

LEGACY ACTION



Edmonton
Community
Foundation



PHOTO: CURTIS COMEAU

COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION

p10

Emmy Stuebing creates a fund so she can keep helping the community for years

ATTITUDE SHIFTS

p6

ECF explores the increase in reporting of sexual assaults in our city

FEMPOWER

p14

A new conference empowers and connects women

THE FOUNDATION. of my community



starts with you and me - more than charity
it's the empathy i feel for the
people where i live.

close to home is where the heart is,
where help goes farthest
my foundation helps me start this:

people standing ^Tall
in towns big and small,
urban, rural, one and all.

My care comes through
helping those that can't make do,
or get by, or maybe
just need to fly. 

My foundation has roots across the land,
intertwining, hand-to-hand,
showing what we thousands banded
together can do, including you, making true
the endeavour
to make things better
for generations still,
their dreams fulfilled,
it all gets built ...



Adrienne Wong
Edmonton Community
Foundation

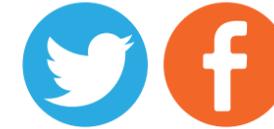
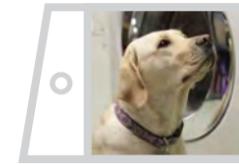
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4

CEO MESSAGE

Words from Edmonton Community Foundation's CEO, Martin Garber-Conrad.

5

ONE MOTHER OF A FESTIVAL

SkirtsAfire provides a place to celebrate and share women's work.

6

DIGGING DEEPER

ECF looks at the shift in attitude towards those affected by sexual assault and how that affects reporting.

9

SPOTLIGHT ON FUNDS

Three funds helping women in Edmonton.

10

FORWARD THINKING

Emmy Stuebing creates an endowment fund, allowing her dedication to the community to continue for years.

12

AWINITA FUND

Award winning author, Nancy Huston, donates money from her life's work to help a cause close to her heart.

13

A NEW JOURNEY

After leaving prison, a program gives women hope for the future.

14

WELL CONNECTED

A new conference empowers women by bringing diverse, young professionals together.

15

CREATE YOUR OWN FUND

Four steps to help you give back.



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Emmy Stuebing photographed at the Stanley A. Milner library by Curtis Comeau



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Edmonton
Community
Foundation



To celebrate International Women's Day on March 8 we're dedicating this issue of *Legacy in Action* to the incredible women in our community and the organizations that serve them.

In our cover story we profile the inimitable Emmy Stuebing who is continuing her family's long tradition of philanthropy by opening an endowment fund at ECF. Emmy's story shows that with modest contributions, and a little help from your friends, anyone has the power to create lasting change in their community.

Nancy Huston is another ECF donor who is making a great impact in the lives of women in our city. Through the Awinita Scholarship Fund, Huston's generosity is opening up opportunities for Aboriginal

women to pursue post-secondary education and professional training.

The SkirtsAfire Festival is also opening doors. The 10-day festival on Alberta Avenue provides a platform for female artists to present their work in dance, theatre, visual arts and music. On **page five** you can follow the story of local playwright Nicole Moeller who will be premiering her new play *The Mothers* at the festival from Feb. 26 – March 8.

On **page 14** you'll learn about FEMPower, a youth-led initiative that brings women from diverse backgrounds together to build community and strengthen their leadership skills. This project is a great example of how our Young Edmonton Grants program is helping youth in our city realize their dreams.

We also understand that women face unique challenges in our community. Last year our Vital Signs report discovered that Edmonton's reported sexual assault rate is the highest of all major cities in Canada. On **page six** we speak with former mayor, and current executive director of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, Jan Reimer, and the Edmonton Police Service to try and find out why this is the case.

Continuing in the vein of helping women to overcome challenges, we look at Elizabeth Fry Society's Bridging New Journeys program on **page 13** which is helping women re-integrate into society after serving jail time.

We trust you will find these stories insightful and inspiring as we celebrate the strong women in Edmonton who play an invaluable role in enhancing our city.

