NETWORKS FOR CHANGE AND WELL-BEING

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

Issue 12: March 2021

Dear Partners, Colleagues and Friends of *Networks4Change*

Arriving at International Women's Day, 2021 reminds us of what a different world we now occupy from International Women's Day, 2020. We never imagined that we would be moving towards the conclusion of our *Networks4Change* activities in the midst of a public health emergency such as COVID-19. Not surprisingly, the pandemic has exacerbated the inequalities already hammering communities and families across the world, including gendered unemployment and poverty. Linked to these, women and girls' vulnerability to violence, including gender-based violence has multiplied. A plethora of media reports and a few emerging studies have alerted us to the large increases in domestic violence as families are locked down together. Many of the cases reported involve gender-based violence. Alarmingly, femicides, particularly at the hands of intimate partners, have skyrocketed. Indeed COVID-19 has exposed the huge gaps in our responses aimed at mitigating the negative impacts of the many inequalities we face. With lockdown, girls and young women, for example, have not only lost access to schooling, they have also lost access to the various services they need, including those that keep them safe from violence, including sexual violence. Throughout this period, partners of the *Networks4Change* have recognized that without sustained targeted interventions informed by the experiences and voices of these marginal groups and their active participation in the development of such programmes, the advances we had made towards addressing girls and young women's safety in communities would be reversed.

In this latest issue of the newsletter we highlight some of the ways the project has been continuing activities in our various sites in Canada and South Africa, and how the girls and young women have been front and centre. This has included winning national awards (see coverage on *Indspire*), and a dazzling collection of creative writing and other productions called *Hope for the Future*. This has also been a time of pulling together key lessons from *Networks4Change* as can be seen in references to lots of new publications and the production of new resources.

The theme for International Women's Day 2021 is *Women in Leadership: Achieving an Equal Future in a COVID-19 World*, a theme which is meant to celebrate "the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic." We offer a round of applause to the amazing spirit of the girls and young women and all the site leaders in the *Networks4Change* who are doing just that.

Warm regards,

Claudia and Lebo

Content

Hope for the Future	2
Fieldsite Reports	16
Congratulations New Graduates	21
Networks Events	23
Welcome Dr. Deby Maia	26
Publications	27
Partners & Stakeholders	35

IDRC CRDI
International Development Research Centre
Centre de recherches pour le développement international

SSHRC CRSH

Hope for the Future!

Expressions from the Sites

By Avril Rios

These past months have proven to be difficult to get together or carry out collaborative activities. Our reality has changed and for many, not only does it mean confronting new problems and struggles, but also the discovery of new activities, abilities, and joys. For this reason, we invited girls and young women from the various sites of *Networks4Change* to express themselves by submitting their creative work, reflecting on how their lives have been transformed, and what changes and transformations they would like to see.

Our focus for this section of the newsletter is on the writing and art productions submitted by the girls and young women themselves. Enjoy their creative work on the following pages and discover more about the amazing girls and young women who are part of *Networks4Change* in Canada and South Africa!

Girls Leading Change

Zethu Jiyana

I saw this poster one day, saying "Men fear ghosts and women fear men", the same men who are supposed to be protectors and I realized the future is not so bright.

I heard of young innocent women and children being killed, people like Uyinene Mrwetyana, Tshegofatso Pule, Kwasa and Karabo, the list is endless.

In 2019/2020 we experienced a wave of killing of women and children. The President stated that we are facing two pandemics at the same time namely gender-based violence (GBV) and COVID-19. So, while we were losing family and friends due to COVID-19, we were also worried about the safety of women and children. Every day we are hearing of women who have been raped and killed brutally, children disappearing, and their bodies later found abandoned. We are losing many of our sisters, mothers, and children.

WHAT CHANGES AND TRANSFORMATIONS AM I SEEING?

After the President announced GBV being a pandemic, we started seeing some changes and developments:

- We hear songs composed against this GBV pandemic, such as *Madoda Sabelani*
- We have policies being implemented against GBV
- Radio stations are taking notice
- Television programmes are taking notice, creating adverts with celebrity males relaying messages about women and children abuse
- We see increasingly effective campaigns against GBV (#RealMenDontAbuse)
- The government is taking more notice and giving support to victims of GBV
- We saw a launch of Uyinene Foundation all in support of women

WHAT CHANGES AND TRANSFORMATIONS WOULD I LIKE TO SEE?

- There is still a lot more to be done like sentencing anyone who violates another due to gender.
- I would like to see more awareness programmes especially in the rural areas where people's voices are not heard or do not have platform.
- Children from an early age should be taught about GBV and Help Care Centres they can go to in case they become victims or know of victims of GBV.

In all this we can see that more work still needs to be done. Each person has a duty, every platform you have, should be used to make a change.

I, Zethu, therefore pledge that in the platforms that I can access I will address these issues so as to raise more awareness and give support to victims of this pandemic, until we have less and eventually no cases of GBV!

Elethu Ntsethe

Bongiwe Maome

The core difference between an apathetic person and a decent human being, in my opinion, is their willingness and capacity to care for themselves and others. I've come to understand that a significant part of the suffering, injustice and unhappiness that we see playing itself out in society is caused by a general unwillingness to acknowledge, account for and learn from our mistakes—exacerbated by an individual and/or collective unwillingness or incapacity to care enough about ourselves as well as our communities, to actively change the present state of affairs. Fortunately, although gradual and painstaking, things are beginning to change for the better. And I believe that this shift in trajectory is the result of the selfless efforts of individuals, collectives and organizations such as the *Networks4Change*, who work tirelessly to shine the light on social injustice; particularly, on issues of gender inequality, injustice and education.

Through working with *Networks4Change* I learned that meaningful social change is the direct result of decisively and persistently flying in the face of complacency and challenging problematic conventions at different levels in which they exist; the mind, the home, the community & general society. The *Networks4Change* introduced me to an entirely different approach to social activism- one that challenged me to look into myself first; and identify, confront, unlearn, relearn and reimagine my own opinions, thoughts, behaviours, practices and biases. This approach provided me with a much needed foundation to be able to effectively and meaningfully engage with, and understand the inputs, behaviours and experiences of others. Thus, creating a safe platform for the launch of earnest and purposeful dialogue as a way to collectively map out a new, more positive, social condition. Although it was a time-intensive and psychologically demanding process, it is the one, which I wouldn't trade for all the gold in the world.

On the shoulders of the Girls Leading Change (GLC) & the *Networks4Change*, I grew. Moreover, it contributed significantly to my transformation as an individual; the experience itself challenged me to be deeply dissatisfied with being complacent and merely hoping for change. It inspired me to care. It encouraged me to embrace and assert my role as an active agent and pioneer of social transformation. It continues to influence my personal philosophy and relationships, it informs my teaching philosophy and pedagogy. The essence of it is that I am a better person, better academic, better teacher, better mother, and better citizen of the world because of all that we managed, and continue to accomplish through this project. And for that, I am forever grateful to the GLC and the *Networks4Change*. Society still has a long way to go but, in me and many others this project has switched on a light and so it is our social duty to keep it in and pass it on.

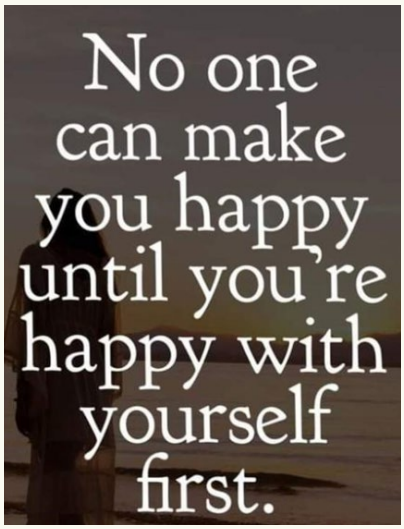
Asisipho Mntonga

EVERYTHING THAT IS HAPPENING AROUND US BECOMES A LEARNING PROCESS

Being part of GLC has provided me with such tremendous opportunity. I developed a sense of agency and ability to advocate for social change and gained self-confidence. We learnt from each other, developing a sisterhood amongst ourselves. Our university, including Professors Naydene de Lange and Lebo Moletsane, played a major role in bringing us together and molding us to be the best of who we are. I started feeling like a young woman when I enrolled to be part of GLC and discovered that my voice is as important as any other voice. I also learnt that hard work and patience pays off and yields good results. Learning about gender violence has not been easy but through team efforts we were able to work together to achieve great success. Life is like the soil, what you decide you want to put in is what you get out, every choice we make has its own consequence.

WE ARE BORN INTO A TIME LIKE THIS WHERE EVERYTHING THAT IS HAPPENING AROUND US BECOMES A LEARNING PROCESS

We all need support, either from family or friends. In my journey I realized that we need each other to succeed. Just like soccer, you can't score a goal alone as you need the whole team to help you. Identity is built through our surroundings, our culture and ways of doing things. Courage comes from being tested and knowing you can fail or succeed, as long as you don't give up. Integrity has been one of the tools that has kept me rejuvenated and able to stand firm in what I believe. It's time to live like there is no tomorrow and use every opportunity to grow and fulfill your purpose. The ultimate purpose is to live and shower the earth with our gifts and serve the divinity of our human nature. Everything happens for a reason.



