



# JANA GIRDAUSKAS

*Health*

Jana Girdauskas is standing up for health and gender equity. By starting The Period Purse, a volunteer-run non-profit organization dedicated to providing menstrual products and comforting items to the marginalized community, Jana is challenging the negative stigma associated with menstruation and advocating for equal access to period products.

The idea for The Period Purse was borne from an encounter Jana had with someone experiencing homelessness. Understanding that menstrual products may be financially prohibitive, Jana filled one purse with products and kept it in her car for someone in need. Within a month, and with the help of social media, Jana received 350 purses filled with donated products. Thus, The Period Purse was conceived.

With the help of a dedicated team of volunteers, The Period Purse has supported over 16,000 menstruators through nine chapters in Ontario and Saskatchewan. The organization is now working with local leaders in a rural Indigenous community to support the needs of their young people.

Trained as a Special Education Teacher, Jana has used her passion for education to create a school program to decrease the stigma around periods. Through Menstruation Nation, which advocates for menstrual equity in schools, Jana and a teenage volunteer are organizing period product drives within schools and starting healthy conversations around menstruation.

In May 2018, Jana partnered up with Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam for the City of Toronto to proclaim May 28 as Menstrual Hygiene Day. This was a bold step for our city to highlight the importance of menstrual equity. In 2019, together they successfully advocated for the City to support some funding for menstrual products in all city-funded shelters. Also in 2018, Jana was named one of the Top 25 Women of Influence in Canada.

Addressing a critical issue that impacts health for cis-women and transmen is what drives Jana to tackle barriers. Her commitment to gender equity has ensured support for thousands of people and is fundamentally changing the discourse around periods.



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