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New project brings music and mentors to Aboriginal youth

*Bonnyville...*Improving self-esteem among Aboriginal youth through music and mentorship is the goal of a new three-year Safe Communities pilot project.

Supported by the Alberta government and involving a variety of community partners, the Cold Lake Music Factory pilot project is designed to help at-risk Aboriginal youth experience success, improve self-esteem, build confidence, and develop team work and other job-related skills.

The program is led by the Legacy Children's Foundation in Calgary. It targets Aboriginal youth age 11 to 20 attending Grande Centre, Lac La Biche and Bonnyville high schools. Youths will take part in a range of activities, including music lessons and the opportunity to play musical instruments. They will also interact with, and be supported by, a team of community volunteers including musically-talented RCMP officers and youth mentors.

"Thanks to this innovative program, Aboriginal youth can explore the creative world of music while receiving important support from the community," said Aboriginal Relations Minister Len Webber, who announced the project at the First Nations and Métis Cultural Showcase in Bonnyville. "Not only will this help build safe communities, it will make a positive difference in the lives of these young people."

"Partnerships are so important to the success of engaging and inspiring young people and we see that in the learning system every day," said Education Minister Dave Hancock. "This unique pilot project will help these youth and young adults to realize their true potential by giving them a venue to express their talents and abilities."

By embracing youth popular culture, the project aims to reach out to vulnerable children and youth in a way that will direct them toward character development, education and fruitful career opportunities.

The Alberta government will provide \$50,000 for the project each year over three years. The Cold Lake Music Factory pilot is led by three Safe Communities partner ministries: Aboriginal Relations, Education, and Solicitor General and Public Security. It is one of 14 projects designed to build safer communities, reduce crime and address the needs of at-risk members of Alberta's Aboriginal community.

The Safe Communities Innovation Fund builds on the work of the Safe Communities initiative to address crime on an immediate basis, as well as over the long term. For more information please visit: <http://www.safecommunities.gov.ab.ca/scif>.

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