's Refuge') with financial support from Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE), launched the pilot project "A Place of Respite and Recovery for Trafficked Women" (also known as 'Respite & Recovery'). This project ran from April 2021 to March 2024, offering support to women who had endured human trafficking, aligning its objectives with their healing journey and broader community awareness. Through collaborative efforts from community organizations, non-profit organizations, and experts, the project employed distinctive approaches, emphasizing community engagement by leveraging local networks, conducting tailored workshops and retreats, and actively participating in community events to amplify awareness of human trafficking in Canada.



With the priority focus of trafficked women residing in Ontario, the "Respite and Recovery" project made notable impact. Since its inception in April 2021, the project has successfully provided trauma-informed retreats for survivors, featuring survivor-led sessions supported by trained professionals and volunteers. This significant progress underscores the project's commitment to its core objectives and the positive impact it has achieved in supporting survivors and fostering community awareness.

## The Networks and Relationships Built

Throughout the Respite and Recovery, we dedicated efforts to foster collaborative partnerships and build robust networks. Our commitment to enhancing anti-human trafficking initiatives and supporting survivors was underscored by the establishment of meaningful connections with a diverse range of stakeholders. From the outset, our engagement initiatives focused on promoting project goals, fostering community ownership, raising awareness, and advocating for change. Over the past two years, St. Mary's Refuge successfully expanded its network with community organizations, local and international non-profit organizations, and individual experts both within and outside of Canada.

Collaborations encompassed partnerships with human trafficking organizations, health and community centres, faith-based groups, and individual experts. Key partners and collaborators in these efforts included St. John the Compassionate Mission, FCJ Refugee Centre, Sacred Heart of Mary Catholic Women's League, Ottawa Victim Services, and the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking. Through these collaborations, we were able to pool resources, share insights, and collectively contribute to the empowerment of survivors.

Our networking initiatives were not confined to formal meetings but extended to interactive events, workshops, and awareness initiatives. This inclusive approach ensured that the project resonated with a wide audience and contributed to the creation of a supportive community dedicated to combating human trafficking and supporting survivors on their journey to recovery. The diverse and extensive networks established during the project's duration have been instrumental in achieving our objectives and will continue to serve as a foundation for future initiatives in the fight against human trafficking.

The following organizations (in alphabetic order) played key roles in providing support and contributing to the overall success of the project:

1. **Aura Freedom International** (<https://aurafreedom.org>). Aura Freedom played a crucial role by offering advice, connecting us with survivors, and facilitating collaboration with other organizations. Their support was instrumental in advancing the goals of the Respite & Recovery Project.
2. **Center to End Human Trafficking** (<https://ovs-svo.com>). The Center played a vital role in our project by providing invaluable advice and consultation on various aspects, including outreach and partnership strategies, program development based on survivors' needs, insights on how to plan helpful awareness raising events and how to offer retreats for survivors. Their multifaceted support significantly contributed to the success and effectiveness of the Respite & Recovery Project.

## Sowing Seeds of Change

A Project Chronicle in Anti-Trafficking Endeavours for Women



3. **Covenant House Toronto** (<https://covenanthousetoronto.ca>). Covenant House collaborated with us by bringing their group of youth survivors to our last retreat, with their team actively present to provide crucial support throughout the event.
4. **FCJ Refugee Centre** ([www.fcjrefugeecentre.org](http://www.fcjrefugeecentre.org)). Collaborating closely with FCJ Refugee Centre amplified our project's impact. Their active involvement strengthened community connections and facilitated successful program implementation by connecting us directly with survivors. Their commitment significantly contributed to expanding our reach and fostering positive outcomes.
5. **Jeanette Romkema** (consultant). Jeanette played a crucial role in developing and collaborating on the Respite & Recovery Project's events and educational materials. Her expertise in designing and facilitating events, including the creation of informative event workbooks, greatly contributed to the success of our initiatives. Jeanette's collaborative spirit enhanced the overall experience, creating safe spaces for participants to delve more deeply into their challenges and life story, offering a process for trust building and vulnerability, and offering activities for personal internal journeying and community healing and wellness.
6. **Ottawa Victim Services** (<https://ovs-svo.com>). Ottawa Victim Services played a crucial role in advocacy, outreach, and retreat planning. Their support greatly enhanced our community engagement efforts and ensured tailored retreats aligned with survivors' needs.
7. **Sacred Heart of Mary Catholic Women's League**. An integral partner in community engagement, Sacred Heart of Mary Catholic Women's League played a vital role in supporting our outreach initiatives, executing successful retreats, and facilitating the implementation of our programs. Their dedicated volunteers significantly contributed to enhancing our outreach and networking initiatives in the city of Madoc as well as other neighbouring cities. They also helped us foster awareness and create a supportive environment for both the team and survivors throughout the process.
8. **Sant Egidio Community** ([santegidio.org](http://santegidio.org)). Their knowledge about human trafficking and experience working directly with survivors of human trafficking was invaluable and insightful. They also affirmed the need for retreats for survivors and one-on-one work with survivors of human trafficking, which helped to validate our program plan.
9. **St. John the Compassionate Mission** ([www.stjohnsmisson.org](http://www.stjohnsmisson.org)). St. John's Mission played a vital role in planning and executing trauma-informed retreats for Respite & Recover. Their experience working with vulnerable and diverse communities, as well as years of trauma-informed work, brought wisdom and value to our team and events. Their active engagement included not only providing valuable insights for planning and implementing the program, but also contributing dedicated staff volunteers in various capacities, offering crucial support during retreats and enhancing the overall success of survivor-centred initiatives.
10. **Talitha Kum** ([www.talithakum.info](http://www.talithakum.info)). Talitha Kum provided invaluable insights and expertise in the field, granting us the opportunity to participate in their conferences and gain a deeper understanding of their



work on trafficking. They also facilitated connections with other organizations, enriching our knowledge and expanding our network as part of the Respite & Recovery Project.

11. **Theresa Flores** (consultant and survivor). As a survivor leader and consultant, Theresa provided invaluable firsthand insights, guiding the design and execution of retreat programs. Her personal and professional experience added authenticity and depth to the survivor-led components of the project.
12. **US Catholic Sisters against Human Trafficking** ([alliancetoendhumantrafficking.org](http://alliancetoendhumantrafficking.org)). They shared their valuable experience and facilitated connections with experts and individuals with lived experience, contributing to the depth of knowledge and network development within the Respite & Recovery Project.

