

Cheryl's Story

Building Self-Sufficiency Through Self-Employment

For 27 years, Cheryl McCallum has made her home near Fort Frances, a small town in Ontario. She loves the area, but her life there hasn't been easy. She struggles to earn enough money to maintain her home and property while helping her hearing-impaired mother who lives nearby.



Over the years, Cheryl has worked hard to keep money coming in. But she found mostly dead-end jobs that offered her no economic security. Cheryl even worked the night shift for 12 years straight. She found herself isolated because of the schedule, and she wanted a better way to earn a living.

An organization named Envision North helped Cheryl update her computer skills so that she could launch a bookkeeping and secretarial service called Cheryl's Office on Wheels.

"I knew it wouldn't be easy to get a business going, but I didn't know how difficult it would be. I didn't realize I would never get a day off. And that I would need time to look after my aging mother and older pets," says Cheryl.

Although launching her business has been tough, Cheryl found a much-needed source of inspiration and moral sup-

port at PARO's Accelerator program in Thunder Bay. The program, funded through a Canadian Women's Foundation grant, offers a mixture of one-to-one support, networking opportunities, and seminars on finance, marketing and other important aspects of running your own business.

"The information is helpful. It makes you think and look for solutions, which is better than having it handed to you. But it's the encouragement that's most important," explains Cheryl. "They're only seconds away when I need advice or reassurance that things will get better."

And things are getting better. Cheryl's confidence has grown. She has the courage to talk to people about her business, or to take on new kinds of work. She is even running a second business. Cheryl bought a local newspaper and expanded the readership and distribution area. She writes and produces the entire paper herself and she's currently developing creative advertising opportunities to help local businesses.

Money is still tight, but now Cheryl is hopeful. And she knows her friends at PARO will help her through the toughest times.

"Before the program, I felt scared and trapped because I had no one to talk to. But they gave me the encouragement to keep going," says Cheryl. "If I hadn't gotten involved with PARO I would never have made it this far," she concludes.

From Coast to Coast to Coast

Funding Violence Prevention Programs Across The Country

This spring, thanks to generous supporters like you, Canadian Women's Foundation was able to award over half a million dollars in violence prevention grants to more than 40 women's organizations across the country. These grants will support a wide variety of programs in cities and rural areas throughout Canada. Some will help abused women and children rebuild their lives. Others will educate young people to break the cycle and stop violence from happening in the first place.

For example, the **BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses** will educate young art students about the issue and engage them in developing a poster for Prevention of Violence against Women Week. The group will also sell student art to raise money for an emergency loan fund that helps abused women.

The Yukon Women's Transition House and Society in Whitehorse will adapt a manual for helping children who have witnessed abuse. The manual will reflect the values of the many First Nations families who live in the area.

The Women's Centre of Calgary will empower girls aged 9 to 16 through a series of fun and educational Girl Power Camps that raise consciousness around gender, sexism, and violence. In Red Deer, **Shining Mountains Living Community Services** will offer Aboriginal women tools, based on the symbolic use of the traditional medicine wheel, to reclaim their lives from the effects of abuse.

The Afghan Women's Counselling and Integration Community Support Organization in Toronto will help Afghan women in Canada who experience abuse. The proj-