

Creative Programs Linking Women with Housing & Supports: *Urban Aboriginal Homeward Bound Feasibility Project*



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Presentation Overview

- 1) OFIFC-WoodGreen Partnership History & Context
- 2) Introduction to WoodGreen's Homeward Bound Program
- 3) Program Results & Recognition
- 4) Urban Aboriginal Feasibility Project Goals
- 5) Reflections & Discoveries from Year 1
- 6) Next Steps



1) Partnership History & Context

- OFIFC background, Kim's portfolio and context for reaching out to WoodGreen (fit with current Friendship Centre Programs)
- Overview of WoodGreen, Homeward Bound and Homeward Bound Replication
- Feasibility Project Funding from Ontario Trillium Foundation & Counselling Foundation of Canada



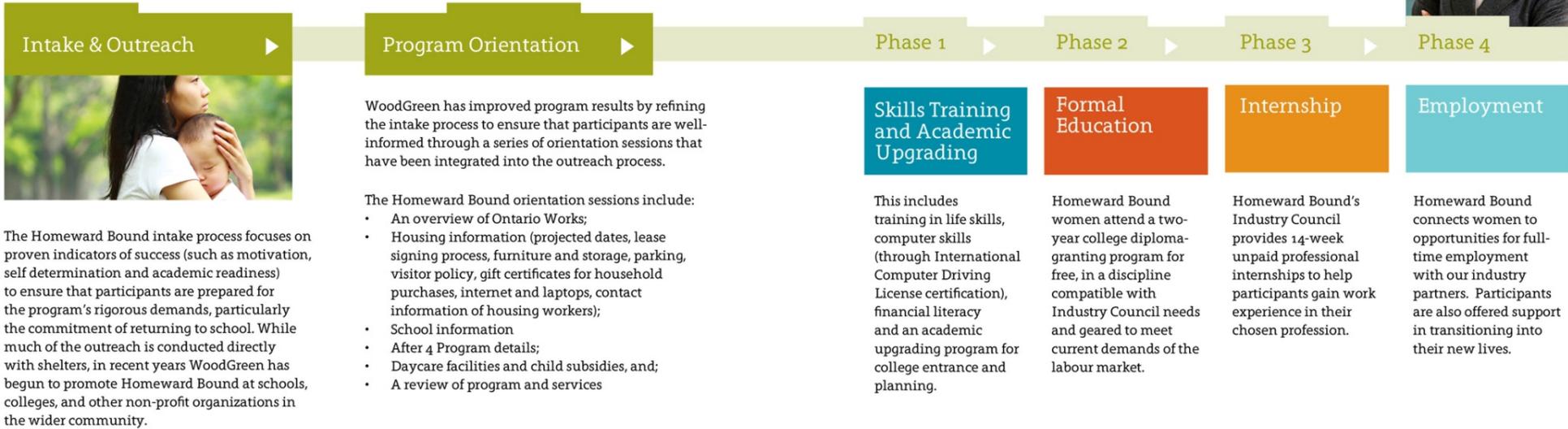
2) Introduction to Homeward Bound



The Homeward Bound Model

"Being able to leave my kids with really good daycare staff is important. If I wasn't content where my children are concerned, I wouldn't be able to do anything."

Homeward Bound Participant



The Homeward Bound intake process focuses on proven indicators of success (such as motivation, self determination and academic readiness) to ensure that participants are prepared for the program's rigorous demands, particularly the commitment of returning to school. While much of the outreach is conducted directly with shelters, in recent years WoodGreen has begun to promote Homeward Bound at schools, colleges, and other non-profit organizations in the wider community.

WoodGreen has improved program results by refining the intake process to ensure that participants are well-informed through a series of orientation sessions that have been integrated into the outreach process.

- The Homeward Bound orientation sessions include:
- An overview of Ontario Works;
 - Housing information (projected dates, lease signing process, furniture and storage, parking, visitor policy, gift certificates for household purchases, internet and laptops, contact information of housing workers);
 - School information
 - After 4 Program details;
 - Daycare facilities and child subsidies, and;
 - A review of program and services

Skills Training and Academic Upgrading

This includes training in life skills, computer skills (through International Computer Driving License certification), financial literacy and an academic upgrading program for college entrance and planning.

Formal Education

Homeward Bound women attend a two-year college diploma-granting program for free, in a discipline compatible with Industry Council needs and geared to meet current demands of the labour market.