While not extensively engaged in direct project activities, some of our partner organizations made valuable contributions to the Respite & Recovery Project. Through informative meetings, they shared expertise and experience, particularly in designing and implementing trauma-informed practices. These organizations include:

13. **Centre For Abuse and Trauma Therapy** ([centreforththerapy.ca](http://centreforththerapy.ca))
14. **Roberts Smart Centre** ([www.robertssmartcentre.com](http://www.robertssmartcentre.com))
15. **St. Felix Centre / Felician Sisters** ([stfelixcentre.org](http://stfelixcentre.org))

## The Events Hosted

As part of the Respite & Recovery Project, St. Mary's Refuge hosted a series of impactful events, each contributing to the project's development, implementation, and dissemination of insights. They are as follows.

**First Planning Meeting (August 3-4, 2022):** The first planning meeting marked a pivotal moment in shaping the trajectory of the "Respite & Recovery Project." Attended by partner organizations, community groups, and individuals with lived experience, the session aimed to strategically plan the first retreat. Outcomes included a comprehensive plan emphasizing the importance of training for staff and volunteers, creating a supportive environment, demonstrating the vital role of nature for healing, hosting safe spaces for respite and wellness, and incorporating trauma-informed practices. This meeting set the stage for the project's mission to provide services through retreats for survivors of human trafficking and it helped us prepare for the complex needs of survivors from a wide array of backgrounds. The planning meeting helped to clarify how to create programs to meet the needs of survivors.

**Second Planning Meeting (September 26-27, 2022):** In September, a detailed planning meeting focused on fine-tuning the retreat program, sessions, recruitment strategies, and promotion efforts. The participants, including the survivor consultant, partner organizations, community volunteers, and professionals, collaborated closely to ensure a comprehensive and effective plan for the upcoming events. This session played a crucial role in translating the project's vision into a well-defined and actionable program.



**First Wellness, Trauma-Informed Retreat (November 18-20, 2022):** The first wellness retreat marked a significant milestone in the Respite & Recovery Project. Designed for female survivors of human trafficking, the retreat brought together survivors across Ontario, professionals, and volunteers. As well, it involved a leadership team including Theresa Flores, who has lived experience and is skilled in leading retreats such as this. With therapeutic sessions, art activities, yoga, and outdoor engagements, the retreat provided a safe space for healing, setting a precedent for the transformative experiences that would follow. The response from participants confirmed the need for a caring presence, non-judgmental and welcoming environment, and healthy boundaries.

**Third Planning Meeting (January 16-17, 2023):** The third planning meeting marked a significant milestone in assessing the project's advancements. Participants, including the project team, dedicated volunteers, and partners, collectively reviewed the work that had been done and valuable feedback from survivors. The agenda encompassed drafting a comprehensive work plan for 2023, which included a strategically planned three-day trip to cities surrounding Madoc. The primary aim was to promote the Respite & Recovery Project and establish connections with organizations directly assisting survivors. Additionally, the meeting laid the foundation for forthcoming retreats and educational workshops, fine-tuning strategies based on survivor insights, and orchestrating extensive community engagement initiatives.

**Educational and Awareness Event (February 24, 2023):** This event played a key role in raising awareness about human trafficking within the Madoc community and other cities in the region. Participants included representatives from community organizations, faith-based entities, locals, survivors, and experts. The event invited open discussions, providing a platform to share knowledge, address concerns, and build robust relationships with the community.

**Second Wellness and Trauma-Informed Retreat (May 11-13, 2023):** The second Retreat was attended by three survivors from different cities in Ontario. The three-day retreat featured a variety of therapeutic sessions, encompassing art activities, yoga sessions, and engaging outdoor experiences. Feedback and lessons learned from the first retreat assisted us in reshaping the program and developing the safety policy. This retreat not only exemplified the project's commitment to comprehensive survivor support but also underscored its broad reach, bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds to participate in sessions designed to foster healing and resilience.

**Lessons Learned Meeting (August 17-19, 2023):** The Lessons Learned Meeting served as a reflective platform for the project team, partner organizations, professionals, and volunteers involved in the project. This event made space for a comprehensive review and assessment of collective efforts, including retreats, workshops, and networking initiatives. The meeting not only identified opportunities for improvement but also laid the groundwork for the Refuge's "Sowing Seeds of Change" Final Report to WAGE, ensuring transparency and accountability in the project's execution.

**Fourth Planning Meeting (November 15-17, 2023):** The fourth planning meeting marked a crucial phase as the project approached its final quarter. The project team gathered at the Refuge to strategize for the last phase of



the Respite & Recovery Project. Discussions included planning for the third retreat, final events, and the preparation of the conclusive project report and other related deliverables.

**Educational Event/Empowering Voices (February 20, 2024):** In February 2024, St. Mary's Refuge hosted an educational event, "Empowering Voices," for the Madoc community. The event featured a survivor leader, experts, and community members, fostering interactive discussions on human trafficking, survivor experiences, and community engagement. Attendees had the opportunity to gain insights, ask questions, and contribute to building a more informed and supportive community as well as plan how to share their learning with their communities.

**Third Trauma-Informed Retreat (February 22-24, 2024):** Collaborating with Covenant House, the third trauma-informed retreat was dedicated to youth survivors of human trafficking. This collaborative effort provided therapeutic sessions, art activities, yoga, spa treatments, and outdoor engagements. The retreat aimed to address the unique needs of young survivors and contribute to their efforts in their healing journey.

**Wrap Up Meeting (February 25-26, 2024):** The Wrap Up Meeting marked the conclusion of the Respite & Recovery Project. Attended by the Refuge's staff, project volunteers, professionals, and partner organizations, the meeting focused on the steps needed to close this 3-year project well, and named ideas and the shared possibilities for Phase II, 2024-2025.

## The Resources Developed

The Respite & Recovery Project has successfully developed a range of resources to support its mission of aiding survivors and raising awareness. These resources include:

### 1. Trauma-Informed Programs

Tailored retreat programs were meticulously designed to provide survivors with a holistic healing experience, a welcoming and non-judgmental environment, a caring presence, community home grown meals, and a community of women ready to support and love, with healthy boundaries. These programs integrated therapeutic sessions, spa sessions, art activities, and outdoor engagements to foster resilience and wellness.

