



BUILDING STRONG GIRLS

GIRLS' FUND 2012-2016

EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS



ABOUT THE CANADIAN WOMEN'S FOUNDATION

The Canadian Women's Foundation is a national leader in the movement for gender equality in Canada. Through funding, research, advocacy, and knowledge sharing, the Foundation works to achieve systemic change that includes all women. By supporting community programs, the Foundation empowers women and girls to move themselves out of violence, out of poverty, and into confidence and leadership.

Launched in 1991 to address a critical need for philanthropy focused on women, the Canadian Women's Foundation is one of the largest women's foundations in the world. With the support of donors, the Foundation has raised more than \$90 million and funded over 1,900 programs across the country. These programs focus on addressing the root causes of the most critical issues, and helping women and girls who face the greatest barriers.

To learn more, visit canadianwomen.org.

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“I learned that it is OKAY
to be a girl and that girls
really CAN do anything
boys can do!”

“I used to feel like
an outsider and
I wanted to belong.
Now I do.”

“Now every time I look at
a magazine I see a different
perspective than what I
saw before. Now I question
everything I see.”



HISTORY OF THE GIRLS' FUND

DEVELOPMENT & RESEARCH (2005)

In 2005, the Canadian Women's Foundation conducted extensive research about girls in Canada. The research included a literature review and an environmental scan of girls' programming across the country. The resulting report, *Girls in Canada 2005*, identified best practices and highlighted the ages 9 to 13 as particularly important in the healthy development of girls.

THE GIRLS' FUND PHASE 1 (2006 – 2009)

The Girls' Fund was launched in 2006 as a three-year pilot project. Eight grants were funded (six program grants and two network grants). A range of programs were funded (i.e., science and technology, sports and physical activity, leadership and empowerment), but all were designed to build resilience in girls aged 9 to 13. A full evaluation of Phase 1 was conducted, which identified the need for a deeper examination of the relationships between best practices and outcomes, and more focus on the promotion of protective factors identified in the literature.

THE GIRLS' FUND PHASE 2 (2009 – 2012)

Based upon the positive results from the pilot phase, the Girls' Fund was expanded in Phase 2 to a total of 14 grants (12 program grants and two network grants). The expanded number of programs meant a wider variety of programs could be funded, such as those that focused on media literacy and those that incorporated teachings from Indigenous cultures.

THE GIRLS' FUND PHASE 3 (2012 – 2016)

This highlights report covers Phase 3 of the Girls' Fund, when 28 community organizations received funding to deliver programs in 56 locations across Canada. Eighteen of these organizations received additional funding to deliver group mentoring as an extension of their main program for girls. The evaluation of this phase includes an assessment of the new group mentoring component, as well as the long-term impact of girls' programming.

THE GIRLS' FUND PHASE 4 (2016 – 2020)

In Phase 4 of the Girls' Fund, 22 community organizations received funding to deliver programs in 44 communities across Canada. The Foundation continues to build on the learnings from previous funding phases, and contribute to the development of strong programs that take diverse approaches to empowering girls.

GIRLS' FUND SUPPORTERS 2012-2016

Founding donor of mentoring for girls

Nancy Baron of The W. Garfield Weston Foundation

Founding partners of the Girls' Fund

Ann Southam Empowerment Fund at the Canadian Women's Foundation
RBC Foundation
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Girls' Fund donors

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Lynda Hamilton
The Haynes-Connell Foundation at the Toronto Community Foundation
Andrea Miller
Rogers Media
TD Bank Group
and individual donors across the country

"I have learned so much in this program it would be hard to list. I find myself using skills I have learned in this program on a day-to-day basis."

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"She has started mentioning things about herself that she likes."—Parent

"She is learning more about who she is as a girl, how to choose better friends and relationships."—Parent

"She is thinking more critically or is able to articulate better."—Parent

INTRODUCTION

Ever played Chutes and Ladders? Then you know how it feels to be winning, only to land on a chute and slide right back to the beginning.

Similarly, for many of us, the path to confidence isn't linear—we have our ups and downs. But for girls growing up in Canada, it's a particularly tricky journey: the chutes are especially steep and there just aren't enough ladders.