Martin Garber-Conrad
CEO

ONE MOTHER OF A FESTIVAL



SkirtsAfire brings women's work to the forefront

The idea for a new play struck Nicole Moeller while attending a reading of Judith Thompson's *Palace of the End* at Theatre Network in 2008. *Palace of the End* is a play based on the story of Lynndie England, the former United States Army reservist who was convicted, in connection, with torture and prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib prison during the U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2005.

"I was like: 'Who is your mother, and how is she dealing with this?'" Moeller says, referring to actions of the main character. "Because right now you are the worst person in North America — you are the monster. That's what triggered it for me."

"It" is Moeller's new play *The Mothers* — a story about a mom coping with her son's recent prison sentence for a violent crime — which will headline at the 2014 SkirtsAfire HerArts Festival from Feb. 26 to March 8 on Alberta Avenue.

Though Moeller isn't a stranger to bringing scripts to fruition — she's had two plays produced including *An Almost Perfect Thing* for Workshop West and *Without You*, for Studio Theatre — she struggled with finding a balanced portrayal of *The Mothers*' protagonist when she started writing the script in 2011.

"I write very flawed characters and sometimes I feel guilty if I'm writing a female character," Moeller says. "I want to write them in a strong light because I want to represent women in a certain way, but ... they're human beings so they're going to be flawed."

After much toil, and refining, *The Mothers* was accepted into Citadel Theatre's

BY: ANDREW PAUL PHOTO: MAT SIMPSON

ECF granted \$7,300 through its Community Grants Program to the SkirtsAfire Society to purchase marketing banners and flags

Playwright Forum, which is a development program for playwrights from across the country, whereby their work is critiqued and refined with the chance of having their plays produced.

I want to represent women in a certain way, but... they're human beings so they're going to be flawed

In the spring of 2012 *The Mothers* emerged from the Forum in a much finer form, but was not picked up for production.

"I had been working on this for so long," Moeller says. "It was discouraging."

Though the Citadel didn't option the production, it did catch the eye of Annette Loiselle the Artistic Producer of the festival SkirtsAfire, who immediately knew *The Mothers* was a perfect fit for inclusion in the event.

Loiselle founded SkirtsAfire, a 10-day multi-disciplinary festival, in 2013 in order to provide female artists with a platform to perform and produce new works in music, visual arts, theatre and dance.

"There are so few opportunities (for women's work) to be produced," Moeller says. "It's invaluable."

Though SkirtsAfire's mandate is to focus on female work, Loiselle wants to make it clear that the festival is for everyone and not only is it important for men to see female stories; they'll also enjoy and take away great insight from them.

"It's about creating a universal understanding of the people in our lives whether it's our husbands or our colleagues or our children."

Audience development is the festival's greatest challenge. Six hundred people attended its inaugural run in 2013 and again in 2014. To boost numbers in 2015 the company hired an outreach coordinator to approach new niche markets and, thanks to a grant from Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF), they are purchasing banners and flags to increase the festival's visibility on the street.

"ECF is awesome," Loiselle says. "Honestly, with a small organization like ours where we're not able to even pay our staff appropriately, there's no way I could think about buying flags."

As for Moeller, "it's an honour to be with all of these women." ■

McLENNAN ROSS
LEGAL COUNSEL

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(L-R: Karen Platten Q.C., Kate Faught, Crista Osualdini)



DIGGING DEEPER

ECF looks into why Edmonton has the highest reported number of sexual assaults among Canada's six largest urban centres



BY: CAROLINE BARLOTT
ILLUSTRATION: ERIK GRICE

It's a Friday afternoon, and Jan Reimer, executive director of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, is busy preparing for a television interview. She's gathering statistics — 17,000 women were turned away from Alberta's women's shelters last year; that's up 2,000 from those turned away the previous year.

She sees the direct effects of those numbers all the time. The week prior to her TV interview, there was a mother who came with her child to one of the shelters every day, and each time, the shelter was so full they couldn't be admitted. "There just isn't enough room," Reimer says, with a catch in her throat. These women have often been abused physically, emotionally and sexually, and a women's shelter provides them with the security that a regular shelter or a friend or relative's house can not. Sixty-six per cent of those women who took a Danger Assessment at an Alberta women's shelter are at risk of becoming victims of homicide due to domestic violence.