### 2. Learning Event Booklets

Comprehensive booklets/workbooks were created to accompany each educational and awareness event. These booklets served as learning tools, resources for further inquiry and discovery, as well as resources to share with others.



# Sowing Seeds of Change

A Project Chronicle in Anti-Trafficking Endeavours for Women



### 3. Brochures

Two informative brochures were crafted to succinctly communicate the project's goals, methods, and impact. These served as valuable promotional materials, offering a quick overview of the Respite & Recovery Project to various stakeholders.

### 4. Webpage

An engaging and informative webpage was developed to serve as an online hub for the project. This platform provides a central location for information dissemination, updates, and interaction with the community, fostering online awareness and engagement.

### 5. Logo

A distinctive logo was created to visually represent the Respite & Recovery Project crafted from a unique image of real life at the Refuge. This emblem serves as a symbol of the project's identity and commitment, contributing to brand recognition and visibility. It is used in this report in the header and on the cover, as well as all documents connected to this project.

### 6. Promotional Materials

To enhance outreach efforts, materials were produced, including totes, pens, posters, a video, and flyers bearing the project's name. These items serve as tangible reminders and promotional tools during community engagement initiatives, creating a lasting impact and promoting the project's objectives.







# IMPACT EXPERIENCED

## For Survivors

1. **Found a new space and place where survivors feel safe.** Most victims of human trafficking have few spaces where they feel safe to fully relax and be themselves. Pulling out of their regular day-to-day life and work, offered freedom to be who they need to be, not who others want them to be.

*"This is exactly what I needed and looked forward to for many years. This place and the nature helped me feel relaxed and safe. I am inspired to find more spaces like this... It is important for me."* (Survivor)

*"[Survivors] left with feelings of validation of their lived experience and everyone took away something good from their experiences these 3 days [at the Refuge]."* (Survivor)

2. **Experienced increased healing physically, emotionally and spiritually.** Retreat survivors expressed a significant impact from the program, particularly attributing the self-care elements to their overall well-being and heightened emotional resilience throughout the retreats.

*"I really enjoyed the self-care components: the massage was incredible and so needed. The salon services were a great addition. I think all [survivors] deeply benefited from the time and space to focus on their wellness and overall health. The Refuge did a fantastic job facilitating this."* (Survivor)

*"I love this place, it has a lot of spiritual life and love. The circle talks, self care sessions, taking care of all of us, and all of the sessions were so loving, I just love it. I love the hike [on the Refuge trail], it has awakened my soul and made me connected to nature and myself. I was able to release my emotions of tears and I feel good now."* (Survivor)

3. **Felt empowered with more skills and confidence in managing their emotions.** Survivors expressed that participating in therapy sessions, including the emotions class and art journaling, significantly contributed to their increased skills and confidence in managing their emotions and to connect with themselves.

*"I loved [name]'s session on emotions and think a longer session with perhaps an art therapy activity would be more impactful in the future [retreats]."* (Survivor)

4. **Experienced increased appreciation and valuing of nature in their lives.** Some survivors discovered St. Mary's Refuge and its natural surroundings to be profoundly beneficial, encouraging mindfulness and being present in the moment. The serene environment of the forest by a freshwater stream, provided a therapeutic backdrop, allowing individuals to immerse themselves in nature and find solace, contributing to their overall sense of well-being. The healing quality of nature was deeply felt.

## Sowing Seeds of Change

A Project Chronicle in Anti-Trafficking Endeavours for Women



*"Looking at these tall trees from where I am sitting, in the early morning quietness, the only sounds I hear are the birds and a gentle rustle of the water from the river. It is so beautiful and soothing. I had a beautiful morning doing my meditation, and I was able to be in the present and relax." (Survivor)*

*"What a wonderful few days in nature. It was great to connect with so many different strong women. Many emotions were shared and many memories were made." (Survivor)*

5. **Experienced increased sense of belonging.** Most survivors felt an enhanced sense of belonging and appreciation as they actively engaged in retreats with others. The collaborative and supportive environment fostered a strong sense of community, where individuals felt acknowledged, valued, seen, heard, and connected.

*"Although I was completely out of my element, the dance [therapy] session was great. More body work and the benefits of healing trauma through movement would be welcomed in future gatherings. It is a practice many trauma survivors don't develop and it should be the foundation of complex trauma care." (Survivor)*

6. **Experienced increased valuing and appreciation for sisterhood.** Survivors expressed a deepened sense of value for sisterhood within the community. They appreciated the ability to openly discuss and share moments of learning, laughter, tears, and engaging in activities with a sense of camaraderie.

*"I appreciate the sense of sisterhood with the women I've just met here. I never thought I would feel this way meeting new people, but it happened to me. I feel like I can share my moments with you." (Survivor)*

### For Madoc, Ontario (St. Mary's Refuge Community)

1. **Heightened awareness and community engagement.** St. Mary's Refuge heightened awareness by hosting educational events, actively involving community members from diverse groups. Furthermore, engaging them as volunteers in the program and retreats not only supported the educational initiatives but also deepened their understanding of the issue and the needs of survivors. This active involvement transformed them into advocates, becoming voices for change within their own communities.

*"I attended a two day introductory workshop/process in which we learned more about the issue through professionals involved in the field, and gained insight as to effective strategies and processes. In the months leading to each retreat, my knowledge, as a member of our local community, helped to draw additional volunteers to lead in various capacities... . During the retreat process itself, I sought to be attentive and compassionately present with each participant, identifying and responding to needs to the best of my ability, and participating in the debriefing sessions following the retreats. Beyond that, I identified and reached out to area social service, educational, and policing agencies to invite them to participate in an excellent Educational/Networking Session planned and carried out by St. Mary's Refuge... ." (Community volunteer)*



- 2. Increased awareness of the need for community respite and recovery retreats.** Bringing the retreats for survivors to the attention of the parish and community has sparked a notable positive impact. The community's awareness and concern about human trafficking have deepened, fostering increased empathy for survivors. The initiative has not only shed light on survivors' experiences but has also fueled a growing interest in educating the community about the issues and helping in creation of a positive shift in community attitudes, indicating a willingness to engage with and address the challenges of human trafficking in Canada.