Research shows that girls' confidence plummets between age 9 and 13—a crucial time in their lives when many challenges lie ahead. Girls grow up in a world where gender equality has not been achieved. They face hypersexualized imagery of women, negative media messaging, limiting stereotypes, discrimination, and a much higher risk of sexual harassment and assault than boys.

These gender-based barriers intersect with other social issues they may experience. Girls may be growing up in poverty, living in unstable family situations, or in homes where there is violence or substance abuse. They may face bullying or discrimination based on their race, culture, physical ability, or their gender identity. Girls in remote or rural communities face specific obstacles to accessing help or resources, either because of distance or lack of availability.

Navigating all of these “chutes” wears on girls' confidence, making them more vulnerable to depression and other mental health issues. Low self-esteem can influence girls' choices around their friendships, romantic relationships, school work, and career goals.

At the Canadian Women's Foundation, we want ALL girls in Canada to enjoy healthy relationships, dream big, and pursue their highest potential. That's why, with our donors' support, the Foundation funds programs across Canada that engage girls during this critical phase. These programs offer a supportive environment for girls, and those who identify as girls, to build the confidence, resilience, and critical thinking they need to face life's challenges.

This highlights report looks at how these programs put ladders in place to help girls navigate from adolescence into adulthood.

“... A main issue they're dealing with is poverty, but this year we've really found that food access is especially difficult for them so the girls are coming in starving and talking more about the fridge being empty.”

-Grantee organization

“A lot of these girls, even if they don't know they have been traumatized, they have seen violence in the home at a young age. They've seen their moms and what they have had to deal with.” -Grantee organization

“... a lot of them are coming from families where they would be the first generation to enter post-secondary or even completing secondary school.”

-Grantee organization

1 For sources and more information on the barriers girls face, go to www.canadianwomen.org/the-facts/barriers-for-girls/.

GIRLS' FUND BEST PRACTICES

The following Best Practices were established during the Development and Research phase (see *History of the Girls' Fund*, previous page).

In order to receive a grant from the Girls' Fund, a program must demonstrate these best practices:

1. Pay explicit attention to gender equity
2. Be asset-based, with a positive focus
3. Be girl-directed and/or girl involved
4. Be interactive and fun
5. Provide a safe, friendly space for girls
6. Be accessible and address any possible barriers to participation
7. Respect and celebrate the diversity of girls

ABOUT THIS EVALUATION

This evaluation was designed to:

- Determine the impact of both the girls' programs and mentoring grants on girls' resilience as they move from adolescence into adulthood
- Assess the extent to which the programs provided or improved girls confidence, connectedness, critical thinking, school engagement, and other protective factors.
- Gauge how well the programs were implemented and adhered to best practices
- Measure the long-term impact of girls' programming

The evaluation involved the girls who attended the programs, their parents, the volunteer mentors, and the staff who delivered the programs.

The evaluation tools included:

- Surveys of girls, parents, and program staff members
- Program site visits that included interviews, focus groups with parents, staff, mentors, and community elders
- Journals, scrapbooks, and letters
- Attendance data

The evaluation was designed to be flexible. While many of the questions were mandatory, in some cases the program staff could select the questions and tools that best suited their individual program.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE GIRLS*

AGE:

The average age of the girls was 11 to 12.

FAMILY COMPOSITION:

Around one-quarter of the girls lived in single-parent households.

PLACE OF BIRTH:

12-14% of the girls were born outside of Canada, and 25 to 33% of the parents were born outside of Canada.

CULTURAL IDENTITY:

20-30% of girls identified as Indigenous, 6-13% identified as French, and other common ethnicities identified were South Asian, Asian, African, and Caribbean.

LANGUAGE:

About a quarter of the girls said they spoke a language other than English or French, or spoke an Indigenous language at home.

RISK FACTORS:

While the populations of girls served by the programs varied widely, and limited demographic information was collected, some organizations were serving girls who faced more barriers than others. Staff indicated that more than 50% of the girls they served were more exposed to risky behaviours, that they lived in homes where domestic abuse has happened, or where drug or alcohol use is a problem. These organizations tended to be the ones that were in inner-city neighbourhoods, on reserves, or that served Indigenous girls.

*Demographic data is based on responses from the girls who completed surveys; the percentage of girls who participated in surveys over the 4-year cycle ranged from 42% to 67%.

PROGRAM TYPE AND ACTIVITIES

The Girls' Fund programs fell into 5 different categories:

1. Leadership and Empowerment
2. Indigenous Teachings and Culture
3. Physical Activity, Sports and Nutrition
4. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)
5. Media Literacy

HOW GIRLS' PROGRAMS MADE A DIFFERENCE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

PROTECTIVE FACTORS:

Who said girls' programs made a difference? The girls themselves!

As part of the evaluation, girls rated their levels of primary protective factors – including confidence, critical thinking, connectedness, and school engagement – before and after the programs. Then the four main protective factors were combined to create an overall resilience score.

HERE'S HOW THE PROGRAMS IMPACTED THE GIRLS' LIVES:

- 62% or more felt more confident
- 59% or more thought more critically
- 57% or more felt more connectedness
- 45% or more were more engaged at school
- **75% or more of the girls felt more resilient+**

This boost in resilience is significant, because the average ratings the girls gave themselves in each of these protective factors was quite high to begin with.

When evaluators looked only at the girls who gave themselves lower average ratings before the programs, an even higher proportion experienced positive outcomes:

- 81% or more felt more confident
- 74% or more thought more critically
- 77% or more felt more engaged at school
- **85% or more felt more resilient+**

The evaluation also demonstrated that girls' program alumnae continued to feel the positive effects of the programs years later. To read about long-term program impact, turn to page 10.

“I’ve learned how to make good choices and to not be ashamed of who I am.”

+Based on results from years 1,3 and 4. In year 2, a different methodology was used.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

ADDITIONAL SKILLS AND LEARNING

Aside from the primary protective factors, organizations could choose to evaluate other outcome areas relevant to their programs. Girls came out of these programs with stronger skills in many areas:

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Girls said that three skill areas where they felt the most improvement were:

- Communication
- Ability to deal with peer pressure
- Knowing where to seek help or advice

Girls also reported improvements in:

- Problem-solving
- Knowing how to deal with bullying
- Knowing when to seek help or advice

Impacts on Relationships and Social Support

- Girls said they came out of the programs better able to get along with their peers and make strong, supportive friendships.
- They also said they had caring adults to turn to, and felt closer to/more supported by family.

Impacts on Empowerment

- Girls reported feeling better about being a girl, and more able to focus on their strengths and skills.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC OUTCOMES

Depending on the category of the program, there were also specific outcomes, including:

Indigenous Teachings and Culture:

- Girls reported improved knowledge of culture and teachings, increased participation in Indigenous ceremonies and events, and in feeling “good being an Aboriginal girl.”

Media Literacy:

- Girls reported an increased ability to question representation of women in the media.

Physical Activity, Sports, and Nutrition:

- Girls reported an improved ability to make healthy food choices and find ways to be physically active.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM):

- Girls reported increased interest in STEM subjects, as well as pursuing STEM through activities such as camps, in post-secondary education, and in their careers.

Leadership and Empowerment:

- Girls reported improved awareness around safety issues and knowing how to protect themselves.
- Girls reported stronger leadership, decision-making, and coping skills.

“Before taking this program I did not have much interest in science, but now I do.”

“The program helps me to not be peer pressured and to say ‘no’.”

“Going to girls’ group makes me feel proud to be Native.”



SUCCESS FACTORS

The evaluation measured what elements made the programs successful.

BEST PRACTICES

These best practices had the strongest impact on outcomes:

- An emotionally safe environment where girls felt at ease talking, listening, sharing ideas, and felt a sense of trust.
- Positive environment: The group was a happy and positive space
- Good variety/holistic: A range of activities and topics
- Staff: Instructors who helped create a comfortable environment

The girls expressed how positive rapport with the program staff also influenced outcomes:

- “The instructors made me feel good about myself”
- “I learned from the instructors”
- “I looked up to the instructors”

THE IMPORTANCE OF GIRLS-ONLY PROGRAMMING

In addition to the factors above, girls, parents and staff said that a girls-only environment improved outcomes.

Parents: Some parents said this was one of the reasons they chose the program. Others observed that their daughters were more comfortable opening up in a girls-only environment, and that it gave them the opportunity to focus specifically on issues girls face. Parents also liked that having women and girls as program staff and mentors meant there were strong role models for their daughters.