Meanwhile, the numbers of reported sexual assaults are high across the country, but they are especially high in our city. Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) found through its 2014 Vital Signs Report that Edmonton has the highest number of sexual assaults when compared to any other large city in the country. In 2013, the reported sexual assault rate was 74.2 per 100,000 in Edmonton compared to 49.5 in Calgary, or 45.8 in Ottawa.

When the news airs that night, the story on the overflowing shelters is just one of many that have aired over the last few weeks that are related to the abuse of women. Just days before, in early December, another woman — one of 20 by this point — had come forward, alleging actor Bill Cosby drugged and sexually assaulted her in the 1980s. Just days before that, former CBC host Jian Ghomeshi was charged with four counts of sexual assault and one count of overcome resistance. Meanwhile, two MPs were accused of sexual misconduct. And earlier in

the year, a video had surfaced of former NFL player Ray Rice dragging his then-fiancé (now-wife) Janay Palmer, from an elevator after physically abusing her.

It's not just about being comfortable talking about sexual assault — it's about understanding what constitutes assault in the first place.

But high-profile cases are just a part of the story. Edmonton has seen a rise in reports of sexual assault especially in the last few years. According to the Edmonton Police Service's Sexual Assault Section, 337 sexual assaults were reported to their unit in 2012, and the

city had exceeded that number already by November of 2014 with 374 reports.

While many have interpreted these statistics in a negative light — police chief, Rod Knecht, presumed in a CBC news report that the rise was a result of an increase in the use of GHB, the date rape drug — Reimer doesn't agree. She believes the increase is due, at least in part, to women feeling more comfortable coming forward and reporting these crimes.

"I'm seeing conversation like I've never seen it before," says Reimer who has worked for the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters for 13 years. She points out the recent twitter hashtag #Ididntreport, where women were admitting to sexual abuse that they had been too ashamed or afraid to speak of in the past. And this public discourse, she says, is changing the way we look at sexual assault. Rather than seeing it as something to hide, it's becoming more acceptable to speak about it openly.

While the recent openness of the public to talk about these crimes is a good start, more education is needed, says Shawna Grimes, staff sergeant for the Edmonton Police Service's (EPS) Sexual Assault Section. It's not just about being comfortable talking about sexual assault, she says; it's about understanding what constitutes assault in the first place.

In 2010, Sexual Assault Voices of Edmonton (SAVE) along with partners EPS and the Sexual Assault Centre launched a campaign called "Don't Be That Guy." Posters were distributed, explaining what it means to have consent. In one, a woman was passed out face down on a couch with the caption: "Just because she isn't saying no, doesn't mean she is saying yes." Another showed a man aggressively wrapping his hands around another man, while the words read: "It's not sex when he changes his mind."

The posters are wildly popular, says Grimes, with interest on an international scale. Since then, several other poster campaigns



have been launched, and the campaign continues today. Grimes says these types of projects help to educate the public while opening up the lines of communication. The campaign also sought to change the way society thinks about victims. In the past, the public discourse has often revolved around what the victim has done. *Did she dress inappropriately? Did she invite sexual advances? Was she drinking alcohol?* “I think we need to look at who is actually doing the crime. Otherwise, we’re all going to be locked away in our houses, and even then, that’s not going to stop it,” says Grimes.

Grimes believes this cultural shift in thinking is helping to propel needed changes as are several initiatives. Many programs in the city are helping those affected by sexual abuse, and throughout the years, ECF has delivered funds towards organizations that implement such programs including those provided by the Sexual Assault Centre. The centre offers therapy along with a 24-hour crisis line for those affected by sexual abuse.

In 2012, ECF funding allowed the Sexual Assault Centre to revamp their group therapy room, where executive director, Karen Smith, says up to 400 people per year go to its sessions. The room is at the heart of the centre’s programming, which seeks to help women, men and teens who have been sexually abused. Having a calm and inviting space is incredibly important when addressing horrific experiences, including those discussed in the War Rape Therapy Program — an initiative initially started by seed money from ECF years ago — which seeks to help immigrants who have suffered from sexual abuse during times of conflict.

