

## Appendix A



**Please view the latest videos that capture the girl's interviews.**

Nicole's <https://youtu.be/fYnCeR2edTg>

Aaliyah's interview <https://youtu.be/Of8c-HoNGm4>

Eve's Interview <https://youtu.be/52kcacByTUE>

Stardale has twenty-three plus years of experience working specifically in the areas of violence and abuse prevention with Indigenous women and girls. In the past fourteen years in Calgary and area, Stardale has offered a holistic program Model and positively impacted the lives 1011 Indigenous girls who are at –risk. By addressing the risk factors such as abuse, addictions, and traumas within a holistic framework that includes art as the mechanism to teach and to heal, innovative group projects have been developed and shared in our communities.

**Priority of Need:** The COVID – 19 has inflicted confusion, grief and disruption to the day to day operations of Stardale, along with the cancellation of our May 14<sup>th</sup> gala. The gala was to feature the Stardale girls performing in the latest performance creation of “The Road”, which was honouring all Missing Indigenous women and girls. Consequently, all the efforts that have been executed through the programming of Stardale towards the preparation of the gala since January of this year are now stagnant. This means the girls, the instructors, the Elders, the committees have all ceased in the preparation for the May 14 event.

There is unique gender-based challenges that effect Indigenous girls that are often considered the norm. Examples include experiences of health issues, suicide, economic marginalization, racism, family violence, addiction, geographic and social isolation, residential school systems, and lack of access to and social support networks and services. Girls who have experienced repeated traumas built negative narratives which are disempowering. *Mental outlook and reducing stress are considered to be the most important factors determining a person's overall health. Most urban Aboriginal peoples, and particularly those with a stronger Aboriginal identity (i.e., know their family tree very well, or feel they belong to a primarily Aboriginal community or one that is equally Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), also believe that spirituality and being part of a healthy, vibrant community are important to good health. Urban Aboriginal Peoples Study Environics Insitute - 2010.*

Stardale addresses the “Gap” in services for Indigenous girls in Calgary through continuing to offer educational classes, mentoring, recreational activities, and social engagements. Due to many constraints in the school systems, Stardale is an adjunct to assist the girl's developmental processes in learning, as well as to help them understand their cultural identity. Due to the suspension of schools until the fall of 2020, and the cancellation of the Stardale girls programming, the girls are placed at further risk. This means that the main prevailing challenges of intergenerational impacts which thrive are lack of parenting skills coupled with addictions and violence will increase. It also means that mentally the girls coping skills will suffer and behaviours such as slashing, cutting and possible attempts of suicide will ramp up.

Gender socialization has a particularly important impact in a young person’s life and their mental health. Every day, young people encounter messages about the roles, attributes, identities, and expectations considered appropriate for people of their sex, through media images; treatment by educational, health, immigration and other institutions and systems; interactions with parents, teachers, and other adults; and peer relationships. The girls at Stardale have expressed numerous times how “safe” they feel in an all girl Indigenous program. That is a big deal! If we cannot provide direct services, then we must continue outreach services with the intent of supporting the girls and their families, but in a different manner. As this pandemic continues, we have the agility to strategize how we can effectively assist our vulnerable population.

At Stardale, we have open communication with the girls and their families to seek what is the best methods in supporting their individual needs while keeping everyone safe. Our small staff,

as well as volunteers have stepped up to do what is necessary to counter the fall out from the COVID – 19.

Firstly, the boosting of the self – esteem is favorable to improving the mental health of the girls. We have sourced & are renting mac books from another project we have worked on. These Mac books will be delivered to the girl’s homes. We have women who are willing to assist the girls with their homework, play games online and do creative writing. We must continue to keep the girls stimulated.

Secondly, open communication with all the women to support them, refer them to services who could help depending on the need. Driving girls to necessary appointments and for basic needs. Keeping relationships strong with the women, who work with the girls is critical. It reduces mental stress. They have someone to lean on that they trust.

Thirdly, we will assist in the necessities of life for the girls and their families. As we have been reaching out to each family day after day, they have been struggling with groceries, meals, health supplies I.E. medicines, feminine products, soaps, etc. In addition, they would like baby diapers and formulas.

Fourthly, with cancelling our gala (please see the file with the gala outline) and being unable to rehearse and perform for the community has left us in dire straits. We were to perform at the Way Out West event on June 6, as well as at the Marlborough Mall for National Indigenous Day. We have no idea how long the pandemic will be around, however, it will take time to recover. Our cohort that we supply services too is already disenfranchised. The constant daily upsets resulting from the COVID – 19 makes things worse. Our gala, the WOW fest and the National Indigenous Day were to generate operational dollars. Now we have lost our operational funds for the next six months.

And lastly, we are attempting to keep everything together to support the girls and their families. Example being, we are preparing meals, buying groceries and household necessities, interfacing online to keep the morale up. The girls tell us that they are missing Stardale. For some, this is their only social outlet. We must not give up. Rather more than ever, we need to assist.

### **Mandate**

1. Introduce proactive interventions that empower Indigenous females to overcome systematic barriers and internalization of lower standards of wellness, achievement, education, and employability by providing classroom educational opportunities as well as skills-training and strategies for healthy choice-making.
2. Focus on preventative measures of addressing abuse and violence by following a holistic approach through an artistic methodology, thus allowing each participant to heal in her own time(s) and place(s).

