Projects give voice to Aboriginal women

VICTORIA – Thirty-seven community-based organizations will share close to $350,000 in Giving Voice grants to fund programs aimed at stopping violence against Aboriginal women and girls, by changing behaviours and attitudes, and mobilizing communities.

The Giving Voice project is an initiative of the Minister’s Advisory Council for Aboriginal Women (MACAW) whose members are respected Aboriginal women from across British Columbia. The purpose of the Giving Voice Initiative is to provide Aboriginal women, men, youth, and Elders safe opportunities to give voice to issues of violence and abuse within their lives, families, and communities.

Grant funds will be distributed in two streams. Initiatives under the first stream must be completed by Nov. 30, 2015, and support activities that bring participants together in a safe, supportive and meaningful way – including employing traditional activities, guest speakers, and the use of social media. Initiatives under the second stream must be completed by Nov. 30, 2016, and support the mobilization, implementation, planning and action phase.

Twenty-five programs will receive funding of between $3,100 and $7,500 each under funding stream No. 1. Just over $170,000 will be distributed under the first stream. Twelve organizations will receive between $13,000 and $15,000 under funding stream No. 2. Just over $178,000 will be distributed under the second stream.

Quotes:

Paulette Flamond, MACAW member –

“Nothing changes when it is not talked about. Silence and lack of outrage enables violence and abuse against Aboriginal women and girls to continue as if it were normal. It is not normal. The Giving Voice Initiative breaks the silence by supporting innovative, culturally-based programs to allow those affected by violence to safely express what they’ve been through, gain knowledge, and begin healing themselves and their communities.”

John Rustad, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation –

“The Province is committed to a collaborative approach to address violence against Aboriginal women. By supporting projects designed and developed by and for Aboriginal women we are moving towards the overall goal of improving the quality of life for all Aboriginal people in B.C.”

Suzanne Anton, Attorney General and Minister of Justice –

“Aboriginal women and girls are at least three times more likely to be affected by violence and
abuse in their lives. The Violence Free BC strategy we’re working on will be our path to creating a province where everyone, including Aboriginal women, has the supports they need to prevent violence, escape from violent situations, and recover if they have been victims of crime.”

Brendan Moore, Aboriginal Father’s Engagement co-ordinator, Aboriginal CATCH –

“We are so delighted to receive this grant. While Aboriginal fathers have traditionally been family protectors and providers, research shows many are confused about their role today. We believe to end violence and become better fathers we need to reclaim our historic identity by focussing on traditional culture and parenting, and developing relationship skills.”

Molly Brewer, Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society, 2013-14 Giving Voice grant recipient –

“Our Giving Voice grant funded workshops and cultural activities to promote health, well-being and a violence-free way of life. Under the umbrella of ‘Stand Up, Our Women and Children’ we participated in talking circles, sweat lodges, medicine gathering trips, and a ‘Standing Up Against Violence’ information booth on Aboriginal Day. The program enabled 120 women and men, aged 26 to 65, to learn healthy lifestyle and decision-making skills, and positive impacts continue today.”

Quick Facts:

- The Province is providing $400,000 to the Giving Voice initiative with $50,000 being directed to hosting a forum planned for October 2015. This funding is in addition to $120,000 provided to the project in 2013-14.
- MACAW was created as a direct result of the B.C. governments’ co-host role at the Collaboration to End Violence: National Aboriginal Women’s Forum in June 2011. MACAW provides advice to government on how to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal women.
- In June 2014, the Government of British Columbia and First Nations Leaders signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) committing to work together to end violence against Aboriginal women and girls and improve quality of life. The MOU is a direct result of the joint work of the provincial government and MACAW.
- In February 2014, the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence released the Provincial Domestic Violence Plan. This three-year, $5.5-million plan includes $2 million to develop and deliver programs specifically for Aboriginal women, men and children affected by domestic violence.

