



Emerging Themes: Our First Roundtable Discussion

On June 26, 2025, thirteen women in philanthropy gathered at Carleton University to discuss the philanthropic landscape in Canada. This generative conversation revealed shared experiences and common themes.

Influential Power and Gender

- Philanthropy is perceived as male-dominated sector
- Men act publicly and women influence privately
- Women often give with their spouses or family through collective decision-making

The power
of women
convening

Women Donors Can Feel Isolated

- Women's wisdom is often in the background of decision making
- Some women philanthropists doubt the impact of their accomplishments
- Women in philanthropy rarely gather purposefully

Intergenerational Shifts

- Older women seek validation and value for their wisdom
- Younger women seek validation for their innovation
- Women focus on community-based change through participation and collaboration across generations

Mentorship
is key

Philanthropic Values

- Philanthropy can be deeply personal, reflecting women's values and family's values.
- Giving is part of "doing the right thing" or using her voice
- Women emphasize the importance of supporting marginalized groups through donation, collaboration, and education

Systemic Issues

- The history of philanthropy is patriarchal
- By understanding systems of oppression, women are empowered to navigate complex systems
- Through innovative system redesign, informed by women philanthropists, the sector can be more significant for social change

Women
can effect
change

Future Conversations

- Women philanthropists need to meet regularly and publicly
- Circle conversations help to avoid triangulating power so that each women's voice is heard
- Women's giving circles can leverage significant impact
- Women philanthropists need deep research with practical applications and education

Threads of voices
and change
create a
tapestry.

Values-based
giving is
different from a
mandate for
social change.

How do we
use our voice
effectively?



Roundtable-Recommended Questions

A number questions surfaced and resonated throughout the discussion, including:

1. What is women's relationship with money? How can women direct the flow of funds so that they become conduits of social change?
2. Where are other women philanthropists? How are women supporting each other? What are their choices for charitable giving that will make real impact?
3. How can women philanthropists help people to use their voices to make social change happen? How can women philanthropists inspire more conversation?
4. How do women philanthropists leverage their power, including our creativity, influence, technology, strategies, voices, connections, community, and giving? How can they be valued for more than money?

Roundtable Insights

- Women often see philanthropy as part of community stewardship, including: front line and leadership volunteering, investment in social change and community betterment, and connecting for community wellbeing and inclusion.
- Many women engage in social investment and charitable giving for compassionate, connected, and healthier communities on local, national and global scales.
- Women donate with spouses, families, and individually, with mentorship from friends and family, other women in philanthropy, giving circles, business and wealth advisors, and philanthropy coaches.
- Women are interested in the impact of their charitable giving or investment, seeking feedback, education, and personal connection with the issues they care about.

We are deeply grateful to all those who attended, and shared their stories and experiences.

**Women in Philanthropy will be hosting roundtables on October 15 and November 25, 2025.
Email WiP@carleton.ca for more information and to join the conversation.**