



## **Girls in Canada: New survey shows Canadian consensus on the value of equality between girls and boys; Girls Action Foundation works to ensure it**

*The LIGHT A SPARK campaign creates an inspiring movement for positive change*

**Montreal, Quebec – March 8, 2011** – "The belief that girls and boys should have equal rights and privileges is fundamental to what it means to be Canadian," according to over nine in ten (93%) Canadians in a newly released Angus Reid poll. The national survey, commissioned by Girls Action Foundation, also shows significant public concern about the specific challenges faced by girls in Canada such as depression, harassment in schools, and over-sexualized images of young women.

"While there is still a lot of work to be done, we are glad to know that Canadians are on board with the value of equal opportunities," says Tatiana Fraser, Co-founder and Executive Director of Girls Action Foundation, a pan-Canadian organization that gives girls leadership skills, mentors, and the chance to discover their power through innovative programs in schools and community centres.

"We know from working with girls everyday, that our programs are like a refuge from the myriad pressures they face. Over and over I hear women say they wish there had been an empowering space for them as they were growing up," states Ms. Fraser about the fuel behind the LIGHT A SPARK campaign.

The spirit of LIGHT A SPARK is to make a difference for the next generation of girls – by harnessing the power of women who have made it and want to give back. Already, more than thirty inspiring women from across Canada have signed on as mentors, spokeswomen or fundraisers, including environmental and social activist Severn Cullis-Suzuki and rock musician, Melissa Auf der Maur.

"I am part of the LIGHT A SPARK campaign because, as a woman, I know how much work we still have to do before we are represented and acknowledged as equals in this world," says rock musician Melissa Auf der Maur. "Thanks to my mother's generation, we've come a long way, but we have a ways to go. It's the women of the future we must focus on."

Severn Cullis- Suzuki adds "We need to heal the relationship between people and nature, and look to the future in living our day to day lives. As the ones who have foresight, female energy is so needed in the world today. And we desperately need youth to lead the way, as those with the most at stake, and those with freedom to live the way they believe is right."

The campaign kicks off on March 8, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of International Women's Day, and runs through June. Throughout the campaign, members of the public will be engaged on Facebook and an interactive site to honour the "SPARKS" in their lives – women who have blazed a trail and girls who inspire.

For the launch, girls across Canada will take action in their communities to raise their voices on important issues. 40 actions are planned, including a scavenger hunt celebrating the stories of strong South Asian women in Montreal; presentations of immigrant young women's videos in response to gender stereotypes and family expectations in Vancouver; and a clothesline displaying T-shirts with message about girls' strengths at a school in Fernie BC.

### **About Girls Action Foundation**

Girls Action Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting girls and young women to overcome barriers to reach their true potential. Founded in 1995, Girls Action provides girls empowerment programs, training for educators, and bursaries and mentors for young women change-makers. Girls Action operates on a national scale with a local impact reaching over 60,000 girls and young women annually. The 240 member-organizations of the Girls Action Network are found in all provinces and territories. 90% of girls & women participating in Girls Action programs come from marginalized urban, remote and Northern communities.

For more information on the LIGHT A SPARK campaign, please visit:

[www.girlsactionfoundation.ca/en/light-a-spark](http://www.girlsactionfoundation.ca/en/light-a-spark)

[Twitter.com/ girlsaction](https://twitter.com/girlsaction)

[Facebook](#)

### **About the Survey**

Access the full survey results and report: ***Girls in Canada Today*** :

<http://www.girlsactionfoundation.ca/en/light-a-spark/girls-in-canada>

From January 30 to January 31, 2011, on behalf of the Girls Action Foundation, Angus Reid Public Opinion conducted an online survey among 1,016 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure a sample representative of the entire adult population of Canada.

For more information or to schedule an interview with Melissa Auf der Maur, Severn-Cullis Suzuki or Tatiana Fraser, please contact:

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### **Melissa Auf der Maur**

A multidisciplinary artist, Melissa Auf der Maur was born in Montreal, Canada. From 1994-1999 she was a member, songwriter and bass player for Hole culminating in the album “Celebrity Skin”. In 2000 she joined The Smashing Pumpkins for their farewell world tour. In 2004 “Auf der Maur”, her first solo album, was released by Capitol Records / EMI worldwide. She then released a multimedia project “Out of Our Minds”, featuring her next Album, Film, Comic Book and Web experience.



### **Severn Cullis-Suzuki**

From fishing for smelt on the seawall in Vancouver, to visiting small communities all over BC with her family, Severn Cullis-Suzuki has been ‘studying’ ecology and society since she was small. She started speaking out about social justice and environmental issues as a child, delivering a powerful speech at the UN Earth Summit at 12 years old (1992). She has continued to speak worldwide about the importance of understanding our interconnections in a globalized world, and to recognize our responsibility to it. Severn was a Commissioner for the UN’s Earth Charter, and an advisor to the Secretary General for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002). She is an Action Canada Fellow and co-edited the book ‘Notes from Canada’s Young Activists’ (Greystone, 2007). Severn recently completed an MSc in ethnobotany, and is currently involved in language revitalization efforts on Haida Gwaii. She sits

on the board of directors for the David Suzuki Foundation and the Haida Gwaii Higher Education Society.