Learn More:

Minister’s Advisory Council on Aboriginal Women: http://ow.ly/EugRP


Read about “Our Sacred Dress” project: www.bcbsides.ca/our-sacred-dress-giving-voice/

A backgrounder follows.
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Connect with the Province of B.C. at: www.gov.bc.ca/connect
BACKGROUNDER

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Giving Voice Initiative grant recipients

Funding Stream No. 1:

WISH Drop in Centre Society (Vancouver; Lower Mainland) $5,000
Project name: Aboriginal Health and Safety Project
Project details: Provide a continuum of culturally-safe services for marginalized Aboriginal women working in the sex trade to connect women to their culture and each other, and increase their capacity to resist violence and exploitation.

Prince Rupert Aboriginal Community Services Society (Prince Rupert – Skeena-Haida Gwaii) $7,500
Project name: Turning Points
Project details: Education based group facilitation sessions using a curriculum to help women understand and take concrete steps to end the violence in their lives – both as victim and perpetrator.

Boundary Métis Community Association (Grand Forks; Kootenay) $7,488
Project name: Hear Our Voices
Project details: Workshops offered will address stopping violence by bringing women together to learn about cultural teachings, as well as connecting with health service providers.

Squamish Nation Education Department (Squamish; Lower Mainland) $7,500
Project name: Bringing Back tradition (Lateral Violence)
Project details: Host four, 4-day workshops (Family Culture Camps) targeted to families with sharing circles, education on family violence and abuse, guest speaker, traditional wool shawl/tunic or cedar hat weaving, drumming and singing.

Skin Tyee Nation (Southbank; Bulkley-Nechako) $7,500
Project name: Giving Voice to Our Women
Project details: Provide tools/supports to prevent and escape violent situations; support recovery process through workshops with RCMP, safe houses, social media, events and gatherings. Twenty bi-weekly gatherings of women and girls with guest speakers, traditional activities, and an ‘invitation only’ support group on social media.

Kwakiutl Band (Port Hardy; Vancouver Island) $7,500
Project name: Kwakiutl Women Empowered Women
Project details: Weekly focus groups combined with traditional activities, culminating in a camp to be delivered by Elder women and ‘ninogad’ (wise ones), with support by band staff. Themes to include empowerment, traditional cleansing rituals, self-care, co-dependence, co-dependence no more, stress management and reaction vs. action.
Gitlaxt’aamiks (Gitlaxt’aamiks, Kitimat-Stikine) $7,500
Project name: Giving Voice Workshop
Project details: Three full-day workshops for women to help raise awareness educate and empower. Topics include risk factors and the arrangement of a local support group within the community.

Kwadacha Nation (Prince George; Fraser-Fort George) $7,500
Project name: Kwadacha Healthy Families Project
Project details: Workshops for existing men’s, women’s, Elders’ and youth groups on ending violence and teaching communication skills and problem solving techniques in relationships. Also includes a focus on restorative justice and healing camps.

Pauquachin Nation (Victoria; Vancouver Island) $7,300
Project name: Opening the Door “Thu she’l’ yu’h’wet a’l’et thu s’l’en sleni”
Project details: Sixteen-Week Program of integrated, women-centred support circles for up to 15 women. Themes include building a Foundation for Understanding Women’s Experiences of Abuse, Supporting Women to Understand their Partner’s Responsibility for Abuse, and Rebuilding and Finding Hope. It will include Elder involvement.

Dease River First Nation (Good Hope Lake; Stikine) $7,500
Project name: Giving Voice Project
Project details: Gathering of women in a safe environment to sew a traditional “Healing Blanket” while listening to violence against women and youth workshops and participating on a need-to basis. The blanket will be displayed in the community band office as a reminder of healing.

Nee Tahi Buhn Indian Band (Burns Lake; Bulkley-Nechako) $7,500
Project name: Giving Voice
Project details: Holistic workshops/gatherings open to all on/off reserve community members. Guest speakers (RCMP, Victim Services, Elders, and Traditional Healers) to address violence, safety plans, spiritual healing, personal well-being and self-care.

