

Coming to Ottawa
Stephen Lewis Foundation 20th Anniversary Commemorative

Solidarity Quilt



Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign

Grandmothers are the very fabric of their communities and families. They weave the values of human rights, justice, feminism and anti-racism into this one-of-a-kind solidarity movement. This unique quilt has been hand crafted by 25 groups of grandmothers in a cross-Canada quilting bee with fabric contributed by over 300 Grandmothers in Canada and sub-Saharan Africa.

Dates and Locations:

- Sept. 9th and 10th* - Fiberfest 2023, Mississippi Valley Textile Museum
3 Rosamond St. E., Almonte
Sept. 9th 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Sept. 10th 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Sept. 11th* - St. Helen's Anglican Church, 1234 Prestone Drive, Orleans
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Sept. 12th & 13th* - John G. Mlacak Centre, 2500 Campeau Drive, Kanata
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Sept. 14th and 15th* - Churchill Seniors Centre, 345 Richmond Road, Ottawa
Sept. 14th - 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Sept. 15th - 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Background

Sixteen years ago, the AIDS pandemic was ravaging sub-Saharan Africa. The very survival of communities was under threat: almost an entire generation of women and men were lost to AIDS, leaving millions of children without parents. In the midst of this global health disaster, grandmothers courageously stepped forward to guide their grandchildren through their grief and toward a more hopeful future.

That's where the Stephen Lewis Foundation's (SLF) Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign found its roots. Canadian grandmothers rallied, determined to raise funds and support for African women who were already doing so much.

This year, as the SLF celebrates its 20th anniversary, grandmothers were keen to launch a project that exemplified the solidarity between Canadian grandmothers and their counterparts on the African continent. They wanted to create something meaningful to represent the power and impact of women's leadership, activism and collaboration in communities around the world.

And so, the 20th Anniversary Commemorative Solidarity Quilt was born. Hundreds of grandmothers across Canada and sub-Saharan Africa have created pieces that will be sewn together by many hands to tell the story of how women transform their communities.

The finished quilt depicts a grandmother tree, arms outstretched in a demonstration of her competence and headship, with roots running deep into the heart of her community. Beneath her canopy are seedlings, symbolizing the children she has cared for during the AIDS pandemic and beyond.

I hope you will join the SLF in supporting these inspirational champions, as they embark on the next phase of their journey: showing the finalized quilt to the world and reminding everyone that with ongoing support, women, and older women in particular, play an important role in building a more equitable world.

Warmly,

Niambi Martin-John,
Director of Development, Stephen Lewis Foundation

Why Now?

Grandmothers in Canada play an important role in championing the advocacy of grandmothers in sub-Saharan Africa. In their communities across Canada, they rally support for important conversations such as human rights and equal treatment for women and girls who face the greatest risk to HIV transmission and other inequities such as reduced access to education, early and forced marriages and gender-based violence.

Grandmothers in Canada endorse and support the formation of powerful advocacy statements that are presented to political leadership both in Canada and in African countries where legislation and funds are required in solidarity with African grandmothers on the frontlines of change in their countries.

Grandmothers in Canada raise over \$2M annually to invest in social enterprise, skill building, micro lending, training, healthcare and other life changing needs of grandmothers and their communities in sub-Saharan Africa by hosting fundraisers, craft sales, events and more.

At a time of global economic uncertainty, and while we face devastating impacts of climate change, COVID-19 and other critical issues are having adverse effects on the livelihoods and health of grandmothers in sub-Saharan Africa, grandmothers in Canada are reviving the movement by focusing on recruitment, fundraising and awareness raising to bolster support for the work here in Canada and that of their counterparts on the continent.

Global funding for HIV is declining and grandmothers here in Canada are working to ensure that we do not forget those who, due to geopolitics, are still caught in the throes of an escalating HIV pandemic that took a life every minute in 2021.

THE CROSS-CANADA QUILT

A quilt committee of Canadian grandmothers was formed in the summer of 2022, meeting virtually, to develop the quilt's design, with key input from African grandmothers

Pieces of the quilt were crafted and contributed by more than 300 grandmothers, including grandmothers representing 12 of the SLF's partners in sub-Saharan Africa.

25 groups of grandmothers came together to sew the quilt in a cross-country quilting bee with stops in 7 provinces.

A cross-Canada quilt roadshow is planned to start in June 2023, with more than 35 stops in all ten provinces, including September 9th through 15th in Ottawa.

FEELING INSPIRED? You can make a contribution to this ambitious project by clicking here: