



# Abbey Retreat Centre

## Annual Meeting 2023

A year of compassion, creativity & community







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# VISION

To be a safe, caring & healing community for people affected by cancer.

# MISSION

To support people on their health and healing journeys, especially those diagnosed with cancer and their loved ones.

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# CORE VALUES



**Whole Person Care**



**Community**



**Transparency, Integrity & Good Stewardship**



**Acceptance & Respect**



**Local Rootedness/Expansive Reach**

Watch for these symbols throughout this impact report.

# 2024-2027 Strategic Priorities

1

**Enhance Financial Sustainability**

2

**Enhance Governance Effectiveness**

3

**Expand Program and Services**

4

**Strengthen Marketing & Outreach Efforts**

5

**Promote Inclusivity and Diversity**

6

**Enhance Operational Efficiency**



# WELCOME

**The Chair of the Board and Executive Director are very pleased to present the 2023 Abbey Retreat Centre Annual Report.**

## MISSION

Our mission continues to be the creation and strengthening of a safe, loving and healing community supporting those affected by cancer. Our retreats and online programs are based on research and best practices fueled by our compassionate, skilled, and highly trained program facilitators. **Our programs are unique across Canada** not only because of the inclusion of caregivers, but also because we provide our retreats at no cost to participants.

Through our work we are able to provide a sense of belonging, understanding, and compassion that is fundamental to a healing experience and helps to address some critical gaps in the continuum of cancer care in our currently overburdened healthcare system.

Those who are part of Abbey Retreat Centre report that one of our most beneficial impacts is the attention paid to the creation of an enduring and caring community amongst participants, volunteers, facilitators, employees, and Board Members alike.

## CELEBRATING OUR VOLUNTEERS

We have an extraordinary group of committed and passionate volunteers who are critical to such a small and growing non-profit organization. **With more than 100 volunteers in 2023, we were able to make all parts of our programming truly amazing.** The “Warm Hug from the Highlands” program that provides cozy quilts for permanent and seasonal residents living with cancer continues to grow with the many dedicated quilting volunteers. Our Haliburton Highlands Challenge (HHC) fundraisers (over 60 people) helped us to raise awareness and critically important funds in 2023! Our volunteer bedmakers, grass cutters, retreat support chefs, community ambassadors and committee members contribute gifts, vision and time in ways that make us a vibrant and healthy organization. We are immensely grateful.

## SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023

The Impact Report demonstrates the robust efforts and achievements of the last year. We introduced over 200 individuals and families to Abbey Retreat Centre's transformative cancer support initiatives. We began developing a fulsome facilitator training program, and recruited and trained 12 new facilitators to help grow and enhance our programming capacity. We received grants to renovate and add new program spaces to the facility. Grants also made it possible for us to continue offering our online programming, design and pilot an end-of-life retreat, support the presence of caregivers in our 4-day retreats and much more. Our Haliburton Highlands Challenge (HHC) raised \$96,000 to support our cancer wellness retreats and the generosity of many others helped us to ensure that no one walks alone through a cancer experience.

**We enter our 2024 with over 200 people on our waitlist. We are motivated to work toward financial sustainability so that we can create safe and healing spaces for even more people.**

## EVOLUTION OF THE BOARD AND THE ORGANIZATION

2023 brought exciting growth and transformation to our organization. In the fall we embarked on a **Strategic Planning Process that provided a multi-year strategic plan to carry the organization successfully into 2026.** Building on our solid organizational foundation, we anticipate being able to expand our capacity on all fronts. With an extraordinary Executive Director and small but mighty staff, Abbey Retreat is ready to move confidently into the future.

With three new board members and an informed sense of direction, Abbey Retreat is poised to have an even greater impact serving more people living with cancer in the next two years.

Amongst the significant changes ahead, Abbey Retreat Centre is changing our name to better reflect our mission, vision, and values and highlight our evolution as an organization.

Thank you to our extraordinary community and everyone who contributes so much to Abbey Retreat Centre.