Cariboo Chilcotin Métis Association (Williams Lake; Interior Cariboo) $3,960
Project name: Make Your Voice Heard for Women
Project details: Workshops for 10-12 women/youth with guest speakers to learn about violence and abuse issues in their community, families/personal relationships, violence prevention, signs of abuse, gender roles in society, culture, sexual harassment, getting out of abusive relationships, and learning safer and healthier sexual interaction.

Laichwiltach Family Life Society (Campbell River; Vancouver Island) $7,500
Project name: Rekindle the Spirit of Our Women and Girls
Project details: Weekly group for women and children to share and learn traditional and cultural activities and new skills for dealing with family violence and create a safety plan for them and their children. Weekly group for girls to share and learn traditional crafts and cultural teachings about family and dating violence.

Aboriginal CATCH – Community Action Towards Children’s Health (Kelowna; Interior Okanagan) $7,500
Project name: Aboriginal Fathers Engagement Program – Giving Voice to End Violence Against Women and Girls
Project Details: Talking Circles open to participants in the Aboriginal Fathers Engagement Program (support for Aboriginal fathers, father figures, uncles and grandfathers) to learn traditional parenting skills, more respectful relationships, meaningful interaction with children, and a stronger cultural identity.

Mount Currie Band (Lil’wat Nation) (Mt. Currie; Lower Mainland) $7,500
Project name: Safer Families, Safer Children
Project details: The community will retain trained facilitators to develop a program that includes introduction to family violence and antecedents and patterns in First Nations communities; violence in society (focused on history of First Nations); counselling interventions; inter-disciplinary responses/obligations; family/criminal legal system; and safety planning.

Nawican Friendship Centre (Dawson Creek; Peace River) $5,445
Project name: Giving Voice: Speaking Out Against Violence Towards Aboriginal Women and Girls
Project details: Women of the community to come together to break the silence on violence against women and achieve community awareness, action, and inspiration. To include lunch, short presentations, guest speakers, and discussion on how this is also a community/cultural issue, ways men can take a stand, available support services, debriefing with a counsellor, and screening of “Finding Dawn.”

Nusdeh Yoh Aboriginal Choice School (Prince George; Fraser-Fort George) $3,100
Project name: Sharing Our Voice, Stopping Violence
Project Details: In partnership with Prince George Secondary School, conduct two, six-week, 1.5 hour per session art-focused sharing circles in a safe and culturally sensitive environment for a group of girls, youth and women, focused on building awareness of the effects of violence. At the end, both groups will hold an art show to build community awareness of how violence affects Aboriginal girls and youth.

Penticton Indian Band Health (Penticton; Okanagan) $7,500
Project name: Giving Voice so that People Hear Me
Project details: Provide a safe forum for Aboriginal women and girls to share their stories in 16 weekly closed-group sessions beginning in June when the birch and cedar roots are ready to make birch bark baskets from start to finish. Participants will invite Chief/Council, Elders and men of the community for a traditional feast and communicate what women in the community expect from men (e.g. protection, respect, and sacrifice) in the interest of creating a safe and healthy community.

Warriors Against Violence (Vancouver; Lower Mainland) $7,500
Project name: Listen to our Heartbeat
Project details: Produce and distribute an electronic CD by various Aboriginal artists to raise awareness of stopping violence against Aboriginal women, including a CD launch party to coincide close to National Aboriginal Day.

Tl'esqox (Toosey) Band – Health Department (Riske Lake, Cariboo) $3,319.60
Project name: Giving Voice Conference
Project details: Conference for Elders, women, men and non-school aged children beginning with a half-day event at Tsilhgot’inn heritage site “Woman Who Turned to Stone”. Elders will
share the significance of the site and the teachings inherent in the legend which includes a deep respect for young women, the roles of young women/men, and girls coming of age. The second day will focus on Family Violence, Young Moms, and Healing from Violence.