*“Bringing the work of the Respite and Recovery Retreats to the attention of parish and community members has deepened the local concern for those who have been trafficked, as well as increasing their interest in becoming more educated about this issue. Over the past two years since the beginning of this journey, I am aware of church groups who have hosted presentations and discussions. Learning both the causes and the impact of trafficking naturally gives rise to a more caring, compassionate community which seeks to listen and accept, rather than judge. To further assist in accomplishing these ends, a larger community public awareness evening is tentatively planned in conjunction with St. Mary’s Refuge... .” (Community volunteer)*

*“I believe that all of these efforts will continue to help our rural community to overcome the erroneous assumption that human trafficking is limited to the urban setting, and alert us to signs that it is present as well, in rural areas. Becoming aware of avenues of response, will only help to lessen the tremendous harm done to victims of this abuse. Finally, I would suggest that because the work of St. Mary’s Refuge Team in facilitating respite and recovery for trafficked women is still, to a great extent, in its infancy, more time and opportunities are needed to bring to greater fruition, the very good work they have begun.” (Community volunteer)*

### For St. Mary of Egypt Refuge

- 1. Deepened the Refuge’s mission and values.** Working with survivors through this project aligned seamlessly with the Refuge’s mission of the dedicated pursuit of providing shelter, warmth, and hope to those in need. The commitment to such a crucial cause, supporting survivors of human trafficking, has served as a powerful source of inspiration and motivation for the staff, volunteers, and supporters at the Refuge. The Refuge's dedication to learning about combating human trafficking enables them to fulfill their core mission and values, contributing to the betterment of society.
- 2. Built new and important partnerships and collaborations.** St. Mary’s Refuge has actively cultivated partnerships, extending beyond experienced organizations in the field to include the local community, survivors, and individuals dedicated to serving those in need. These relationships have proven invaluable for St. Mary’s Refuge in numerous ways, facilitating the exchange of expertise and time from committed individuals and organizations. The collaborative efforts have resulted in the provision of helpful advice, consultations, and additional resources. Through these relations, St. Mary’s Refuge has not only expanded its reach but has also tapped into a wealth of collective knowledge and support, enhancing the organization's ability to effectively address the challenges associated with the work.



## Sowing Seeds of Change

A Project Chronicle in Anti-Trafficking Endeavours for Women



For more on this, please read *The Networks and Relationships Built in The Programs Description* section of this report.

3. **Seen as a valuable and trusted ally in the fight against human trafficking in Canada.** Three years ago, St. Mary's Refuge initiated a journey to combat human trafficking, defining its pivotal role in this critical fight. Today, the organization stands as a well-established force, demonstrating its commitment to the battle against human trafficking, and effective in delivering essential support to survivors through thoughtfully impactful programs.
4. **Learned from action.** Collaboration with organizations and survivors has been an enriching experience, offering the team and volunteers invaluable insights and lessons. Working closely with survivors has provided a deep understanding of their unique challenges and resilience, fostering an ongoing learning process. The dynamic nature of the work has nurtured a culture of adaptability and innovation within the team, propelling them to explore new strategies and refine existing ones to better serve survivors within the programs they offer.







# CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

As with any project, this one had challenges and limitations. These demanded a thoughtful needs assessment process, heavy reliance on organizations and individuals who have a long history of this work, humility to listen and learn, creative solutions, and careful planning. Below are the many challenges and limitations we faced.

1. **Accessing survivors.** Trust is needed to successfully invite survivors of human trafficking. Since we were new on the scene, this trust was not yet present. For this reason, we knew time would be needed to prove our worth.
2. **Suspicion about faith-based organizations.** Some organizations underestimated the capabilities, contributions, or motivations of St. Mary's Refuge, as a faith-based organization venturing into the field of supporting survivors of human trafficking. This misconception impeded the establishment of productive and collaborative relationships with some, leading to limited access to survivors in need and a low number of participants in the retreats.

*"This work is not something you 'choose' to do, and I question why you've chosen to engage in it. Nowadays, everyone seems to be interested in human trafficking because the government is providing grants, making it a profitable endeavour. I admit I've never heard of Theresa Flores, and it seems trafficking has evolved significantly from what it was in the 80s."* (Organization providing support for survivors)

*"While some clients embrace Christianity this goes against our inclusivity. Even though the words 'open to all' are there, the website, the name of the organization are not in alignment with who we are. As a survivor-led organization we need to be mindful of doing our work with the integrity of those best practices and that is not evident here. It's not at all clear who will lead these retreats, etc. Are they trauma-informed, etc.? How will they manage the inevitable situations that arise with this population and what will be the criteria to attend?"* (Anti-trafficking organization)

3. **Building and maintaining trust with survivors.** Building and maintaining trust with survivors is challenging due to the deep-seated trauma, fear of retaliation, and past negative experiences they may have endured. Additionally, their individual unique needs, cultural and linguistic barriers, and the necessity for long-term commitment further complicate the process.
4. **Partnerships are challenging to build.** Given differences in organizational goals, limited resources, communication barriers, trust issues, varying levels of commitment, building respectful and trusted partnership takes time, patience, and commitment.
5. **Survivors come with multifaceted traumas.** They have often endured physical, emotional, and psychological trauma, making it essential to adopt comprehensive and individualized approaches to support their healing and recovery. Using a 'cookie-cutter' approach would have been dangerous,

