



ENDING I KNOW A PLACE VIOLENCE

National Emergency Survivor Support Fund
2023 Impact Report
Slaight Family Foundation



What We Know

Women and gender diverse people often cannot escape intimate partner violence because they do not have the financial means to live on their own – a fact exacerbated by the housing crisis facing all of Canada.

This means survivors of gender-based violence have no choice but to stay in dangerous, unsafe living situations. Those who courageously find their way to an emergency shelter are either turned away due to capacity issues or they must stay longer in a temporary living situation because they do not have the financial means or support to reach stability and safety on their own.

Because of your investment, we are answering this need and empowering hundreds of survivors.



The National Emergency Survivor Support (NESS) Fund provides an immediate one-time grant of up to \$2,000 to help survivors of gender-based violence leave abusive housing situations, emergency shelters, or unstable living arrangements.

A new, first of its kind emergency fund that launched across Canada in 2022 is changing lives because of **your investment**. Your funding is empowering women, gender diverse people and their families to leave unsafe living situations and find their place to heal and start again.

Because of You

405 survivors were supported by the NESS Fund in 2023.

\$1,254.00 was the average individual grant provided to survivors.

637 requests for survivor support was received by YWCAs.

89% of your investment was given directly to survivors.

Top 3 Needs Meet

1. Rent and security deposits.
2. Essential furniture for new homes.
3. Utilities set up.

Dear Mr. Slaight and The Slaight Family Foundation,

Expressing our deep appreciation for your investment cannot be overstated. Your forward-thinking commitment has allowed YWCA Canada to address a critical need voiced by survivors – providing readily available financial assistance to enable their escape from violence and wraparound supports to address their immediate needs.

As outlined in this report, your investment in year two of the NESS Fund has been exceptionally significant. Thanks to your funding support, YWCA Canada has been providing Canada's inaugural National Emergency Survivor Support Fund for over 2 years. This fund is innovative, grounded in the newest research around ending homelessness and focused on breaking cycles of poverty and abuse.

Because of your support, a route to safety has been forged for 405 survivors of gender-based violence across Canada in 2023. Together, since 2022, we have empowered 733 survivors of gender-based violence to begin their healing journey. Across Canada, 12 of our local YWCAs, who reach into 30 unique communities, have allocated 89% of your investment directly to women and their families. Because of the YWCA's history, infrastructure, sector partners and community trust, we are reaching those most vulnerable and empowering positive change, one survivor at a time.

Like you, we are deeply committed to the NESS Fund, so much so that we ended 2023 with an online fundraising campaign, 'I Know a Place', designed to raise both funds and awareness about NESS Fund impact. Unfortunately, the demand for the NESS Fund keeps growing across Canada and the outlook is grim. The 2022 Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability (CFOJA) recently reported that 850 women and girls have been killed in the last five years, equating to a single woman or girl being killed every 48 hours. But because of you, and your contribution to the NESS Fund, 733 individuals were able to flee unsafe living situations and take the crucial first steps towards safety and healing.

Thank you for empowering survivors of gender-based violence and sparking hope and relief for so many across Canada. We are honored to partner with you in this journey to end gender-based violence and empower survivors.

With thanks,

Aline Nizigama (she/her)
CEO, YWCA Canada





Evaluating Impact, Voiced by Survivors:

"This is an amazing program and I wish all women could have access to this. I feel fortunate to have ever even heard about the program. The housing crisis almost broke me but having secured housing for my daughter, I know this feels like all the hard work I've put in has been worth it... Because it's not ever only about me anymore it's about me and empowering my daughter".

"It's a great program. It's very much needed. So, I hope that the funders continue to contribute because it is, it is very much needed for people coming out of situations. Um, where there are no funds available. And yeah, it just makes a huge difference".

"As a woman who grew up around domestic violence and never thought there was a different way of living, the YWCA and staff showed me that there are people and programs out there that do help. And because of this program, I'm able to take myself out of a violent living situation and focus on myself and my unplanned pregnancy".

78% felt the support offered was sufficient to cover their current needs.

90% felt the support was received in time to meet their immediate needs.

90% of recipients had reported that the NESS Fund was a primary reason they were able to leave violence.

In the words of survivors, this fund has not only provided finances in times of need but also "**moral support with hope for a brighter future**" and the ability to "**feel safe and free**".

89% of recipients felt their safety, confidence, and stability improved because of the program.

79% of recipients credited the financial support provided by the program as the primary reason they were able to leave a violent living situation or maintain a living situation free of violence.

98% of recipients reported a good experience communicating with YWCAs.

99% felt the intake and application process questions were relevant, appropriate, and respectful.

Evaluating Impact, Across Systems

Together we are breaking down the financial barrier survivors face when fleeing domestic violence, easing the pressure on the temporary shelter system, and breaking cycles of abuse against women and gender diverse people.

The impact of the NESS Fund is multidimensional. We observed impact on survivors but also on the systems they must navigate to reach safety and healing.

Here are two such observations:

1. Housing Crisis

Operating the NESS Fund has underscored the connection between the housing crisis and the gender-based violence epidemic in Canada. The single most common request for support has been towards payment of rent and utilities. These forms of financial support have proven to be crucial for women, gender diverse people, and their children, as fleeing violence can often lead to or intensify housing instability, homelessness, and experiences of discrimination. The lack of access to safe and affordable housing in Canada is another leading barrier for survivors seeking safety.

