



Highlights from Our Second Roundtable Discussion

On October 14, 2025, women from the sector gathered to discuss women's roles in philanthropy in Canada. Below are discussion points and common themes that emerged.

Isolation

Building Connections

Belonging

- Participants discussed the idea of feeling lonely versus isolated in planning and making monetary gifts
- Isolation is sometimes self-imposed due to discomfort discussing wealth, fear of judgment, and lack of peer networks

- Participants are seeking trusted educational forums to share experiences and advice
- Spaces like women's groups foster empowerment and allow rethinking traditional fundraising models

Gendered Dynamics

Pathways to Visibility

Women-Centred Philanthropy

- Participants feel invisible as a collective force in Canadian philanthropy
- Need to balance existing philanthropic structures with innovative approaches
- Women are seen as "tagging along" rather than leading in philanthropy despite major contributions

- Participants want to be valued for who they are, not just for their financial contributions
- Need to build momentum through gendered-analysis without replicating traditional power imbalances
- Younger women are more vocal about women's issues, signalling generational shifts

External Pressures

Wealth & Equity

Collaborative Spaces

- Women experience gatekeeping around the language, investment strategies, and practices of philanthropy
- Lack of strategies for discreet giving while retaining significant impact
- Wealth creates expectations to address broad social issues that need to be addressed by institutions beyond philanthropy

- Participants desire spaces to be curious, consult, and learn together
- Women seek relationship-forward philanthropy that fosters healthy mentorship and addresses power imbalances
- Need to foster equitable peer relationships and collective work

"It's not so much loneliness as isolation when planning to give."

"We need to better balance gender-dynamics in philanthropy."

"We may have richer spaces if we all knew how to talk to each other about giving."



Roundtable-Recommended Questions

Questions raised throughout the discussion.

1. Women's relationship with wealth can differ depending on whether it is wealth they created, married into, or inherited. How can we increase all women's sense of self-worth and empowerment, in the context of their volunteer time, skill-sharing, as well as monetary giving?
2. How is a woman's worth recognized in the sector and in society? How do we uplift the narratives about ourselves and our communities? How can we be ourselves and be validated for it? How do we lead in philanthropy?
3. Women philanthropists must contend with the political climate, concerns about power imbalances, safety, persistent solicitation, peer pressure, and family implications. How can women as philanthropists help other women navigate these difficult circumstances?

Roundtable Insights

- Important to better understand concepts like trust-based philanthropy, ethical philanthropy, feminist philanthropy in the context of women and their cultures, faiths, race, and other intersecting identities.
- Women philanthropists experience a tension between anonymity in giving and the desire to recognize women's contributions.
- Privacy and agency in recognition are integral to sector relationships with women philanthropists.
- We need a richer conversation about the collective force of women and their potential for social change-making.
- Women supporting community and engaging even small organizations make a big impact.

We are grateful to the contributors who shared their stories and experiences.

**Women in Philanthropy will be hosting additional Roundtables in 2026.
Email WiP@carleton.ca for more information and to join the conversation.**