ECF also gave funding towards computers for the Sexual Assault Centre, which helped the organization update their out-of-date technology. Now, Smith says, clients can come in and have a safe place to research information that they may not explore in public. And the centre is thinking about ways that they can further connect with young people, potentially creating a live-chat version of the 24-hour hotline for those who need help, but may not want to connect via phone.



According to Reimer, many do not understand that sexual assault isn’t just perpetrated by strangers in back alleys as depicted in Hollywood, but that it is common within relationships. But Grimes, Reimer and Smith all agree that sexual assault and domestic violence go together. “Sexual assault isn’t about sex; it’s more about control and violence, particularly when you’re dealing with a domestic violence situation,” says Grimes. “There’s control of the money, perhaps control of friends and family, and then controlling sex is just another aspect of that. It’s a way of exerting power over someone else.”

Victims of sexual assault need a large amount of support in order to be able to heal from their experiences, and also go through the court system, which Grimes says is an extremely difficult process. “You can imagine, having to talk about it over and over to strangers in a courtroom with the person who did this to you sitting there and watching. It takes a great deal of strength to be able to do that,” says Reimer. “People have to be in a position where they can handle that mentally.”

Reimer describes her passion for her work as a “fire in her belly.” She’s always been concerned about women’s issues, and this dates back to her time as Edmonton’s mayor between 1989 and 1995. While in office, Reimer was intent to help the underdog, and one of her main focuses was ensuring that those with lower incomes had a voice. Through the Safer Cities Initiative, she also looked at issues of violence against women, initiating the start of a domestic violence joint response team. Reimer remembers a woman coming up to thank her for saving her life. “And I said: ‘Well, I haven’t done anything,’” says Reimer. “And she said: ‘Well, yes, you did because you made a program in place that’s saved my life, so thank you.’ That was one of the greatest gifts I’ve ever had.” ■

If you, or someone you know, needs help, call the Sexual Assault Centre’s 24 hour crisis line: 780-423-4121.

Some of the ECF-funded programs supporting vulnerable women:

Aboriginal Consulting Services of Alberta: \$30,000 (2012-2013) to expand programming that addresses multi-generational violence in Aboriginal communities.

Catholic Social Services: \$35,428 (2011) to support Valeda House, which provides transitional care for women who are homeless and their children.

Edmonton Women’s Shelter Ltd.: \$30,000 (2011) to support WIN House III, to provide shelter and support to women of diverse backgrounds. \$37,000 (2014) for the Shelter Support Program, which helps staff gather data and report it to the government, funders, and the public.

Today Family Violence Help Centre: \$30,000 (2013) and \$20,000 (2014) to help the Centre develop a sustainable funding model.

WINGS of Providence Society: \$25,000 (2013) to support Youth Program at Home Next Door, an affordable housing apartment complex for women and their children who have escaped family violence.

YWCA of Edmonton: \$25,000 (2014) to support its Counselling Centre which provides counselling to women who could not otherwise afford services. ■

SPOTLIGHT

ON FUNDS

Don & Norine Lowry Award for Women of Excellence Fund

As the former CEO of EPCOR, Don Lowry knows how difficult it can be to excel in the corporate world. He also understands that women face even more hurdles as they pursue professional goals. That’s why Don and his wife Norine opened the Don & Norine Lowry Award for Women of Excellence Fund in 2012. “There are all kinds of opportunities for guys and yet we didn’t see the predominance of support for women, so we figured we’d step up and make an investment and help make a difference,” Lowry says. Their fund is designed to help Edmonton women pursue their post-secondary education in a number of fields including disciplines associated with water, power and energy resources as well as professions involving finance, accounting, safety, health or community relations.

June Virginia Robinson Memorial Award Fund

When Harold Robinson established the June Virginia Robinson Memorial Award Fund in December 2010 he knew it was important. Harold wanted to honour his late mother, and support other single Métis mothers trying to improve their education. He knew there would be excellent tax benefits associated with his gifts (a 50 per cent tax credit), but what surprised him was just how satisfying it was to remember and celebrate his mother’s life and values through the fund. “I felt really connected to her again and that, I think, is one of the great joys of these funds,” Robinson says. Our donors really do make a difference, one and all.

