

Read a Calgary Sun article about Margaret McQuiston by Bill Kufmann.

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Traumatized by the Rwandan genocide two decades ago, the survivor still couldn't bring herself to pick up a kitchen knife said Calgarian Margaret McQuiston. "The knife reminds her of the machetes used to kill her family," she said. That's just one of the encounters motivating McQuiston to keep alive the dream of INSPIRE!africa, a Calgary-based non-profit group that's raised more than \$500,000 to help victims of the 1994 Rwandan massacres.

Some of that funding has gone towards providing counselling for the survivors, she said. "Even 20 years later, the people in Rwanda are still dealing with the impact — the trauma is still there," said McQuiston. Eight years ago, McQuiston made a trip to Rwanda — the first of five — and witnessed efforts that showed results in the wake of a genocide that left up to 1 million people dead, most of them Tutsis. "I was really impressed as they were started by survivors themselves," she said.

Another program funded by the group is one that provides legal aid to survivors to help them reclaim land taken from them following the killing. Sometimes, that property was usurped by other family members or those who murdered their loved ones, said McQuiston. "At the time of the genocide, they lost their parents and didn't know they had land," said McQuiston, adding victims are also helped in gaining access to government benefit.

Still another initiative supplies livestock to widows who use the animals to raise money and feed their families. That also spins off funds to micro-credit programs that create opportunities to market crafts and jewelry. "It's really kind of a self-generating program," said McQuiston. A fundraiser earlier this month collected about \$100,000 — money that will go towards helping vulnerable women in Rwanda, she said. "Rebuilding the life of a genocide survivor lead to healing an entire community," said McQuiston.

Anyone seeking more information on the group can go to inspireafrica.org.