



MA MAWI WI CHI ITATA CENTRE, INC.

"We all work together to help one another"

MEDIA RELEASE:

YOUNG OFFENDER MENTOR PROGRAM RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 11/02

WINNIPEG--An innovative initiative designed to break the cycle of crime by connecting young female offenders to long-term, stable mentor supports will host an open house on Friday, September 13, 2002 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at 318 Anderson Street (Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre) to announce its **new location** and kick off its **'Mentorship Recruitment Month'**.

Called Ototema: Her Friend, the program brings young female offenders on supervised probation together with volunteers who can act as positive role models for them. The program is designed to be of particular assistance to Aboriginal youth.

"Young women sometimes slip back into a life of crime because they haven't had a chance to connect with another path," said Attorney General Gord Mackintosh. "Through strong volunteer connections, Ototema has been successfully providing guidance, supervision and long-term connections for young women in Winnipeg since last spring. During our Mentorship Recruitment Campaign, we look forward to the continued support of our valued community leaders as they share the gift of friendship and inspiration with young Aboriginal women."

The program is supported with funding through Manitoba Justice. Day-to-day management is provided by Partners for Careers in Winnipeg in partnership with the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre and the Brandon Friendship Centre in Brandon, which train the mentors to provide guidance to young female offenders.

"As a community organization, the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre serves the needs of children, families and communities and is an excellent choice to house this program," said Laurie Favell-Mowat, Ototema Winnipeg program co-ordinator. "Young women need to be shown that there is another path in life that does not involve gangs, addictions, violence and poverty."

On average, approximately 440 young female offenders are on supervised probation throughout Manitoba, with 50% being concentrated in the city of Winnipeg. To date, Ototema Winnipeg has matched fifteen (15) Mentors and Young Friends.

The program is structured so that the mentor relationship will continue to be supported and fostered after the offender's probation term is over. Additional community supports will be incorporated as the participant's needs are defined.

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