## Sowing Seeds of Change

A Project Chronicle in Anti-Trafficking Endeavours for Women

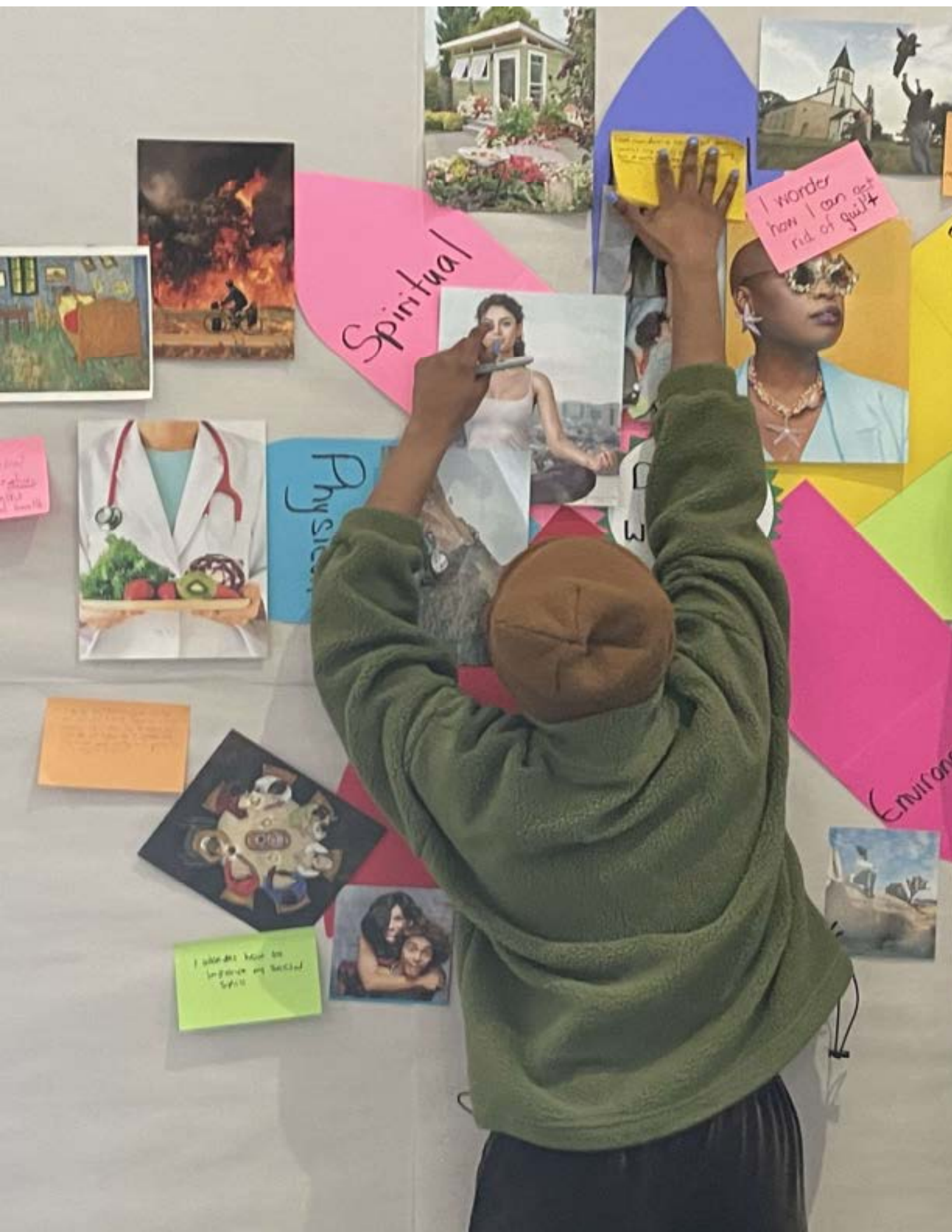


insensitive, over simplistic, and irresponsible. The small size of the groups we served allowed for a personal approach.

6. **Limited funding constraints.** The project encountered challenges associated with limited funding, restricting the geographical reach of survivor participation to Ontario. This limitation resulted in lower-than-anticipated survivors' numbers for the retreats. Additionally, securing funds for key aspects, such as hiring a consultant with lived experience, proved to be a challenge, contributing to delays in the project timeline.

The goal of Phase One was to learn and lay a foundation for delving more intentionally into key issues with the community. We have achieved the project goals and objectives, and have now made efforts to secure funding for the future work.





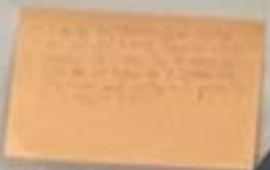
Spiritual

I wonder how I can get rid of guilt

Physical

Environment

I wonder how to improve my social skills





# LESSONS LEARNED

There was much learned along the way over the three years: about survivors of human trafficking, about working with organizations fighting human trafficking, about faith-based organizations, about human trafficking in general, and even about ourselves. The learning journey has been rich and we are grateful. Below are some of these lessons learned. May they inspire the reader as much as they inspired us.

## About Survivors of Human Trafficking

1. **Trust takes time to build.** Building trust with survivors is a time-intensive process that requires patience and consistent effort. Recognizing the depth of trauma experienced by survivors of human trafficking, we have learned that establishing trust is a gradual journey that demands sensitivity, empathy, and a commitment to consistently demonstrating reliability and support. Developing genuine connections and fostering an environment where survivors feel safe to share their experiences necessitates an understanding that trust is not easily gained but is paramount in providing effective assistance and support. This lesson underscores the importance of approaching survivor engagement with a long-term perspective, allowing trust to evolve over time.
2. **The needs of survivors are complex.** Recognizing the unique and intricate nature of the needs of survivors is essential in providing effective and respectful support. It has become evident that the challenges faced by survivors of human trafficking are multifaceted and intricate, requiring a nuanced understanding to address them adequately. This lesson emphasizes the importance of approaching survivor care with sensitivity and openness, acknowledging the complexity of their experiences and tailoring support services to each individual's unique needs.
3. **Trauma-informed retreats are crucial for healing.** These retreats provide a designated space for self-care, relaxation and reflection, significantly contributing to improved mental, emotional and physical health. Emphasizing personal growth, empowerment, and community building, retreats establish a supportive network for survivors. By alleviating stress through breaks from daily pressures, connecting with nature, and incorporating health-focused activities such as yoga, dance therapy and other therapeutic classes, these retreats create an inspirational environment. This setting fosters well-being, creativity and goal-setting, playing a key role in the journeys of survivors towards recovery, overall well-being.
4. **Cultural sensitivity is essential in providing services to survivors.** A fundamental lesson learned in our work with survivors of human trafficking is the critical importance of cultural sensitivity. Acknowledging the diverse cultural backgrounds of survivors, we understand the need to tailor interventions to align with various cultural norms and values. This emphasis on cultural sensitivity





fosters a more inclusive and respectful environment, ensuring that our support is considerate of the unique contexts and experiences of each survivor.

