



Project Report

Healthy Women, Healthy Families (HWHF)

**Submitted to
Action Dignity Society**

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Project Title: Healthy Women, Healthy Families (HWHF)
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Date CAP Started: September 1, 2023
Date Cap Ended: December 31, 2023

Brief project description

The Nepalese Community Society of Calgary (NCSC), with funding support from Action Dignity Society and United Way of Calgary and Area, commenced the "Healthy Women and Healthy Families (HWHF)" project on September 1, 2023, and concluded it on December 31, 2023.

The HWHF project aimed to create opportunities for women to learn, share, develop self-confidence, and improve their physical and mental wellbeing through Zumba and awareness sessions in an inclusive environment. It aspired to empower women and build their capacity through workshops and awareness sessions focusing on women's health and nutrition, anti-racism awareness sessions, and women's conversation and learning circles.

Project results and outputs

The Zumba sessions commenced in the second week of September and ran every Tuesday evening and Saturday morning until the third week of December 2023. The project activities included several programs, including beauty and makeup workshops, yoga and meditation, mental health, anti-racism, truth and reconciliation, maternal health, and nutrition sessions were included.

As part of creating awareness, the "National Day of Truth and Reconciliation" was commemorated with a discussion in a circle among women. The participants discussed about Canada's colonial history, missing and murdered indigenous women, residential schools, and their legacy on indigenous communities. On another occasion, a potluck was also organized during a Zumba session, which allowed women to spend some quality time together. Similarly, a session led by a gynecologist was focused on reproductive health issues and women's nutrition aspects.

The NCSC has also offered two Beauty and Makeup Workshops for women under the Healthy Women and Healthy Families project. The workshops covered various topics and techniques to help achieve your desired appearance for professional and party settings. These very popular workshops not only provided the tools and techniques of the art of makeup to enhance physical appearance but also helped to cultivate self-confidence, uplift spirits, inspire creativity, and

empower women to embrace their uniqueness, resulting in improved well-being and a positive mindset among participants.

Indicators	Total number of Sessions	Expected number of Participants	Total number of Participants
Zumba sessions	24	100-120	290
Beauty and Make up workshops	2	30	63
Other training and awareness sessions (Truth and Reconciliation session, Maternal Health and Nutrition session, Yoga and Meditation, Potluck	3	45	74
Number of volunteers involved		35	49
Number of volunteer hours		60	175
Number of collaboration / joint activities	3		

Success Stories – Community Action Plan (CAP)

In many racialized communities, women hesitant to come forward despite their degrading physical and mental health due to stigma and culture back home. The Zumba sessions have evolved as a very successful program that not only helped women maintain their physical fitness and boost mental health but also served as a safe environment for women to openly discuss their life experiences, spend meaningful time with one another so they might inspire and learn from one another, and strengthened community belonging among women. It also provided a platform for women to share stories and resources, promote cross-cultural learning, and encourage the development of long-lasting connections and friendships among the participants.

The project served a total of 427 women of multicultural backgrounds through various project activities, involving 49 volunteers, who contributed 175 hours of their time to the project. Additionally, the project has facilitated collaboration with three organizations: Madhuban Performing Arts, Joe Cepeda Institute and Abhivyakti Indian Dance and DanceYoga School Calgary.

Testimonials of the participants

“Personal grooming helps to present people in the best possible manner. Makeup art is one of the components of it. The beauty and Makeup workshop organized by the NCSC I attended on Dec 2nd was very useful not only from a physical beauty aspect but also from a mental health perspective. This workshop helped me focus on self-care, which is also instrumental in gaining

self-confidence and self-esteem. It also contributed to the way we love and care for ourselves regularly. The instructor (Pooja) did a fantastic job of making the workshop more interesting and valuable through her extensive knowledge, skills, and experience. I am looking forward to attending this type of program in the near future.” - Durga Deuja

“Participating in the Zumba sessions helped me strengthen my physical strength, flexibility, and mental fitness. I got the chance to socialize with Nepalese friends and other ethnic/racial groups. I was thrilled with the opportunity to spend time with my friends and community. It was one of my favorites and most enjoyable physical activities. I love it.” – Chandrakala Ghimire