Submitted by,

Lynda Shephard (Chair)  
Barb Smith-Morrison (Executive Director)



Community



Acceptance  
and Respect



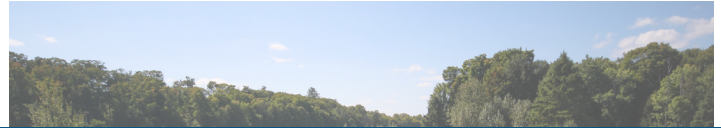
Transparency,  
Integrity  
and Good  
Stewardship

# IN-PERSON RETREATS

## Seven Retreats (3 or 4-Day Retreats)

*“The best ‘hidden gem’ in the cancer world.”*

**54 Participants**



## Facilitators' Training Retreat

**14 Facilitators**



Whole Person  
Care



Acceptance  
and Respect



Community



# ONLINE PROGRAMS

## Two Re-Shaping Our Cancer Stories (4-weeks online)



Re-Shaping added creativity to my life, taught me new techniques for self care, gave me courage to try new things, and grounded me.



## Two Take a Thread and Follow It (7-weeks online)



I had no idea that I would be taking a thread from my own heart and following it along a journey that, for once, allowed me to truly express all the things that have transpired since my diagnosis. This has been the most healing program I have taken.

39 Online Participants



Acceptance and Respect



Whole Person Care



Community



# COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

## A Warm Hug From the Highlands



40+ Volunteers

53 Quilt Recipients



“At a time when my cancer diagnosis was new, scary and life-changing receiving a quilt was a very comforting, thoughtful, and a beautiful gesture. Thank you! It truly is a warm hug!!”

- Warm Hug Quilt Recipient



Community



Whole Person  
Care



Local  
Rootedness/  
Expansive  
Reach



# NEW INITIATIVES IN 2023

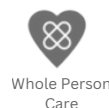
## Death: Charting Unknown Territory Together 3-Day Pilot Retreat

This pilot retreat is meant to be a safe place to explore ideas about the end of life.



"The Abbey Retreat Centre provided a nurturing environment where we could explore through art, creation, conversation and connection with peers the delicate topic of my end of life journey. I am so thankful to the facilitators, organizers and volunteers that have become dear friends... I have experienced an awakening to my life expectancy. This program came to us at the right time. I hadn't thought about my end of life process or what that process would look like for my wife and family. I now have a better idea of some of what I would like."

—End of Life Pilot Retreat Participant



Whole Person  
Care



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and Respect



Community



# NEW INITIATIVES IN 2023

## Living and Dying Well: Conversations Around End of Life Support and Resources

We hosted two community conversations where we explored resources that are available to support individuals and families as they navigate end of life possibilities and decisions.

35  
Community  
Participants

We had a Funeral Director, Death Doula, Lawyer and a local Medical professional join us as panel members.

## Developed a New “Living and Dying Well” Website Resource



You can check this out at:

[www.abbeyretreatcentre.ca/living-and-dying-well/](http://www.abbeyretreatcentre.ca/living-and-dying-well/)



Whole Person  
Care



Acceptance  
and Respect



Community

# FURTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Thanks to some generous grantors, amazing local contractors and wonderful volunteers, in 2023 we...

Created and furnished a new art studio



Built a new deck and screened 3-season porch

Furnished our new outdoor spaces



Repaired and redesigned outdoor campfire area



Built a small deck by the dock



Purchased new appliances

Repaired the cabin in the woods with new doors and window

Added a beautiful sound absorbing door to multi-use studio

Replaced the old geothermal system and oil boiler with a triple function geothermal system

Redesigned our website

Began filming a mini-documentary about ARC's one-of-a-kind cancer support retreats

Completed a Strategic Planning Process





# VOLUNTEERS

3000+ HOURS of volunteer time in 2023



Volunteers helped us in the kitchen during retreat.



Volunteers helped us with yard maintenance (the dock, the grass, the gardens, etc.).



Volunteers helped us create quilts to gift to local people with a cancer diagnosis.



Volunteers helped us make beds before every retreat and rental.



Volunteers helped us set up for retreats.

