



# NETWORKS FOR CHANGE AND WELL-BEING

Girl-led 'From the Ground Up' Policy Making to Address Sexual  
Violence in Canada and South Africa

Issue 7: October 2018

## Dear Partners, Colleagues and Friends of *Networks4Change*

Girls and young women in *Networks4Change* have been travelling! As this issue of the newsletter highlights, this has been a time of summits, think tanks and retreats. When we started *Networks4Change* in 2014, we imagined that these kinds of engagements would be 'the real thing' of a project with 'girl-led 'from the ground up' policy making to address sexual violence in South Africa and Canada' in the title, but it is safe to say now, we think, that the success of these events is surpassing our wildest dreams.

What can be learned through these gatherings? First of all, the girls and young women themselves talk about how important it is to hear and see (through all the various participatory visual tools) what is happening elsewhere. Second, girls and young women as resources to each other remains central to these events. We of course support the idea of digital platforms and communication through social media, but girls and young women from different parts of the province, country or somewhere else in the world actually meeting each other to co-produce collages and cellphlms, or looking at each others' work, or just walking on the beach together or sitting around a campfire, brings home so powerfully what collective learning and action means. From these 'learning together' events, the agency of the girls and young women in the various sites in our two countries in the context of Indigenous ecologies and resources is emerging as an important force that we (and the many other researchers and NGOs who have also participated in these events) are learning to nurture and theorize in our scholarship.

Finally, we send best wishes to all for this, the 7<sup>th</sup> International Day of the Girl. How fitting it was to have the recent announcement of the joint Nobel Peace prize given to the Congolese gynaecologist, Denis Mukwege, who has treated thousands of rape victims, many of them girls and young women, and Nadia Murad, the young Iraqi Yazidi, who was sold into sex slavery by ISIS and who has since committed herself to activism. This is an occasion for celebration for work with, for, and by girls and young women in relation to social change.

Warm regards,  
Claudia and Lebo

## Content

Circles Within Circles Event	2
<i>Networks4Change</i> Girls' Summit	6
Welcome Catherine Vanner!	6
Fieldsite Reports	7
Feminist Dialogue	20
International Cellphilm Festival	21
Sisters Rising Colloquium	21
Circles Within Circles: Girlfesto	22
New Publications	24
Partners & Stakeholders	25



# Reflections on Circles Within Circles

July 8-11, 2018 | Montebello, Québec

**Pamela Lamb**

Pamela is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education, McGill University

*Circles Within Circles: Transnational Perspectives on Youth-Led Approaches to Addressing Gender-Based Violence* was held at Fairmont Le Château Montebello.

The intergenerational event funded through the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation brought together participants on-site from Canada, South Africa, Sweden and Russia; as well as remote participation

from research sites in Ethiopia and Kenya.

With over 70 attendees from diverse geographical and social backgrounds, the multiple perspectives from Indigenous girls, gender activists, academic researchers, community partners and representatives from national and international NGOs made for highly

engaged and richly informed discussions around sexual violence, and implications for policy, education and well-being.

The most vital of all contributions were the voices and artistic expressions of Indigenous girls and young women, whose leadership and lived experiences informed the dialogue around urgent changes needed locally and globally.



Group photo of participants at Circles Within Circles

## Behind the Scenes

Several event organizers joined Maria Ezcurrea and Sadaf Farookhi on-site early on Sunday morning to mount the international exhibition, *Speaking Back: Youth-led Perspectives on Combating Sexual Violence*, and prepare for the arrival of participants.

Participants arrived by bus and taxi, from downtown Montreal and nearby airports, from late afternoon on Sunday into the early hours of the next morning. The lobby of the Fairmont – where Leann Brown and Jennifer Coutlee were spryly managing the registration tables – was humming with animated conversations between the newly acquainted arrivals.

Many younger attendees made swift moves to get in some swimming in the



Leann Brown and Jennifer Coutlee welcoming and registering arrivals in the hotel lobby

outdoor pool before dinner, after their long journey by plane and bus, all before dinner. All meals apart from breakfast were served outside, and there in the open air the conversations flowed more informally in the relaxed atmosphere.

And it was here on the first evening on the terrace where the first participatory arts-based activity took place to create



Image of consent from the photovoice activity for the Hall of Consent

the Hall of Consent, which remained on display for the duration of the *Circles Within Circles* retreat.

In this photovoice exhibition, participants produced images of consent by photographing symbols made by hand gestures; messages about the meaning of consent were then inscribed on the printed photographs (see above).



## Overview

The four-day program was designed around participatory and arts-based workshops such as cellphilmaking (video production with tablets and mobile phones), photovoice, and collage. Time was built-in to each activity for 'share-back' sessions in smaller and larger circles, which was not only enlightening but also inspiring to think-with and feel-with the participants and their evocative visual productions.

Great attention was paid by workshop facilitators to the ethical concerns of participatory visual research, such as protecting participant confidentiality and anonymity. Care was also taken by the youth mentors to support the young participants' agency in taking part in, or abstaining from, activities according to their comfort level. Mostly though, the young participants evidenced courage and creativity sharing their personal narratives and cultural traditions.

One young woman who had flown in from a small north western Canadian community expressed with great emotion how powerful it was for her to find herself among so many other strong young Black women. Several Indigenous girls drew their courage from their friends and family relations (sisters and cousins) who were also present to share songs and dances from their communities, such as the jingle dress dance (see below).



Treaty 6 participant

## Monday

In the **International Collage Workshop**, participants were prompted to visually represent what gender based violence looks like in their community. Using found images from magazines, this visual arts activity inspired much creativity with images, to show rather than tell how participants experienced and felt about these issues.

Naydene De Lange, Professor in the Faculty of Education at the Nelson

Mandela University, South Africa, facilitated the workshop.

In groups of 4-5, people shared magazines, glue and scissors as they recounted their own story through collage. They then shared the stories of their collages with the larger group.

A collective discussion ensued around emerging themes, similarities and differences, about gender based violence.



Display of collages

In the **International Stakeholders' Forum** researchers, policy makers, NGO's, civil society, and teachers came together in small groups to discuss how each stakeholder may be part of making significant change.

Nora Fyles, head of the UN Girls' Education Initiative, was an excellent facilitator for this unique interdisciplinary exploration of the roles of different actors in addressing gender based violence.

Stakeholders were prompted to reflect on how the multigenerational and transnational perspectives expressed at *Circles Within Circles* contribute to their knowledge and learning. In addition to considering new challenges or new potential solutions, stakeholders were asked to share their hopes for future actions for girl-led or youth-led organizations.

It was fascinating to hear emerging ideas on how efforts to support such change may be translated to influencing policy in these areas.



International Stakeholders' Forum

The **Speaking Back: Youth-led Perspectives on Combating Sexual Violence Art Exhibition Opening** was officiated by Lebo Moletsane, co-PI of *Networks for Change and Well-being*, and Professor in Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Brittany Jones, an Anishinabe youth mentor from Neyaashiinigmiing First Nation in South Western Ontario, co-led the exhibition run of show with Lebo.

The *Speaking Back* art exhibition showcased visual works (drawing, mapping, photovoice, cellphlms, and other material productions) representing and addressing sexual violence from Canada, South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sweden, and Russia.

Representatives from each site introduced their works, and explained the importance of creating their images. They then drew the audience's attention to particular aspects to look out for and reflect upon when viewing the images.



(L): Noluthando Mngadi presents the South African exhibition panels

On this memorable evening with dinner, performance and an open mic on the terrace, attendees were so entertained, enlivened and encouraged by special musical guests DJ PØPTRT and Dayna Danger that they broke out in dance.

With the principal focus of the conference on girl-led approaches to addressing sexual violence, the shared song and dance here, and later at the bonfire, invigorated high and hopeful collective energies.



Evening performance by Iehente Foote (L), Dayna Danger (M), and Sedalia Kawennotas Fazio (R)

## Tuesday

The **Story Lab** workshop drew participants' attention to how we listen to stories related to change in the context of safety and security. What 'lenses' can we use to process such stories? One storyteller per group offered up their narratives with the opportunity for all participants to engage with the ideas using specific 'lenses' to examine and respond to the story.

Each story was discussed in the group through the designated lenses of facts, emotion, turning points, and what's missing. A rapporteur was assigned to take note of what was deemed most compelling about the narrative and analyses.

Catherine Vanner, postdoctoral researcher with the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University, facilitated the workshop.

To summarize, group members then collectively reflected on what some of the challenges are to addressing gender-based violence, what is needed now, and what each individual hopes for change in their community.

Participants share their reflections in the Story Lab workshop



The **Cellphlming Workshop and Screening** were facilitated by Katie McEntee, postdoctoral researcher at York University. Hani Sadati, PhD candidate at McGill University, lent his media skills and savvy to supporting the digital production aspects of the workshop.

The theme, to be rendered as a public service announcement, was, "How We See It: Sending a Message about Addressing Gender-Based Violence."

Groups of ten participants each began the work by brainstorming to identify one issue for their cellphilm. Once consensus was made, the groups used the tablets to conduct research on the Internet for evidence for the problem or concern.

Identifying an audience and message was the next task: asking whom they wanted to influence, and whom they wanted to act, helped the groups decide what approach they would take to communicate their



message through creative storyboarding. Fun was clearly had by all as groups planned out the sequence for their cellphilm, some taking up acting roles, as the cellphilm began to role.

