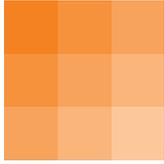


# GREAT GRANT STORIES



## The Counselling Foundation of Canada

### Finding the Path to Education

**A**t the end of the 1990s Regent Park, Canada's oldest and largest social housing project located in Toronto, was in decline. The nearly 11,000 people that called Regent Park home faced alarmingly high crime rates, chronic unemployment, low family income and poor educational success rates. Despair and hopelessness prevailed in this multi-racial Toronto community. To address the root causes of the community's ills, the Regent Park Community Health Centre (RPCHC), a facility offering clinical, social and educational services, decided that a key to breaking the cycle of under-achievement and poverty was to support young people to succeed in school and adults to find rewarding employment.

The RPCHC contacted The Counselling Foundation of Canada to discuss how to put its Community Succession



Photo credit: Regent Park Community Health Center, Pathways to Education Program

*Ms. Carolyn Acker (middle), former RPCHC Executive Director and founding Executive Director of Pathways to Education Canada, with two Pathways to Education graduates.*

Vision into practice. The Foundation, a family foundation, was established in Toronto by Frank Lawson in 1959 with the aim of creating and enriching counselling programs and improve the technical skills of counsellors. The Foundation welcomed the RPCHC's proposal and provided a seed grant and two facilitators to undertake community consultations with local agencies to enhance the project design and to develop a long-term sustainability funding model. The Regent Park Community

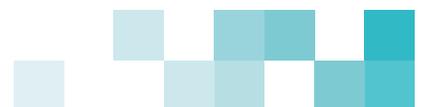
Health Center submitted its revised two-part Pathways to Education and Pathways to Employment grant application to The Foundation in October 1999. These initiatives proposed to provide the supports that young people in the community needed to stay and succeed in school, strive for post-secondary education, and for their parents to find a rewarding career. The Foundation supported this innovative approach with a one-year grant.

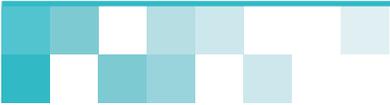
Continued on page 2



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In the first year of the pilot, the RPCHC recognized that focusing its efforts solely on education provided the greatest potential to promote community change. The decision was made to drop the Pathways to Employment program, and focus on the Pathways to Education program. With that adjustment, the foundation's grant was renewed in 2000 to support the RPCHC's development of Pathways to Education, and sustained with several successive grants.

Pathways to Education offered tutoring, mentoring and financial support to young people in high school. The impacts of the Program in Regent Park were nothing short of remarkable. Data from the first three cohorts of students demonstrated that the dropout rate in the Regent Park catchment area decreased from 56% to 10% while absenteeism fell by

50% and the rate of youth with serious attendance problems was cut by over 60%. The Pathways funding model has generated over \$40 million in grants and donations since 2001. Carolyn Acker, former RPCHC Executive Director and founding Executive Director of Pathways to Education Canada, notes that The Counselling Foundation of Canada was "instrumental in embracing and nurturing the Community Succession Vision from a set of ideas to tangible outcomes".

The influence of the foundation's grant was not solely felt in Regent Park. The success of the Pathways to Education Program prompted the creation of a new agency, Pathways to Education Canada, to replicate the model in other communities. The Counselling Foundation of Canada has supported Pathways Canada since its

inception in 2006. Today, Pathways to Education is operating in eleven communities in four provinces, with plans for further expansion in two other provincial jurisdictions. Funding the Pathways to Education Program contributed to Regent Park's revitalization. It also led to the application of an innovative community renewal model that is benefiting a far greater number of people than was ever envisioned by the Regent Park Community Health Center and The Counselling Foundation of Canada.

For more information, please visit [pathwaystoeducation.ca](http://pathwaystoeducation.ca), [regentparkchc.org](http://regentparkchc.org) or [counselling.net](http://counselling.net)



The Counselling  
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*Written by Carolyn Acker, Mario Gravelle and Bruce Lawson  
Canada, May 2011*



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