



## **Elaine (Sweet) Whitford Scholarship Announced**

**February 15, 2010** – Commissioner Tony Whitford and President of the Yellowknife Community Foundation Daryl Dolynny announced today the establishment of the Elaine (Sweet) Whitford Scholarship to recognize the contribution Mrs. Whitford made to the North and support NWT post secondary students who want to make a difference.

Commissioner Whitford said “during her life Elaine contributed greatly to the well-being of Northerners and was influential in encouraging and assisting many of them to remain in school and pursue a post-secondary education. My family and I have established this scholarship to build on that legacy and make our communities stronger”. Daryl Dolynny said “The Yellowknife Community Foundation is pleased to be able to assist in recognizing Elaine’s contribution and help NWT students with this scholarship opportunity. We are looking forward presenting the inaugural scholarship later this year.”

Mary Elaine (Sweet) Whitford was born in Islay, Alberta. She first came North in 1964 as a University student and then, after completing her Masters of Social Work Degree from the University of Toronto, returned in 1965 to work in Fort Smith where she also met her future husband Tony. Elaine’s thirty-two year career in social work was marked by a passion and commitment that made her a role model for many young northerners pursuing a career in the field. Elaine and Tony raised three sons, Warren, Blair and Ian in the NWT. Elaine died on February 23, 2003 after a brief bout with cancer.

The Yellowknife Community Foundation was formed in 1993 to provide residents (and former residents) with a means of supporting projects in our community for the enduring future. The Foundation is not singularly dedicated to any specific area of support. It embodies a simple concept - that people working together can make a difference. Donations are still accepted to the Elaine Whitford Scholarship Fund. The money, invested over time, will grow and will continue to have an impact long after the original gift is made. Donations to the Foundation are eligible deductions for Income Tax purposes.

For more information contact:

The Honourable Tony Whitford  
Commissioner  
(867) 873 2772 or 445 3100

Mr. Daryl Dolynny  
President  
(867) 445 2000

Attachments:

1. Biographical information on Elaine Whitford
2. Elaine Whitford Scholarship description



### **Mary Elaine (Sweet) Whitford**

Mary Elaine (Sweet) Whitford was born in Islay Alberta and first came North in 1964 as a summer student from the University of Saskatchewan. With her Bachelors' degree, her first assignment took her to Inuvik where she spent the summer as a Social Worker for the Government of Canada.

In 1965 she received a scholarship to pursue her master's degree in Social Work at the University of Toronto. At the time, there were few (if any) northern or aboriginal social workers in the North and the Government was anxious to train anyone who was interested in working as a social worker in the north.

After completing her master's degree in Social Work she returned north to work in Fort Smith in the late summer of 1965. Shortly thereafter, she met her future husband (Tony Whitford), a mechanic with the Northern Canada Power Commission. They married a year later and over the years raised three sons Warren, Blair and Ian in the North.

During her life in the North Elaine strived not only to serve the public, but to encourage northerners to remain in school and for many, pursue a higher education. She had a particular fondness for social work and nursing and encouraged many to go on and obtain their diploma or degree and become the professionals and the supervisors working in the field today. Amongst the many who benefited from her encouragement was her husband Tony, who would receive his BSW from the University of Calgary in 1977.

Elaine led by example and became a role model because of her commitment. She was active in her profession and maintained a strict code of conduct and encouraged dedication, hard work and continued personal development. During her long career with the GNWT, she was also in a position to influence the changes leading to the professionalizing of Social Workers and the overall increase in numbers of Aboriginal employees in Government generally.

In 1997 when her position in the GNWT was dissolved in a reorganization of departments, she retired to travel the world and spent months as a volunteer teaching English in Nepal. Elaine was also a tireless volunteer in the North, especially in sport, fitness and health. She served on many boards and committees and was an active fund raiser for many great causes. Elaine died on February 23, 2003 after a brief bout with cancer.

The Elaine (Sweet) Whitford Scholarship was established in her memory in 2009. It is designed to assist Northern post secondary students in their second or subsequent year of study in Social Work or Nursing. One of Elaine's concerns was for mature Aboriginal students with families returning to school and the commitment and hardships they faced as a result. As such, priority consideration will be given to those students.



## **Elaine (Sweet) Whitford Scholarship Fund**

The Elaine Whitford Scholarship Fund was established to support NWT residents pursuing post secondary studies in social work or nursing.

### **Prerequisites**

Applications for the scholarship are open to individuals resident in the Northwest Territories for at least two years. To be eligible, an individual must be entering their second or subsequent year of post secondary studies in social work or nursing at a recognized College or University.

### **Review**

Factors taken into consideration in reviewing grant applications from individuals include:

1. An understanding of the important role they play in community development as a professional social worker or nurse,
2. Community involvement,
3. Commitment to social work or nursing, and
4. Economic need.

First priority will be given to applicants of Aboriginal ancestry who have lived in the Northwest Territories for at least one half of their lives; second priority will be given to other individuals who have lived in the Northwest Territories for at least one half of their lives.

### **Applications**

The deadline for applications is May 15 of each year. Applications must include a written essay of at least 500 words on why they are applying for the grant.

Applications must also include written confirmation of acceptance in a second year of post secondary studies in social work and nursing and documentation confirming residency. The residency requirement may be confirmed through a letter of reference from a Mayor, Chief or other official acceptable to the Yellowknife Community Foundation.