The Cellphilm Screening was followed by a facilitated discussion around main

themes, similarities and differences, and what stories we didn't see. Katie had informed participants of their right to remain off-screen and/or un-named in their cellphilm productions.

One group decided not to appear on camera though used their voices in the audio mix

to narrate their media message. Theirs was a poignantly creative rendering of metaphor and message: small stones thrown against a larger rock, and with each strike the harm inflicted by gender-based violence, often invisible, was made audibly visible.

## Wednesday

**Imagining a Future: Creating a Girlfesto** was a collaboratively reflective activity, facilitated by Marnina Gonick, Anuradha Dugal and Claudia Mitchell. In her opening remarks for the session, Claudia reviewed some truly impressive highlights of the retreat – the different genres of creative productions, and the different messages generated.

Ten groups of 7 people per group were formed and took off on a 'walk about,'

viewing all the artful messages that had been created over the course of *Circles Within Circles*. Paying attention to what stood out for each individual, groups then spoke informally about the content and meaning of these aspects of the art works.

From this discussion the groups generated themes to describe what they saw and reflected on using prompts. One person from each smaller circle shared the main ideas and themes with the larger circle.



*Imagining a Future activity and What Needs to Change*

Generating the **Girlfesto** was the final and most astonishing participant collaboration. Each group generated a list of declarations – statements that concretized the themes that surfaced in the art walk and the discussions that followed. There was no fading of creative energy here; lists were powerfully formulated as mottos, slogans and artwork.

It was decided collectively that the 'Montebello Manifesto' would be named the Girlfesto – a shared group statement

of ideas and recommendations to take forward. I was randomly selected to type out the collective list of declarations, and I found it hard to keep up with the fervent pace of speakers reading their lists aloud. I felt like I was witnessing a spontaneously inspired performance.

With the typed text projected onto a screen for all to see as the Girlfesto was being generated, the speakers built momentum echoing their group's mettle as they forewent the microphone and raised their voices.

## Reflections

Having the opportunity to participate in this transnational retreat, I was particularly struck by the girl-led discussions about resistance; especially resonant, resisting gender norms that intersect with negative stereotypes about Indigeneity.

A group of young Indigenous women, the *Sohki Iskeewew* (Strong Women) from the Saskatoon/Treaty 6/Traditional Homeland of the Metis, donned red ribbon skirts that they had made by hand – the color red to honour Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

I witnessed many interactions in which Indigenous girls challenged others in the room – especially non-Indigenous women – to think more critically about the issues affecting their lives.

We heard from one group of Indigenous young women from South Africa, called *Girls Leading Change*, about 'saying goodbye to the obedient, submissive woman.' Some other poignant rallying calls:

*“Being Indigenous is not a risk factor (for gender-based violence); colonialism is a risk factor”;* and,

*“The translation of resilience in Indigenous terms means resistance and creating a positive self-identity.”*

Conclusively, 'self-love' was an affecting refrain heard throughout the work, often spoken by Indigenous youth mentors to the girls as an act of resistance to a culture of violence towards Indigenous peoples, especially women and girls.

# Networks4Change Girls' Summit

March 9-11, 2018  
Durban, South Africa

For the first time since the *Networks4Change* project began, the *Girls Leading Change* and the *Young Girls Leading Change* from the Eastern Cape, the *Social Ills Fighters* from Loskop and the *Leaders for Young Women's Success* from Khethani all came together in Durban from 9-11 March, 2018.



After the opening dinner on the Friday evening, we began a very full day on Saturday with Zethu and Asisipho from the GLC facilitating an exciting activity challenging sexual and gender-based violence and the stigma of menstruation using sanitary pads.

We then heard presentations from each group about the work that they are doing in their communities. Fortunately, Lotta Brannström was able to be with us to talk about the work she is doing with girls in Sweden. Naydene then led us in collage activity focusing on what GBV looks like in our communities.



## Welcome!



Catherine Vanner

Catherine Vanner is an education researcher and practitioner who joined the Participatory Cultures Lab as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in June, 2018. Her research uses participatory qualitative methods to examine the relationship between education and gender violence in multiple country contexts.

Her Ph.D. research at the University of Ottawa examined the link between learning processes and gender violence in primary schools in Kenya, and identified that high-stakes testing can lead to an increase in multiple forms of gender violence.

She has worked as an Education Advisor at Plan International Canada and the Canadian International Development Agency (now Global Affairs Canada) and is currently the Co-Chair of the Comparative International Education Society Gender and Education Standing Committee.

Catherine's postdoctoral research at McGill University examines the experience of teaching and learning about gender violence issues in Canadian secondary schools and involving both students and teachers.



# Networks4Change Fieldsites

Here we present updates on fieldsites set up in Canada and South Africa.

## Khethani (South Africa)

Leaders for Young Women's Success

The L4YWS organised an event for Youth Day in South Africa. Youth Day is a national holiday in South Africa that takes place on 16 June every year to commemorate the 1976 Soweto Uprising during which police opened fire on young people engaged in protest action against the apartheid government. The event took place in the Khethani community hall. The programme included spoken word poetry, traditional and modern dancing, and a short drama.

In August, the Leaders worked really hard with Naydene to develop policy posters and action briefs to support their advocacy, and policy and social change work.



(L): The Leaders for Young Women's Success Youth Day event in Khethani

(R): Discussing policy posters and action briefs at Khethani



## Paterson (South Africa)

Ntosh Yamile

### The First Dialogue with Parents

The parents were very happy to be invited to the *Young Girls Leading Change* (YGLC) dialogue and to be more informed about the girls' work. Before attending the meeting one mother said,

*"We thought Networks for Change is a project working with girls only and doesn't include older women because we never attended any meetings."*

YGLC parents were very open and keen to share their knowledge and experiences about gender-based violence and how it affects their households and community. One of the parents said,

*"As parents we do not know what to say to our children because they do not listen to us, they are constantly looking at their phones."*

From this engagement, parents promised to try to erase the intergenerational challenges and to make time to listen more and talk less with their children. By doing so, the parents are hoping that their children will be open to talk about their boyfriends or anything with them.

### The Second Dialogue with Parents and the Girls Presenting

The girls felt too intimidated to present their work to their parents. For that reason, none of the girls wanted to present first but one of the girls was confident to read the first presentation slide. During the presentation, I observed that girls were not comfortable

reading words like sex and showing the video named "After being raped". One of the parents disrupted the presenters and said,

*"I know you are not comfortable presenting in front of us but please be assured that you are doing the right thing."*

Hence, the girls continued showing their work with happy and confident faces. For that reason, the dialogue started in good spirit, where everyone was eager to participate. At the end, the parents blamed themselves for being silent but indicated that they were willing to learn how to be open and do good to their children.

It was at this meeting that the parents indicated that they wanted to have an event for Women's Day in August!

## The March and Dialogue on Women's Day

YGLC, parents and interested members from the community took the lead throughout the march because they wanted to raise awareness about gender-based violence against girls and women. Police officers were also in

support of the march, they walked and sang along with the marchers.

During the dialogue, parents engaged very well responding to the three open ended questions. The responses on the right are direct quotes from some of the parents.

One of the speakers emphasized that, it is the responsibility of the community to take the lead and support the YGLC and see what can be done to build a community without violence.

*"The girls are following the steps of the strong women that fought for us in 1956".*

## Young Girls Leading Change

### Marching to Raise Awareness of Gender-based Violence

On Women's Day in August, the YGLC, their parents and family members, as well as other community members, gathered in front of the police station in the small town of Paterson, to march to raise awareness of gender-based violence.

Typical at a march is the singing of rousing songs, in this instance songs about how girls and women wanted to be respected and wanted to be free to live their lives without fearing some boys and men. Ntomboxolo Yamile, with the YGLC, led the group in song as more and more people arrived. The messages on the placards the group carried, clearly stated what women wanted.

They spoke confidently in English and their mother tongue, being able to express themselves, their concerns and experiences as young girls leading change to their community. Their presentation was well received with praise coming from the teachers and parents who attended.

At 10:30 the group set off, still singing and waving their placards. We had gained permission from the police who also escorted us on the march to the community hall. One police member drove behind us in the police vehicle, while three others marched with us, calling people to join the march, engaging people on the way handing out pamphlets on gender-based violence and talking to them.

By the time we arrived at the community hall, the numbers had grown



YGLC leading a march in the town of Paterson to raise awareness of gender-based violence



Ntomboxolo Yamile, PhD candidate at Nelson Mandela University, engaging with the audience

considerably and we were singing with gusto! The parents had prepared the community hall, cleaning it, and setting out the chairs and tables. The YGLC displayed their policy posters on the wall as an exhibition of their messages to the community.

It was in this atmosphere that the community dialogue began. There were several speakers: a reverend opened with prayer, the ward councillor spoke about the need for fathers to work with their sons, the police sergeant spoke about breaking the silence and reporting

the violence, a female relative of one of the girls spoke about how women's rights are violated in marriages.

The YGLC talked about their work, grappling with gender-based violence, making cellfilms of how they saw GBV in their community, and then making policy posters to make the message visible, complemented by a set of action briefs to articulate what they and the community could do to stop gender-based violence.

The day was concluded with opportunity for dialogue, with the audience



responding to the presentations! It was lovely to see one of the mothers of the YGLC acting as MC and holding the event together! This was, after all, an event initiated by the YGLC and their parents.