Internship

Homeward Bound's Industry Council provides 14-week unpaid professional internships to help participants gain work experience in their chosen profession.

Employment

Homeward Bound connects women to opportunities for full-time employment with our industry partners. Participants are also offered support in transitioning into their new lives.

Key Supports

Housing

Participants live in furnished apartments while they are enrolled in the program or until they graduate and find permanent employment (to a maximum of four years). During this time, rents are set at approximately 30 per cent of participants' household incomes. The building is adjacent to the daycare and training centre.

On-Site Child Care and Support for School-Aged Children

High quality, certified childcare with extended hours is offered on-site for young children. School-aged children and youth attend local schools as well as an After-4 Program which provides extra support for the young people as they transition into a new community, new school and a new life. Homeward Bound children have the opportunity to take part in supervised recreational activities, art instruction, Cooking Club, Homework Help, one-on-one tutoring, summer camp, and parent-child programs to help the children develop socially and overcome trauma.

Case Management and Counselling

Each participant works with a dedicated case counsellor to develop regular Action Plans that will guide her through the four phases of Homeward Bound. These phases are broken down into milestones which program participants set and celebrate with their case worker as results are achieved over the course of the program. This support is enhanced by additional one-on-one psychotherapy sessions that are available to participants. At the end of the program, support continues to be available to graduates and their children as they reintegrate into the community.

3) Program Results & Recognition

80%

of the women who have entered Homeward Bound have either successfully completed the program, or are on track to meeting the program's milestones.

ONPHA Housing Excellence Award (2005)

Conference Board of Canada Community Learning Awards – Honourable Mention (2005)

Approval to build 44 more units – Homeward Bound Phase II (2007)

CMHC Award of Excellence (2006)



"WoodGreen's Homeward Bound changed everything. Here someone was telling me they would give me a subsidized two-bedroom apartment, access to top-of-the-line daycare my son could attend and an opportunity to go back to school and get a good job. I did not have to be poor forever. I would be able to have the life I had dreamed of – a normal life. That's all I wanted... someone was giving me a chance."

Homeward Bound participant

4) Urban Aboriginal Feasibility Project Goals

- Conduct community-based feasibility studies for Homeward Bound in a handful of Friendship Centre communities
- Engage in dialogue and sharing of wise practices
- Produce an adapted Homeward Bound model specifically for the urban Aboriginal context if community input suggests that elements of Homeward Bound should be adjusted in order to better meet the needs of participants in urban Aboriginal communities
- Create a Wise Practices Manual based on the feedback and wisdom from partnering Friendship Centre communities



5) Reflection on Process in Year 1

- 5 Friendship Centres partnered: Timmins, Niagara, London, Hamilton & Dryden
- Significant engagement and opportunities arising in partner communities (e.g. municipal enthusiasm, inter-sectoral representation, potential funders engaged)
- Collaborative approach essential (especially between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations)
- Geographic diversity an asset and a challenge
- Important balance of community-based leadership from Friendship Centres and supportive capacity and guidance from WoodGreen and OFIFC



6) Looking Forward



- Project design allowed for initial year to focus on engagement with Friendship Centre leaders and members of local community (e.g. preliminary meetings, orientation sessions for communities, collaborative planning with Friendship Centres and key potential partners)
- Year 2 will focus on community-based stakeholder mapping workshops, continued outreach, formal review of Homeward Bound program model by Friendship Centre communities, ongoing planning and stakeholder engagement where Friendship Centres continue to move forward
- By the end of Year 3 there will be a Wise Practices Guide sharing all of the learnings from this project, a forecast Social Return on Analysis and at least one Friendship Centre moving forward with implementation of an Urban Aboriginal Homeward Bound

Thank you and please stay in touch!

- If you are interested in our progress and/or outcomes in this project, please send either of us a message and we will be happy to keep you in the loop!
- Contact Kim at kschultz@ofific.org to learn more about OFIFC (www.ofific.org), Ontario Friendship Centres and her current policy work in the area of urban Aboriginal homelessness.
- Contact Sydney at sblum@woodgreen.org to learn more about WoodGreen (www.woodgreen.org), Homeward Bound (including replication), or to receive a copy of WoodGreen's Homeward Bound How-To Kit.

We have an opportunity to break the cycle of poverty for single mothers and their children.