Girls: Girls said a girls-only environment made it easier to talk openly, and find common ground. Many mentioned feeling shy in a mixed environment because boys might dominate conversations or laugh at them.

Staff: Staff noted the girl-directed nature of the programs played a key role in their success. Girls had a voice in deciding program activities and rules – meaning that the programs were truly girl-centered.

Subsidized nature of the programs:

More than 80% of parents said this was critical, and that their daughters otherwise wouldn't have been able to participate. They also pointed out that it made the programs accessible to a diverse group of girls.

Cultural elements:

In several of the Indigenous programs, staff said the cultural focus was a critical component in reinforcing the girls' sense of self.

“I have learned to make new friends and the program has helped me with being more open with people ... it's girl time only and it's fun to be all girls.”

“Joining the program helped me to step outside of my comfort zone. I was more outgoing and felt connected to a lot of the other girls there.”

“I liked using my voice. I was really quiet at the beginning of it, and then I got louder.”



PROGRAM DELIVERY AND SATISFACTION

How well were best practices implemented? Were girls and parents satisfied with the programs?

Girls: Girls reported that best practices were being implemented in their programs and more than 80% said they would recommend the programs to other girls. Girls' suggestions for improvement included that the programs be longer or accessible to more girls, and that the programs feature more community-based activities or field trips.

Parents: Although parents rated the programs positively, they shared that they would feel more connected to the programs if they had more detail about the girls' activities. Their recommendations included the addition of regular updates through program newsletters, emails, Facebook pages or program websites.

Staff also said best practices were implemented, but cited common challenges. In some cases, there were resource difficulties, such as access to suitable program space or school events precluding girls' attendance. Some staff members had difficulty creating a positive, trusting environment because of interpersonal issues between the girls. Others mentioned challenges around staying connected with parents and building their support. Staff members also reported that they explored various ways of addressing these challenges. Based on the girls' and parents' program feedback, it seems that staff delivered strong programs in spite of these challenges.

Over 80% of participants
said they would recommend the programs to other girls.

MENTORING

In the 2012-2016 phase of the Girls Fund, the Foundation added an enhanced mentoring component, through the Nancy Baron Mentorship for Girls Program.

The goal was to support girls' programs in developing effective and sustainable mentoring initiatives that would enhance program impact.

Mentoring activities became an extension of the girls' programs, with girls ideally meeting with mentors at least twice monthly for at least a year. By the end of the funding phase, 21 organizations were delivering enhanced mentoring programs.

The evaluation tools included:

- Group interviews/focus groups with mentors
- Interviews/focus groups with girls
- Online surveys with mentors and staff
- A "Letter to my Mentor" activity
- Surveys with more than 580 girls

OUTCOMES FOR MENTEES

The evaluation indicated that mentorship boosted the benefits of the girls' programs, improving outcomes for almost all of the protective factors (including confidence, connectedness, and critical thinking).

When girls in mentorship programs were compared with those in programs without mentoring, there was greater impact in terms of confidence, connectedness, school engagement, and resilience.

The girls also shared the positive impact of mentoring through the "Letter to my Mentor" activity (230 girls across 15 programs participated). The girls wrote about how they felt safe and comfortable in their groups, and often described their mentors and other group members as sisters or family. They described feeling loved, cared for, included, and welcomed.

Some common themes the girls wrote about included:

- How participation in the mentorship program increased their sense of belonging or connectedness
- How the mentoring relationship boosted their confidence.
- How their mentor or mentoring group helped them to find their voice, speak up, or communicate more openly.

"You make me feel like a person that can do anything."

"My mentors taught me that it is OK to be me. They also taught me to love myself."

"They made me feel important, like I was meant for something."

OUTCOMES FOR MENTORS

Mentoring programs also had major benefits for the mentors, who ranged from teenage girls to adult women.

- Teenage mentors said they learned new skills, and improved their sense of connectedness, confidence, pride, and feeling positive about the future.
- Adult mentors said they felt stronger for giving back, and for learning how to work with young girls.