“I attended sessions under "Healthy Women and Healthy Families," which have been a transformative experience for me! The energetic music and dynamic dance moves in each session provided not only a great workout but also a joyous celebration. Additionally, makeup sessions enhanced self-confidence and offered practical tools for daily grooming. These programs provided skills and the opportunity to connect and engage with women from all ethnic backgrounds. I am grateful for the fitness, creativity, and engaging sessions these programs brought to my life.” – Radha Paudel Wagle

“I was always excited to attend Zumba because it was my refreshing time. I was able to maintain a balanced body and mind for everything I needed to do. If we women are happy and our mental health is positive, we can look after our children and family properly. Sometimes, we suffer from so much stress inside our house that we do not want to share it with our family, but when I attended those women's focus programs, we could share our issues with other friends there; some of them also had the same issues, and we can sort out a solution that makes you feel good. Those programs are always happy moments for me. For some hours, we forget everything that's going on around us and just focus on ourselves. It supported my mental and physical health in so many ways.” – Mandira Rijal

"I joined Zumba with the intention of getting fit, but I gained so much more. The sessions are a perfect blend of fitness and fun, and I've never enjoyed working out this much. Zumba has become my go-to stress buster, and I've seen improvements in my endurance and coordination. It's a holistic fitness experience for me that helped improve my mental health as well. I also enjoyed participating in a makeup session, a game-changer for my beauty routine. I'm grateful for the newfound confidence and skills I gained from this workshop. These opportunities as a part of community involvement have become integral to my life, providing a sense of purpose and connection. I've had the opportunity to meet diverse individuals and build lasting relationships. The collective effort to address community needs has shown me the strength that lies in unity, which has a ripple effect that positively impacts the community as a whole." – Pooja Dhakal

Lessons learned and challenges encountered.

The Healthy Women and Healthy Families project provided invaluable experiences and learning opportunities through its planning and successful implementation. Several phases were needed throughout the process, such as identifying the need for programs for women, launching the project, advocating, and promoting, and looking into possible financing sources for additional sessions. During the process, we learned that using the right planning and execution tools for community work strengthens solidarity, raises consensus, encourages open communication, and improves participation. The project taught us the importance of identifying beneficiaries' real needs, desires, and concerns before developing programs or implementing activities.

For example, NCSC was preparing to implement Women's Pampering Day, one of the project activities listed in the proposal. However, as the Zumba participants and other community women requested a Beauty and makeup workshop instead of a women's pampering day, we needed to adjust the activities to meet the community's demands. The workshop was prepared and scheduled for the first week of December. As the registration form was made available, within four hours of opening registration, more than 60 women signed up for the Beauty and Makeup workshop, which reflects the needs of the community. As the number exceeded our capacity, we had to close registration. This also forced us to immediately address the needs of the community by finding an additional budget and offering another workshop. Positively, both of our workshops were a big success, and the whole experience helped us identify the community's needs and respond quickly to address those needs.

Recommendation

NCSC has conducted numerous activities as part of the HWHF project, serving 427 women from multicultural backgrounds in four months, engaging 49 volunteers. Short project periods and small amounts of funding may not suffice to achieve lasting effects and make a significant difference. Several participants ask that programs like HWHF be continued. Therefore, Action Dignity should plan for a longer-term project with relatively higher funding that could also support administrative requirements in order to make a difference in the community.

The Action Dignity team overseeing the HWHF project should also visit to see the activities of the project and have discussions with the participants and volunteers. These visits could provide better impetus for fine tuning the scope of Action Dignity's work, which can also contribute to future collaboration possibilities.

Some photos of the project



One of the Zumba sessions



One of the Zumba sessions



Participants after one of the yoga and meditation sessions



Awareness session of the National Day of Truth and reconciliation -September 30, 2023



Awareness session of the National Day of Truth and reconciliation -September 30, 2023



Participants in the Christmas vibe on the last day of the Zumba session



Women's health and nutrition session



Women's maternal health and nutrition session



Beauty and Make Up workshop one - December 2, 2023



Beauty and Make Up workshop one - December 9, 2023



Participants of Beauty and Make Up workshop one-December 2, 2023



Participants of Beauty and Make Up workshop one-December 2, 2023

Beauty and Make Up workshop two - December 9, 2023



Participants of Beauty and Make Up workshop two - December 9, 2023



Participants of potluck and women informal conversation