Lalum’utul’ Smun’eem Child & Family Services (Duncan, Vancouver Island) $7,500
Project name: Si’a’lum’ stuhw thu shunlheni’ tst (Giving Strength to our Ladies)
Project details: Program for women and young girls to address intimate partner violence/other forms of violence. Based on three topics – education, prioritizing safety, and social/emotional spiritual supports – the program will be offered as a series once per week for 24 weeks with a maximum of 12 participants. Cowichan Elders will provide cultural support and guidance throughout the series.

Lake Babine Nation (Burns Lake; Bulkley-Nechako) $7,500
Project name: Girl Power Hour
Project Details: Weekly Monday gatherings open to all Lake Babine Nation women/children to engage in various crafts, storytelling and healing circles. It will include information sessions on the history/impacts of colonization, trauma on self/family/nation, community willingness to end silence, shame and guilt, breaking the silence, types of violence, right to be safe, and protecting children. It will kick-off and conclude with an interactive ladies luncheon.

Yekooche First Nation (Prince George; Fraser-Fort George) $7,500
Project name: Yekooche Women’s Group
Project details: Existing Yekooche Women’s Group of 25 women will hold 25 bi-monthly meetings to raise awareness/empower each other and the community to address violence and bullying. It includes craft-making, International Women’s Day event March 6th, dinner and slide show at school gymnasium, and program graduation Nov. 30, 2015.

Butterflies in Spirit Society (Vancouver; Lower Mainland) $7,500
Project name: Butterflies in Spirit
Project details: To create two new dance performances to commemorate and raise awareness about the female victims of violence in Vancouver and across Canada that will be showcased at the National Day of Action of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women on Oct. 4, 2015.

Snuneymuxw First Nation (Nanaimo; Vancouver Island) $7,500
Project name: Wise Women
Project details: The proposal was constructed by a focus group of 24 Snuneymuxw women, including five Elders. It involves women telling stories of resilience and strength in overcoming violence. These stories will be recorded during a three-day weekend retreat. Participants will decide how to give creative and meaningful voice to their findings through stories (e.g. music, dialogue, dance, art). A public event will be held to share information on Giving Voice to strength and resiliency, including a cultural longhouse ceremony honouring young women (a cultural practice that has all but disappeared since European contact) to bring back respect for women and their unique role of creator.

Funding Stream No. 2:

Storytellers’ Foundation (Hazelton; Kitimat-Stikine) $15,000
Project name: K’yuuuskxw: Waking Up to Change
Project details: Delivery of five activities: (1) Monthly inter-agency meetings/events. (2) Design/deliver three cultural competency trainings to front-line providers. (3) Support a man’s
campaign to end violence. (4) Advise a holistic program that supports youth and their families recovering from violence and trauma. (5) Implement an Intra-Agency Case Assessment Team process to facilitate sharing of information and strategizing regarding individuals/families.

**Musqueam Indian Band (Vancouver; Lower Mainland) $15,000**

**Project name: Mobilizing a Musqueam Critical Incident Response Team**

Project details: Tackles the first stage to address violence – crisis response (the other two stages are aftercare and prevention) through community-based mobilization of a Critical Incident Response (CIR) Team. It will support parents/extended families in dealing with issues of violence; enhance confidence/trust in response teams; and build capacity of community-based staff/social support workers.

**Kamloops Sexual Assault Counselling Centre (Kamloops, Thompson-Nicola) $15,000**

**Project name: Indigenous Communities Safety Project**

Project details: Working with community partners, this project will include a three-day intensive training opportunity for Aboriginal service providers to mobilize and implement a safety plan for their communities.