The overall benefits for mentors included:

- Increased confidence
- Experience working with children/young girls
- Increased self-awareness
- Learned about issues women and girls face
- Increased sense of community
- Increased skills: leadership, communication, problem-solving, critical thinking
- Increased support
- Met new people
- Opportunity to give back to the community
- Felt valued and important
- Learned how to be a role model
- Broadened view on life
- Learned about diversity and acceptance
- Felt happy when volunteering

"Many teens (mentors) don't come into the program seeing themselves as a leader or positive role model, but over time they develop a sense of self that includes having something to give ... despite being a 'bad' student, or having a dysfunctional home life."
-Grantee organization

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION AND PROCESS

Mentor profile:

- 63% of programs had mentors age 18-25
- 58% of programs had mentors who were teens
- 42% of programs had mentors who were over 25
- 4% of programs had mentors based on a shared interest with participants (ex: athletes, cultural or community background)
- 3% had mentors who were Elders

Why did mentors choose to participate?

The top three reasons mentors participated were:

1. They felt it was important work
2. They enjoyed working with girls
3. They wanted to contribute to the community

Training, support and mentor satisfaction was important to overall program success.

- 97% - 100% of the mentors enjoyed their roles.
- 96% - 98% of the mentors would recommend becoming a mentor to others
- 87% - 94% were satisfied with their involvement as mentors
- 93% - 96% said they received the support they needed to be a good mentor

The mentors' satisfaction shows that the programs provided strong training and support, and this was echoed in mentors' feedback.

The mentoring component also extended an organization's reach, by providing a structured activity for teenage girls and young women who have aged out of girls' programming.

What kept mentors involved?

Mentors were motivated by their commitment to the girls, the positive outcomes they observed, and by their positive relationships with the mentees. They also appreciated the support and interactive training they received from the grantee organizations, although they did note that training could be improved by being more continuous.

Both mentors and mentees rated their relationships positively, commenting that they developed trust, could talk openly, found common ground and had fun together. They also often commented about feeling like sisters or close family members.

Mentors also noted that, given that they weren't program staff, they could develop closer relationships with the girls.

Best practices and critical program elements

The mentoring practices that had the most positive relationship with resilience were:

- Good variety of topics/activities
- Positive, happy environment
- Caring and supportive staff
- Physical safety

Other contributing factors:

- The girls mentioned the size of the group (smaller groups facilitated communication) and the mentor's ability to act as a role model.
- The mentors said the critical elements were comfortable, open relationships with the mentees, their ability to listen and support the girls, and their ability to act as role models that the girls could relate to.

Suggestions for improvement:

Though both mentees and mentors were happy with their experiences, suggestions for improving mentoring programs included: more consistency in attendance, more time to spend together, and a wider range of activities.

**96% - 98% of the mentors
would recommend becoming a mentor to others.**



“I have benefitted deeply as a mentor in the girls' program, as it was a chance to truly explore and expand on my abilities and knowledge, as well as networking with different people to strengthen my communications skills.”

“I see change in a lot of [the mentees]. Some of them talk more in general. When they first came they were really shy, but now they engage more. Every group, they always have an opinion on everything. I find it's really amazing, in such a short period of time, you can change so much.”

LONG-TERM IMPACT OF GIRLS' PROGRAMMING

While girls' fund evaluations have demonstrated overwhelming evidence that girls' programming works, the Foundation wanted to find out whether programming continued to affect girls several years after participation.

How data was collected:

