



GIRLS ACTION
FOUNDATION

WE BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF GIRLS*

25th Anniversary
Impact Report

1995-2020

When girls receive the support they need, a dramatic ripple effect can be created. Girls* and young womxn have the potential to be leaders and change-makers. They are resilient and innovative; they can grow up to improve their own socio-economic situation and that of their communities. They can help build a stronger economy, environment and society.*

— Girls Action Foundation

Girls Action Foundation Impact Report

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25 YEARS OF BUILDING THE SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE OF GIRLS FROM COAST TO COAST

Our Vision

A national movement of empowered girls* and young womxn taking action to lead social change in their communities. To create a world where girls* are strong, confident, and engaged leaders.

Our Mission

Girls Action Foundation inspires and supports the empowerment, leadership and healthy development of girls* and young womxn by increasing their access to resources and opportunities.

Our Work

We reach over 60,000 Canadian girls* and young womxn annually, particularly in under-represented communities including Northern, racialised, low-income, indigenous and immigrant communities.

For girls* and young womxn

We provide spaces for girls* to speak out, build skills, and create action on issues that are important and real to them. Our local girls* programs address violence prevention, health promotion, media literacy, and leadership. Our national leadership program offers long-term investment and support to young womxn who are change-makers in their communities.

Through the national network

We provide our National Network Members with publications, resources, and practical support. Our programs include coaching, training, and networking opportunities that help develop community initiatives and girls' programs. Our National Network fosters learning, connections, and collaborations that inform and direct our work.

“
Girls have an innate ability to be change-makers. They just need a strong support system, willing and respectful adults to work with, and the freedom to take space to be seen and heard.
”

— Andrea Canales-Figueroa, Vancouver BC

Language Guide

Girls*

When written as girls*, this term in the Girls Action context is taken to mean any person from 10 to 18 years that is a cis-gendered girl or identifies as non-binary, transgendered, femme, masculine, or anywhere under the LGBTQI2SA+ umbrella.

Womxn*

The alteration of the word woman to womxn is utilized as a more inclusive term including trans, non-binary, and LGBTQI2SA+ womxn that may not identify with the traditional binary and cis-gendered definition of a “woman”.

Message from the Board Chair

As the Chair of the Board, it brings such joy to be able to celebrate 25 years of Girls Action Foundation (GAF) with all of you collectively; the staff who give tirelessly of themselves, our volunteer board who supports the principles and GAF, our network members who challenge us to be innovative and make us the force we are, our funders/donors who support a grass-roots national vision, and to all the young girls and womxn who realize GAF's vision and mission and are changing the world one community at a time. We thank each of you for the important roles you play.

We have gone through challenging times but with the commitment and leadership that our team has shown, our collective resilience helped us to the other side. Girls Action Foundation is stronger, more focused, and developing more innovative programming and projects that continue to support our

networks. Collectively we are rising to the challenge of providing opportunities and supporting young girls and womxn to; realize, achieve and share their full potential across Canada.

We look to the future with excitement. We believe that GAF has never been more needed and more relevant in our communities. We believe that leaders will be needed at all levels of society to revitalize our communities. Most of all, we believe that with you, we will continue to be a foundational resource for the lives of young girls and womxn across Canada.

On behalf of the board and myself, thank you for the last 25 years!

We couldn't have done it without you, and we know the next 25 years will be equally as significant.

With deep gratitude,

Ericka Navarro Ho-Sang

Message from the Operations Manager

Twenty-five years ago, three young women decided to start a summer camp for girls* as a part of a class project. That summer camp turned into Girls Action Foundation.

To this day, the sense of initiative and leadership they demonstrated has continued to be the basis for Girls Action's programming. Following the example of our founders, our mission has always been to inspire and support the power of girls* and young womxn to act as agents of change in their communities. Over the years, we have provided countless girls* and young womxn with resources and opportunities to build their confidence, develop their skills and connect with inspiring peers and mentors; all with the aim of seeing them flourish, grow and achieve their full potential.

While the path has not always been clear or easy, we can look back with pride on all that we have accomplished over the last 25 years. From hosting gatherings and retreats, to developing resources and trainings, and creating spaces where girls* and young womxn could express themselves and lead actions on issues that concern them, we have always strived to be leaders and advocates for the healthy development and empowerment of girls* and young womxn. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the incredible contributions of our network members,

community supporters, girls programmers, expert facilitators, research partners, volunteers, and, of course, the girls* and young womxn themselves.

As we look forward to the next 25 years, we are committed to continued support of organizations and individuals at the grassroots level, in recognition of our own "from the ground up" beginnings. In particular, we committed to centering diverse voices of girls* and young womxn through increasing opportunities for their engagement in our programming and activities in our most recent strategic plan. After spending the last year grappling with questions about who we are as an organization at our core and where we want to be, this renewed commitment to designing programs that are "by and for girls*" stems from a desire for greater cohesion and alignment with our mission and values as a feminist organization. By getting back to our "soul song" - our reason for being - we hope to see our network grow and ignite into a vibrant movement of active and engaged organizations and individuals working towards a brighter future and more just society for all.