Bunny Casper Rae Field of Interest Fund

Margaret Edith Alice Rae (Bunny) died at the age of 91, leaving funds to a variety of charities with the residue coming to ECF to support or assist disadvantaged youth or women. ECF received her first gift in 2009 and the fund is now worth over \$1.4 million. Grants from this fund have supported newcomer women, the Bissell Centre, and youth leadership initiatives. Bunny’s will was specific on the areas that she wanted to support so it helps ECF direct funds to causes that she cared about.





FORWARD THINKING

Emmy Stuebing considers how to carry her commitment to community into the future

BY: ALIX KEMP
PHOTO: CURTIS COMEAU

For Emmy Stuebing, it's true that charity starts at home. Although born in Red Deer, most of her family hails from Edmonton, where they've been deeply involved in the city's local organizations. Stuebing says that thanks to her family's dedication to giving back to the community, it's something that has always come naturally to her. Her grandfather, Ralph Loder, was a proud supporter of the Citadel Theatre, and served on its board of directors until his death in 2012. "To me, it was just part of what you do as a human being and as an adult," she says. In fact, Stuebing has spent her entire adult life giving back, first as a member of the Delta Gamma sorority at the University of Alberta participating in the group's numerous charity drives and events, and then as a professional fundraiser, volunteering and working for charities and non-profits.

The former executive director of the Alberta Emerald Foundation, Stuebing is now the associate director of fund development at the Edmonton Public Library, tasked with raising \$10 million for improvements to its downtown branch. She's also thinking about the future, and how she can continue to support the causes that matter most to her.

There is a widely held misconception that endowment funds are reserved for wealthy families that have large sums of money

to invest. Endowment funds operate by investing an initial gift. The earnings then allow for a percentage of the endowment to be granted each year while enabling it to grow and continue to give in perpetuity.

Stuebing, a self-described "professional volunteer," says she hardly falls into the class of people that she would generally perceive as having their own endowment fund. But Edmonton Community Foundation's (ECF) emerging funds are changing that perception. Rather than expecting a large contribution up-front, emerging funds give donors up to 10 years to raise \$10,000 in capital. Once the fund reaches \$10,000 it can begin granting.

They're saying, 'Hey, she's young, she's not super rich; if she can do this, maybe I can too.' I'm happy to be an example of what you can do.

Kathy Hawkesworth, ECF's director of donor services, says that people are surprised and delighted to learn how simple it is. "So often 'endowment' is equated with great wealth. People appreciate that they can have a lasting impact by growing a fund over time." Stuebing, who had worked with Hawkesworth in her years in fund development and during her time at the Emerald Foundation, was thrilled by the idea.

Stuebing realized that she was already donating hundreds of dollars a year to various charities around the city, and that the amount required to start a fund — it works out to about \$85 a month — wasn't substantially more than she was already giving. As a gift to herself, and the community at large, she decided to launch her own fund in time for her 30th birthday, asking friends and family to contribute rather than buying gifts. She named it the

Emmy Stuebing Family and Friends Fund and set up recurring monthly donations to reach her goal. When she got married a couple years ago, rather than registering for gifts, Stuebing and her new husband asked friends to contribute either to their honeymoon fund or to her endowment.

She reached her goal last spring, at 38, a year and a half ahead of schedule. "When I think about things that I'm proud to have accomplished, this is certainly one of the things that I take great pride in," she says. Choosing the recipients for her first disbursement was a thrill, and she split the \$400 between the Edmonton Public Library and Theatre Network, — which recently lost its home when the historic Roxy Theatre burned down in early January — where she's a board member. "It's important to me to put my money where my mouth is. That way, when I ask others to donate, I can say 'join me,' rather than 'please give.'"

Stuebing has represented her own fund as passionately as she has the not-for-profits she's worked for as a fundraiser over the past 17 years. Hawkesworth says that Stuebing has been "a great ambassador" for her own fund by encouraging friends and family members to contribute. But she's been an ambassador in another sense as well, by inspiring others to start their own endowment funds. Stuebing says that several of her friends and acquaintances have asked her to put them in touch with ECF. "They're saying, 'Hey, she's young, she's not super rich; if she can do this, maybe I can too.' I'm happy to be an example of what you can do."

