

# FROM POVERTY TO POLITICS

## Rose wants to be the first Indigenous prime minister - and she's on the right path thanks to a United Way program. ♦

"Growing up was tough - I was diagnosed with depression and anxiety as a kid. By the time I was a teenager, most days I just wanted to sleep all day, rather than face the world. I couldn't eat, shower or even brush my teeth.



In grade nine, I started attending a United Way-funded tutoring and mentoring program after school, and the support I had there made such a big difference. During high school, my family struggled with poverty, which made life very hard. After we paid for rent or other necessities, sometimes we couldn't afford to pay our heating bill, or had no money left over for food.

Eventually, my family of five became homeless and we had to split up because we couldn't find a place that could accommodate all of us. I felt so much stress and anxiety, my hair began to fall out. The tutoring program helped me get through it all by being there to support me - no matter what. The staff made sure that we were okay every night and had food to eat. They also advocated for us and helped us look for housing.

I think a big part of this program is that it made people feel welcome. Just knowing that there was support was huge for me. Even after high school, I could go there and talk to the staff about university and they'd help me.

Now, I'm doing a double major in criminal justice and human rights - I want to work with the United Nations, or maybe be a human rights lawyer who focuses on Indigenous issues. And one day, I want to be the first Indigenous female prime minister of Canada. But for now, I'm going to school and working full-time as a student parent support worker at the same program that helped me so much. It feels amazing that I could take my own story and inspire other students to keep going and to be the best that they can be.

**"IF I CAN INSPIRE ONE STUDENT,  
THEN MAYBE THEY CAN INSPIRE 10  
MORE"**

them to know what our lives are like.'

I remember talking to an elder at the program, who said, 'They need somebody who understands our culture and is from our culture to make a change in other people. You can't have an outsider and expect

When I'm at the program, they call me the Honourable Rose Tobacco-Olson or Prime Minister Rose. I feel like if I can change one life or inspire one student, then maybe they can inspire ten more." -Rose



**United Way**  
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