Happiness is a state of mind and an attitude. We are not able to decide the circumstances we are born in, but we can decide how we choose to feel. ***Choosing happiness*** *is one of the greatest choices because we all aspire to be happy. In Beyonce's music video,* ***I Was Here****, she is asked what her aspirations in life are, to which she answered that she aspires to be happy. At that time I did not understand what she meant, but now I do. Happiness is a choice and a feeling that we all can aspire to!*

My family has contributed a lot toward the person I am today. Some of their teachings helped me develop as an individual. My friends too, played a major role in shaping the kind of person I am. The tough years of my life, where everything was rocky, that was when I learnt that a friend in need is a friend indeed. Knowing who you are is part of self-discovery and that it makes it easier

to know where you are going. Knowledge is gained through self-discovery and then becomes power and light for your own benefit as well as other people.

My cousin's brother's traditional wedding vibes. My three beautiful aunts and my mother in the middle with brown dress (isishweshwe), are standing near the kraal where the men are about to slaughter cows for the celebration. They represent that women are to be treated with respect and dignity because they are also part of the community and work hand in hand with men. As the saying goes 'the man is the head of the home, but the woman is the neck', helping the man stand firm and making joint decisions. Celebrations have a way of bringing families together. ***We all need each other to survive.***

This me and my friend Sandy. We have been close from varsity days and we also worked together in Girls Leading Change. We developed a friendship and sisterhood. This picture represents the value of my friends in life, as I am not able to share pictures of each and everyone. This picture reminds me of how far I come from with her help, I am filled with emotion when I think of how Sandy helped me to find my way through life and I am grateful for what she and her family have done for me. ***A friend in need is a friend indeed.*** *Earth angels are for real (people with good hearts are still out there).*

I marched for fighting against women abuse at the Nelson Mandela University. On South Campus we students came together and with one voice and said NO TO VIOLENCE, and rape. We all wore black to represent sadness and mourn for those who have been broken by violence. We were saying 'Away with violence, We break the silence!'

This picture represents the idea that we are all in the process of learning. The destinations are not clearly known or seen, but as you journey through life, your destiny finds you. Strength and courage come from within and you become more powerful and wise. So, know who you are and appreciate the gift of life with its challenges. The more difficult the path the greater the destiny.

It was a dream come true working with girls in the Networks4Change project and to establish good relations with each other. We also had a great opportunity of going abroad, to St Cloud State University, in the USA. Going abroad for a young rural girl like me was a dream come true and I was inspired to dream even bigger and achieve great things to come. This group photo means so much and it shows how far we have come, we have come a long way together.

My wish is that we as Africans, men and women, would learn to appreciate ourselves as we are and know that we are a gift to be given. I wish our parents could open lines of communication with their children and talk about issues without being afraid. Sometimes some people suffer because of ignorance, and cruel cultural practices. I wish to tell young women that it's okay so dream big and those dreams are valued.

I am who I am because everything I went through was all worth it in the end, because I am wiser and stronger than before. Reflection is part of self-discovery and an important tool to use in analyzing our life.

THERE IS NO MANUAL THAT STATES HOW WE SHOULD LIVE OUR LIVES, BUT WE LEARN AS WE GO THROUGH LIFE EXPERIENCES

There is no magic and nothing is certain, as all that happens is by chance. It's time to let go of the past and hold onto good things so that the next generation will not be left worse off or feel wronged but are able to learn and improve even more than us. They say 'the sky is the limit' but I say it's possible not to be limited by anything.

CORONA VIRUS (COVID-19)

Asisipho Mntonga

The Coronavirus affects all of us in different ways.
It does not discriminate; it does not care whether
you are young or old,
Black or white,
It can kill everyone, anyone, whoever you are.
The pandemic that has become global issue,
This killer disease,
is a pandemic of a world-wide scale.
Society is left unsettled, disempowered and in disarray.

Allow me to echo these words and tell you my own story or should I
Borrow your ears and eyes for a moment so that I can speak ...
Hoyina! Hoyina! Hoyina!!!
I have seen people dying—daily news reporting new cases,
increasing numbers of infected people, increasing number of deaths
I have seen the economy slowing down, businesses shutting down,
People losing jobs ... and losing their loved ones. Period of depression
hovering over us and we were losing hope and our dreams
For a better future were shattered.

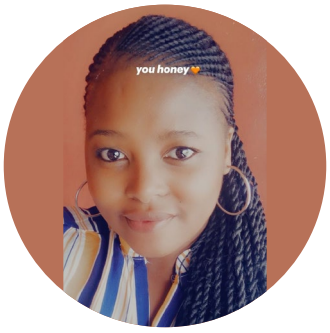
I have seen faith of people shaken, tested to the extent of questioning
Their level of faith and understanding through their religion, cultural
Practises: "Is still worth believing even if I am alone?"
"Is it still worth
believing what I believe, even though I am not allowed to go to church, or
practice my culture and traditions the best way I know?"
I have seen families bury each other, I have seen children
becoming orphans and I have seen people dying alone ...
with no funeral for them.

I have seen the government officials trying their best
Encouraging people to stay safe and protect themselves in the COVID-19
pandemic. But I have also seen the government failing its people in terms of
exploiting the vulnerable individuals by not giving or rendering the services to
them and breaking the laws that were meant to protect us.
I have seen foreigners struggling to satisfy their basic needs and how they
Make plans. They come with ideas just to make ends meet,
One such idea made me even more sad,
They had to queue for someone and get paid.
I have seen people suffering for various reasons and how violence has slowly
Creeped in and covered all in the name of culture, religion and respect.
Days of lockdown have been the hardest
Because for people depending on their families or work,
It meant that they were no longer able to provide for their loved ones.
This feels like a terrible dream, a horrifying dream...
The world is quiet, and gloomy,
It's like no one ever existed ...
Depression and anxiety kicks in.
Everything and everyone is mourning,
Even the sky no longer shines bright,
The birds no longer sing lovely songs.
There is silence ... there is quietness,
but behind closed doors a lot of things are happening.

Technology, Internet have become the chord to unite us all
To some people it has become a place of dreams, work and fun
It has made us to come together, more than ever.
It has helped us to harbor humanity (Ubuntu) within and between us.
A year of quarantine is indeed a year of personal reflections.
Our existence is through the experiences we have and how we try to live and love
within the space and time we are given.

Lelethu Mlobeli

In my years of experience as a teacher, I have learnt to inform myself and be aware of learner differences in sexual orientation or gender and give them equal respect and treatment. I also try to teach that to learners in the hidden curriculum. I only get to teach about this during a certain topic in my grade 10 Life Orientation class. So I also try to teach it as the hidden curriculum to other learners in my classes by my reaction or comments when this topic or anything related to it comes under the spotlight. I don't only do this at school, but in any space.



Zikhona Tshiwula

Being a GLC member has inspired me, Zikhona, in so many ways but what I learnt most from the project is being confident and able to speak out. That has been a learning point for me as I really could not express myself. I will forever be grateful for learning that because now I am a young woman who is married, I have 3 beautiful girls and a loving husband who is supporting me in my life's journey. It was not easy, but I conquered it all.

The project has been an eye opener for me because I had experienced GBV, but it really was not easy to speak about what I had been through, but this project has taught me self-agency. I am now part of a group of young women called the *AMAQOBOKAZANA* (Mothers of the Nation).

It is a group of teachers from my school and other schools as well as my friends. We formed the group to talk about things that are affecting us as women, and we try to lift one another up and share ideas. There are a lot of things we do but most of all we try to create a space, where we feel free to talk about anything. Power to women growth and uplifting other women to be strong!

> *Think like a Queen. A Queen is not afraid to fail. Failure is another stepping stone to greatness.*
>
> —Oprah Winfrey

Zikhona (in front) and other young women teachers of the *Amaqobokazana*

Melissa Lufele

Where does one begin to speak about such a legacy? A legacy that managed to rewrite history and give hope to a generation of young women, who will live on to tell the tale. Writing this piece just reminded me of the first story I wrote for the GLC project, a story I titled "The Smile of a Broken Child." Thinking about it today I realise I needed GLC more than it needed me, I needed an outlet to cry and heal wounds I thought had long healed, to confront the demons head on. I needed a space to discover my true self—an identity I had not yet crafted for myself. I needed to grow into my fullest potential, to live, breathe, laugh, share, and be empowered. *Networks4Change* did that for me.

The project opened doors for me to discover a young woman in me that was hidden and just waiting to be unleashed. I learnt the power of words, a power that liberates, unshackles and releases my restless soul. This project was bigger than me and the girls, it part of a nationwide movement to curb a pandemic that unfortunately cannot be fought with gloves and masks, a pandemic that requires a mentality shift in society, a destabilisation of the current status quo, one that forces us to ask the tough questions that trigger resistance and rejection.

This fight against gender-based violence forced us to leave our comfort zones and become loud voices that disturb peace, challenge normalcy and aspire to influence this new generation, who will inspire a new and just society for women and children across the board. It was a challenging experience that demanded us to first identify GBV in our lives. The process required us to be informed in order to be informative, it demanded that we face the reality outside our sheltered lives. We had to listen to the muted voices in our corridors, voices that were silently crying against sexual harassment in our supposedly safe spaces, come face to face with policy makers and highlight the problems with their respective solutions. We were asked tough questions that were hard to answer at times because unlike the rest we were merely rural girls in big institutions that needed us to act so that other girls like us can be free of any form of GBV.