Perhaps most exciting to Stuebing is the idea that even years after her death, she can continue to help the causes that matter most to her. ECF will manage the fund according to her wishes in perpetuity, donating to the organizations that Stuebing supports now, or others with similar missions. Stuebing recalls the portrait of her grandfather that hangs in the Citadel Theatre in memory of his service. "I love my family's bits of legacy. Mine's different, but it's meaningful to me," she says. "It's one way of making a stamp that says 'Emmy was here.'" While Stuebing will doubtlessly continue making an impact on the community as long as she lives, being able to do so even beyond her own lifetime is a gift. ■

Starting an endowment fund is nowhere near as expensive or difficult as you might think.

ECF's emerging funds allow donors to create endowments regardless of their current income. Kathy Hawkesworth, the organization's director of donor services, says all it takes is a conversation. "The process always starts by describing to us what you want to accomplish. We listen carefully and ask questions to clarify and help us know how to draft a sample fund agreement." This agreement, in the case of a donor-advised fund like Stuebing's sets out who will give the Foundation advice each year about the organizations and causes to be supported and how granting decisions are to be made by the Foundation if the donor is unable to give advice. Donors can contribute either a lump sum of \$10,000 or spread payments over up to 10 years. ECF can accept cash, credit cards, direct deposits, and even gifts of shares or mutual funds. Once the fund reaches its goal, it can begin making grants.

For more information visit Page 15



AWINITA FUND

An award-winning writer donates money from her life's work to help people whose struggles mirror those of her favourite character

BY: CARISSA HALTON PHOTO: FANNY DION

It isn't often that a writer is approached by Library and Archives Canada with a request to buy one's drafts and letters.

Nancy Huston, winner of a Governor General's Award and Prix Femina, however, has been approached twice. Twenty years ago, she gracefully declined. "Death didn't seem anything real to me then," she laughs. Then in 2014 the request came with a \$300,000 offer.

The Calgary-born author of 45 publications, which include essay collections, plays, children's books and novels, began to pack up her professional and personal papers. Her journals, letters, and draft manuscripts spanned a four-decade career. The material filled 14 boxes and included a USB stick with digital materials that could have filled 14 boxes more. After packing everything into a delivery truck, she snapped a photo of her life's work before it sped out of her driveway in Strasbourg, France and headed to Canada as summer began.

The \$300,000 cheque for her material, however, was never drafted in her name. On Huston's request, the money was seamlessly transferred to Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) to create the Awinita Scholarship Fund.

Despite having lived abroad since 1973, she has followed the news in her birth province

closely. The inequality that Aboriginal women face, and the impact of the oil sands on their traditional territories, has troubled her. She wanted her archives to have a further legacy, a legacy that impacted this injustice in some way.

Without that scholarship and loan ... I might still be fighting cockroaches in the Bronx.

The year she sold her archives, she also released her novel, *Black Dance*, in English (it had been released in French in 2013). It is the story of fictional screenwriter Milo Noirlac's life written as though it were the draft of a screenplay by Noirlac and his partner. The book's threads follow Milo, his grandfather Neil and his mother Awinita. Awinita is an aboriginal teen working the Montreal sex-trade in the 50s, and of all the characters Huston has invented, Awinita is one of her favourites. "I learned a lot from her," says Huston. "She is tough as nails and very funny."

Her lawyer suggested she contact ECF about her desire to support women like Awinita. Then ECF connected her to the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation, (CEASE). From this collaboration, the bones of the Awinita Scholarship Fund took shape.

Beginning in 2015, scholarship grants will be awarded to women (priority given to First Nations and/or Métis women) who have been, or are at risk to become, sexually exploited. The award can be used for post-secondary education or professional training.

Scholarships also played a significant role in Huston's own life. While she was raised in a loving family, they struggled financially. "When I was living in New York at age 18, I could very easily have gone off on that path," Huston says.

Then, a scholarship and loan package ensured Huston could follow her dream. She attended Sarah Lawrence College. From there she completed a year abroad in Paris, and an incredible career writing in both French and English followed. "Without that scholarship and loan ..." she says, "I might still be fighting cockroaches in the Bronx."