We had as guests three of the Girls Leading Change members, Takatso,

Bongi and Sandisiwe, who are now teaching in schools and who travelled to join us in Paterson.

We also had four guests from Eastern Africa, who are postgraduate students of CERMESA, and who also wanted to speak out against gender-based violence. One of them, Nelson, stood up

and thanked the community for hosting them, and commending the community for speaking about gender-based violence, concluding that they had learnt a lot which they will take home to Kenya and Uganda.

All in all, a great Women's Day and a great gathering of amazing people!



(L): YGLC talking to the audience about the gender violence work

(R): Three Girls Leading Change (now teachers) joined the YGLC for the march and the community event!



## North-West University (South Africa)

### Sadiyya Haffejee

**Research Title: A Visual Participatory Exploration of the Resilience Processes of Black African Girls Who Have Been Sexually Abused**

In my study, I explored the resilience processes of seven black African adolescent girls who have been

sexually abused. To this end I employed an instrumental case study design and generated data using a range of participatory visual methods (PVMs). In so doing, I also considered the potential of participatory visual methods in resilience research.

This study produced novel insights about the resilience processes of sexually abused adolescent girls and the utility of PVMs. In particular, it highlighted the role of individual agency and drew

attention to the role of the social ecology in both disabling and enabling positive adaptation.

My PhD research project was successfully completed in 2017 and I graduated in May 2018. To date, outputs from this research includes three publications; one in a peer reviewed indexed journal and two in internationally published scholarly volumes. Two additional articles are under review.

### Yolandé Coetzer

**Research Title: Historically Disadvantaged Youth Negotiating for Resilience Resources to Navigate Towards Violence Prevention**

My study applied participatory visual methods to explore the social ecology of resilience in a rural Free State community. The purpose of my study was to investigate how visual messages created and delivered by South African youth within a rural Free State community can lessen violence aimed at them.

Eleven historically disadvantaged young women and men aged 18-

24 participated in this study. Their messages foreground resilience resources. Through employing PVM, the historically disadvantaged young adults communicated that they have a need to collaborate and co-negotiate with their specific social ecology stakeholders to be "kept away" from violence.

My study promoted understanding of the protective factors historically disadvantaged young adults need in order to be better protected against violence in their community as well as facilitated dialogue between young adults and their social ecology in

the hope to activate social change. I developed a violence prevention toolkit that includes the specific types of education strategies voiced by the historically disadvantaged young women/men in my study.

I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to have been part of the *Networks4Change* project. The project's rationale and purpose, together with Linda Theron's support and guidance, not only awakened academic potential within me, but also a greater sense of awareness regarding my responsibility to activate change in my community.



## Loskop (South Africa)

### Social Ills Fighters

The 21<sup>st</sup> of March is Human Rights Day in South Africa. This annual national holiday commemorates the Sharpeville Massacre during which police opened fire on and killed 69 people engaged in a peaceful protest of the apartheid government's pass laws.

The Social Ills Fighters (SIFs) held an awareness march and community dialogue on Human Rights day this year to raise awareness about sexual and gender-based violence in their community, particularly forced and early marriage.

(Above right): The Leaders for Young Women Success supporting the Social Ills Fighters

(R): Some of the messages on the placards were in IsiZulu and some in English



In June, the SIFs were invited to participate in a Municipality event for Youth Day. With some of their male friends, the group engaged in a public debate on the pros and cons of early marriage and dropping out of school.



(Above and right): Community members from Loskop at the dialogue







On the **first day** of the workshop we began with ice-breaker games and snacks to introduce the girls and researchers to each other. A discussion began about the cellphilm, photo voice and community mapping activities the group would be doing throughout the week. The girls were also introduced to the *Networks4Change* project.

The group brainstormed a list of issues that they felt are important to Inuit girls in Rankin Inlet, and that could be the focus of a cellphilm. In their deliberations the group made some links between safety in the community, personal safety and food security.

It is well documented that food prices in Northern communities are a serious issue and an important factor of life in the North. The group decided on calling their philm “The Price is too High,” playing on both the actual price of food in their community as well as the social costs of food insecurity.

The girls planned out a series of locations in the community for shooting

their video that included the land-mark Inukshuk that stands on a hill above Rankin Inlet, the two grocery stores (The Northern and the Co-op), and a lake bordering the community. The shooting and video editing took place into the second and third day of the workshop.

The video opens with shots of the girls holding up their posters with the philm’s title and a statement about their concerns about food insecurity in their community. The girls recorded themselves throat singing two songs as the back-ground vocals to the philm’s introduction. A series of shots in the grocery stores show different girls holding up different items such as a green pepper, a bag of flour, a bag of sugar and stating the prices (for example, a large bag of flour is \$50). The philm ends with one of the girls, speaking into the camera, making a strong statement about food insecurity and its connection to social safety.

On the **fourth day** the girls began the photo voice and community mapping exercises. The group went into the

community to capture pictures that answered the following questions:

*What do you like about your community?*

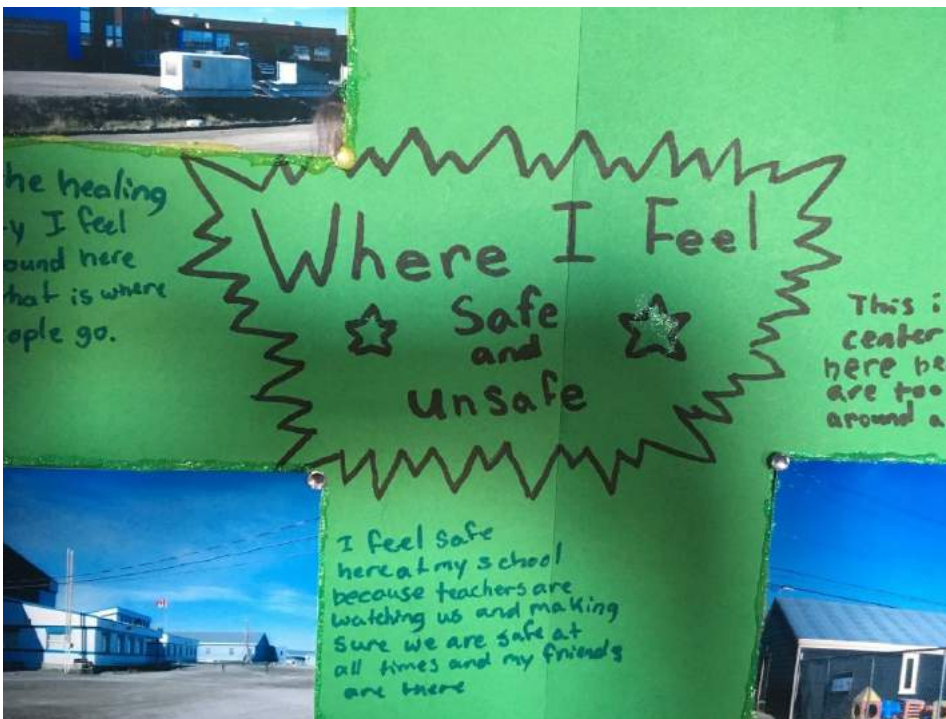
*What do you wish you could change about your community?*

*Where do you feel safe or unsafe in your community?*

The girls used the printer and art supplies to create individual posters. Home was often identified as a site of safety while the local legion was identified as unsafe, due to the alcohol that is consumed there.

Interestingly, the local youth center was also identified as an un-safe space for girls. Then the girls claimed the office space by decorating and setting up for a community presentation.

Parents and community members were invited on the last evening to enjoy a pizza social. The girls welcomed the community and presented their philm and posters. Each girl was presented with a certificate for participating in the project.



Poster: Where I feel safe and unsafe in my community



Girls editing their video



## Eskasoni (Canada)

Linda Liebenberg

Gwe'!

Our research and dissemination work over the past three years in our respective groups is starting to come together as one. Drawing on the findings each of

our groups has generated, we are now able to give more attention to sharing these findings with our community and with others.

During the past eight months, we have been working on all sorts of creative ways of sharing findings.

For Valentine's Day 2018, we baked 1,000 cookies, packed them up in pairs,

and distributed to them throughout the community with an invitation to share a cookie with a friend and visit our website.

Given the challenges that winter can pose when the electricity fails we also donated cell phone power banks and flash lights (all with our website address on) to Eskasoni Mental Health Services. These items were included in emergency packs that were distributed throughout the community to those in need.

Because of the concerns raised in the study about having a safe space to workout, we donated exercise mats as well as sparring equipment to the Access Open Minds Eskasoni Youth Centre. These items are now used for weekly fitness and self-defense classes for girls and women in the community.

We also contributed numerous books focused on relational health as well as healing from sexual and gender-based violence to the Access Open Minds Eskasoni Youth Centre library and related counselling services.



Dissemination activities

## Colouring Book for Survivors of GBV

A bigger project that we have been working on is a Mi'kmaw version of a coloring in book for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

The book is an adaptation of one developed by the Office of Sexual Violence Support and Education at Ryerson University. That original book is called *We Believe You*, created by Farrah Khan, Tesni Ellis, Kirsty Pazeck-Smith, and Karen Campos Castillo.

We started the process at the end of 2017 by holding a drawing competition in the community for images reflecting the seven sacred teachings (hope, truth, wisdom, humility, courage, honesty, and respect).

