

empow3r

Breaking The Cycle Of Trauma

A journey of empowerment and
reshaping narratives for survivors
2019 - 2023




veees
VANCOUVER EASTSIDE EDUCATIONAL
ENRICHMENT SOCIETY


Kiwassa
neighbourhood house

What is empow3r

EMPOW3R is a trauma-informed employment program that prepares adults for careers in Early Childhood Care and Education

We understand that the state of childcare on a national and local level has reached acute proportions. In 2020, we decided to carve a niche in the early childhood education sector due to the overwhelming need and response from the communities we serve. We understand that the nationwide state of childcare continues to reach acute proportions with the lack of affordable childcare, professional childcare staff, and childcare space. EMPOW3R is our important contribution to Canadian families in helping address this situation.

What is EMPOW3R?

EMPOW3R assists participants with finding employment, economic sustainability, and enhancing wellness through a hybrid of online and in-person training.



Career Exploration

We provide quality short term training to be an ECE-A. We provide entrepreneurship track into the ECE sector. We supplement participants with added value training in the childcare sector such as Responsible Adult and Home Daycare trainings.



Job Search

We provide expertise in helping guide job seekers enter the childcare sector through our job readiness workshops and connections with daycare operators. Theoretical and hands-on training is provided to ensure a well-rounded job search experience.



Life Skills

EMPOW3R provides life skills training to our participants who may have experienced or continue to experience employment barriers due to mental health, poverty, trauma, English language, and computer literacy skills. We discuss topics on leadership, diversity, culture, and equity.



Why empow3r

Our research in the childcare sector, and interactions with daycare centre owners/operators, training organizations, childcare workers, and advocacy groups have led us to re-imagine and re-strategize our work. The preference to switch from providing training to our cohorts with Responsible Adult (RA) training to Early Childhood Education Assistant (ECEA) training was a welcome and needed change.

It provides a more competitive advantage to our graduates once they complete their program with a certificate in ECEA, a certification that opens more doors in childcare work.

Kiwassa's childcare department and its partners paved the way for a new partnership between EMPOW3R and private and public colleges, ie. Sprott Shaw, Coastal College of BC, Douglas College, Vancouver Community College, & Burnaby Community and Continuing Education. EMPOW3R and many of our allies believe that we provide a solution to the lack of childcare workers in the province, onwards to helping support the opening of more childcare spaces and later, more affordable childcare cost.

Why EMPOW3R?

Early Childhood Educators are needed

People who have survived violence and abuse and face multiple barriers to steady, good-paying jobs deserve opportunities to create better circumstances for themselves and their families.”

Melanie Mark
Minister of Advanced
Education, Skills and Training.

BC Gov News. Oct. 4, 2019

Appropriate and Supportive, Client-Centred Training

The fortitude and resilience of these women who come from diverse backgrounds as homemakers, single mothers, newcomers, and refugees were amazing to witness as they went through rigorous training and navigated challenges of trauma, poverty, communication, and cultural differences. This is Kiwassa’s important contribution in lending support towards a national childcare strategy, by providing not only quality daycare services but also, quality childcare graduates to fill the labour shortage.”

Honorio J.R. Guerrero
Director of Settlement and Employment
Services
Kiwassa Neighbourhood House

Equality in opportunities for meaningful employment

People who have survived violence and abuse and face multiple barriers to steady, good-paying jobs deserve opportunities to create better circumstances for themselves and their families.”

Mark Gifford (2020)
Executive Director
Kiwassa Neighbourhood House

Our Values, Principles and Approach

Wrap-around supports:

EMPOW3R is an all-encompassing wrap-around programming for women who wish to work with children, pursue a career, & get out of poverty. Our participants who are self-identifying as survivors of violence, abuse, and trauma sometimes continue to face these challenges in their lives. And it is how and where we ground our work; through a sense of belonging, care, compassion, and empathy. Friendly and professional EMPOW3R staff provide participants with support in their journey into mental healing, social, and economic transformation. EMPOW3R provides participants opportunities to connect among themselves and to the wider community.





Mental health

Trauma-informed,
healing-oriented:

EMPOW3R staff team provides participants with support in their journey into mental healing and social and economic transformation. EMPOW3R provides participants opportunities to connect among themselves and to the broader community.



Context-responsive

Immigration, Poverty, Labour Market,
Education and Training Systems:

Coming from primarily immigrant communities, EMPOW3R participants identify as low-income earners, career changers, and unemployed. Most of them are stay-at-home mothers; their well-being is disproportionately affected by the systemic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, social isolation, mental health issues, and downspiralling economic trends.

Healing begins when we know and acknowledge where we are located. EMPOW3R acknowledges that the land and waters we are settled, as the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Coast Salish people; x^wməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səl'ílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We heal as a community!



Collaborations and Partnerships

EMPOW3R is delivered by Kiwassa Neighbourhood House in partnership with Vancouver Eastside Educational Enrichment Society (VEEES). We are ably supported by Burnaby Community and Continuing Education (BCEE) as our primary training partner. We are funded by the Government of British Columbia.