Now 40 years later, she hopes that the Awinita Scholarship Fund will help others follow their dreams. ■

ECF granted \$40,000 through its Community Grants Program to support Elizabeth Fry Society of Edmonton's Bridging New Journeys program

A NEW JOURNEY

BY: CAROLINE BARLOTT

After completing their jail sentences, women are given another chance through a program that replaces risk factors with preventive factors

Stacy, whose name has been changed for her protection, remembers the way she felt the day she was released after two years of incarceration. Her heart was pounding, her brow perspiring and her hands shaking. She wasn't excited; she was scared. "I didn't know anyone in Edmonton, or anything. You can imagine that would be scary after two years of being in jail," she says.

But after being released, she walked down the stairs, towards the door, and realized she wasn't alone. Berna Gudzinski, Federal Prison Liaison with the Bridging New Journeys program, was waiting for her. And for the next six months, Gudzinski was by Stacy's side, helping her through many challenging situations that would come her way. "I was surprised by just how much Berna did for me. We're friends, and nothing will change that," says Stacy.

The Bridging New Journeys program operates through the Elizabeth Fry Society and helps women to reintegrate into the community after having faced prison sentences. Members of the Elizabeth Fry staff help women make decisions that reduce risk factors of recidivism, replacing them with support and resources necessary for success.

"Each woman completes six pillars of success: basic needs, housing, employment/education, health care, support systems along with future goals and plans," Toni Sinclair, executive director of the Elizabeth Fry Society, wrote via email. Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) provided a grant to the society last year, to help ensure

that the program, which has helped 120 women so far, continues.

For Stacy, that help came in many different ways; she learned how to create a resumé, how to deal with the effects of her former addiction and how to prepare for parole. In fact, Stacy says, without the program, she may have even been deported. "Even though I've been in Canada since 1965, once you commit a federal offence, you can be kicked out," says Stacy. To ensure Stacy was best represented, she needed a lawyer and despite many setbacks, Gudzinski's determination helped her find one.

Gudzinski went with Stacy to all the meetings and was her support throughout the hearing. "I have no idea what I would have done without that support," Stacy says.

"So many women serve a prison sentence and are released into the same set of circumstances that caused them to become criminalized in the first place. This is why Bridging New Journeys is important," says Sinclair. "This program gives women the sets of skills and tools to overcome these risk factors and the connections in the community to have the best possible chance at success."

Stacy's life is completely different today than it was before she went to prison when she was addicted to drugs and had a very dangerous lifestyle. Now, she's reconnected with her family, she has a full time job, and she's been clean since 2010. She's been able to stay away from the people who she used to associate with, and start a new life. ■



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WELL CONNECTED

A new conference allows young, diverse Edmonton women to come together and help one another BY: PAUL BLINOV PHOTO: ABBY WOLLUM

A few years ago, Maegan Robinson-Anagor was scanning the Edmonton horizon for networking opportunities — particularly those that were geared towards young women of diverse backgrounds — and coming up short on results. She was then a member of the City of Edmonton Youth Council, and, partnering with fellow council member Meghana Valupadas, they created FEMPower: A Diverse Young Women's Empowerment Conference in response to that unfulfilled niche.

"I myself am a first-generation immigrant; my parents immigrated here from Nigeria and Grenada," says 23-year-old Robinson-Anagor. "So I was just thinking, 'What is something here for young, diverse women in Edmonton, to help them better themselves and be able to feel like they're able to do anything in the community?'"

And that is the goal of FEMPower — to create a space for women aged 15 to 25 and of varied backgrounds to come together and discuss the issues facing their respective communities. Robinson-Anagor notes that men are welcome at the conference too, as inclusion is important in the discussions she wants to have.

"We're trying to bring more people into the conversation," she says.

The inaugural FEMPower, held in Enterprise Square last March, offered a span of sessions on topics from self-defence to volunteering to yoga, as well as panel discussions that ranged from how women are portrayed in media to the importance of community engagement, and the challenges and successes professional women face in the workplace.

The session leaders were all diverse female professionals in the community, who ranged in age from 18 to 35, and in background from music to journalism to the Edmonton Police Service.

