The Role of Indigenous NGOs in Canada’s Charitable Sector

June 2018

Introduction to Outside Looking In

Outside Looking In (OLI) provides a national high school credit dance program for Indigenous youth in grades 7-12. The Indigenous-led organization was founded 10 years ago with a mission to motivate Indigenous youth by giving them hope for a better future. Too many Indigenous youth struggle with identity, socio-economic barriers, and sometimes, a reason to live. OLI provides youth with an outlet to express themselves physically, mentally and emotionally, and to rediscover who they are as Indigenous peoples today. The participants understand that they must meet academic, attendance, choreographic, and behavior requirements in order to progress through the program. Along the way, the participants’ academic performance, physical and mental health, and sense of belonging improves.

INGOs as Local Capacity Builders

Indigenous non-governmental organizations (INGOs) often work at the intersections of social, cultural, and economic issues, driving transformative change for some of Canada’s most vulnerable communities.

OLI, for example, builds capacity and inspires youth to identify a series of positive practices and perform them with consistency. Participants’ hard work and dedication to OLI result in strong personal management skills, especially in the areas of self-discipline, self-confidence, punctuality, persistence, and self-reliance. 88% of youth report increased motivation; 89% report better understanding of the importance of education; 86% report better behavior at school and in the community; and 82% report improved mental health.

OLI youth complete the program with a renewed sense of personal agency and resilient attitudes. In turn, they often become leaders and mentors for younger peers in their community. Importantly,

“It is through our charitable organizations community that we can do reconciliation initiatives outside of the political and government processes. More often than not, the community societal reconciliation process is ignored, and this is one place where charitable organizations can support the whole process of reconciliation.”

Chief Joseph, Ambassador of Reconciliation Canada
community members, teachers and parents become involved in an empowering journey, sharing in the overall success and feeling of accomplishment.

INGOs like OLI empower local communities, spurring positive change among the next generation of Indigenous leaders. It is for this reason, that the role and value of INGOs should be better understood, and supported by the federal government.

**OLI’s Contributions to the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector**

Indigenous-led charities and NGOs face unique challenges when it comes to accessing federal funding, creating partnerships with government, and satisfying reporting requirements. Tracee Smith, Executive Director of Outside Looking In, would be pleased to testify to the Committee on the following topic areas:

1. Attributes and conditions that contribute to resilient and effective INGOs based on OLI’s experience over the past decade.
2. How Government of Canada funding processes and impact measurement requirements can better reflect the unique realities facing Indigenous charities and NGOs.
3. Opportunities for federal program managers and staff to receive intercultural fluency training to ensure a more harmonious working relationship between funders and funding recipients.
4. How increased awareness about the value of INGOs could result in innovative solutions and partnerships between the Government of Canada and Indigenous communities.

We welcome additional questions from the Committee. We are prepared to respond through a written brief and/or testimony at Committee.

For more information, please contact:

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