3. Foster cross-cultural exchange of health and social development issues with community partnerships
4. Develop research and learning schemes in order to have a better-informed view of the needs in the province.
5. Share our programming strategy and encourage reconciliation within communities

**Mission:**

Our mission is to provide life skills, literacy and advocacy to Indigenous girls living in poverty, and other challenging circumstances, with a view to empowering their lives, and thereby their families and communities, with the aim of helping them to overcome systemic barriers.

**Targeted Participants and Recruiting:**

- Participants in the program will be 30 Indigenous identified (First Nations, Metis, Inuit) young women aged 10-17 who may be at-risk of destructive behavior and/or whose families are financially vulnerable. All of the young women have experienced (whether personally or through familial connections) addictions, violence, abuse, and other forms of trauma within their lives. We will build resiliency among participants against exposure to destructive behaviours, and impact positively on cycles of marginalization.
- Eligible participants will be identified through:
  - A network of service providers (Alberta Family and Social Services, Calgary Adolescent Needs Network, Calgary Interagency, Calgary Board of Education, Calgary Catholic Schools, the City of Calgary Parks and Recreation, Group Homes I. E. Enviros, Hull Homes, McMan Calgary & Area, Woods Homes, and Siksika Family Services);
  - Referrals through visiting our website; and
  - Word of mouth
- All participants will be fully informed about the goals of the project and will need to have consent given by a legal guardian, to be arranged before the program commencement. Stardale, in conjunction with each referral source, will facilitate the consent form completion process.

Mentoring: Historically, Indigenous mentoring was embedded in cultural practice in which the entire society contributed to the raising and teaching of their young; yet today, many of the social and cultural systems and networks that once guided Indigenous youth are no longer as central to community life (Bisanz et al., 2003; Klinck et al., 2005). The entire society contributed to raising children and everyone had a role to play in teaching the young. Group mentoring is considered an effective model for Indigenous youth because groups are fundamental to Indigenous culture. Through the complexity and interweaving of social circles, Indigenous people can relate to each other.

In traditional cultures, self-esteem is developed by a sense of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. They highly value individual freedom, self-management, giving to others and giving back to their community (Strand & Peacock, 2002). Providing appropriate services to young people is the most effective means of addressing the problems of youth. All females, regardless of ethnic background, tend to assume more family obligations than do males (Smale, 2001). This is true in Indigenous families as well. **Mentoring can have a powerful, positive impact on young women.**

**Caring & Connection** Stardale is keenly aware of the role we as adults play in the lives of the young girls we serve. We know the importance of having strong boundaries in place, as youth can & will push the boundaries. We know too that we must and will display unconditional love towards each girl. What has been observed from previous programs & many years of delivering the programs is that the girls learn to understand the boundaries & flourish with the love. Consequently, as the circle of life progresses, the girls exhibit these patterns with others I.E. new girls in the program, meeting the public, at the schools they attend, at Stardale events. We have witnessed this firsthand & received feedback from teachers, counsellors, businesses, NGO's and more.

**The key messages and themes of the Stardale Girls' program:** Mental health is largely understood as a child's ability to regulate his/her emotions and behaviours and was perceived to be primarily influenced by a child's "surroundings." What we have discovered in working with young girls for many years is the importance of the Three E's: ***Environments, Exposures, and Experiences***. In shifting some of our focus to include the three E's we stimulate the girl's intellectual, social, and emotional development along with nurturing her to stay in school.

Environments need to be rich, stable, and stimulating; exposures need to be positive and reinforcing, and not destructive or disruptive, and the negative exposures need to be buffered by the presence of supportive adults. And experiences need to be age appropriate, coordinated, and promote exploration. The girl child must be an *active*, not passive, participant and be guided by adults. (The staff and mentors can be the guiding force for the girls, if they do not have the appropriate role models)

The primes that emphasized social, emotional and intellectual development, most clearly articulated in the Three E's, as well as Stardale programming recognizes that patterns of understanding culture, after all, is an important part of how we make sense of, and make decisions in, our shared social worlds. For culture too this includes the girl's diverse Indigenous cultures, an all-female mechanism of delivery, media content analysis, and messaging in the broader scope of what the girls define in how they view society. Therefore, to gather optimal performance from each girl participant, Stardale has in place a strong innovative program coupled with role modeling and mentors.

## Methodology:

*The habit of constructing the world **through stories** has been found at the core of Indigenous youth's discourse on identity. This conclusion is based on one of the most ambitious research programs aiming to link individual development to the dynamic life of communities. This ongoing work of Chris Lalonde and Michael Chandler was first published in 1987 from observations in British Columbia, which has since been tested in the Prairies. The Indigenous youth (70 per cent) described themselves with a more Narrative view. This means that they described themselves in the form of stories, bridging together various moments of their life. (2003)*

The artistic methodology is highly successful with our group. In addressing the needs of the Indigenous community, most particularly the young girls who we serve, it makes sense to engage an arts rehabilitation project. It is the process leading to product and reciprocally the product leading to the process. The more creative the processes, the more enthusiastic the girls become. It is important for the adults and the non – Indigenous people who are involved in our projects *to keep an open mind and allow for the processes to flow*. In a safe space with established boundaries and rules around confidentiality, the sense of purpose of “why” we are doing the various art forms become magnified. We spent a lot of time debriefing after each session and after each performance/ exhibition. This gives us valuable insights as to if we are on track with our project. Included are the volunteers who are at times the bystanders and witnesses, which may give important feedback to our progress and what we intended on achieving.





Vanessa Wenzel