GLC and *Networks4Change* taught us not only to be good storytellers and writers but change makers in our communities. I learnt that change does not require me to speak to millions of crowds for a thunderous applause; change is achieved through one person at a time, it's me teaching young girls and boys in the mentorship club what GBV is, it's me listening to a learner struggling with sexual identity and offering the information I have learnt along the way without judgment. It's me refusing to be part of social circles that find life in stereotypical scenarios, change is me sharing information with colleagues to better prepare them for a new generation of young people who are mentally woke. I am a change agent because I do not tolerate any form of gender-based violence in my life and I challenge any norm that teaches me otherwise, be it patriarchy or culture, I refuse to be enslaved simply because I am a woman.

I intend on continuing the work I have started grooming young people in the KING&QUEEN ME Mentorship Club, I will continue to influence the learners who enter my classroom each day to be better than yesterday, to aim higher and work harder. I want to continue working on my poetic pieces and hopefully publish them in a book titled *Conversations from the Heart: Sister to Sister*. From here I will continue to rise because I have received the tools; the baton is in my hands and it is my responsibility to pass them to generations that come after me. For this publication, I have decided to dedicate this piece of writing to women and girls, who have had it hard, ladies that have been hurt, rejected and ridiculed by people and systems meant to protect them. To my fellow sisters I say:

> *We have been rendered powerless for far too long, but now that we have discovered our own power, no one will ever enslave us again because we are Strong, Heroic, and Empowered.*

I AM S.H.E.

Melissa Lufele

Tell them I said Thank you but no Thanks.

I will not humble myself because I am still not humble. Tell them I am not coming and quite frankly I do not care how this response makes them feel because they too refused to care when I needed care.

I want to remind you about who I am. I am the girl they rejected because I wasn't light-skinned enough to be smart, I am the girl that told on the pastor when the congregation said it can't be! "He is a man of God". I am the stupid girl that was left unemployed because I refused to earn my strides and climb up the corporate ladder through labouring on my back and knees. I'm the one that refused to be submissive when it meant I must be abused, battered and cheated on by a man to save the "Mrs Title".

They called me a weakling. Apparently I wasn't even marriage material anyway; they said I wouldn't make it and for a split second I believed it and now they want to celebrate me? What for? Do they not know me? Few layers of foundation, a shade or two of eye shadow and they have forgotten me? Well, I haven't forgotten them, I can never forget them.

Tell them to keep their praise I don't need it. I am refusing to place myself in that space of weakness because now I'm Empowered, I know my worth and I definitely know who I am. I am a woman unchained and liberated, without me there is no life because I breed creation into existence and nurture it to excellence, everything I touch turns into gold because I am a mastermind, an architect that directs every challenge or obstacle to take the shape and form I desire. How dare they reduce me to a nameless ornament?

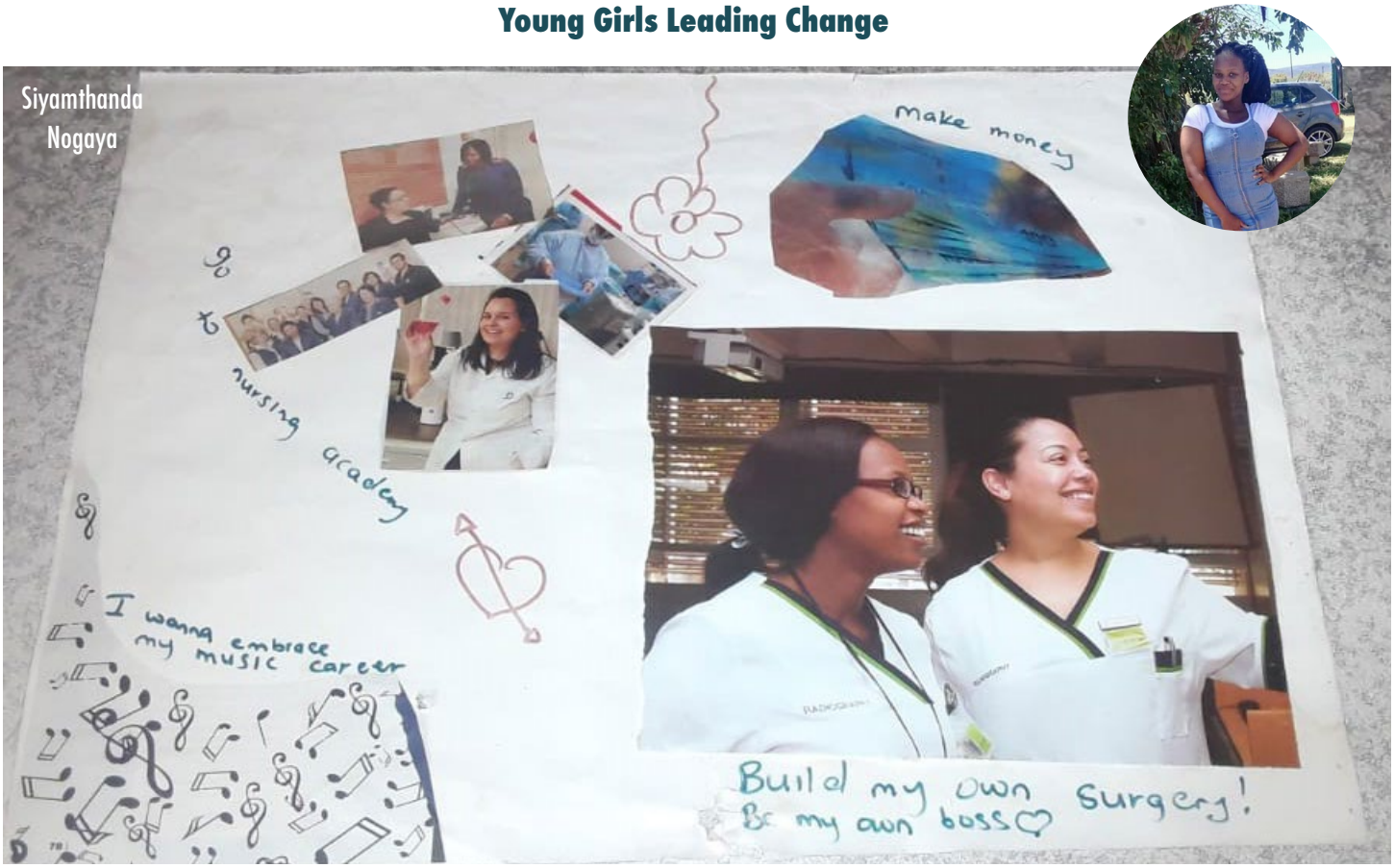
I'm sorry if my fragrance bruises their ego, in fact I withdraw that statement, I am NOT sorry because it's actually cute that my cough rattles their cage. How dare they? How dare you underestimate the power of a queen!

You want to know my response? Tell them their applause or acknowledgment won't make me shine any brighter than I already am because I am big, black, beautiful and too bright to go unnoticed.

I am S.H.E., honey.

Strong, Heroic and Empowered.

Young Girls Leading Change



Nozinga Nyamakazi

Everything has changed ever since the Coronavirus came and I am not the same person I was before … I can see I've changed. At home things are not the same, my parents are not working. I so wish things can get better so that they can go back to work. I don't think things will be normal again because there are more deaths, and the virus is causing more deaths.

My only wish now is to go to a school (college or university) so that I can change my home situation because we are living on a Sassa grant (provided by the government). Things have changed, in our country women are being killed every day and homeless kids are the victims of rape. I wish I can change that.

Vimbiso Okafor

Being a research assistant in the *Networks4Change* project and working with Naydene has been a very memorable and enriching experience. I got to visit one or two places in South Africa something I never thought would be possible in this line of work. I got to meet different people who shared their insightful experiences which I appreciate.

The *Networks4Change* project was an eye opener to the struggles girls and women go through. I had no idea the extent of the problems we face. I love that this project has given a space for young women to air the struggles they see and experience and I am very grateful to be a part of such a project. I also learnt more about myself in the position, as I discovered that I can actually design a poster, and that I had computer skills. Who knew! I had no idea that I had problems solving skills till I started working as research assistant, to make a plan when an odd situation arises and know that "I can." I am forever grateful for this opportunity and will carry the skills I have attained further as I pursue my PhD studies. Thank you for this opportunity.

Siphosethu Mahashi

HOW AM I IMAGINING THE FUTURE?

I am imagining a future, where I will take care of myself by being responsible and not dependent on other people. I realized that being dependent on other people can destroy you, like if they died tomorrow what would I do? I am teaching myself to be independent.

WHAT CHANGES ARE YOU SEEING IN YOUR LIFE?

My life is not the same anymore. My mother lost her job in 2020 and we are struggling in the house.

WHAT CHANGES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?

I would like to see myself continuing with my studies. I hope I will get a space at the college this year.I would like to see people getting jobs so that they can provide for their families. I would like to do community work, like continue motivating other girls to continue breaking the silence on gender-based violence.

Nosifundo Bolovayi

HOW AM I IMAGINING THE FUTURE?

I imagine success. I imagine myself educated and obtaining a better job.

WHAT CHANGES ARE YOU SEEING IN YOUR LIFE?

My life has become difficult. I lost both parents in 2020, they died of Corona. That is when I saw the huge role that my mother played because she was the breadwinner at home.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?

I would like to see the economy of the country going up, hoping that people will get jobs. I would like to study after matric so that I can get a decent job that will improve the situation at home. I believe my siblings would also want to continue with their studies if I can go to college. I would like to see people wearing masks all the time and washing their hands. I would like to see my family staying close and supporting each other.

Amahle Dlala

Greetings to everyone. My name is Amahle Dlala. I come from a very small town in Paterson in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.