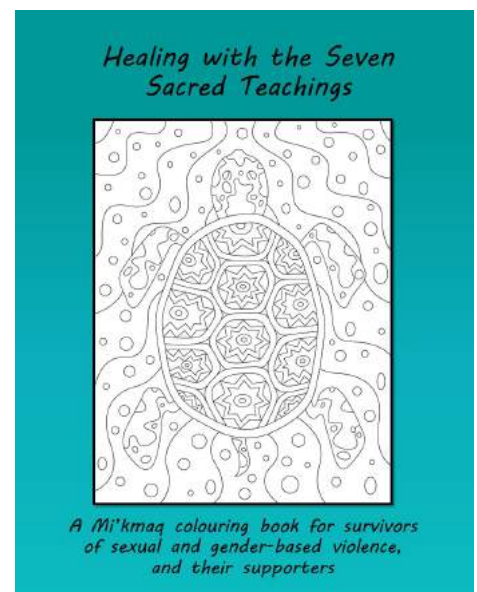
The winning images were then passed on to a local graphic design company (Indigenize Creative Solutions) where Kaylyn and Cassidy Bernard transformed them into line drawings for the book.

Karen Bernard (the wonderful elder who has been partnering with us on the research since the very beginning and who suggested the coloring in book project) provided us with statements about each of the seven sacred teachings. These teaching statements, along with the reflective statements, were translated into Mi'kmaw by Michael R. Denny. We are very excited that the book is now available on our website:

<http://changethesilence.org/>

We are hoping to hold an official launch later this year, which of course will

provide us with another opportunity to share even more of our findings. Until then however, we are also working on developing a resilience forest.



Colouring Book

## Resilience Trees

Over the past three years we have explored the causes of sexual violence using problem trees. In the process though we turned the concept around and developed a series of resilience trees to explore what is needed to stay strong on the face of high rates of violence and what is needed to engage in better prevention and intervention of sexual and gender-based violence. We are now working with *Indigenize Creative Solutions* to bring our trees together into a forest.

The trunk of each tree highlights what the various resilience elements look like. For example, what resilience in the face of high rates of violence looks like. The root systems of the trees reflect what is needed to develop and support these resilience elements, while the branches hold the consequences of these resilience elements.

We believe that bringing these trees together into a forest, creates a landscape in which the consequential “fruit” falling from the branches will feed into a cycle where the roots are better nourished and in turn can better support the resilience elements.

Briefly, both trees highlight the importance of a wholistic and collective response to raising and supporting happy, healthy young people in the community. Both trees call for intergenerational connections that extend through family, to community (including teachers, other service providers and community leaders). They point to the need for these relationships to be supportive, stable and trusting.

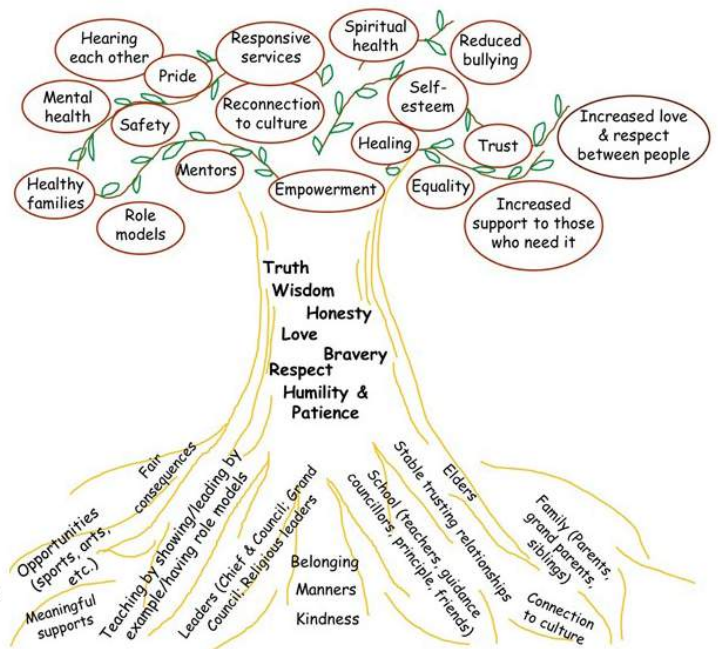
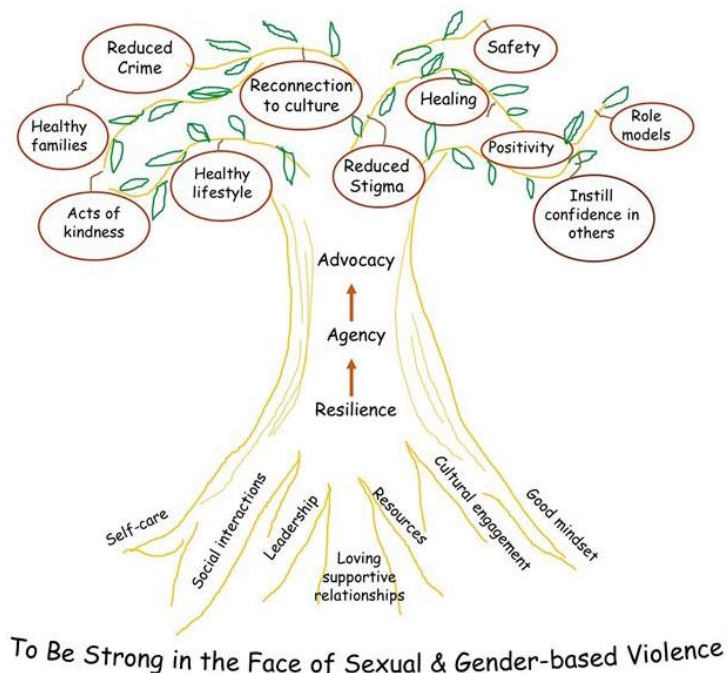
Relationships should also be spaces where youth can connect with culture, and find opportunities for personal development, including experiencing fair consequences for behavior that

allow for life lessons to be learned in positive ways.

Similarly, both trees show that when young people are supported in these ways, their resulting engagement with each other and the broader community has important consequences.

These consequences include community healing from intergenerational violence rooted in cultural genocide and ongoing systemic racism. Additionally, as the community heals and reconnects with culture and spirituality, there is an increase in healthy behaviors and lifestyles and a reduction in various types of crime (including interpersonal violence).

Once we have images for the forest finalized, we will integrate them into posters and brief reports for service providers within our community as well as the policy makers that are linked to this service work.



### Seven Sacred Teachings

*Teliaqew'e'l: Truth*  
*Kesaltimkewey: Love*  
*Ketleweywaqn: Honesty*  
*Mikikno'ti: Courage*

*Penoqe'k: Humility*  
*Kepmite'taqn: Respect*  
*Ns+tu'o'qn: Wisdom*



## Sisters Rising (British Columbia, Canada)

University of Victoria,  
Unceded Lkwungen Territories



**Team:**  
Chantal Adams  
Shantelle Moreno  
Anna Chadwick

Sandrina de Finney  
Kathryn McLeod  
Amber Lewis  
Kyla Elliott

### Honouring our Sisters, Rising Together in Spirit and Dignity

Our Sisters Rising team ([sistersrising.uvic.ca](http://sistersrising.uvic.ca)) extends a warm welcome from the west coast of Turtle Island (British Columbia).

Since the last newsletter, our Sisters Rising team has continued to deliver workshops and activities. To facilitate knowledge mobilization and further connections, we hosted a larger, all-day event at the First Peoples House (unceded Lekwungen and WSÁNEĆ homelands, Victoria, British Columbia).

This event supported Sisters Rising participants from seven different First Nations communities across BC to meet each other, share emerging research findings, and create new artwork and a video story.