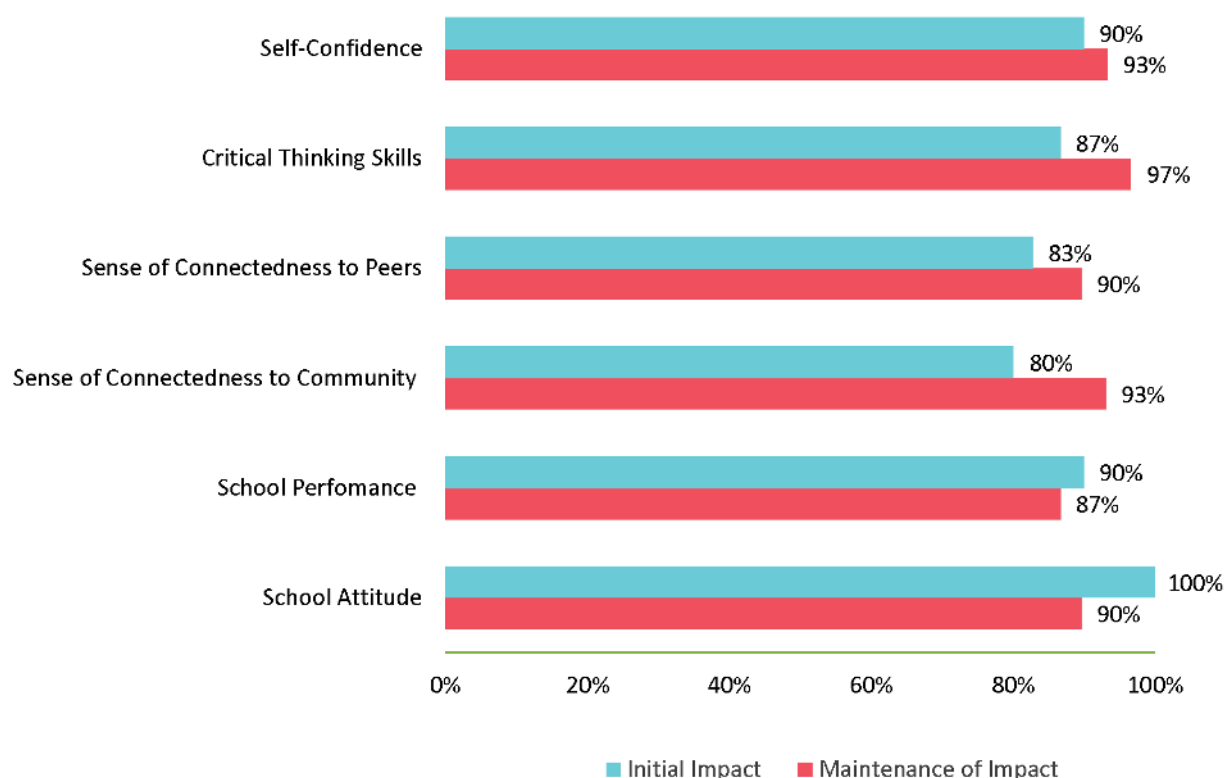
A group of seven organizations (which had received Foundation funding more than once) recruited alumnae who had participated in girls' programs between 2009 and 2012.

The alumnae, between ages 16 and 22, were asked to fill out an online survey. Though it was challenging to obtain responses, 30 alumnae from seven organizations completed surveys.

Outcomes:

When asked to reflect on how the main protective factors (confidence, critical thinking, connectedness, school performance and attitude) were impacted and maintained after, the alumnae reported strong and enduring impact. **80 to 100% of alumnae said they experienced a boost in the main protective factors, with 100% noting improvement in school attitude.** It's interesting that alumnae girls reported greater change in this area than the girls who participated in evaluations right at the end of the programs. It's possible that academic outcomes became more apparent to girls when they had more time to reflect.

Figure 35: Alumnae Ratings of Main Protective Factors



When asked whether the positive outcomes of the programs have stayed with them, the alumnae gave a resounding "Yes!". 88% to 96% of alumnae said the gains have been maintained or strengthened.

The alumnae also noted strong and enduring impact in other areas:

- 93% continued to feel empowered
- 90% continued to feel they knew when and where to get help
- 93% maintained positive relationships with peers
- 93% maintained problem-solving skills
- 97% maintained communication skills

Alumnae commented on other positive benefits, including:

- Stronger relationships with family
- Broadened perspectives
- Opportunities they wouldn't have otherwise had

While the alumnae survey results were based on a relatively small number of participants, they indicated that the benefits of the program are maintained even after it has ended – particularly a sense of empowerment. The results demonstrate that the programs can have a powerful impact on the direction of girls' lives, and provide more evidence for the importance of girls' only programming.

**93% of girls' program alumnae
continued to feel empowered in the years after participation.**

“I joined the program when I was new to Canada and it impacted my first few months, where I found there were people around me to guide me through and help get over me being a newcomer.”

“[I gained] a feeling of empowerment, particularly about being a girl, because the topics we touch on and workshops we have ... make me want to change the way girls are viewed in today's society. The staff here make it well known that us girls have the power to do anything and as a group we are strong enough to change the world.”