## Our 2023 Board of Directors

**Chair:** L. Shephard (as of Sept. 2023)

**Interim Co-Chairs:** J. Davey and T. Patterson (until Sept. 2023)

**Secretary:** T. Patterson

**Treasurer:** M. Ward

**Directors:** J. Ramsdale, S. van Nood, P. Handley, G. Boyle



Acceptance and Respect



Local Rootedness/  
Expansive Reach



Community



# 4th ANNUAL Haliburton Highlands Challenge



**\$96,625.30 raised!**

**#WeMoveForCancer**



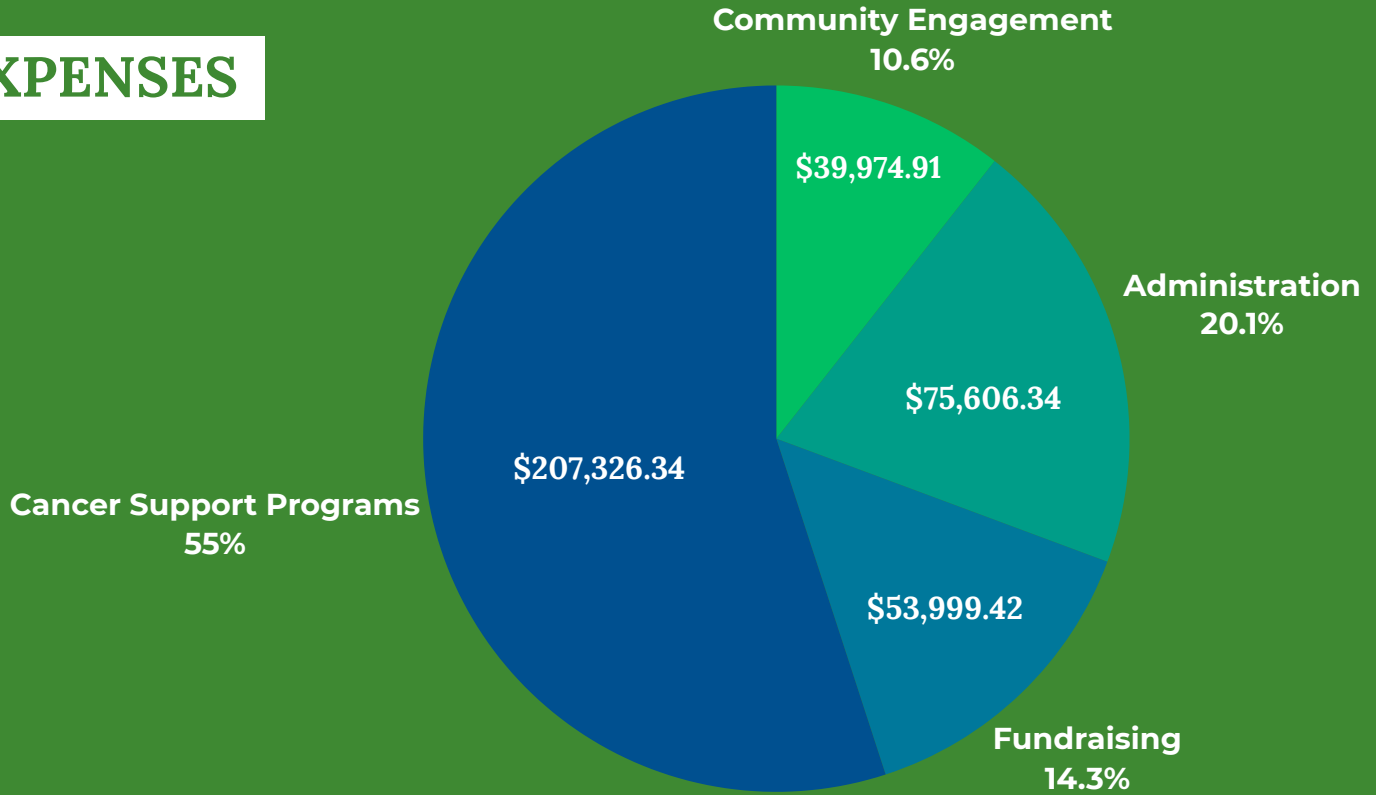
**19 Teams!**

**60+ Fundraising Volunteers**

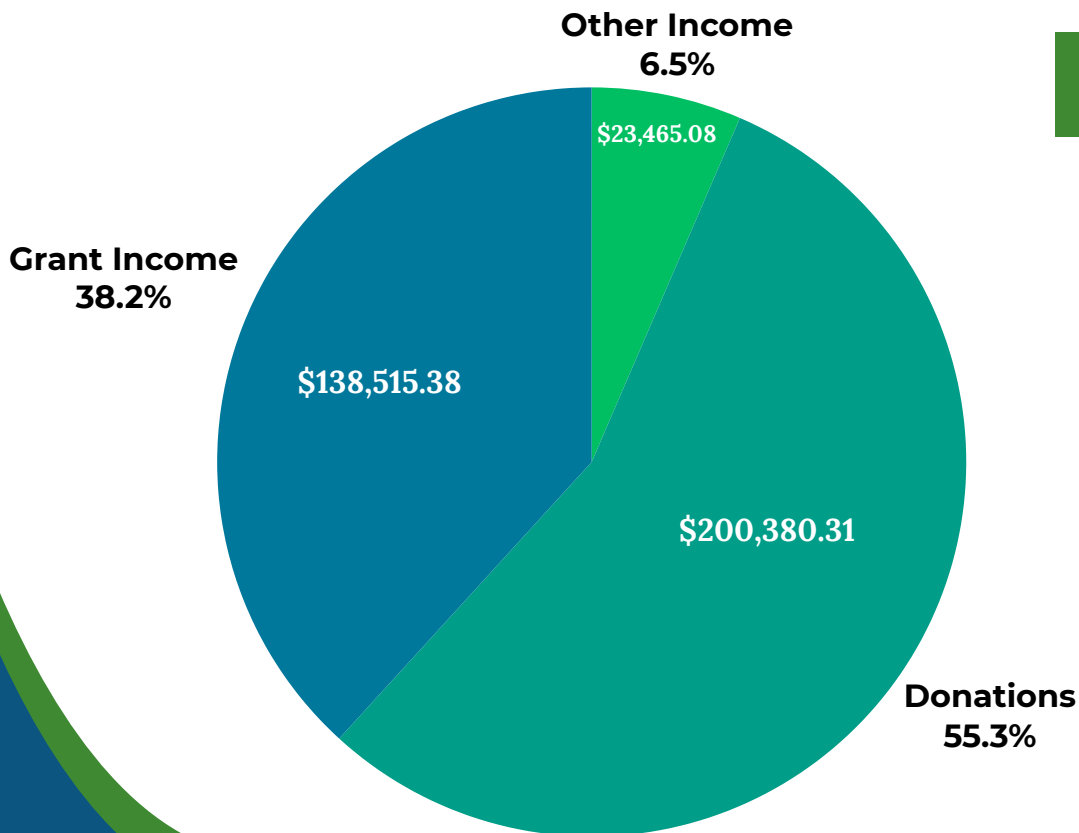


# Financial Summary

## EXPENSES



## REVENUE





# 2023 Major Funders

# 2023 Supporters

**+675 individual donations**



The fact that I didn't have to pay for the retreat was meaningful to me on so many levels! **Cancer is expensive.** It made it really AVAILABLE to me. It felt like a HUGE HUG from people. **People I don't even know want to help me!** That was very powerful for me. It made me feel like my suffering is not going unnoticed. I hope to pay it forward one day when I am in the position to do so.

—Past Retreat Participant



Community



Transparency,  
Integrity  
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# KELLY'S WORDS

## A WARM THANK YOU

In the fall of 2022, I was invited to be part of a Practices for Creating Meaning 3-Day retreat. The timing was unbelievably perfect as my cancers had both progressed and I was feeling emotionally and physically too overwhelmed to fully grasp the optimism that had assisted me in navigating the cancer journey to that point.

I couldn't have anticipated how incredibly valuable each piece of the entire experience was going to be in helping me find the things I had much need for at that moment in time – exploration, communications, and connection with the spectrum of my genuine emotions – safe ways of expressing them and sharing amongst others also experiencing similar feelings.