WHAT CHANGES ARE YOU SEEING IN YOUR LIFE?

I will start by telling or sharing some of the changes I'm experiencing now. It is the new normal, where I have to follow the protocol of the new normal … the new normal really changed a lot of things in my life, such as losing relatives, having one person to provide for the whole family … This has affected us negatively as a family especially us children … Some people lost their jobs. We had to spend the last Christmas in pain and hurt and yet we had to pretend to be fine.

HOW AM I IMAGINING THE FUTURE?

Our country will never be the same again … the country's economy will never go back to the way it was.

HOW AM I IMAGINING MY LIFE?

Though the COVID-19 took so many souls, it left us with a task of knowing ourselves. During this pandemic I had time to sit with my loved ones finding out wonderful things about them, like spending more time with them. It helped me to know more about myself - it turns out I didn't know me, I didn't know who is Amahle. So I did self-introspection … it was the best thing I ever did. Especially after high school it is very important to know what you want and who you are.

Phelokazi Nyamakazi

HOW AM I IMAGINING THE FUTURE?

I am imagining my future being bright. I managed to go to college this year. I am imagining myself being a successful young Black woman.

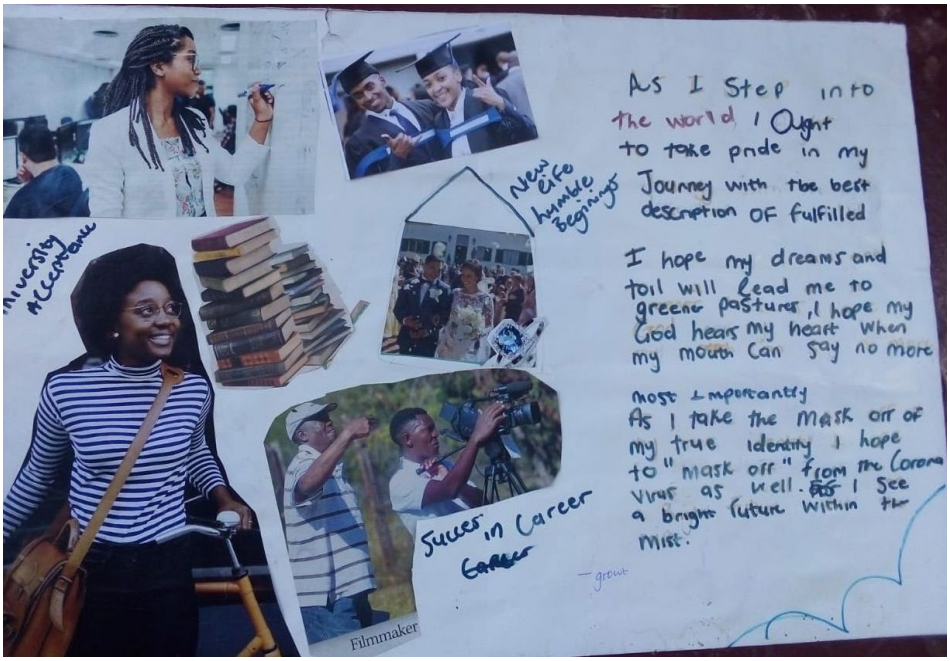
WHAT CHANGES ARE YOU SEEING IN YOUR LIFE?

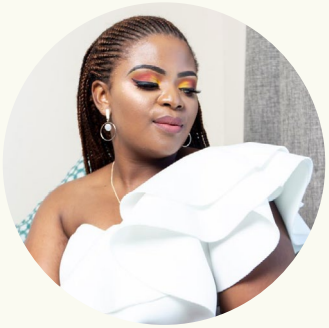
Getting used to being at home all the time, which has developed my communication and relationship with my family. I now have more me time than spending time with friends.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?

I would like to see the COVID-19 pandemic going away. I would like to see businesses that have closed to open up again. I would like to see children going back to school everyday not two days a week.

Xabisa Bless





REMINISCING TOWARDS MATURITY

Takatso Mohlomi

"When you know better you do better." —Maya Angelo
Participating in GLC and Networks for Change
Enlightened my perspective
To do better.

An incredible initiative
Sadly, may only directly impact
A certain number of people
In this world of so many different characters.
After all these amazing workshops we still go back to converge with these characters.

I take with gratitude what I learnt
in relation to Gender-based Violence (GBV)
and how one can look after oneself.

However, they say experience is the best teacher.
Sometimes adversity helps you realise how resilient you can be.
It so hurts when you realise right after the storm that that's the awareness
I've been hearing about all this time.

Only if the society we live in got the same workshops we attended
The world would be a much better place to live in.
That's where we come in as teachers.
The little bit we can do with GBV will go a long way.

I listened to and took to heart all what was shared
Yet I still succumbed to GBV
I won't pretend all has been smooth sailing, No!
I've had my ups and downs even though I had been made aware.
This I call growth and maturity.

Awareness alone does not guarantee your safety
It's not a ticket to a GBV free life.
However, I believe it's the unconscious decisions we take
When faced with adversity that determine our safety.

The journey continues
Soul searching, finding one's strength and voice.
Empowering myself with my studies.
Thriving for a change of scenario &
A fresh start AGAIN.

Young Indigenous Women's Utopia

Nicoletta Daniels

COVID-19 has affected me in many ways by death, online school, highs and lows, and birthdays.During COVID-19 we were all stuck at home and because of that I wasn't able to see my grandparents and family and friends and online school started and nobody was allowed to leave. Then my birthday came around and it wasn't getting any better so my whole family came by my house and sang.

Now the part I don't like to talk about, death. I have lost a lot of people this year but the person I loved the most, my papa Noel, he was the most important person to me and he was always happy and he loved everyone he was never mad or sad and then my Uncle Jon. He was so funny and happy all the time and then my Uncle Wheese. He never had a bad bone in he's body he was funny and loving.

Now my highs and my lows: one of my highs was my Granny and Auntie Mona recovery from COVID-19 and my second nephew was born (Brixton James Miller); and my lows were losing three people this year and it was hard but I know they are in a way better place now and happily watching over me and my family.

Kellie Kakum, Utopia 2.0

2020 A TEENAGE CREE CANADIAN POINT-OF-VIEW

Andie Daniels

The year started like every other year
Although there was bush fires, Royal family drama, passing of Kobe Bryant
I thought "wow what a bad start"
But everything went on as normal, still in school,
I hate school
But at the end of the day it was a normal year
And then March 13, 2020 hit
I heard of " corona" but I knew it wouldn't hit Canada
And when it did they sent us out of school,
woo hoo a two-week break
Unfortunately we didn't know, that that wasn't the case
Eventually, the email came, we were done school for the year and we mercy passed
To 2020 ...
thank you for the growth
To 2020 ...
thank you for the experience
To 2020 ...
thank you for the good and bad times
To 2020 ....
you sucked
Lockdown?
I hated it at first
Sleeping, painting, and eating everyday
It wasn't enough for me
One day I woke up and started discovering
March to June became the best months of my life
Self care, writing, and walking
I was finally happy
I adapted to it, I woke up and lived differently everyday
Watched and fought for social justice issues like BLM

I suffered loss and became a person I didn't like
I started in school and failed a lot
Then got a job
I completely lost myself to the pandemic
To 2020 ...
thank you for the growth
To 2020 ...
thank you for the experience
To 2020 ...
thank you for the good and bad times
To 2020 ...
you sucked

2020 was crazy but I cannot be mad
I was happy at a time and proud of myself
I did everything I could and even wore a damn mask everyday
2020 was something you only experience once and i'm okay with that
To 2020 ...
I loved you but happy it's 2021

Gabby Daniels

COVID-19 affected me, a young nehiywak girl in so many ways. During this pandemic I've lost and gained, I've hit low and I've climbed back to the top, and I've learned to be more grateful for the life I've been given. I was able to get my driver's license right before everything was shutdown, and then I had my first car crash. That brought my self-esteem down a lot because I thought I was the worst driver in history; eventually I got over it though.

April was when I first started online school and doing Zoom classes, I really enjoyed getting to be in the comfort of my own home while still in class. At this point I thought my Grade 11 schoolwork was easy and what I wanted. It was getting tougher to have motivation and continue with my classes. I was lucky to have the opportunity to take my final grade and finish Grade 11, that helped me a bunch and made me happy. I realized I missed my cousins, aunties, uncles, grandparents a lot. All my life I've been so close to both sides of my family, we would have so many birthday parties and dinners all together on my father's side; and on my mom's we would drive down to Nevada to visit them a couple of times a year. Not being able to see them made me quite lonely. I became closer to my 2 sisters and little brother, we did what siblings always did; argue, fight, forgive. In May I went to a BLM rally and stood with so many loving people who thought George Floyd deserved better. Seeing all this racial injustice made me feel like people of colour, would never get any justice. In my head I wondered why there was so much hate in this world.