Funding provided by the Government of Canada through the Canada-British Columbia Workforce Development Agreement.





Our Impact

EmPOW3r Circle/ Peer Support offers a space where participants may network, create friendships, compare learnings, and refer resources. The space also allows participants to get to know the trauma counsellor who facilitates the group.

Reaching out for counselling services requires a lot of courage to be able to take the step. Those who have accessed one-on-one trauma counselling sessions have done significant work on their deeper issues of trauma, anxiety, and depression.

Trauma counselling sessions are provided to interested participants. Ten percent of these sessions may be done in person, the rest online.



MENTAL HEALTH

Clients who have sought counselling have shared that being listened to without judgment is beneficial. They have gained more self-awareness and acquired tools to deal with stress."

Lysandra Chan
Trauma Counsellor with EMPOW3R



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Pathways to meaningful employment or self-employment:

We employ a holistic well-rounded approach to learning using concepts from the ECE program, antioppression, and EDI Equity Diversity and Inclusion.

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EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

It has been a privilege to support EMPOW3R participants. Witnessing their growth, determination, and resilience in navigating their employment journeys has been truly inspiring. It is incredibly rewarding to see EMPOW3R participants achieve their professional goals. Being part of this program has reaffirmed my belief in the power of dedicated support and tailored services in fostering meaningful employment opportunities.”

Adaeze Oputa-Anu
Job Developer with EMPOW3R



WRAP -AROUND, CLIENT-CENTRED SUPPORTS

We support our participants in moving through their action plans and career goals, which means implementing different tactics due to the diverse intersecting issues our participants experience.

We provide services to support participants' mental wellness, childcare and transportation needs, poverty, combatting isolation, and referrals

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Testimonials from EMPOW3R Participants

MENTAL HEALTH

“I was really lonely and struggling to find a job and support to maintain normal living. I have been through hell these last 14 years and it has been hard to stand on my feet. I was so blessed to come across this program. The Kiwassa team helped me big time. Kiwassa put a stepping rock to help me succeed in my life. I am really thankful and I can't say it enough. I am doing my best and at the same time, I feel stronger as a member of a community. I would like to be a part of the Kiwassa community forever to give back., ~Anonymous participant.

MENTAL HEALTH

“During our time together, I am touched when we shared how we can cheer up ourselves in our down times., ~M.

WRAP-AROUND SUPPORTS

“I was a stay-at-home mom, dealing with depression, trying to find a new path in life before discovering EMPOW3R. At first I was afraid and anxious, then I forced myself to start the program; I am glad I did. I have found lifelong friends within the group and gained the confidence I needed to reenter the workplace., ~B.

WRAP-AROUND SUPPORTS

“You made happen something I really wanted to do. I am so happy to give me this opportunity to learn from another cultures and see how important is to integrate in to a community with this program. I was really need this happened in my life. I learned about how to treat myself, how I treat my son and all my relations. You are awesome!“ ~ N.C., 4

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Testimonials from EMPOW3R Participants

CONTEXT RESPONSIVE

"The pandemic brings a lot of anxiety and uncertainty to many lives. I, for one, got hit on this. Ten years in self-employment, I never thought that I would face a drastic change in my career- with people laid off work or have reduced work hours has a ruffling effect in my business into a losing side. I lost my motivation. I feel I have reached a breaking point where my mental health suffers, thinking, "when is this going to be over?,, Now I have decided that this is the time to make a career change, look at what I love to do, and work on it. And yes, it was not easy if I did it alone. Thankfully, I found the Empow3r program. I would say the program has brought back my hope and empower and re-engaged me.,, ~M.

CONTEXT RESPONSIVE

"Before I started, I wondered if my English was enough to join this program. After, I can say that you guys make it easy for me. I understand almost everything. I saw a difference in my life when I took the first step to reach my goal, that it would have a positive impact on me.,, R.M., C 5

EDUCATION & CAREER

"I had experience in teaching, however through this program I learned so much new things and I highly improved my teaching skills. Also, this program added to my teaching confidence and made me excited to work with kids. They [EMPOW3R staff] are very supportive and they're doing their best.,, ~ G., C 5

STATS

2019 - 2023 by the Numbers

208

Participants

18

Cohorts

10

Diverse demographic identities

- Middle Eastern
- South Asian
- Chinese
- Latin American
- Black / African Descent
- Southeast Asia
- Iranian
- Filipino
- First Nations, Indigenous, Metis
- Non-visible minority

64%

Participants with children/ dependant

17%

Participants on Income Assistance

7%

Participants achieved full ECE

53%

Participants achieved ECEA employment

167

Employer partners supporting our participants

Thank You

to our funder



*Funding provided by the Government of Canada through
the Canada-British Columbia Workforce Development Agreement.*

and to our partners



empow3r

Join the EMPOW3R Community!

- Be a program participant
- Work with us
- Learn with us
- Fund our program
- Be a practicum placement partner
- Be an employer of our graduates

Contact Us?

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Research and analysis by Verapax.