5. **Adaptability is key in working with programs for survivors.** Another key lesson is the necessity of adaptability in our approach. Recognizing that survivors' needs and preferences may vary, we have learned the importance of flexibility in our interventions. Being adaptable allows us to respond effectively to the evolving circumstances of each survivor, ensuring that our support remains relevant and meets their changing needs. This lesson underscores the dynamic nature of our work and the commitment to providing responsive assistance.
6. **It is important to prioritize quality over quantity when providing services to survivors of human trafficking.** While it's crucial to reach as many survivors as possible, we recognized that the effectiveness and impact of our interventions are paramount. We found that focusing on the quality of our services, ensuring they meet the highest standards of effectiveness and impact, yielded better outcomes for survivors. This emphasis on quality over quantity underscored our commitment to providing survivors with the best possible care and support on their journey to healing and empowerment. Real impact and healing was experienced as a result.
7. **Radical hospitality is essential in serving and working with survivors.** We learned the importance of welcoming all visitors to St. Mary's Refuge retreats regardless of their past experiences, cultural background, religion, age, ethnicity, social standing, or political views. Recognizing each individual as uniquely valuable and deserving of honour, respect, and good treatment underscores our commitment to creating a sense of belonging, which fulfils a deep human desire.
8. **Survivors have faced many complex challenges which have altered their lives.** All these challenges come with them to retreats, so too does their energy, vision, resilience and hope. We have learned that creating and sustaining a caring presence amplifies hope, strengthens resilience, and gives a needed gift that accompanies survivors into their futures. Being willing to suffer with those who have suffered and listening for the hope and strengthening each one builds a real foundation. The hurts caused by false relationships (used to exploit) can be addressed by patient, committed, healing, relationships with healthy boundaries.
9. **The spiritual dimension is important for healing and wellness.** There are numerous dimensions of wellness and wholeness. Although many retreats and groups focus on these dimensions (emotional, social, physical, environmental, occupational, and financial), many don't focus on the importance of the spiritual dimensions in this kind of work. We have witnessed the importance of this dimension in healing.
10. **Clear and healthy boundaries are important for healing.** It is common for traffickers to control their victims in all aspects of their life. These attempts to disconnect and tear apart dimensions of self, work to confuse, frightening, create reliance, humiliate, disassociate, and have full control over. Setting healthy boundaries helps to repair and reconnect the dimensions of oneself.



11. **Embracing vulnerability fosters empathy and resilience.** In our journey, we've discovered that by welcoming and embracing vulnerability, we open ourselves up to diverse experiences and perspectives. This also means recognizing our own vulnerability in the process. We've learned the delicate balance of working with survivors and the wounds they carry while creating a safe and inclusive environment for all participants, volunteers, and staff.

### About Working with Organizations Fighting against Human Trafficking

1. **Trust takes time to build.** Some organizations hesitated to trust our efforts, most likely due to our emerging status in the field. This reluctance impacted the team's dedicated efforts to invest in vital work that is increasingly essential in every community. Recognizing that effective collaboration is indispensable for addressing the pressing issue of human trafficking, this lesson underscores the significance of overcoming initial scepticism and building trust with established organizations. Despite the challenges, our commitment remains steadfast, aiming to bridge gaps, foster collaboration, and collectively contribute to the crucial work needed in communities to combat human trafficking in Canada.

*"This is not work that you 'choose' to do but that you end up having to do or that chooses you. Why are you doing this work? Suddenly everyone is interested in human trafficking because the government is giving out grants and it's profitable.... Do yourself a favour and educate yourself."* (Potential collaborating organization)

2. **Clarify neutrality of events.** St. Mary of Egypt Refuge is a charity organization, with roots in the Christian faith. As such, for some it is seen as a Christian organization (first and foremost) with a goal to convert or work with other Christians. However, the organization's commitment is to provide support to anyone in need, regardless of religious or faith affiliations, showcasing a core principle of inclusivity. The program serves individuals from diverse communities, including various religions and faith-based groups. While the organization is rooted in Christian values, the emphasis is on inclusivity underscoring its dedication to reaching and aiding individuals from all walks of life and for all people of faith or non-faith.

*"While some clients embrace Christianity this goes against our inclusivity. Even though the words 'open to all' are there, the website, the name of the organization are not in alignment with who we are. I am concerned as to the approach - getting experienced service providers together to develop the program is a good idea."* (Potential collaborating organization)

3. **Credibility needs to be earned.** This takes time and this takes work.

*"However there are far too many unknowns including time commitment on an already 'over capacity' workload. As a survivor-led organization we need to be mindful of doing our work with the integrity of those best practices and that is not evident here. It's not at all clear who will lead these retreats, etc. Are they*





*trauma-informed, etc.? How will they manage the inevitable situations that arise with this population and what will be the criteria to attend?" (Organization fighting human trafficking)*

4. **Partnerships are necessary.** Effective partnerships have been essential in the success of the project and programs. One such helpful partnership that made a significant impact in helping us to accomplish our goals was our partnership with St. John's Mission. They journeyed with us from the beginning, learned much along the way and offered invaluable time and resources. Partnerships like this need, which we nurtured along the way, were mutually beneficial.

For more information on other organizations involved in this program, see *The Networks and Relationships Built* section in this report.

5. **Faith-based organizations are keen to support the project.** We experienced a warm reception and substantial support from religious organizations, including churches and community-based groups in support of our initiatives under the project. These entities not only welcomed our initiative but also actively participated in various capacities, demonstrating their commitment to assisting survivors of human trafficking.

### About Human Trafficking in General

1. **International cooperation is essential in addressing the complexities of human trafficking.** Cross-border coordination is crucial for combating transnational criminal networks and protecting victims. Migration flows increase vulnerability, highlighting the need for addressing root causes and supporting migrants and refugees. Ethical labour practices must be promoted globally to prevent exploitation in supply chains.
2. **There is a need to address the divide between rural and urban areas.** One key aspect of securing funding for this project (Respite & Recovery) was the location of The Refuge in a rural area, specifically in Madoc, Ontario. Through this experience, we realized the significant divide and lack of understanding between rural and urban communities. Rural areas, including Madoc, often face unique challenges in accessing services and raising awareness about human trafficking. This underscores the importance of addressing the specific needs of rural communities and advocating for tailored support services and awareness initiatives. Bridging the gap between rural and urban areas through collaboration and education is essential for a more inclusive response to human trafficking.



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# QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

Much was learned, and much was gained in this work. As well, our learning inspired new questions. These questions will guide our future work, research and collaboration. May they inspire the reader here as well.

1. Should we do similar explicit work for and with men? Research shows that there is a growing increase in human trafficking of men and boys.
2. How can we more intentionally and carefully integrate root causes of human trafficking in this work, such as poverty, inequality, mental health issues, and lack of access to education and employment opportunities?
3. How can policies and institutions better support action against human trafficking?
4. Are there approaches or best practices from other regions or organizations that we can adapt and implement to bring change in providing support to survivors of human trafficking?
5. How can we increase our awareness about emerging trends or tactics that are being used by traffickers, so that we can more directly design impactful responses?
6. How can we more effectively involve youth groups for peer-to-peer education and awareness raising?
7. What is the role of faith-based communities and organizations in supporting trafficked women and preventing trafficking?
8. Labour trafficking has increased, both globally and locally. How can we learn more about labour trafficking in our own neighbourhoods?