My summer was filled with being outside lots with the 2 little girls I babysat, hanging out with my siblings, and starting to somewhat see family again. My life was going great and I was happy. Then September came and it was time to decide if I wanted to go back to school, or take Grade 12 classes online. I took the online option, which was one of the

worst mistakes I've ever made. I had no motivation at all to do my classes, I started to fall behind. It went on like this for about 2 months. My life was hectic and draining, and then tragedy struck my family. My grandparents, auntie, and 2 cousins caught COVID-19. With me being a family person I was so scared and worried for my kin, I didn't want anyone to have this sickness and here my family had it. They recovered but my Papa was hospitalized because of other health problems. Our Papa meant so much to us and not being able to call him or talk to him really took a toll on our family. On December 18th around 7pm we learned our Papa wouldn't make it through the night. My family was a mess, we all stood outside the hospital seeing as we couldn't all be in the room with him. We were allowed 2 at a time in the room, and I'm happy I could see him one last time. I thanked him for everything he did for my parents, for my siblings, and myself. I was lucky to have him in my life, seeing him suffer that night made me feel even more sad than I ever was. I saw my uncles cry for the first time, my dad, and my grandma. We lost him in the early morning of December 19th. It took my family a lot of time to heal and mourn, we never thought we would have to say goodbye to such an amazing person. It's been 2 months since he's left to the spirit world to be with our other family. We've been there for our Granny so much because she doesn't want to be alone.

About 2ish weeks ago we received a call saying my mom's brother was on life support after a complication in surgery, this struck us all so fast we couldn't even react, he died a couple hours later after that call. My mom was hurt and so were me and my siblings and dad. My uncle was a bright soul who always lit up a room. Since he lived in the States we couldn't go down, my own mother couldn't even mourn for her brother. It hurt so bad to know we couldn't be down with our family, that we couldn't see him one last time. A week later my moms oldest brother, suddenly passed. I have never seen my mom so heartbroken. At this point we had to go down and mourn with my moms side. We drove to Nevada and stayed for about a week and a half. We're on our way back to Canada as I type this. My Papa and uncles are now at rest, and so are my family's. From now on I plan to be grateful for everyday I am gifted. As I finish typing this I have a couple last words. Hug and checkup on the important people in your life, live everyday to the fullest, take some time for yourself, stand for what you believe in, and stay safe.

Rylan Lafreniere

Before COVID-19:

Swimming
Clean
Sports
Programs

After COVID-19:

Sad
Using
Depressed
Drained

Eskasoni

Hannah Batiste

My entire life, I never imagined that I would be good enough to make it this far. I worked as hard as I could, just to get told my work was never going to be good enough or positive enough. I wrote down many stories and poetry that I hid from everyone, because I was too afraid to fail.

My biggest inspiration in life was to share my story through my poetry, and to inspire those who can relate. I've worked for years trying to get it right, trying to take my time and be patient. I let a lot of things take over my life in the process, but I am grateful that I went through what I went through, because it has made me who I am today, It has gotten me this far and for the first time in my life, I am ready for whatever the future has in store for me. My new journey is only beginning.

These are some of the poems from Hannah's poetry book. We will make an announcement when the book will be published.

Journey
In the beginning there are roads
Then you don't know which way to go
You stop and wonder
Then you hear the thunder

You're standing in between crossroads
Unsure of which path to take
Breathing in the summer air
Wind blowing in your unwashed hair
Wearing the same dress from decades ago

Your journey grows stronger but you get weaker
The night sky falls
You are freezing and wheezing
The autumn leaves are coming
Then you start stumbling with nowhere else to go

The whistle in the wind blows
Your eyes and heart follow the noise
The stop lights catch your attention
You wonder what the world would be like
If you only took a different path

You wish to turn back time
Deep breath in and you open your eyes
In the beginning there are bumpy roads
You know which ways to go

You never stop but always wonder
Then you hear the familiar thunder
But just to leave it all behind
And let it go

—Hannah Batiste

Sisters Rising

Ruth Underwood
Tsawout First Nation

I was thinking of all the things that we carry from the history of our people. All the battles that were left on our shoulders. How we as First Nations today are fighting so hard to not be put down any more than we have been. When we can put aside our struggles and move forward. Not to move on and forget but, to discover more of who we are.

Networks4Change Fieldsites

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

Treaty 6, Saskatoon (Canada)

Young Indigenous Women's Utopia (YIWU)

Jen Altenberg

Taanshii kiyawow annoosh!

Our landscapes determine our worldview and we are all rejoicing that the snow is starting to melt and the sun is shining again. We are just coming out of a deep freeze for the last two weeks with temperatures dropping below -50! Remember, our landscapes determine our worldview and so we acknowledge the lessons in those harsh, cold winter days and nights. The Young Indigeneous Women's Utopia (YIWU) is pleased to report our interactions from Treaty 6 and the homeland of the Métis in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Showing Appreciation

We would like to begin by giving a shout-out to our Aunties and loved ones who have sat, Google-chatted, and zoomed with us over the last six months of being isolated and in restrictions at home to stay safe from COVID-19. We continue to be thankful for our time to gather together. For many of us girls from YIWU, 2020 was a year full of loss, grieving, and change. While we welcomed some change, other changes were very hard to accept.

Even though COVID-19 tried to keep us apart, we have creatively been continuing to connect and engage with our new circle of girls from Utopia 2.0. We would like to welcome and introduce Kellie, Harmony, Melody, Rylan, Sikwan, D'lia, Nicolletta, Tara, and Milo into our larger circle of *Network4Change* and the *More Than Words* family.

(Right): 1st virtual planning session for YIWU Mural Workshop, January 2021

(Far Right): Brainstorming for Mural Workshop, February 2021

Indspire Award

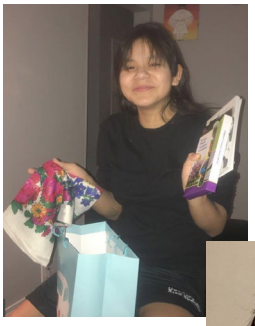
Winning the national Indspire organizational "Guiding the Journey" Award for Indigenous educators was very special. Along with the honor and recognition, we received a financial award. We wanted to put these dollars towards community action. The girls decided to create self-love care packages full of art supplies, kokum scarves, and other products they felt would lift young people's spirits during this time. We created twenty gift bags and delivered them to:

- our newest members,
- some older members from our first year together who needed some extra love,
- young people at the new youth shelter in Saskatoon, and
- community members accessing Prairie Harm Reduction, our safe-consumption site.

Mural Workshop

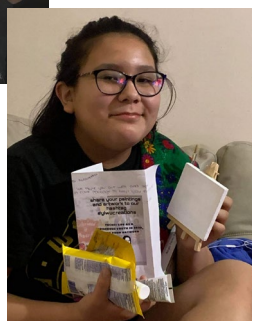
YIWU just wrapped up a 2-day workshop to begin planning and conceptualizing our mural project. This culminating action will allow the girls to make and leave their mark on our community. They will speak back to many of the spaces we marked as unsafe in our very first cellphilm actions. The murals will create spaces in our streets that will give others in our community visual messages of hope, healing, and resistance. This project will connect the intergenerational work that women and girls from our community have been fighting to protect and preserve. It is because of this work that we get to continue to journey and learn how to respect ourselves and awaken the powers within us. We are no longer accepting shaming attitudes or teachings. We want to speak back to the violence in our community and the girls of Utopia and their new little sisters continue to create movements that give each of us strength, courage, and hope for a better tomorrow.

It is always good to watch the girls give back to the community and take care of each other in times of need. Reciprocity is one of our core values in YIWU, as we would say *nīkāni tipahikē*. Everyone has something to give.

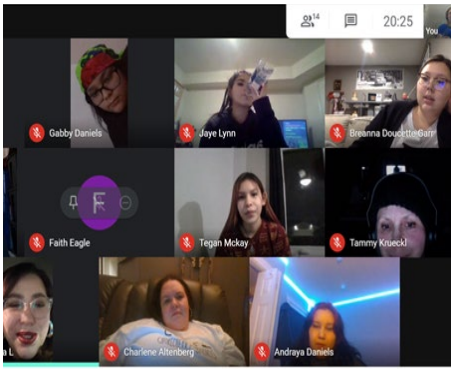


(Left): Kellie

(Below): Nicoletta



Opening self-love carepacks, January 2021



Congratulations!

Congratulations to YIWU who were recently awarded the Indspire *Guiding the Journey* Award (2020) which recognises Indigenous educators and organisations who have made valuable contributions to community-based education and honour the principles of Indigenous knowledge.

YIWU had the opportunity to share their knowledge and leadership with Indigenous educators and organisations across Canada at the 2020 Indspire National Gathering where they delivered their "Community Arts as a Source of Resistance" workshop. They also developed a lesson plan which is available in both English and French.

Indspire's Former President and CEO, Roberta Jamieson, presented the girls with their award and talked with them about their work and experiences. As an Indigenous woman of many 'firsts'; the first Aboriginal woman to earn a law degree in Canada, the first non-Parliamentarian to be appointed an ex-officio member of a special House of Commons committee on Indian self-government, the first Aboriginal Commissioner of the Indian Commission of Ontario, and the first woman appointed Ontario's Ombudsman—it

was an honour for YIWU and Roberta to hold space together and be mutually inspired. We are continually inspired by Young Indigenous Women's Utopia!

Rankin Inlet (Canada)

Jennica Alhda Barcial

Due to the COVID-19 lockdowns, the scheduled Rankin Inlet GET ART weekend workshops that were supposed to occur during November was cancelled. The two youth mentors Haily May Ussak and Julia Ussak decided to deliver the program remotely so that youth could still participate in the art program.

Children aged 8-14 were asked to submit a photo on the Rankin Inlet News Facebook page that displayed how they were keeping safe during the pandemic. Photo entries were submitted to the Facebook page where their names were entered into the draw. Ten lucky winners received a $100 gift card to the local grocery store in town.