We look forward to the next 25 years and we hope that you will join us and continue to support us on this journey.

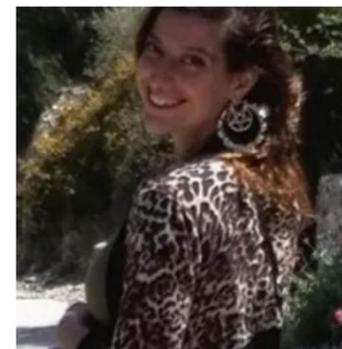
Natasha Harvey

Our Team



Natasha Harvey
Operations Manager

Passionate about both feminist issues and the outdoors, Natasha is constantly searching for ways to connect and ground her work as a feminist in nature and the world around her.



Naoual Laaroussi
Communications and Administrative Coordinator

Naoual strives to make a difference through her work at Girls Action Foundation, contributing to equality and social justice.



Jenn Addison
Network Coordinator

Jenn is an intersectional feminist who's career is driven by a desire to create a more inclusive, equitable, and socially just world by working with organizations that center social justice and social change, like the Girls Action Foundation.



Brittany Williams
Programs and Strategy Manager

Brittany has always been passionate about youth work and youth empowerment. The necessity for education, support and programming geared to girls and young non-binary people is an integral part of Brittany's desire to work with the Girls Action Foundation.

Board of Directors



**Ericka Navarro
Ho-Sang**

Chair
*Consultant, Perfect
Balance Canada,
Toronto, ON*

Lambrini Soulos

Vice-Chair
*Executive Director, Leave
Out Violence (LOVE)
Society BC,
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Christine Caines

Director
*Clinical Counsellor,
Vancouver, BC*

Gilda Boffa

Director
*Translator, Interpreter,
Belly Dance Instructor,
Montreal, QC*

Why Girls*?



Girls Action Foundation was born out of the clear gap in access to resources and support to address specific realities in girls and young women's lives. Stephanie, Willow and I met in a gender studies program, what we were learning had a huge impact on our understanding of the world, it reframed issues like violence, racism and poverty from individual problems and failures to a socio-political lens and systemic frame. In this way - we discovered our agency and awareness that we could act to change these harmful and outdated systems and cultures. We asked ourselves,

why didn't all girls have access to this? We believed in a world where all girls and young women grow up with support, resources and love to bring their gifts to the world.

The journey from a small grassroots initiative to scaling through a network model across the country was an incredible learning and joy. We set out to do things differently, to create shared learning about how to work together across our many diverse cultural, geographic locations and identities. All our members were rooted in their communities as leaders, innovators, and advocates with girls. The community we created together was connected by love, and a deep belief that girls and young women had a lot of power to create the world.

I am still inspired by the many incredible humans connected together through this work over the years, for their leadership, for their fierce commitment to justice and our shared visions for the world. I know many are still walking a path with these visions and I can't wait to watch the continued journey as it all unfolds.

— **Tatiana Fraser, Co-founder of Girls Action Foundation**

Timeline

1995

Power Camp National was founded as a startup in 1995 by three young womxn fresh out of school with an entrepreneurial spirit. They had no funding and no limitations.

1998

Power Camp becomes Power Camp National in response to communities from across Canada asking to have support to start their own girl spaces.*

2001

The first meeting was held to bring together community organizations engaged in initiatives for girls.*

2003

National network had 40 member organizations.

2004

Girls' Club was launched in inner-city Montreal, extracurricular programs for girls between 10 and 17 years old. Girls* are encouraged to think critically, develop their self-esteem, accept differences and develop healthy relationships. The first National Network Retreat takes place.*



2005

First National Day of Action, an annual event that encourages girls and young womxn to take action to reduce racism, violence and poverty.*

2006

kickaction.ca, a website for girls making a difference, is launched. The first Make Some Noise training workshop takes place. Girls Action partnered with network members to bring indigenous and racialized young womxn voices to the World Urban Forum in Vancouver.*

2007

Launch of Amplify, a 4-day annual training program that focuses on designing and leading girls' programs with 32 participants from across Canada. Zoom sur les filles, a networking and training event for organizations working with francophone girls, is started.*



2008

Power Camp National becomes Girls Action Foundation. Seventy girls and young womxn from northern Canada gather to build leadership skills and a northern network for girls' empowerment at the Northern Light event. Project "L", an innovative mentorship and leadership program for girls* and young womxn aged 16 to 24, is launched.*

2009

National network has 150 member organizations. A compilation of research on Northern, rural and indigenous girls and young womxn's issues, including information that can reinforce funding proposals, program development and communication materials. Career Day in Montreal is launched.*

2010

Launch of Why Girls? resources on violence prevention, sexual health, media and pop culture, and leadership - tools designed to support educators, parents, girls* programmers and the media.*

2011

National network has over 300 member organizations. Launch of the Light a Spark Campaign was launched to encourage accomplished women to motivate and inspire the next generation. More than 64 Canadian women took part in the initiative as mentors, spokeswomen or fundraisers, including musicians Melissa Auf der Maur and Jenny Salgado, environmentalist Severn Cullis-Suzuki, triathlete Tereza Macel, social justice activist Judy Rebick, writers Lillian Allen and Kim Thúy Ly, and journalist Isabelle Racicot.