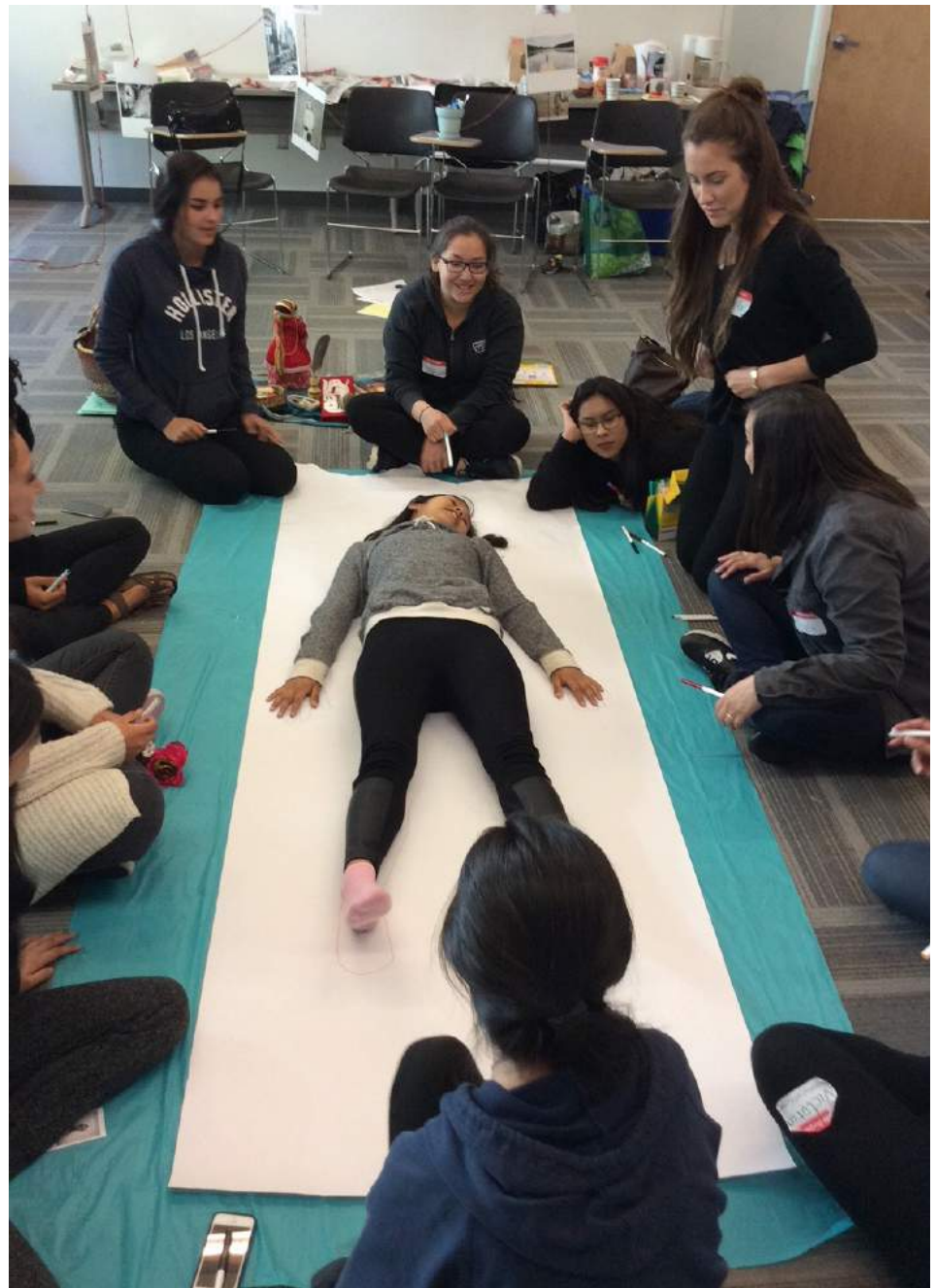
The video can be viewed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceQsFUosZqE&t=111s>

Our workshops continue to focus on critical issues of colonialism, gender-based violence, kinship, and land and body sovereignty.

We are committed to upholding our values and ethics of respecting, honouring, and asking for the consent of our participants throughout the whole process.

Our work is focused on upholding the dignity, resurgence, blanketing, and honouring of Indigenous people. Our purpose is to (re)center Indigenous teachings and ways of being with regards to gender and sexuality specific to the communities we come from and work within.



### Circles Within Circles

We were very fortunate to travel as a group to attend the *Circles Within Circles* event in the unceded territory of the Anishinaabe and Weskarini. Our Sisters Rising delegation included youth

participants from eight First Nations across BC, as well as four research facilitators, two community chaperones, and one very cute baby (Matthew) who just turned 1 in August!

## Shantelle Moreno, Research Facilitator

Boarding the plane to Montreal on July 7<sup>th</sup> with our Sisters Rising team, I found myself filled with an excited, nervous energy. I realized how important this opportunity was for our participants. Many of the youth we work alongside live in rural and isolated communities, tucked away in some of the most Northern regions of BC.

This meant that many girls and their volunteer chaperones had travelled for days, taking boats and smaller airplanes to finally meet us in Vancouver to start the final leg of our journey to the *Circles Within Circles* event.

In the days that followed, strengthened connections were forged for our small but mighty Sisters Rising group. Our participants had the chance to explore Montreal, taking in the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of many different

cultures and diverse ways of life.

We then spent 4 days in Montebello for the *Circles Within Circles* event, which provided opportunities for our girls to learn and grow as individuals – actively participating in conversations about gender-based violence and the ongoing impacts of colonization, sharing their experiences as Indigenous girls and young women with people from all around the world.

Speaking for the first time in front of an international audience, including the sharing of songs and drumming passed down from family and kin, was an incredible feat.

As the days went on, I was privileged to see the bonds of friendship and sisterhood being woven together. Watching the confidence of the youngest members of our team increase with each passing day – including the power

of raising our voices proudly in song and community – was an honour to witness and participate in.

This event solidified my already existing knowledge that Indigenous girls and women are experts on their lives and experiences, and are crucial knowledge-holders and change-makers. It reminded me that we are always more strong and powerful when we are together.

I was recently asked the question,

### *What is your medicine?*

I was heartened by the answer that came to mind at this profound inquiry. The sisterhood of Sisters Rising – our connections, community, love, support, trust and encouragement of one another- are all movements toward the decolonial futurity that I dream of.

May we all find such good medicine in the beauty and love of sisterhood.

“

### **Sisters Rising participants reflect on their experiences during the *Circles Within Circles* retreat in Montebello**

*It is disheartening to know that gender-based colonial violence is not only a problem within the western world, but throughout the world. Circles Within Circles really put into perspective that gender-based colonial violence is even more prevalent internationally, or perhaps just better hidden within our own communities. It meant a lot to attend the event, as part of the Sisters Rising team, and see the work being done internationally to combat sexual violence - to feel empowered as part of the solution.*

*The morning of the first full day was the best for me, meeting everyone and learning from the presentations across sites (although trigger warnings would have been appreciated before certain pieces of work). Admittedly, I did not participate in many of the workshops because stronger facilitators were needed. I would have been inclined to participate more if workshops were led by ladies/youth from the different sites (i.e. Eskasoni/Saskatoon).*

*My biggest hardship is not being able to turn to my culture during hard times, the same way my friends of colour can turn to theirs. Colonial institutions have stripped me from my culture, and being raised in an urban setting has made it hard to learn about where I come from, and our traditional practices. Sisters Rising has taught me that it's okay to feel disconnected sometimes. I have built my own small community with the Sisters Rising team, one which I can turn to during my hardship.*

*We especially appreciated seeing all of the stories shared by the South African young women and men. These were shared over Skype, and in their videos, artwork and presentations. It was truly amazing to see the powerful work being done; their work connects to so many of our own issues but also teaches us something new. It was nice to connect with Indigenous youth from other countries to remind us we are all in the same struggle. We all deserve to be decolonized of colonial violence.*

”

## Anna Chadwick, Facilitator

The *Circles Within Circles* event was an unforgettable time to connect with the young women of Sisters Rising and meet with youth and researchers from across Canada and South Africa.

Spending time with the girls of Sisters Rising and our team of researchers in Quebec was transformative.

Being part of this team, I am reminded of how compassionate collective energy ignites courage to speak about critical issues and envision ideas for change.

I was moved by the girls' remarkable presence as they expressed their creativity through music, photography, drumming, singing, and “dance offs!” The girls showed tremendous courage to speak in front of an audience at an

international forum and engage with one another to discuss issues they are affected by in their communities.

This circle of sisters, aunts and mothers truly rise with each other in their compassion and care for one another. I have such gratitude to belong to such a transformative group of women working towards Indigenous resurgence and honoring dignity.



## Chantal Adams, Facilitator

I echo what my Sisters/co-research facilitators have stated. Being witness to peoples' reflections, revelations, and resurgence is such an honour. I continually learn from the young ones that I work with, they truly are a gift from the Creator. The flexibility, creativity, laughter, compassion, and courage that I have seen from the girls is such an important teaching for me as both a facilitator and person in general. Seeing the connections that they have built during the Circles event was very powerful and it reminds me about how we have strength in community. Relational work requires that we 'meet people where they are at.' I am very proud of our girls for contributing what they could at this event; as mentioned, they spoke in front of a large international audience and some of them sang and drummed as well. They shared their voices, which told the audience "we exist and we are here. Our knowledge is valid, real and concrete" (Absolon, 2011, p. 12).

As my colleagues have spoken about the events, I would like to take a moment to share my personal experience. Throughout my experience with Sisters Rising, I have felt very empowered, loved, dignified, and honoured as I have been encouraged to lead with my Indigenous ways of being. I feel truly blessed to be involved in grounded Indigenous research that does the same for our participants and all our relations. From my experience, Sisters Rising dignifies, honours, respects, and asks for the consent of our participants and our relations.

This work could not be done without the Sisters Rising team coming together, helping each other, using our own individual and collective strengths, and providing a loving sisterhood. I am very grateful for our team and cannot express my gratitude enough. Here is to learning so much from them and alongside them; may our journey together continue and stay strong.



## Sisters Rising participant

*I believe Native women face things like racism, sexualization and a lot of discrimination. For example, our trip to Montebello was truly amazing, but while at the resort my sister and I still received a lot of sideways glances and treatment from a variety of guests. It made me realize that even though we were supposed to be there, we are not treated equally as Native women. On another note, at the pool one Caucasian lady was making plans with her kids and casually commented, "but first mommy needs a drink". In my opinion, a Native mom could never make a comment like this and be seen as funny; rather we would be judged negatively and it would bring up stereotypes. These stereotypes are part of the reason why Native children have the highest rates of being in foster care in the whole country. We are never given a second chance. If it were a Native mom or family in that situation, a mother would be investigated for neglect, might lose her children and have to jump through a series of hoops to get them back. Our children get removed more than any other children in Canada because Native parents are judged to be not good enough. I believe that letting it happen with little to no action is what allows people to think this way. Some of the strengths our Native women have is strength of spirit, strong communication, and moving forward to work towards what they believe, even with bumps in the road such as racism and gender discrimination. In my experience with Sisters Rising and at Circles Within Circles, it was just amazing to see all of these Native girls and women come together to talk about their experiences to heal and educate one another.*

## Next Steps (Sandrina de Finney)

We have been very honoured to share the work we have been doing on our [website](#), which features our [videos](#).