It was the first time, the program's youth mentors, Haily May Ussak and Julia Ussak, led a program for the community. Haily May was very pleased with the result and loved seeing all of the children's projects. Julia Ussak believes it gave children a fun challenge to keep themselves busy while everyone was at home.

There were over 70 entries, with over 50 likes and over 160 comments on the Facebook post. Pictures shared ranged from children cooking, painting, sewing, and learning to work on seal and caribou skin. The youth mentors are excited to hold their next online project in March.

Sisters Rising (British Columbia, Canada)

University of Victoria,
Unceded Lkwungen Territories

Greetings from the unceded homelands of the Lekwungen and ̱WSÁNEĆ nations on the west coast of what is now colonially called Canada. Sisters Rising has concluded a wonderful six years of work with hundreds of Indigenous youth, community members, and knowledge keepers from over twelve different Indigenous communities in BC. We are incredibly grateful for our partnerships with these communities, and for the vital stories, teachings and transformative work generated through our arts- and land/water-based workshops and initiatives.

In this edition of the *Networks4Change* newsletter, some of our amazing graduate students share about their individual graduate research as part of Sisters Rising. Although Sisters Rising has concluded, we are now starting a new four-year project called Kinship Rising, focused on restoring Indigenous concepts and practices of gender sovereignty and body-land wellbeing. Our new websites (kinshiprising.uvic.ca and landbodyart.uvic.ca) will be live soon. We extend our gratitude to all involved in *Networks4Change* and send out good medicine for healing and resurgence

Shantelle Moreno

I was born to young immigrant parents who left their homelands as a direct result of violent conflict and economic devastation. My father, who was born in Chile, is of mixed Spanish and Mapuche Indigenous ancestry. He immigrated to Canada in the early 1980s, fleeing U.S.-backed civil wars in both Chile and Argentina. My mother was born in Suva, Fiji, and is of Indian descent. Her family has lived in Fiji for generations as a result of British-initiated labour programs in which tens of thousands of Indians were forced to work as indentured servants and labourers, primarily on sugar cane plantations. They met, married, and raised their children on the territories of the Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh peoples in what is commonly known as Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

I am a working-class, mixed-race, queer woman of colour who has been living on Songhees, Esquimalt, and ̱WSÁNEĆ territories (Victoria, BC) for almost 17 years. Many of these years have been spent as a student at the University of Victoria and because of this experience, I acknowledge the disproportionate privilege I hold as a graduate student in the School of Child and Youth Care. I lean into the tensions of embodying this educational privilege, while also recognizing that my educational experiences form the theoretical and practice-based underpinnings of my research work with Sisters Rising. The opportunity to pursue a university education has also led me to some of my biggest passions including my career as a school counsellor, my work as a research facilitator with Sisters Rising, and my role as a teaching assistant in the School of Child and Youth Care.

My research study was conducted in 2017 on the unceded homelands of Coast Salish nations (on the west coast of Turtle Island, BC), as part of Sisters Rising, an Indigenous-led research study employing youth-engaged, participatory and arts- and land-based methodologies to:

> *[Focus] on challenging the victim-blaming climate of racialised gender violence by re-centering Indigenous values and teachings and linking body sovereignty to questions of decolonization and land sovereignty.*
>
> —Sisters Rising

I hosted individual and group sessions with seven individuals who identified as Indigenous, racialized, people of color, mixed-race and/or biracial. Much of my own learning in Queer, Trans, and 2-Spirit BIPOC (QT2SBIPOC) activist communities over the past decade has highlighted the essentiality of QT2SBIPOC perspectives in movements of dismantling colonial power and working toward Indigenous land and body sovereignty. I acknowledge that the exploration of decolonial love that I sought to highlight in my research would have been incomplete without the knowledge shared by QT2SBIPOC individuals. This understanding affected my participant recruitment since several participants were acquaintances connected through local circles of anti-racist/Indigenous activist and advocacy groups. Some participants reached out through mutual friends and were interested in my research as it applied to their experiences as undergraduate students. Each of the seven participants self-identified as a girl, young woman, and/or LGBT2SQ+ person.

Using arts- and -land based materials, participants shared both pre-existing and co-created knowledge around their experiences and conceptualizations of decolonial love, sovereignty, and resurgence, as Indigenous and racialized peoples. The 5 main themes that emerged were focused on decolonial love as:

- relational,
- temporal,
- spiritual,
- political, and
- personal.

Many participants framed decolonial love as temporal, describing how love is expressed through connection to the land, waters, and sky. Many expressed love as a felt sense experienced between the self and others. Participant Keisha Jones, who identified as ̱WSÁNEĆ and Pacheedaht, noted:

> *When I think about love and connection, I think about how I feel at home when I'm out on the land and out on the water and out in the community in that area; it's just a huge part of love for me. It's home.*

Her affirmation of home and belonging emphasized complex understandings of

the power of love and land, reinforcing the need to uphold Indigenous young people as knowledge holders across their homelands. Keisha went on to describe the significance of her art piece—a carefully twisted copper wire tree—explaining that:

> *Our connection to land is love and growth. Trees really represent that for me.*

Her knowledge that land is a vital component not only of decolonial love, but also for growth as an individual and as part of a larger whole, bolsters the notion that:

> *[e]verything [needed] to live a good life is in and from the earth.*

—Gilpin, 2018, p. 51

Participants rejected neoliberal conceptualizations of love and self-care as individualized, bio-medicalized processes that serve the self above all else, and each participant spoke to the interconnectedness and relationality that is at the heart of decolonial love.

My hope is that the conceptualizations of love highlighted in this research can contribute meaningfully to the groundwork being laid by Indigenous and racialized communities across Turtle Island who continue to assert their rightful sovereignty through reclamation, resurgence and practices of decolonial love.

Michaela Louie

I am Nuu Chah Nulth from Ahousaht on my father's side and have mixed European ancestry on my mother's side. I was born and raised on the lands of the Lekwungen-speaking peoples, and I am incredibly grateful for all this land has provided me with, and how it has taken care of me. I started working with Sisters Rising, now known as Kinship Rising, during my undergraduate degree in Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria. I began by participating in workshops and getting to know the other research facilitators and their own work.

My own project with Kinship Rising is focused around gathering stories of strength and resilience from Indigenous sex workers in regards to the colonial, gendered, and sexualized violence they experience. To gather these stories, I will be holding

- small workshops, and
- providing land and arts based materials for the participants to document and create an art piece representing their strength and resiliency.

The intention of this project is to centre the voices of Indigenous sex workers and to hold space for narratives that are not problem saturated, shifting away from re-traumatizing or re-living violent experiences.

Keenan Andrew

ʔukłaasiš ʔimsča Hist'ṭ'ukk shitls Ahous Hist'ṭ'ukk shitls Nuučaan̓ułʼ Isaak camis čuu ƛ̓eekoo ƛ̓eekoo

My traditional name is ʔimsča, I come from the people of Ahousaht of the Nuučaanuł Nation. Respectfully, thank you.

Firstly, my given name is Keenan Andrew, and I would like to begin by acknowledging that I occupy the Lekwungen- and SENĆOŦEN-speaking peoples' lands. I would also like to acknowledge with respect the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples on whose lands my partner and I raise our two young children. Presently, I am a third year MA student at the University of Victoria who recently finished my practicum placement with the Victoria Child Abuse Prevention & Counselling Centre (VCAPCC). Over that nine-month placement as an intern counsellor, I supported at-risk Indigenous children and youth who have experienced sexualized and physical violence.

KNOWLEDGE-SEEKING

My study focused on working with Indigenous young men to decolonize their understandings of gender-based and sexualized violence by participating in making and weaving traditional cedar hats. The methodologies used to collect research data stemmed from land-based pedagogies and traditional Indigenous methodologies to counter the disenfranchisement that Indigenous communities experience in a colonial state. In particular, by connecting Indigenous men who had experienced or were in foster care to their ancestral ways of knowing and doing, the project aimed to help young men break away from historical abuse from residential schools that has left Indigenous families in cycles of violence. The cedar hat workshop was held with self-identified Indigenous, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youth between the ages of 13 and 25 on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, in 2019–2020. I worked with Indigenous young men by adhering to each community's unique protocols with the support of Elders and knowledge carriers.

Anna Chadwick

Anna is an artist, registered art therapist, and clinical counsellor in Victoria, British Columbia. After working in northern British Columbia for fourteen years, Anna completed her graduate degree from the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria. She currently works for a non-profit agency with children and youth who have experienced sexualized violence. Anna also works with the SHHRC funded project, *Kinship Rising*, with Dr. Sandrina de Finney.

For her graduate thesis entitled, *Lighting Fires: Re-searching Sexualized Violence with Indigenous Girls in northern Rural Canada*, Anna reflected on the ethical and theoretical foundations of re-searching sexualized violence with Indigenous girls in remote communities in northern British Columbia, Canada. Through Sisters Rising, an Indigenous-led, community-based research study, she focused on centering Indigenous teachings related to sovereignty and gender well-being. She conducted arts- and land-based workshops with girls and community members and sought to unsettle her relationships as a diasporic frontline worker to the communities and lands she worked with. She also reflected on how alternative, safer spaces for Indigenous girls can be created for resistance and (re)storying connections to land and relationships.