2012

Girls Action was asked to be a witness for the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women on the economic prosperity of girls in Canada.*

2015

Launch of the first ever online evaluation platform for girls programmers.*

2016

Reclaim was published, a compilation of violence prevention best practices for programmers working with girls from immigrant communities.*

2018

Published Take Care, a curriculum/activity guide on girls' healthy living (physical activity, nutrition and substance use) funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.*

2019

Young womxn led social change projects in their communities through the leadership training project Women, let's take our place! Funded by Heritage Canada (Commemorate program) in honor of the centennial anniversary of Canadian women obtaining the right to vote.

2020

Continuing this work to inspire and support the empowerment, leadership and healthy development of girls and young womxn.*



Impact Stories

“

Girls Action Foundation (GAF) had a profound impact on my life as a 12 year old young woman and founder of a young women's leadership organization in my hometown of Sherwood Park, Alberta. When I attended my first retreat in 2004, I was amazed by how diverse, inclusive and supportive the GAF network was and how deeply connected I felt to the other participants. GAF's programming helped me understand and contextualize my own privilege as a white cisgender young woman and learn how to effectively facilitate conversations about intersectionality, oppression and privilege with the young women I worked with. Now in my late twenties, the passion I developed for social justice and feminist activism through GAF has led me to undergraduate studies in women and gender studies and a career in public policy and law. I am deeply grateful for the vibrant community of feminist activists that GAF has nurtured over the years, and look forward to supporting the organization for years to come.

”

— Joanne Cave, past retreat participant and founder of Ophelia's Voice

“

Girls Action has been an integral part in shaping my career. I continue to work with many of the people I met through Girls Action regularly and am in contact with many many more. Network members have been my mentors, references for new job opportunities, sat on committees I've formed, participated in projects I've managed, and consulted on my career direction, work direction, and life direction. We grew up together through the network and I'm forever grateful for the opportunity to befriend and collaborate with the amazing people who do gender-specific programming throughout this country. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of spaces like those that Girls Action creates for young women's leadership. It has been a privilege and an honour to participate in these spaces as a young woman, and to support other youth in their journeys.

”

— Keetha Mercer, past Network Coordinator, Girls Action Foundation

“

L'environnement, c'est intersectionnel, (The Environment is Intersectional) is an educational platform which was launched in April 2019 thanks to the support of Girls Action Foundation. GAF called out to leaders across Canada to participate in the Women Let's Take our Place! program. I was fortunate enough to be one of the 16 people selected to carry out a personal project. My idea was to ask visual artists to gather garbage and, from what they had salvaged, to create a work of art. The project ended with an exhibit at Librairie Racines, where activists were invited to talk about intersectionality in the environment. But that was only the beginning! Since then, the platform has gained visibility and its vision continues to reach a growing number of people. I've also had the pleasure of continued collaboration with GAF, having been invited as a panelist at their 2019 edition of National Career Day where the theme was Gender and the Environment. This is just one example among many of how important GAF's support to young leaders is. GAF certainly helped me fill my leadership toolbox!

”

— Lourdenie Jean, participant of Women Let's Take our Place!



“*Girls' Club is a safe place for them to go, relax, breathe easy and share what they have to share about all the daily stresses [going to high school; changes during puberty]. It's a place to ask questions - maybe at home they can't get all the answers. Girls' Club is good for their self-esteem. They feel more confident about themselves.*”

—High school guidance counselor

“*Girls' Club is a safe space for me. Cause when someone wants to fight with me and I don't want to fight them, I feel safe going into Girls' Club. I won't get in trouble or fight with anybody. After a while [the fight] goes away. People may say something like 'oh, you didn't fight' but I don't care cause I didn't get in trouble. Everyday at Girls' Club I have something to do, that's why I joined, this way I know I wouldn't get into fights.*”

—Girls' Club participant

Thank you!

A huge thanks to our partners, supporters, volunteers and funders. The following funders and donors have made our work possible through financial and in-kind contributions:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
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National Crime Prevention Centre - Community Mobilization program

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The Ontario Trillium Foundation

Timeraiser/WestJet

University of Western Ontario (research partnership)

Vancouver Foundation

Women's Executive Network Foundation

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