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## For St. Mary of Egypt Refuge

1. **Extend outreach efforts beyond Ontario** to effectively address the needs of survivors across Canada. Implement targeted outreach campaigns, partnerships with national organizations, and support services to connect with survivors in different provinces and territories.
2. **Collaborate with local schools** to implement prevention education programs targeting students, educators, and parents.
3. **Expand the frequency and variety of educational and awareness events** to cover a broader range of topics related to human trafficking prevention - both sex and labour trafficking- and survivor support.
4. **Forge partnerships with faith leaders and religious institutions** to create safe spaces for survivors to seek support, healing, and spiritual guidance. Collaborate on the development of faith-based resources, workshops, and retreats that integrate trauma-informed practices and cultural sensitivity training with spiritual practices.
5. **Foster collaboration with Indigenous leaders and volunteer groups** to ensure culturally appropriate services for First Nation survivors are present in your programs.
6. **Maintain the momentum of retreat initiatives** and assess their impact through regular evaluations and participants' feedback and interviews.

## For Canadian Churches

1. **Foster collaboration with local organizations fighting human trafficking, law enforcement agencies, and community groups** to amplify their impact in combating human trafficking.
2. **Create safe and supportive environments where survivors of human trafficking feel comfortable seeking help and accessing resources.** This may involve offering confidential counseling services, support groups, and referrals to specialized service providers.
3. **Play a more proactive role in prevention efforts by implementing programs and initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of human trafficking.** This may include youth education programs, community outreach events, and advocacy campaigns focused on raising awareness and promoting social change.
4. **Advocate for policies and legislations at the local, national, and international levels** that prioritize the prevention of human trafficking, the protection of victims, and the prosecution of traffickers.

## For the Canadian Public

1. **Get educated about the signs, prevalence, and impact of human trafficking.** By raising awareness and understanding, individuals can recognize indicators of trafficking and take appropriate action to report suspicious activities.



2. **Remain vigilant and report any suspected instances of human trafficking** to law enforcement authorities or relevant hotlines. By reporting potential cases, individuals can help rescue victims, disrupt trafficking networks, and hold perpetrators accountable.
3. **Provide support and assistance to victims of human trafficking.** The public can contribute by volunteering with or supporting organizations that provide shelter, counseling, legal aid, and other services to trafficking survivors.
4. **Address the demand for trafficking.** The public can advocate for ethical consumer choices, support businesses with transparent and fair labour practices, and challenge the normalization of exploitative behaviours.
5. **Build resilient and supportive communities.** The public can participate in community-based initiatives, outreach programs, and awareness campaigns to promote solidarity, resilience, and social cohesion.

## For the Canadian Government

1. **Enhance consistent funding and support for victim-centred services**, including shelter, legal assistance, healthcare, trauma-informed retreats, and psychosocial support. Invest in specialized programs tailored to the needs of trafficking survivors, including those from marginalized and vulnerable communities.
2. **Improve coordination and collaboration among government agencies, law enforcement, civil society organizations, and international partners** to enhance the effectiveness of anti-human trafficking efforts.
3. **Increase investment in prevention initiatives, public awareness campaigns, and educational programs** to raise awareness about the risks of human trafficking and empower individuals to recognize and respond to trafficking situations. Targeted outreach efforts should reach vulnerable populations, including youth, Indigenous communities, migrants, and LGBTQ+ individuals.
4. **Develop strategies to address the demand for trafficked persons**, particularly in industries such as commercial sex and forced labour, including in agriculture. This may involve implementing measures to deter potential buyers, supporting exit services for individuals in exploitative situations, and promoting ethical consumer choices.

## For Hastings County

1. **Learn about trafficking of migrants for farms in Hastings and surrounding counties.**
2. **Consider seeking individuals/organizations in the 'corridor'** (401 area near Belleville) for learning and collaboration.
3. **Learn about needed services presently being offered in this county**, such as ESL and cooking, to have referrals ready.







# APPENDIX

## Social Media Communications - A Sample

**ST. MARY OF EGYPT REFUGE**

**WORLD DAY AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

**"REACH EVERY VICTIM OF TRAFFICKING. LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND."**

**WHAT DOES LEAVING PEOPLE BEHIND MEAN?**

In the context of trafficking in persons, leaving people behind means:

- failing to end the exploitation of trafficking victims,
- failing to support victim-survivors once they are free from their traffickers, and
- leaving identifiable groups vulnerable to traffickers.\*

[www.unefi.org](http://www.unefi.org)

**St. Mary's Refuge** offers awareness and educational programs to help the effort of ending human trafficking in Canada. We also offer trauma-informed, and survivor led wellness retreats for women who have been trafficked. Join us and the world to [#EndHumanTrafficking](https://twitter.com/EndHumanTrafficking). Contact us at: [respite@stmarysrefuge.org](mailto:respite@stmarysrefuge.org)

**WWW.STMARYSREFUGE.ORG**

[www.stmarysrefuge.org](http://www.stmarysrefuge.org)

**2023 UPCOMING RETREATS**

"Once a survivor is no longer being trafficked, the journey doesn't end. There is still a lifetime of hard work to find the way."

**Join St. Mary's Refuge to help survivors of Human Trafficking on their journey of healing**

The Survivors Wellness Retreat offers individualized classes, therapeutic activities, personal care, and a safe & supportive community for beauty, gentleness and peace. Treat yourself and your heart with the indoors.

**2nd Retreat May 11-13 2023**

**3rd Retreat August 18-20 2023**

**About us**

The Refuge is a place to provide essential services to help all survivors heal. Together, we create a space to be empowered, heal, thrive, learn, grow, and prosper. We are an open, non-judgmental, safe, and supportive community. We are committed to the process of supporting their strength and to healing, healthy lives.

**Retreat Goals**

- Offer a safe space to learn, heal, and thrive.
- Offer a supportive community for beauty, gentleness and peace.
- Offer a safe space to learn, heal, and thrive.

