

Royal City Gogos

2017 Report to Arts Council of New Westminster

Gogo is a Zulu word for grandmother. The Royal City Gogos, based in New Westminster, is part of a national movement of grandmothers and "grandothers" that form the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign of the Stephen Lewis Foundation. We fundraise in support of African grandmothers who are caring for a generation of children who have been orphaned by AIDS. These children are the hope of the continent.

We direct our fundraising to the Stephen Lewis Foundation because they put money directly into the hands of grassroots organizations that are working to turn the tide of AIDS in Africa.

We meet on the 3rd Wednesday of the month. Members gather to socialize at 12:30 and many bring their lunches. The official meeting is from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm. We are meeting at the Centennial Community Centre, 65 East 6th Avenue, until renovations are complete at the Main Library. Guests are welcome to come for a few months before committing.

The Royal City Gogos wish to recognize and thank the New Westminster Office of Unifor. We use their hall and meeting space for our events – a significant contribution to the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign.

Building Awareness

Red Shoelaces School Program

In Africa today 13 million children have been orphaned by AIDS -- more than twice the number of children in all of Canada. Many of these children are in the care of their grandmothers. These elderly women, often with few resources, are challenged daily to keep the orphans safe, healthy and happy. It is a further challenge to educate them. School fees, uniforms and school supplies are out of reach for many grandmothers.

We believe Canadian children would like to help. In collaboration with school staff, the retired educators in our group engage children in selling red shoelaces for the SLF. In this way we enable local children to take action as global citizens. This past year we worked with two elementary schools and in collaboration with the Burnaby Gogos, one high school in Burnaby.

Pan-Canadian Flash Mob

On World AIDS Day, December 1, 2016, Royal City Gogos met at Surrey's Guildford Mall with over 100 Gogos from other groups in the region. Dancing to "Sisters are Doin' it for Themselves", we joined hundreds more Gogos from all across Canada to build awareness of the struggles of grandmothers in Africa as they raise grandchildren orphaned by AIDS. What a fun way to demonstrate our solidarity with grandmothers in Africa!

“Powered by Love”

Since 2006, the 10,000 Canadian members of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign have raised over \$25 million to support our African sisters. These funds went directly into the hands of African grandmothers and the grassroots organizations supporting them at the front lines of the AIDS pandemic.

“Powered by Love” tells the story of these indomitable women, and of the movement that started in Canada and is now reaching around the world. The book was launched on October 10th, 2017, and is available in New Westminister at Black Bond Books in the Royal City Centre. It’s already a best seller, according to CBC!

2017 Fundraising Events

Nuno Felting - February 2nd to 5th, 2017

Artisan Janine Reid hosted four day-long open workshops, teaching participants to make the beautiful felted silk shawls she creates for the Royal City Gogos. Each participant made their own unique shawl!

The Art of Wine - May 5th & 6th and June 9th & 10th

Guided by a sommelier, over 100 guests explored and enjoyed six international wines, tasting and pairing, selecting and most importantly, enjoying wine. Hors d’oeuvres to compliment each wine were prepared and served by the Gogos.

New West Culture Crawl - August 12th & 13th

Gogo artisans and friends demonstrated how they make their unique, one-of-a-kind artisanal crafts, including painting, jewelry, felting and sewing.

Solidarity Cycle - September 10th

28 cyclists from across the Lower Mainland rode 100 kilometers from White Rock to Yarrow, raising tens of thousands of dollars in pledges for the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. The cycle ride was organized five Gogo groups from the Lower Mainland, including the Royal City Gogos.

Artisan Crafts for Africa - November 3rd to 5th

The 6th Annual Artisan Crafts for Africa featured beautiful artisanal crafts handmade by our members and by Gogos from our region and Vancouver Island. Products included artisan felting, knitting, sewing, weaving, Christmas items, fair trade goods from Africa, food products, our signature totes and more!

New this year, Family Day on Sunday featured special items for children, an imagination station for crafts, cookie decorating and more. We wish to thank the ArtsToGo program of the Arts Council of New Westminister for their support for the children’s art station.