"It was mostly trying to prepare young women with tools to use in their own communities," Robinson-Anagor says. "To try and empower themselves, to try and make a change."

FEMPower, both last year and this year, received grants from Edmonton Community Foundation's (ECF) Young Edmonton Grants (YEG) program — \$2000 for its first incarnation, and the grant-maximum of \$3000 for the 2015 edition. That funding helps pay for the venue, catering and honorariums to some of the speakers, as well as to keep FEMPower free to attend, ensuring it remains accessible to the young people it's looking to empower.

To qualify for YEG funding, an applicant's idea must be partnered with a non-profit or registered charity; that said, the project must be driven by the applicant, rather than a pre-existing program, Cassandra Lundell, Community Grants Associate at ECF, explains.

Now, as Robinson-Anagor plans the 2015 conference with an added emphasis on gender equality, she's already seeing the effects of the first FEMPower. Many of last year's participants not only want to return, but also want to get involved in making the conference happen.

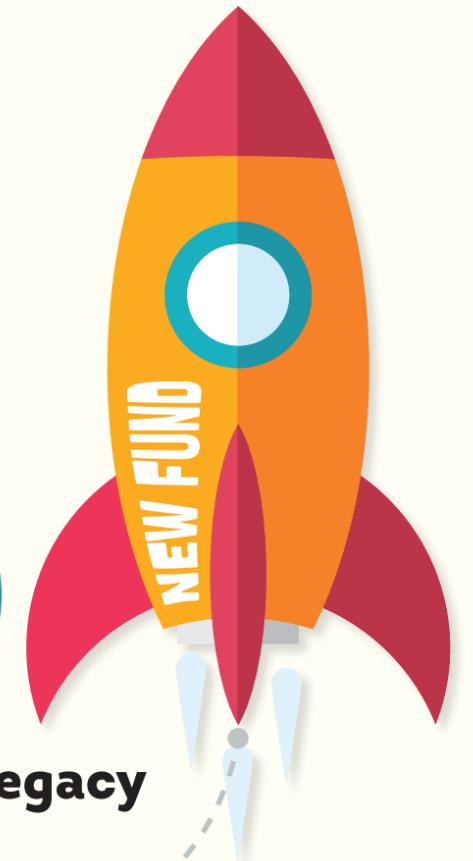
"I feel the specific impact FEMPower has been in allowing young women to picture themselves being able to succeed," she says.

And, that goes hand-in-hand with one of the primary purposes of ECF's YEG program — to foster youth leadership.

"I've never put on my own event before," she says. "That's helped me grow as a person. Even just reaching out to people, and realizing that there are people out there that are interested in the same things as you — you just need to be proactive, and get out there, and connect with people, and you will find them." ■

CREATE YOUR OWN FUND

Four easy steps to leave a lasting legacy



1 Define Your Objective

Even if you have only a vague idea of where you want your money to go, give ECF a call, says Kathy Hawkesworth, Director of Donor Services. The Foundation will help you articulate exactly how your fund might work, and help you define how you can make a difference by matching your support with organizations whose goals most closely mirror your own.

The Foundation's only criterion is that the money be granted to a registered Canadian charity — so you're not limited to local causes. "Whatever they want to accomplish in the world, we'll talk to them about," Hawkesworth says.

2 Make an Agreement

The Foundation will draft a formal agreement. This will explain, in writing, the goal of the fund and the extent of participation you want to have in allocating the money. Remember that this agreement dictates how your fund will operate; so make sure it says exactly what you want it to before signing.

3 Get Started

A fund can be started with just \$10,000, which can be donated all at once or be built up over a 10-year period. The money is not immediately allotted, it is invested and approximately four per cent is distributed annually. This means your fund will continue to support causes important to you.

4 Maintenance

Once the fund reaches \$10,000 and is ready to grant, your level of involvement is your choice. Donors can choose to add to their funds' values, stay active in the annual charity selection process or, if they've left things up to the discretion of ECF, simply sit back and watch the good work happen.

For more information visit ecfoundation.org or call our Donor Services Team at 780-426-0015

ECF granted \$3000 through its YEG program to support the Diverse Young Women's Empowerment Conference

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