Our writing, website and videos have been featured at several international conferences, and in post-secondary classes in child and family programs across BC, Yukon, Ontario, Texas,

Hawaii, and Massachusetts. We have been invited to present in numerous classrooms, at an educational fair and symposium, as well as on Sisters Rising panels at the Critical Ethnic Studies Association conference, the Association of Cultural Studies, and international Child and Youth Care conferences, among others. We also have a few new [online publications](#).



## Upcoming Indigenous-led Sisters Rising Forum!

We received SSHRC Connection and CIHR knowledge mobilization grants to host a transdisciplinary Indigenous forum in the fall of 2018 at the First Peoples House in Victoria. This forum will bring together our girls, youth, Elders, and community, academic and front-line collaborators in sharing Indigenous responses to violence, and re-centering our teachings of gender wellbeing. The event will include a public, interactive walk-through art gallery. We are ecstatic that some of our South African, *Networks4Change* and

Native Youth Sexual Health Network partners will be joining us! As always, a big thank you to Claudia, Lebo, and the *Networks4Change* team for all their support.

To our ancestors, guides, families, communities, kinship, and everyone who has supported and contributed to Sisters Rising, we hold great appreciation and gratitude for your commitment throughout this journey. Here is to the next generation of our Sisters who are Rising in dignity.

**In good spirit,  
the Sisters Rising Team**



## Treaty 6, Saskatoon (Canada)

Kari Dawn Wuttunee & Jennifer Altenberg

There is something to be said about the bond between girls, their sewing machines, and the moon. The Treaty 6 site, located on the traditional homeland of the Metis, also known as Saskatoon, gathered for our second round of funding to further explore our ideas about: Indigenous Girls Utopia and self-love as our form of resistance to violence and colonialism.

We had some challenging beginnings, having to make decisions to minimize the size of our group. Many of the girls were disappointed that they were not invited back, however, the eight that stayed on continued to display commitment, dedication, and growth with their emotional and personal wellbeing.

The focus of this round was to create, compose, and explore our spiritual identities as Indigenous women. As in all our sessions, we started with check-in's and a women's smudge.

A **smudge** is a ceremony where we burn sage to open our hearts and our minds to the work we do together.

We had many highlights together including our Red Ribbon Skirt creation, with the empowering and always inspirational Tala Tootoosis. She shared her personal story with the girls and we talked about rape culture and how Indigenous girls need to feel safe in ceremony and on the land. Everything happens for a reason.

Tala found personal strength in our time together and was impressed with the work the girls were doing and the ribbon skirts we created together to honour our murdered and missing sisters. We talked about how/when we do this self-love work, our ancestor's feel us, hear us, and walk with us. They prayed for us to be "speaking back" to these forms

of oppression that we face as Urban Indigenous women.

Another highlight was our trip to Duck Lake, Saskatchewan, where we participated in a Full Moon Ceremony with two-spirited elder and knowledge keeper Marjorie Beaucauge. This

road trip was full of curiosity, giggles, blueberry tea, prayer ties, fire and songs. Each one of us left the fire feeling a little stronger and more aware of our power as women. Our emotions are valid, our tears are cleansing, and Grandmother Moon gives us strength to keep going.



Treaty 6 girls visit Montreal

### Circles Within Circles

Our preparation work for our big trip to Montreal was an affirmation to the girls that the work we have been doing is important, meaningful and should be shared. We decided together that we wanted to publish our writing and art work. The girls each chose a piece to showcase at the *Circles Within Circles* Gathering.

Through, poetry, narrative writing, photovoice, and dance the girls were nothing short of remarkable in sharing their personal stories to the larger group in Montreal. Thanks to outside funding from the AMISKUSEES Foundation and Fire Creek Gas Station we were able to stay in Montreal for two extra days.

The highlights from our time in Montreal was ziplining with Sarah Flicker, our late night adventures, shopping, the food, and our trip to McGill to conduct interviews with each of the girls. During

the interviews, the girls shared how important this group and experience has been for them. For many, this was their first time flying, leaving home without family and we experienced memories that will last a lifetime.

Upon our return home, we dedicated three evening sessions to complete our writing and create more art that spoke back to the violence that we are experiencing or witnessing within our community in Saskatoon.

Together we brainstormed a comprehensive list which identified what violence the girls see in our community. Some of the forms of violence that we are continuing to resist are catcalling on the street, online, and at school.

We are also worried about being raped or abducted because there has been an influx of girls and children being approached in the Pleasant Hill area, the known "hood" of Saskatoon.





The girls were able to go to a larger NGO sharing circle, where they brought this to other organizations and the public's attention outside our circle.

The girls also wanted to bring attention to the fact that many girls, women, boys, and men in Saskatoon are selling their bodies for shoes, cellphones, money, clothes, drugs, iPads, and needles. They also wanted to acknowledge that for many, trading sex leads to further drug use and suicide because of the

shame and embarrassment. As the girls would say, "the struggle is real" for many of our people and each one of us is doing what we can to continue to resist these mechanisms of poverty and colonial oppression.

The girls want to make it clear, that even though they struggle, we struggle, and witness these violent day to day actions, that they still feel strong and proud of who they are. They have many people they can look up to in their families and

community and that they have hopes and dreams that they are working towards. For most of our girls, they will be the first in their families to graduate high school, go to university, not have a teen pregnancy, and be clean from drugs or alcohol.

Our group of girls never want our sessions to end, the last day is always the hardest because we know we won't have our weekly circles, activities, and time together. Fortunately, we have some collaborative time together in the fall, we have been invited to Sturgeon Lake First Nations to co-facilitate a weekend workshop on Self-Love and Cellphilming.

This invitation is another affirmation that the girls are empowered, educated, and ready to inspire others to envision a community, society, and world where women and girls are able to move freely, speak openly, and be themselves without the fear or shame that many of us carry.

This is what our Indigenous Girls Utopia is all about! Until next time. Treaty 6 out!

*Hiy Hiy ekosi!*



Treaty 6 girls and their ribbon skirts



# Networks Events

While girls, young women and gender non-conforming young people are enrolling in education in ever increasing numbers, gender inequality, and, in particular, its manifestations in violence against girls and women, and related health issues (most notably HIV infections and poor reproductive health outcomes), continue to have a negative effect on their participation and success in education. For those in rural communities, poverty, geographic isolation, and legal and cultural frameworks intersect in the regulation of their lives.

Significantly, not a week passes by without major national and local newspaper headlines screaming about another girl, young woman or black lesbian being raped, murdered or battered, or in more recent times, take their own lives.

This dialogue took its cue from the 2015 exhibition, *Speaking Back*, held at the [Goodman Gallery](#) in Johannesburg and curated by Natasha Becker. The exhibition sought to:

*“Reveal deeply significant dimensions of culture and subjectivity, history and struggle, by bringing women together as diverse artists to find out what each in her artistically signified yet gendered/racial/sexual/cultural singularity is offering to the world, to us all ... Speaking Back prioritise[d] narration—the use of particularly chosen aesthetic practices to convey a story to an audience”* (n.p.).

We invited young people and adult allies and feminists to come together to ‘speak back’ in resistance to the silencing they often face in the context of violence in the various spaces they occupy in our country.

As the young gender activist, Simamkele Dlakavu wrote in her City Press Guest Column (March 26, 2017),

## New Conversations? Girls and Young Women Speak Back Against a Legacy of Gender-Based Violence in South Africa

Co-hosted by Networks4Change and Well-being and Agenda Feminist Media

*“When Black women ... talk back, their speech becomes “the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice. The violence they encounter becomes a teaching moment”* (n.p.).

The dialogue was followed by the launch of the book *Disrupting Shameful Legacies: Girls and Young Women Speaking Back Through the Arts to Address Sexual Violence* edited by Claudia Mitchell and Relebohile Moletsane (see page 21).