Eskasoni (Canada)

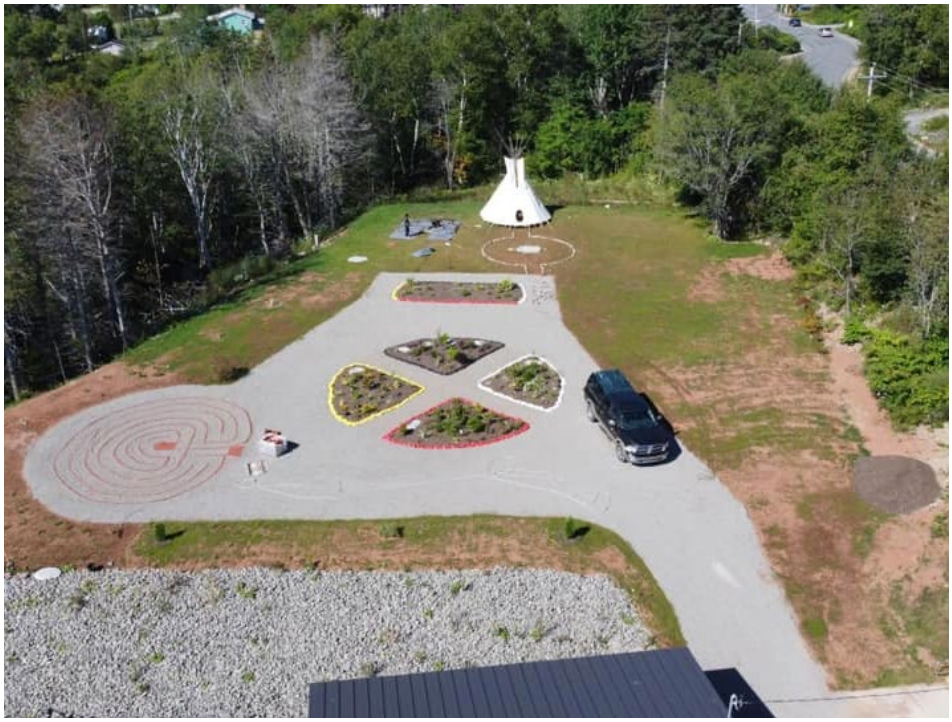
Growing Connections: An Update on Our Memorial Garden for *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*

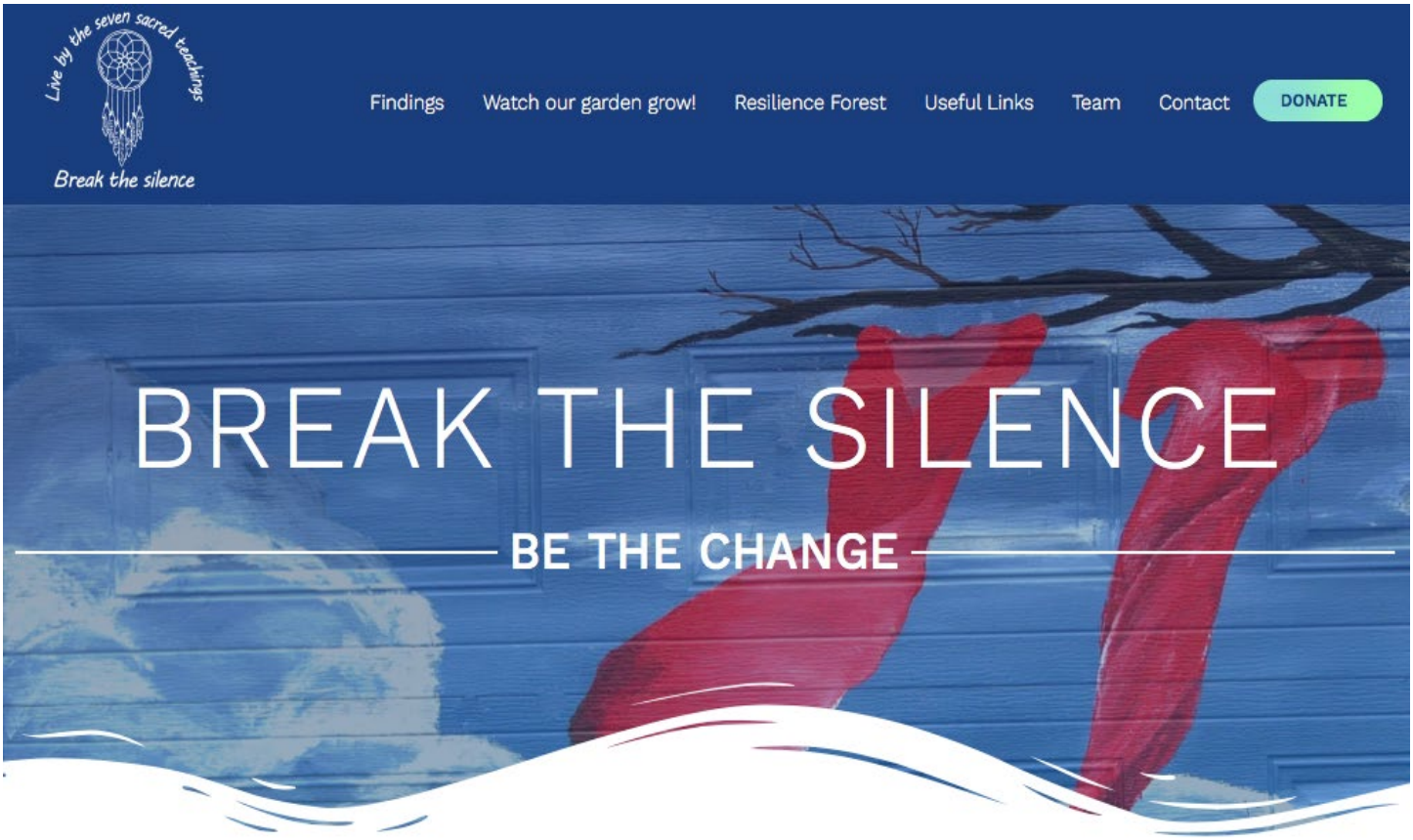
Gwe' everyone!

Warm greetings from a winter wonderland in Eskasoni. Despite the weather we have been continuing our work on the memorial garden *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* through the winter. In the fall we installed the sweat lodge, tee-pee, and sacred fire pit. We also received funding from *Commemorating the History and Legacy of Residential Schools, Commemorate Canada*. This funding allows us to expand on the space for ceremony, adding change rooms for men and women and a storage shed for wood, as well as a Grand Mother Moon Ceremony space. We hope that work will begin on these in the next few weeks. When spring arrives, we should be able to add the finishing touches to the garden!

We have also been gifted a revision to our website! Many thanks to April Mandrona for linking our project with NASCAD's student internship program and Alexia Mitchell. Alexia has done a wonderful job of re-envisioning our on-line presence and showcasing our garden. You can visit our space here.

In addition to our group work, some of us have been continuing with individual projects and pursuits. Hannah's contribution to the newsletter is an example of this, as she works on her first collection of poetry, hopefully to be published later this year!





Eastern Cape (South Africa)

Girls Leading Change & UNGEI

Bongiwe Maome

"Alone we can do so little but, together we can do so much."

—Hellen Keller

In the spirit of collaborative social activism, I accepted an invite by the United Nations Girl's Education Initiative to join a panel of youth activists in the "Real Talk" and moderate a virtual webinar titled *"Shifting Gender and Social Norms to Address School-Related Gender-based Violence: Strategies and Promising Approaches"* as part of their #16Days of Activism against women and child abuse learning series on August 12th, 2020.

The *"Real Talk on Tackling the Shadow Pandemic"* was a discussion aimed at confronting gender-based violence (GBV) in schools and communities in the midst of COVID-19, and sharing best practices on how the impact of both pandemics on education and social activism can be mitigated for the benefit of women and children during this time and in the aftermath of COVID-19.

I think that it is a common experience amongst activists that COVID-19 has amplified the gendered violence in our communities and the direct upshot of this is that the vulnerable become more vulnerable. Accordingly, there is an urgent need to intensify local and global efforts to tackle GBV effectively whilst being mindful of the specific effect of these pandemics from one context to the next. Particularly noteworthy for me was the invaluable opportunity to share expertise, experience, and learn from the diverse panel and participants such as Fatou Wurie, a social justice activist from Sierra Leone, Madeleine Kennedy-Macfoy from Education International, Maryjacob Okwuosa with the WHISPERS feminist network, Megha Kayshap from ActionAid, Elin Martinez from Human Rights Watch, Yvonne Laruni from Raising Voices, and Tikhala Itaye from SheDecide.

Particularly interesting for me was the fact that we recognized the change in gender power dynamics amidst this pandemic and also recognized that our individual and collective approaches to activism needs to change to meet this change in order to achieve and maintain efficacy.

Congratulations!

South Africa New Graduates

Being an Adolescent Orphan in the Context of Sexual Violence: A Participatory Visual Methodology Study in and around a Township Secondary School in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Ndumiso Daluxolo Ngidi | 2020

Ndumiso Daluxolo Ngidi completed his PhD in 2020 and is due to graduate in May

This study examined the vulnerability and agency of a group of adolescent orphans in the context of sexual violence in and around a township secondary school. This qualitative study was located within a transformative paradigm and employed a participatory visual methodology (PVM) in its objective to pursue the notion of research as an intervention. Located in one co-educational secondary school in the Inanda, Ntuzuma, and Kwamashu township precinct in KwaZulu-Natal, the study involved 27 adolescents aged 14-17 years, and in Grades 8 to 10, who identified as 'double orphans' (i.e., those who had lost both their biological parents). To generate data, the study used drawing, collage, photovoice, storyboards, and participants' written reflections as modes of inquiry and representation. These were supplemented by data generated through interpretive group discussion and my researcher field notes. Data analysis occurred in three layers:

- the first two layers involved the participants' analysis of their visual artefacts, the captions they wrote, and the explanations they gave about them during the interpretive group discussions, and
- the third layer involved thematic analysis of the participants' data.

