



Enterprising Women Making Art

Launched in August 2003 in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, the Enterprising Women Making Art (EWMA) project has empowered multi-barriered women (barriers such as low incomes or poverty, abuse of substances, involvement in the sex trade, experiences of violence and abuse or involvement in the mental health system) by furnishing the skills-based training necessary to create and produce marketable artisan items, and to develop an artisans' co-operative: Creative Women Craftworks. EWMA's goal is to improve marginalized women's personal and economic well-being and encourage their full participation in the economy and community.

At-risk women in communities like the Downtown Eastside are often unable to secure mainstream employment, driving many to the types of work that expose them to violence, abuse, and exploitation. EWMA provides these women with access to supplemental income (in addition to government assistance) and safe and flexible employment alternatives.

A large percentage of Creative Women Craftworks' revenue is returned to the craftswomen, and a smaller percentage is placed in the co-operative pool. Co-op members are the primary decision-makers regarding the Co-op and its development process.

Creative Women Craftworks' products are sold primarily at local craft fairs and artisan markets, but they have begun marketing their products on eBay, and EWMA is currently supporting development of an e-commerce website project (lead by a woman in the community), intended to provide another venue for the Co-op's products.

EWMA's goal is a sustainable co-operative program and business. In the next year, the Co-op is looking to formally incorporate and increase its membership in order to foster a larger and more diverse inventory selection, increase market reach, and have a broader impact in the local community. To date, approximately 100 women have accessed the skills development workshops and weekly

community-accessible arts and crafts drop-ins, and sixteen women have been involved in the co-operative development process.

[Click here](#) to read *A Social Economy Showcase – BC Stories* in its entirety.