Langalihle Khuzwayo, spoken word poet performing a poem at the feminist dialogue



The panel at the dialogue (L to R):  
Ali Shongwe,  
Lindelwa Mthiyane,  
Nkonzo Mkhize,  
Janine Hicks  
(facilitator),  
Amanda Ngcobo

Brian Sibeko  
(standing)  
offering a  
comment in  
response to  
the panel





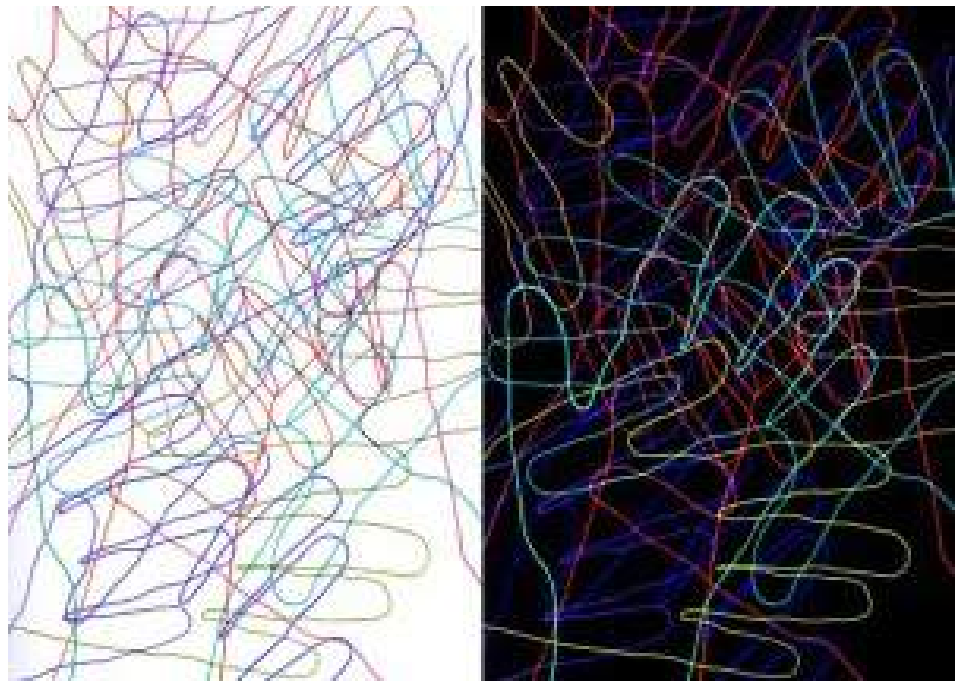
## 6<sup>th</sup> International Cellphilm Festival

**Making Community:  
Action, Activism, Advocacy, Art**

November 8, 2018 | McGill University

The organizers of this year's festival invite submissions that explore how you and your community (a small group of friends, members of a project or class, research colleagues, a global community, etc.) envision making community. You may choose to do this in view of a particular issue (climate change, violence, compassion) or, alternatively, to consider what 'making community' might mean in a context where people often struggle to find community.

Submissions should be no more than 90 seconds in length and should be uploaded to YouTube. Along with your YouTube link, we ask that you also submit a 200-300 word write-up that includes the following:



- The title of your cellphilm and its country of origin
- The names of all the cellphilm's co-producers,
- A short description of how your group went about creating the cellphilm as well as the film's connection to this year's theme.

All submissions should be sent to [thecellphilmfestival@gmail.com](mailto:thecellphilmfestival@gmail.com) by **Monday, October 22, 2018**.

## Engaging Youth and Community Responses to Sexualized Violence

**An Intergenerational Colloquium to Honour  
Indigenous Knowledges of Gender Well-being**



A research project honoring Indigenous responses to sexualized violence ([sistersrising.uvic.ca](http://sistersrising.uvic.ca))

### Hosted by Sisters Rising: Linking Body and Land Sovereignty

October 26-28, 2018 | University of British Columbia

Contesting legacies of colonial violence  
Reclaiming our gender teachings  
Centering body and land sovereignty

Join us for this free interactive forum  
First Peoples House and Cadboro Commons

Youth-led workshops, presentations and art-making by young people from Indigenous communities across British Columbia, Canada, and South Africa

Indigenous mentors (artists, Elders, activists, academics)

Interactive gallery featuring art and research findings by Indigenous youth from across the world

**October 26-27:** Our youth circle, hosting by Sisters RIsing, will include girls, young women and youth of all genders from various Indigenous communities across British Columbia, Canada, and South Africa. Spots are available for Indigenous youth and honoraria are provided. Please contact us to participate!

**Sunday October 28** is open to the public. We invite researchers, students, service providers and community members interested in seeing youth and Elder keynotes, visiting our gallery, and learning with our circle. Please register.

For questions or to register, please email [sistersrising@uvic.ca](mailto:sistersrising@uvic.ca)

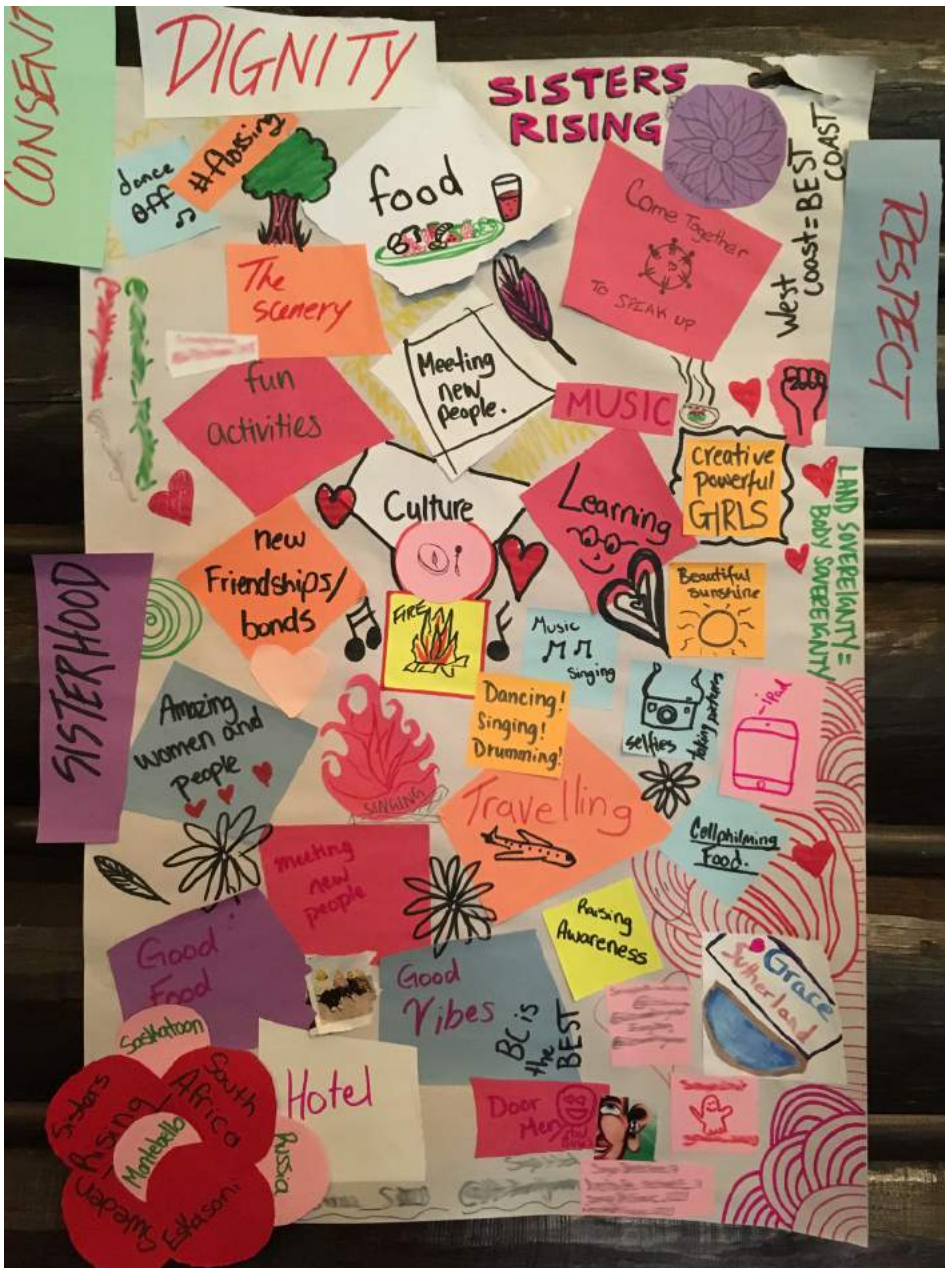
# Circles Within Circles: Girlfest

**'WE ARE UNCOMPROMISING!**

**WE WILL END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE!'**

Quebec | 8-11 July 2018

*Montebello Girlfest\**



The Montebello Girlfest comes out of *Circles Within Circles: Transnational Perspectives on Youth-led Approaches to Addressing Gender-Based Violence*, a gathering held at Montebello, Canada, from 8 - 11 July 2018. The participants drafted this Girlfest on the final day of the gathering.

The event brought together girls and young women along with researchers, representatives of national and international NGOs and policy makers from Canada, South Africa, Kenya, Sweden and Russia. It included presentations by girls and young women on what they are doing in their communities to address gender-based violence, as well as arts-based workshops, stakeholder sessions and an international exhibition, *Speaking Back: Youth-led Perspectives on Combating Sexual Violence*, made up of images from 7 countries.

The aim of this intergenerational, international gathering was for Indigenous and non-Indigenous girls and young women to engage with each other, share knowledge and practices, network, and learn from each other about participatory visual and other arts-based approaches to address gender-based violence. While gender-based violence is universal, and colonialism and patriarchy underpin discrimination and inequality, addressing it requires contextual approaches which also need to take account of sexual orientation and gender identities.

## Contributors to the Montebello Girlfest:

Indigenous Young Women's Utopia (Treaty 6 Saskatchewan, Canada) | Sisters' Rising (British Columbia, Canada) | Eskasoni (Nova Scotia, Canada) | Girls Leading Change (South Africa) | Young Girls Leading Change (South Africa) | Gender Activists (South Africa) | Social Ills Fighters (South Africa) | Leaders for Young Women's Success (South Africa) | Ange School (Sweden) | McGill University | University of Victoria | Mount Saint Vincent University | York University | Nelson Mandela University | University of KwaZulu-Natal | First Nations University | G(irls)20 | United Nations Girls Education Initiative | Canadian Women's Foundation | Pauktuutit (Inuit Women of Canada) | Gorbachev Foundation (Russia) | Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights | Trudeau Foundation Scholars



\* The Montebello Girlfest is a work-in-progress.