**Carrier Sekani Family Services (Prince George; Fraser-Fort George) $15,000**

**Project name: CSFS Youth Leadership Camp**

Project details: Will utilize the concept of sharing knowledge and wisdom while engaging in traditional cultural activities to mobilize youth and Elders in developing their nation specific Youth Wellness Strategy.

**Takla Lake First Nation (Takla Landing; Bulkley-Nechako) $15,000**

**Project name: Takla Lake Women’s Group**

Project details: Hold workshops (crafts/traditional teachings) about matrilineal role in Takla society, mentored by elderly women, as well as community sessions. Various presentations in the community will be held. The Women’s Group will also participate with Takla Men’s Group to develop a video presentation for the end of the school year.

**Saik’uz First Nation (Vanderhoof; Fraser-Fort George) $15,000**

**Project name: Saik’uz Men’s Wellness Project and Women’s Theatre Project**

Project details: This two-part project will both create a theatre group for Aboriginal women and girls that will result in four public performances, as well as create a mentorship program connecting Elders with men of all ages to create a space in which men feel safe to confront some of the key issues of disempowerment that might fuel abusive behaviour.

**Doig River First Nation (Rose Prairie; Peace River) $13,140**

**Project name: Doig River Women’s Circle**

Project details: Establish a safe place for approximately 40 women/girls one evening per month for 9-10 months for a total of 18 events over two years. This will include shared meals, fun activities, healthy lifestyles/self-care, cultural skills, traditional story-telling, inter-generational transfer of cultural values and local and inter-agency guest speakers, culminating in the development of a community anti-violence action plan with the assistance of regional agencies.

**Gitxaala Health Centre (Kitkatla; Skeena-Haida Gwaii) $15,000**

**Project name: Naga Amhaw Hana’nan Gitxaata**

Project details: Following a community forum to identify local priorities, a trained team of volunteers will build relationships with Gitxaala women/families through
workshops/celebrations; invite, teach and support families to become part of the response/prevention team; track number and severity of incidents; and identify future projects such as a local safe house. Gitxaala-designed multi-media workshops to be developed for members/other visiting professionals/communities by the project’s conclusion.

**Heiltsuk Tribal Council (Bella Bella, North Central Coast) $15,000**

**Project name: Heiltsuk Giving Voice Project**

Project details: Community members/partners/professionals to create a Heiltsuk Nation Declaration on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls and, subsequently, community policy and protocols; other supporting components include a social media awareness campaign; ‘Lunch’n’ learn’ programs, community brochures/signage/logo contest and marches. A community-wide feast to honour young women and unveil the new Declaration and Protocols will also be held.

**Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council (Port Alberni; Vancouver Island) $15,000**

**Project name: Creating Healthy Relationships**

Project details: Will hold family violence workshops (girls/youth discussions; parenting; anger management); community input focus group sessions leading to final forum bringing 14 communities together for workshops/guest presenters/panel discussions based on needs identified in focus groups. Final phase will identify available services/build support systems to address needs identified in focus groups/forum.

**Scia’new (Beecher Bay) First Nation (Sooke, Vancouver Island) $15,000**

**Project name: Canoe Journey – Life Journey**

Project details: Youth, Elders, community members, staff and external agencies will identify what it means to ‘show and receive respect’ and establish the norm of ‘deserving to be in a healthy relationship’. A series of bi-monthly activities will challenge men to find their ‘sense of place’ in the world, culminating in an “Oath of Healthy Relationships.” An event will be held to recognize February 2016 as the first “Relationship Awareness month”.

**Tahltan Health and Social Services Authority (Telegraph Creek, Kitimat-Stikine) $15,000**

**Project name: Tahltan Youth Gathering**

Project details: Gathering for Tahltan youth and men ages 11-30 offering workshops on healthy relationships, puberty rites and teachings, martial arts and self-defence, safe partying, sex education, suicide prevention, grief and loss, and language and cultural teachings. RCMP will present on domestic violence. Outcomes will also include developing a Nation Plan and curriculum for a resource booklet.

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