Everything was amazing – the beautiful surroundings, the absolutely incredible food, the genuinely lovely people (other participants, staff, volunteers) and the skilled, talented facilitators who took us through the weekend's journey in an open, respectful, empathetic way. Their creative talents opened doors, inspired, and nurtured many painful, some frightening and all deeply impactful emotions – allowing us to examine, make some sense of and express (internally and/or externally – which ever we needed) much of what was in our heads and hearts but we had not been able to process or did not feel we should/could share with our loved ones. Wrapped around all this was much shared laughter and joy.

I felt nourished (in all ways) by the time we all parted that weekend. An energy of optimism and peace had returned that I had been struggling to regain. I also made some lovely connections with amazing people whose strength and insights continue to resonate in my thoughts and heart.

The Abbey Retreat Centre is a truly valuable resource – the thoughtfulness that continues to go into its operation and development is what I think allows it, as it grows, to remain true to the vision of “providing a safe and loving community to those affected by cancer”.

Thank you so very much to all those who make the Abbey Retreat Centre possible.

– Kelly Phipps



“

A truly life-changing experience! Absolutely everyone involved is sooo compassionate, caring, and fully accommodating to everyone's needs. The land and the views are spectacular! The food is delicious, the house is so clean, comfortable and welcoming. I feel so blessed to have been able to attend the retreat.

”

Thank you for attending the 2023  
Abbey Retreat Centre Annual Meeting