# We want freedom, not just safety

## STARTING POINT

The Montebello Girlfesto is premised on the belief that the inclusion of girls and young women as knowledge holders and leaders, with the mutual support of all stakeholders in addressing gender-based violence, is central to the changes required to make the dream of safer communities, where girls and women are treated equally and with respect, into a reality.

## VISION

*'We want freedom, not just safety.'*

Our vision for an ideal world without gender-based violence demands valorization of the principles of Equity, Equality, Justice and Dignity for all people. This vision is characterized by practices that celebrate diversity, using open communication and active listening. It is illustrated by the following image, created by a group of girls and young women participating in *Circles Within Circles*, to show the kind of world that they are committed to creating.

## TO REALIZE THIS VISION

### WE ALL NEED TO:

- Learn to be uncomfortable
- Recognize and acknowledge the diversity of experiences
- Hear, not just listen, especially to girls and young women
- Recognize power and privilege within our communities
- Acknowledge and address the micro-aggressions and lateral violence in our communities
- Have an open heart and open mind coming into circles of dialogue
- Share counter-narratives (including stories of success and courage)
- Reflect continuously on how practices and behaviours that enable gender-based violence can be done differently
- Love and respect each other as individuals, and celebrate each other, our similarities and differences
- Adopt a Sisters' Keeper attitude where we look out for one another, and support each other to ensure that we grow as individuals
- Recognize that boys and young men should be part of the conversations about gender-based violence

## WE URGE ALL STAKEHOLDERS:

*(International, national, provincial and local policy-makers, community leaders and non-governmental organizations)*

- To be curious, thoughtful, engaged, open, supportive, and generous in hearing the voices of girls and young women, and to be willing to engage in multilingual discussions
- To decolonize land, bodies, spirit, and nations, including Metis and their ancestral homelands: This means recognizing the connections of girls' and young women's experiences with land and water in the global context, restoring rights, land sovereignty, natural laws and freedom in order for girls and young women to exist as themselves
- To address shared and specific colonial histories and their impacts across different communities
- To create safe spaces for girls and women at various levels and in all ecologies
- To invest in resources (including resources to support arts-based methods) to support girls and young women to engage in cultural production
- To challenge and change unjust policies that enable gender-based violence
- To make policies accessible (through public digital and physical spaces and using language that is easily understood
- To track and monitor the outcomes of the work/collective efforts to address gender-based violence on individuals, communities and policies
- To foster political will from top-down and bottom-up to address gender-based violence
- To support programs and policies that help to ensure that communities are free from alcohol and substance abuse
- To ensure that culture and politics that support gender-based violence are not tolerated
- To support initiatives such as #Imnotafraidtosay (I'm not afraid to say) and #MeToo, and to not silence voices
- To create spaces, especially educational spaces for emotional, psychological,

spiritual and physical wholeness for girls and young queer people

- To respond to the narratives of girls and young women about vulnerability and support their agency
- To explore means and methods that support girls and young women to construct and communicate their understanding of gender-based violence
- To promote projects that address gender-based violence in global contexts
- To develop more ways to share different initiatives and funding opportunities (both to support girls and young women and to raise awareness about the concerns of girls and young women)
- To commit to engaging more men and boys in discussions about gender-based violence

## AS COMMUNITY MEMBERS

### WE COMMIT:

- To insist on the importance of dignity
- To support girls and young women to take action
- To recognize the importance of initiatives that take account of the work on gender-based violence in a global context; in particular, support girls and young women to participate in this work at a global level through events like *Circles Within Circles*
- To increase girls' and young women's participation as partners in policy construction
- To include boys and young men in dialogue and activism to end gender-based violence
- To hold local, national and international leaders accountable for addressing gender-based violence

## CONCLUSION

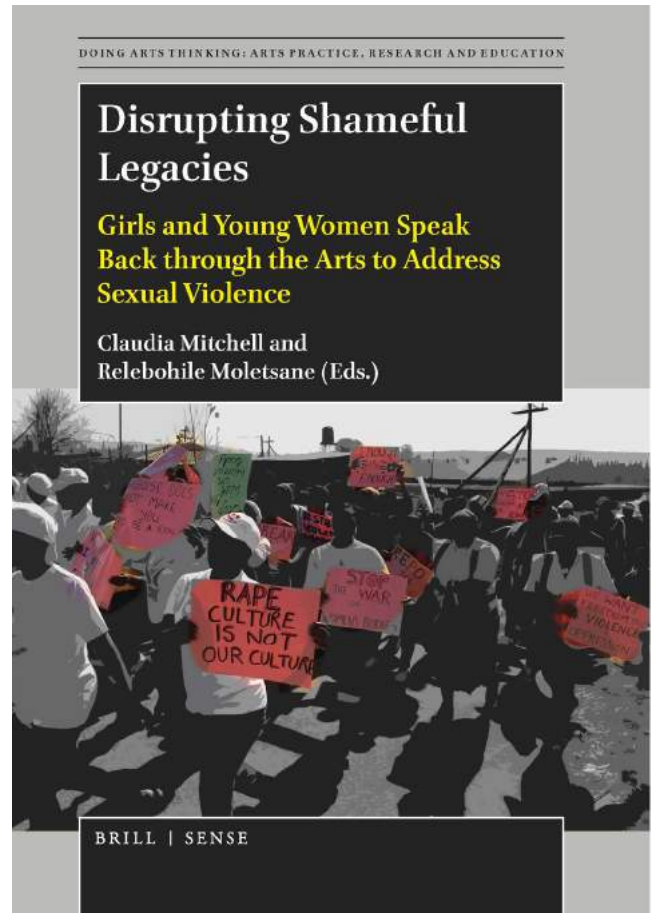
This Girlfesto acknowledges the key role that girls and young women can play in conceptualizing, planning and facilitating events related to their lives and concerns. Above all, it recognizes the importance of listening to the voices of girls and young women and emphasizes the value of girl-led and young women-led dialogue and learning opportunities.

# New Publications

**Editors:** Claudia Mitchell and Relebohile Moletsane

Much has been written in Canada and South Africa about sexual violence in the context of colonial legacies, particularly for Indigenous girls and young women. While both countries have attempted to deal with the past through Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and Canada has embarked upon its National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, there remains a great deal left to do. Across the two countries, history, legislation and the lived experiences of young people, and especially girls and young women point to a deeply rooted situation of marginalization. Violence on girls' and women's bodies also reflects violence on the land and especially issues of dispossession.

Taken as a whole, the chapters which come out of a transnational study on sexual violence suggest a new legacy, one that is based on methodologies that seek to disrupt colonial legacies, by privileging speaking up and speaking back through the arts and visual practice to challenge the situation of sexual violence. At the same time, the fact that so many of the authors of the various chapters are themselves Indigenous young people from either Canada or South Africa also suggests a new legacy of leadership for change.



## “Hamba, Thobekile”

**Rewriting the narrative of young indigenous African women in times of gendered violence**



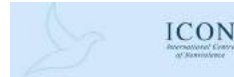
**Authors:** Sandisiwe Gaiza, Zethu Jiyana, Thina Kamnqa, Melissa Lufele, Bongwiwe Maome, Asisipho Mntonga, Takatso Mohlomi, Wandiswa Momoza, Elethu Ntsethe, Zikhona Tshiwula

First they wrote *Fourteen Times a Woman: Indigenous Stories from the Heart*. Now in this new book on the uses of collage in storytelling, *“Hamba, Thobekile”: Rewriting the Narrative of Young Indigenous African Women in Times of Gendered Violence*, many of these same young women – most of whom are now teachers in various schools in South Africa – share stories of their own work of activism and “changing the narrative.”

They chose to use collage as a tool and an entry point to the work. The workshops began with defining what collage is and the various ways of creating collage. For the collages to be produced in the workshop, the prompt: “What does it mean to be a young indigenous African woman in times of sexual violence?” was used. As they found, there is something about this art-making work that is highly conducive to reflection, conversation and debate!



## Partners



## Current Stakeholders



National Council Against Gender-Based Violence, South Africa



## Contact

### Co-Principal Investigators

Claudia Mitchell  
claudia.mitchell@mcgill.ca  
McGill University

Relebohile Moletsane  
moletaner@ukzn.ac.za  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

### Project Website

Canada  
[www.networks4change.ca](http://www.networks4change.ca)

South Africa  
[www.networks4change.co.za](http://www.networks4change.co.za)

### Project Coordinators

Leann Brown  
leann.brown@mcgill.ca  
1 (514) 398 4527 ext. 094461

Lisa Wiebesiek  
wiebesiekl@ukzn.ac.za  
+2731 260 3409

### Addresses

Participatory Cultures Lab, McGill University  
3715 Peel Street, Room 221,  
Montreal, QC, H3A 1X1, Canada  
[participatorycultureslab.com](http://participatorycultureslab.com)

Centre for Visual Methodologies for Social Change  
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus  
Durban, South Africa  
<http://cvmsc.co.za/>

Fatima Khan, Communications, Networks4Change  
Design by Freepik