**Contact us**

Location: 222 Barry Road  
Madoc, Ontario  
K0J 1R1  
613-673-2679 [respite@stmarysrefuge.org](mailto:respite@stmarysrefuge.org)

English • Français • Spanish • Italian • Chinese • Vietnamese • Tagalog • Hindi • Urdu • Punjabi • Bengali • Tamil • Malayalam • Sinhala • Telugu • Kannada • Malay • Thai • Vietnamese • Tagalog • Hindi • Urdu • Punjabi • Bengali • Tamil • Malayalam • Sinhala • Telugu • Kannada • Malay • Thai

## Event Posters - A Sample

**Do you know someone who is a survivor of sex trafficking and ready for an inward and outward journey?**

St. Mary of Egypt Refuge is offering a trauma-informed Retreat for survivors of human trafficking.

**February 22-24, 2024**  
**Madoc, Ontario**  
206 Barry Road  
Madoc is halfway between Ottawa and Toronto

This empowering retreat blends education, therapy, and personal care in a tranquil setting, ideal for survivors seeking healing and growth. It fosters supportive relationships and encourages self-work, creating a transformative experience.

**The retreat is free, covering all expenses—accommodation, food, and transportation.**

For more info and to register, contact:  
[respite@stmarysrefuge.org](mailto:respite@stmarysrefuge.org) For voicemails: 613-473-2679

**FEBRUARY 22**

**NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS DAY**

February 22nd marks a day of awareness and action against human trafficking nationwide. Together, let's raise our voices, spread awareness, and stand in solidarity with survivors.

On February 20th, The Refuge hosted an awareness event in Madoc, Ontario, titled "Empowering Voices: Unveiling the Realities of Sex Trafficking and Celebrating Resilience." Attendees had the opportunity to gain insights, ask questions, and contribute to building a more informed and supportive community as well as plan how to share their learning with their communities.

To learn more about our programs and events and how you can get involved, visit our website: [www.stmarysrefuge.org](http://www.stmarysrefuge.org) or contact us at [respite@stmarysrefuge.org](mailto:respite@stmarysrefuge.org).

**Together, let's #EndHumanTrafficking and support survivors on their journey to healing and empowerment.**

# Sowing Seeds of Change

A Project Chronicle in Anti-Trafficking Endeavours for Women



## Awareness Raising Event Agenda - A Sample

10:00-10:30	Arrivals, registration, and coffee
10:30-10:45	Welcome and plan for the day
10:45-11:00	Connecting with each other and why we are here
11:00-11:30	SPEAKER #1: <i>The Real Needs of Survivors, from a Survivor and Social Worker Perspective</i> (Ashley Smith, RSW)
11:30-12:00	SPEAKER #2: <i>The Sacredness of a Woman's Body</i> (Sr. Mary-Ellen Francoeur, PhD.)
12:00-12:15	Break – time to stretch
12:15-12:45	SPEAKER #3: <i>A National Perspective</i> (Kendra Mackinnon)
12:45-1:15	What does this mean for me?
1:15-1:30	Planning our next steps
1:30-2:30	Lunch – sharing a meal
2:30-	Safe travels home



# Sowing Seeds of Change

A Project Chronicle in Anti-Trafficking Endeavours for Women



## Retreat Agenda - A Sample

### Day One | February 22 | THURSDAY

- 12:00 - 1:00 Arrivals and settling in
- 1:00 - 1:45 Our and commitments
- 1:45 - 2:15 Getting to know each other
- 2:15 - 2:45 A model for wellness plans
- 2:30 - 4:30 PHYSICAL: Time to treat yourself
- 4:00 - 5:00 PHYSICAL/SPIRITUAL: Enjoy a little Reiki
- 5:00 - 5:15 Check in
- 5:15 - 6:00 SPIRITUAL: Quiet time
- 6:00 - 7:00 Dinner
- 7:00 - 7:30 Free time
- 7:30 - 8:30 SOCIAL: Making a prayer object

### Day Two | February 23 | FRIDAY

- 7:00 - 8:00 SPIRITUAL: Quiet time
- 8:00 - 8:45 Breakfast
- 8:45 - 9:00 Free Time
- 9:00 - 9:15 Welcome, overview + guidelines
- 9:15 - 9:30 A look at yesterday
- 9:30 - 11:00 EMOTIONAL: How to ground and centre ourselves
- 11:00 - 12:00 ENVIRONMENTAL/NATURE: Listening to nature
- 12:00 - 12:45 Lunch
- 12:45 - 1:00 Free Time
- 1:00 - 2:00 SOCIAL/OCCUPATIONAL: Makeup and dressing essentials
- 2:00 - 3:00 ENVIRONMENTAL/NATURE: Going for a hike
- 3:00 - 4:00 PHYSICAL/SPIRITUAL: Yoga
- 4:00 - 4:45 SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL: Getting creative with paper
- 4:45 - 5:00 Check in
- 5:00 - 6:00 SPIRITUAL: Quiet time
- 6:00 - 7:00 Dinner
- 7:30 - 9:00 SOCIAL: Sitting around the campfire

### Day Three | February 24 | SATURDAY

- 7:00 - 8:00 SPIRITUAL: Quiet time
- 8:00 - 8:45 Breakfast
- 8:45 - 9:15 ENVIRONMENTAL/SOCIAL: Getting ready to return home
- 9:15 - 11:00 Expressive journaling: A tool for wellness
- 11:00 - 11:10 A quote says it all
- 11:10 - 12:00 SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL: A closing circle and saying good-bye
- 12:00 - 1:00 Lunch

## Sowing Seeds of Change

A Project Chronicle in Anti-Trafficking Endeavours for Women



*“The retreat was much needed perfectly balanced therapy in three days. Having participated in the retreat, I feel like a new person, refreshed, joyful and so grateful for this opportunity. Thank you the Refuge and the Staff.”*

(Survivor)

*“Just love everyone here [at the Refuge], they are so loving and caring about us and they have something like special about themselves and I think its love.”*

(Survivor)



# Sowing Seeds of Change

A Project Chronicle in Anti-Trafficking Endeavours for Women



## Sowing Seeds of Change A Project Chronicle in Anti-Trafficking Endeavours for Women

Respite and Recovery Report  
Phase I, 2021-24

**St. Mary's Refuge**  
206 Barry Road, Madoc, Ontario  
Canada K0K 2K0  
stmarysrefuge.org • 613 473 2679  
info@stmarysrefuge.org

With support from



Women and Gender  
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité  
des genres Canada