2. Employment & Education

Experiencing gender-based violence, fleeing from it, and taking the time to heal can have a significant impact on the survivor's career and economic stability, especially when children are involved. The NESS Fund has played a role in many recipients' employment journeys. The funding supported recipients in finding stable homes, contributing to their ability to seek better employment or reach better educational institutions. One 2023 NESS Fund recipient was able to reach stable housing, without disrupting her educational journey, and become a registered professional. She attributes her professional success to the NESS Fund. It became even more evident through the NESS Fund evaluation process that the financial support given to survivors through the NESS Fund gave survivors both the chance and, in some cases, a 'push' to seek careers in desired fields, further their education or secure jobs that better suited their needs. Employment and continuing education were outcomes many recipients reported after receiving the NESS Fund.





Hope. Relief. Needed.

These words were common amongst the NESS recipients.

The financial support received did more than fix immediate problems; it gave survivors of gender-based violence hope; it gave much-needed relief; it sparked confidence to push forward to a better and brighter start.

Survivors tell us that the NESS Fund has contributed to their healing journey and in some cases, made their **healing possible**.

"I'm so thankful because I really needed the funds for a new start with my four young kids."

"The YWCA and NESS fund have played a big part in giving me hope!"

"Yes, it was a big relief for me when I received it. It was like a ton of bricks falling off my shoulders, that's for sure. It came at the right time, and it made things a lot easier."

Recommendations from Recipients

During our evaluation, YWCA Canada asked recipients if they had any recommendations or suggestions to improve the NESS Fund:

One recipient raised the importance and impact of having a **'listening ear'**;

"It is more than just financial support. You need, as I said, a listening ear, just somebody to hear what's happening because sometimes it's just when it's, it is you and your kids, and you're just so alienated and alone, just having somebody you can talk to can make a huge difference."

Another recipient suggested further **financial literacy** could be helpful;

"I would love to see a program out there for women to have like a few sessions with a financial advisor to pick apart their bank accounts, figure out when things have to be paid, how they have to be paid, what they should be doing for, you know, security and, and things like that. And I haven't seen anything like that out there."



YWCA Canada Key Learnings

Because recipients are often in crisis or focused on immediate needs, collecting feedback surveys or evaluations of the NESS Fund can be difficult. Survivors of gender-based violence are fleeing unsafe living situations, often with their children, and rightfully are focusing on basic needs, seeking safety, and navigating complex legal, medical and financial systems. Despite this, YWCA Canada is tremendously proud of the feedback we were able to collect in 2023. We received **155 responses** to our NESS Fund participant survey and we conducted seven in-depth interviews. We believe high response rate is a testament to the trust survivors have in YWCA and their gratitude for funders like you.

The NESS Fund National Community of Practice Table, facilitated by YWCA Canada and attended by 12 local YWCA frontline staff, continued monthly throughout 2023. Together, within the Community of Practice, we troubleshoot program delivery and share best practices. Notable for 2023, we co-designed diverse ways to access the NESS Fund by making our NESS Fund application online and available in **90 languages**. We also re-designed the application so that it can be completed by a service provider on behalf of a survivor and that the form itself can be completed **in less than 10 minutes**. Our evaluation matrix was re-developed by our Community of Practice so NESS Fund providers could receive real-time feedback on the NESS Fund delivery—including participant feedback, number of people served, and amount of funding released.

Together we **decreased the average wait time** for application decisions from 6 business days to an average of 3 business days in 2023, which results in assisting survivors faster. Our National Community of Practice will continue to meet, share best practices and co-design improvements so that this critical fund can meet the evolving and complex needs of survivors of gender-based violence in communities across Canada.

RAINE'S MONEY TRANSFER PARAGRAPH



Here are some of the changes we hope to make in the year ahead:

Decrease the wait time by:

- continuing to improve communications between community partners and potential applicants.
- continuing to improve our intake forms to gather only essential information.
- improving financial processes to release funding faster.

Increase the number of referrals by:

- building better relationships with allied organizations and appropriate services.
- developing a stronger interconnected network of service providers, ensuring survivors receive the support they need and play an important role in immediate and long-term empowerment.

Increase funding available by:

- targeting national fundraising activities to fundraise for NESS Fund.
- maintaining committed donors like you.
- seeking both corporate and family foundation donations for NESS Fund.

Increase resources available to survivors by:

- seeking in-kind donation partners such as furniture donors and donations of essential items or donations in the form of gift cards to meet the needs of survivors who are rebuilding their lives.

In the words of one NESS Fund recipient, ***“Thank you very much for the help. I am so happy that there are programs and help for victims who suffered violence. This is amazing and I am truly blessed to have received the help”.*** YWCA Canada feels the same way. We are honored to partner with the Slight Family Foundation and to continue providing this critical lifeline to women, gender diverse people and their families who are fleeing unsafe living situations.

As you probably know, the gendered housing crisis has become so severe across Canada that the **Federal Housing Advocate has deemed it one of the top human rights issues in 2023.** Only together can we confront this crisis and this report is proof that we can end this gendered crisis by combining funds with innovative service responses such as the NESS Fund.



Questions? Concerns? Please reach out to: Raine Liliefeldt
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