



Supporting Aboriginal Women and Girls in Crisis

*“Until all of us have made it, none of us have made it.”**

Once again the CGOV Foundation and the partners and clients of CGOV Asset Management are teaming up with the Canadian Women’s Foundation on an important grant program focused on Aboriginal women and girls in crisis in their communities. ➔

OUR PARTNER

The Canadian Women’s Foundation is Canada’s public foundation for women and girls. They empower women and girls in Canada to move out of violence, out of poverty and into confidence.

Since 1991, they’ve raised money and invested in over 1,200 community programs across Canada, and are now one of the ten largest women’s foundations in the world.

The Canadian Women’s Foundation takes a positive approach to address the root causes of the most critical issues facing women and girls. They invest in carefully selected community programs that produce the strongest outcomes, and that serve women and girls who face the highest risks and have the least access to services, such as those who live in our remote northern communities. ➔

OVERVIEW

The grant project we have chosen to partner with is one of the Canadian Women’s Foundation’s biggest priorities – women and girls from First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities, many of whom are in crisis, facing extremely high levels of domestic violence, poverty, and sexual exploitation. The roots of the problem are systemic and complex. ➔

BACKGROUND

As you are most certainly aware, generations of Aboriginal children were removed from their families and forced to live in residential schools, losing all connection to family, culture and language. Many became victims of physical and sexual abuse resulting in generations who struggle with violence and forms of abuse. The statistics are jarring.

- An Aboriginal woman (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) is more than eight times more likely to be killed by her intimate partner than a non-Aboriginal woman
- 36% of all Aboriginal women live in poverty – this is much higher than the average of 9% for all Canadians
- About 75% of Aboriginal girls under age 18 have been sexually abused

But there is room for hope with our help, and Aboriginal people are leading the way. ➔

OUR COMMITMENT

The CGOV Foundation has committed \$25,000 a year for a three year period. These funds will contribute to the Canadian Women’s Foundation’s work with Aboriginal women and girls across important program areas identified below to empower them to move out of poverty and violence and into confidence.

Area One: Girls’ Group and Mentoring

Research demonstrates that Aboriginal students in grades 7 through 9 are at the highest risk of school dropout, experiences of racism and high-risk activities; including sexual exploitation. This is particularly true for Aboriginal girls.

This program represents an initiative between the Interior Indian Friendship Society, School of Social Work and Human Service at Thompson Rivers University, School District 73 and First Nations Education Council.

The goals of the program are:

- To provide a safe place for young Aboriginal girls to explore adolescent female issues including strengths and skills, body image, and self-esteem and to promote a positive and healthy gender and cultural identity

- To increase protective factors for Aboriginal girls within the context of relationships (peers, family, culture, school and community) and teaching cultural practices and traditions from a gender equality perspective including positive relationship building skills and positive ethnic and cultural identity (protective factors)
- To provide participants with increased coping skills and leadership skills regarding the issues they face as young Aboriginal girls and a shift from unhealthy coping to healthy coping mechanisms (decreasing risk factors)
- To take into account the developmental needs of Aboriginal girls at the critical stage for gender identity formation and healthy cultural identity (protective factors)
- To encourage healthy relationships between girls and older role models to provide an additional level of support

Area Two: Healthy Teen Relationships

The goal is to prevent violence against women and girls in Canada through work supporting healthy relationship programs for teen girls and boys. The Canadian Women's Foundation funds projects that work to develop skills that will lead to behaviour change aimed at preventing violence against women.

The Canadian Women's Foundation looks for teen-focused projects that offer healthy relationship training with gender awareness in order to respond to increasing levels of high-risk activity in the school years, including dating violence, early sexual activity, and violence between peers. The Canadian Women's Foundation also supports work that aims to remove systemic barriers and to change systems to help prevent violence from happening in the first place.

Through Canadian Women's Foundation research, school-based programs focused on youth in the age range of 11 to 19 are critical. The Canadian Women's Foundation defines "school-based" both as programs delivered during school hours as part of the curriculum, and programs delivered outside of the curriculum in a school setting (e.g. after-school programs). These programs can be facilitated by teachers, community members, or youth, or a combination of these three.

*Cover quote from Rosemary Brown,
Canadian Women's Foundation Founding Mother

Area Three: Aboriginal Partnership Grants

To help low-income Aboriginal women move out of poverty, the Canadian Women's Foundation recently launched a new Aboriginal Partnership Grants program, which was designed by a volunteer committee of Aboriginal women.

The goals of the Aboriginal Partnership Grants program are:

- To help low-income Aboriginal women transition out of poverty and move toward economic independence by participating in economic development programs
- To increase the capacity of Aboriginal organizations to deliver effective economic development programs to women
- To create new relationships between the Canadian Women's Foundation and Aboriginal grantees in order to improve program success, provide new learnings for the Canadian Women's Foundation on the individual and systemic challenges facing Aboriginal communities, and to learn how to fund more effectively in their communities↔

FUTURE IMPACT

We believe that this is an important area of our society that requires our time and financial attention. The cycle of poverty, abuse and racism must end. If not now, when?

We invite you to participate with the Foundation and the partners and clients of CGOV Asset Management in supporting this impactful charitable project. For more information about our experience and commitment to these communities through CGOV Asset Management, please visit <http://www.cgov.ca/institutionsFirstNations.php> on our website.↔

Please feel free to contact me directly should you have any questions about this initiative. Thank you.

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