“This program helped me learn to love myself and had an extremely positive impact on my self-esteem and confidence. It also helped develop my leadership skills, which have gotten me many jobs and leadership positions that have become a huge part of my life.”

THE BIGGER PICTURE: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GIRLS' FUND

The impact of the Canadian Women's Foundation Girls' Fund goes beyond the girls themselves. The benefits of the programming extends to girls' families and communities, and the fund helps to strengthen grantee organizations.

WHAT PARENTS SAID:

The girls' parents spoke about various ways the program benefited their family. Some parents developed stronger relationships with their daughter (or noticed better sibling relationships) because she became more open and communicative as a result of the program. Family members also became more aware of the social and educational issues being discussed at the program, such as positive body image, or STEM education. For some parents, the program provided additional supports that they could not, perhaps due to poverty or other family responsibilities.

WHAT PROGRAM STAFF SAID:

Staff said that programs filled a gap in community services for young girls, particularly in lower-income communities. They also noticed positive changes in families related to the girls' increased knowledge around healthy relationships and communication, as well as community engagement. Staff have observed that some participants go on to become role models and leaders in their communities. In Indigenous regions, staff said the programs strengthened the connection between the girls and their nations. When it came to newcomer girls, staff said the programs helped link participants to their communities and reduce isolation due to language or cultural barriers.

IMPACT ON GRANTEE ORGANIZATIONS:

Given that the Girls' Fund provides 4-year funding, grantees spoke of how multi-year financial and program support provided by the Foundation goes beyond what funders typically provide. They also valued opportunities to share knowledge with other grantees, and became more connected to girls' programs across Canada. Grantees said that the funding helped their organizations grow in many ways, because they could focus more on program development than fundraising. Some also mentioned that the implementation of the girls' program increased interest in girls' programming in their organization, and provided a platform to speak to issues facing girls in the community. The evaluation process helped grantees to build changes into their programs, and created a positive feeling among the girls themselves. When staff explained that their girls' program was one of many across the country, girls began to see themselves as part of a larger community that could help to benefit women in Canada.

IMPACT ON GIRLS' FUTURES:

In the fourth year of the evaluation surveys, participants were asked about the programs' impact on their future. Fifty-five per cent of the girls said the program positively impacted their futures, by helping them feel more empowered, hopeful, and aware of their potential. Many parents echoed these sentiments, noticing that their daughters showed more confidence about their goals and their ability to achieve them.

CONCLUSION

When girls have access to the right supports at the right time, the impact can be life-changing.

Thanks to the Canadian Women's Foundation Girls' Fund 2012-2016 and the programs it supported, girls across Canada built more confidence, learned to think critically, developed stronger connections to other girls and their communities, and became more resilient overall.

Evaluation data collected over four years shows that the girls left the programs better equipped to navigate from chutes to ladders in the journey through their teens. The programs also motivated some of the girls to do better at school.

Not only did the evaluation reveal strong results in these key protective factors, but it also helped participants build communication skills, learn how to deal with peer pressure, and how to find resources for help. Depending on the program, the girls improved specific skills, including media literacy, cultural knowledge, STEM, and leadership.

The data collected on the group mentoring suggests that mentoring can strengthen girls' program benefits, and showed how mentoring can benefit the mentors themselves. The responses from girls who participated in the alumnae survey also indicated that the program benefits can continue to impact them years later.

Beyond the girls themselves, the programs play an important role in families and communities across Canada – particularly those where social services are few and far between. The Foundation's four-year funding cycle and capacity-building approach offers community organizations a rare opportunity to focus on strengthening their programs, and connect with other grantees who offer girls' programming.

The evaluation echoes previous reports that illustrate why girls' programming is both crucial and transformative. The Girls' Fund continues to support future generations of empowered girls who believe in themselves and know they matter. These girls will become role models to others, and help lead the way toward a more equal Canada.

“It made me understand more of my options and possibilities.”

“Before being in this program, I thought that only boys or special people could go to medical school or do those types of things. Being in the program has taught me that if I want to do something, I can do it.”

“Being in this program made me think I shouldn't give up on my dreams and should focus in school.”



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