The theoretical framework that informed data analysis in the study involved, first, the Frankfurt School's critical theory, which suggests that inquiry must emphasise the creation of a sense of consciousness where participants can identify and communicate their vulnerability to sexual violence in and around their school. From this perspective, the study was premised on the notion that the emancipation of adolescent orphans from sexual violence is possible if safe spaces are created in which they can freely analyse their victimisation and critically imagine strategies for curbing/ending it. The second theory used in the study is Mezirow's transformative learning theory, which posits that given a safe space and tools (involving the use of PVM) to communicate their perspectives, adolescent orphans can

become critical, engaged, and active agents who can envision possibilities for social change in the context of sexual violence.

The findings in this study illustrate how I used PVM to engage adolescent orphans in identifying, understanding, and communicating their vulnerability to sexual violence in and around their township secondary school. However, the findings also point to gendered differences in how both boys and girls in this study were able to communicate their vulnerability. Specifically, the findings revealed that orphaned girls found it easier to articulate their vulnerability to sexual violence, while the orphaned boys tended to be silent about their vulnerability. Finally, the participants identified the tools and strategies for addressing sexual violence, including structural and emotional support strategies, as well as retribution and punishment for perpetrators. The findings reinforced the idea that PVM can be a tool for research as an intervention. Provided with the right tools (through the use of PVM) and a safe space to engage freely as knowledge producers, adolescent orphans in this study were able to explore and articulate both their vulnerability to sexual violence and to identify the tools and resources they needed to address it. Informed by these findings as well as the literature reviewed, this thesis proposes that in the context of sexual violence, providing a safe space and using PVM with adolescent orphans has the power to excavate the silenced voices of children who are often marginalised; in doing so, this approach develops their agency to address violence.

I AM THE LIFE YOU TOOK

Ndumiso Daluxolo Ngidi

I am the life you took
A childhood you stole
Once a mountain and now a shadow
I am the ashes of the tree you burnt
down in the middle of the night
The scars you left when you forced
yourself inside me
I am the nameless, faceless grave that
you dug

I am the life you took
A child once ruled by imagination
Now I walk through the valley of
nightmares
Empty and without structure
Where there was once a life now stands
an empty shell
The bruises you left on the soul when
you took my innocence away
I am without presence nor form, a life
without meaning

I am the life you took

Robin Notshulwana graduated with a PhD in Education at Nelson Mandela University

Girls Here and Boys There: Participatory Visual Methodology as Pedagogy to Facilitate Gender Sensitive Practice with Pre-service Foundation Phase Teachers

Robin Notshulwana | December 17, 2020

Foundation Phase classrooms are not impervious to unequal gender practices and despite policies that promote gender equitable practices in schools and in society in general, most South African schools still engage in gendered practices that perpetuate inequality and gender-based violence. Teachers are custodians of the curriculum, have important work to do, and are in a position to facilitate critical engagement with learners. This, however, often relies on teachers' own understanding of how their identities influence their practice along with the school and curriculum as a whole.

My research explored how participatory visual methodology might facilitate a deeper understanding of gender sensitive practices in Foundation Phase (FP) pre-service teachers. Participatory visual methodology, aligning with a feminist pedagogy and feminist poststructuralism, facilitated such a process, as it is steeped in reflexivity, enabling the participants to imagine gender sensitive practices in their future classrooms thus potentially contributing to eradicating gender inequality. Data were generated through visual methods such as family photo album, drawing and participatory video. The participants started with the family photo album to explore their own gendered lives thus an entry point to examine their own gender development. This, I argued, was important as it enabled participants to re-look at their own lived experiences thus making them more likely to see how gendered practices influenced them as girls growing up, and in turn might influence their teaching practice as young women. The drawing work then allowed the participants to think about their own teaching practice followed with the creation of cellphilms to explore gender beyond themselves and the classroom. My research highlighted the value of using participatory visual methodology in starting with the self to explore pre-service FP teachers' understandings of gender, enabling them to work towards gender sensitive practices in seeking new possibilities of equitable gendered language and disrupting the dominant gendered discourse.

My study contributed to understanding how participatory visual methodology might be an appropriate pedagogy within a teacher education programme, since it presents the participants with a means of engaging with the issue of gender while simultaneously gaining skills and knowledge required to be a critical and relevant teacher in the context of gender inequality.

A heartfelt thank you to my supervisor Professor Naydene de Lange and the financial support through *Networks4Change*.

Networks Events

COMING SOON!

9th McGill International Cellphilm Festival: Transformation!

Colette Anton and Darshan Daryanani

Mark your calendars and transform your cellphones to create your submissions for the upcoming 9th McGill International Cellphilm Festival! Since 2013, the festival has attracted submissions from girls and young women attached to *Networks4Change* cellphilm festivals, members of the Advisory Board, along with many other groups and individuals around the world! This year, the virtual festival will be brought to the comfort and safety of your homes! It will feature a platform for the organizational expression of unique voices in the form of a publicly accessible showcase.

This year's festival will center on the theme of ***Transformation***. Transformation has been a pivotal force shaping human experience throughout history and modernity, as our world has undergone unique and influential transformations across the fields of education, health, art, technology, and beyond. Across the globe, we have learned to adapt individually and collectively to our circumstances, as well as piloted transformations of our own, bringing new perspectives and ways of living to our loved ones and wider communities.

Here is your opportunity to share your original transformation story with others! Harness your creativity and critical thinking skills to film, edit, and produce a short project on how you see or have experienced transformation. How has our changing world transformed you or your community? How will you and your community transform in our changing world?

Submissions

We accept and encourage online submissions from groups and individuals of all ages. Submissions may be up to 90 seconds in length and should be uploaded as public videos to YouTube. Please fill out the submission form by **May 24th, 2021**.

Awards

Thanks to the generous sponsorship, this year we have over $2000 in prizes! Our panel of judges will announce the recipients of the Storyteller Award, Production Award, Community Change Award, Young Filmmaker Award, and the People's Choice Award on **June 10, 2021**!

New Podcast!

Girlhood Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal is a peer-reviewed journal providing a forum for the critical discussion of girlhood. The Editor-in-Chief is Claudia Mitchell and the Managing Editor is Ann Smith: both are from McGill University, Canada. International and interdisciplinary in scope, the journal is committed to feminist, anti-discrimination, and anti-oppression approaches.

The *Girlhood Studies Podcast* supports the journal's work of addressing the research-to-practice gap by translation research findings into oral storytelling for new audiences. In this monthly conversation, hosts Pamela Lamb and Julia Lehmann explore themes related to girls' lives from the perspectives of girls themselves and members of their communities.

Listen to the ***Girlhood Studies Podcast*** and be inspired by all the creative, playful and empowering ways girls can be girls!

The ***Girlhood Studies Podcast*** launches on Monday, March 8, 2021 for International Women's Day!

Listen to the first episode here:
https://girlhoodstudiespodcast.libsyn.com/website

For inquiries, contact pamela.lamb@mcgill.ca

A Virtual Campaign in a Virtual World: Realizing and Reflecting on the #16DaysofActivism

Darshan Daryanani | McGill University

Every year, the *16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign* runs from the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November) and ends on the International Human Rights Day (10 December). Since 1991, over 6,000 organizations from 187 countries have participated in this campaign and contributed in their own unique and meaningful ways. At the end of 2020, for 16 consecutive days, the More Than Words and Networks4Change projects, as part of the Participatory Cultures Lab, launched a joint campaign, inviting academics, researchers, community organizations, youth leaders and supporters to join us and discover how Indigenous youth are addressing gender-based violence through arts-based, participatory work from eight project sites based in South Africa and Canada.

The cross-channel virtual campaign was launched on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and is also compiled here, as part of an off-social-media campaign summary. Through 27 multimedia posts, the campaign strategically and creatively introduced the *More Than Words* and *Networks4Change* projects, featured the art and activism of four Canadian and four South African sites, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women (Canada), along with the key national and international days. The campaign showcased the ethos of these youth-groups as well as their amazing accomplishments ranging from book publications and awards to the creation of an educational memorial garden, and activism leading to the signing of a protocol that ends child, early and forced marriage in Loskop, South Africa.

In generating a purpose for the virtual campaigns, we recognized that social media movements will help to validate the issues related to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), as well as our roles in contributing to change. This campaign creates awareness and draws attention to actions that have been taken in addressing these important and complex issues; it allows various audiences to learn about gender-based violence even when they are not actively engaged with the issue, and gives an opportunity to highlight what we can each do in our work, communities, and lives to eliminate the disproportionate violence faced by women, girls and LGBTQ2 folks.

An Interactive Campaign Summary of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence

The everyday wins of gaining new followers, shares, likes, comments and reach of posts encourage all of us to continue to increase and promote awareness about the work and missions of each of the field sites, to increase traffic on multiple platforms including websites which contain more academic information, and bring genuine conversations surrounding important and sensitive topics into the mainstream, thereby achieving the campaign's goal. Specifically, hashtags are powerful tools that connect groups and like-minded individuals to the cause and greatly increases the reach of the campaign. Examples include: #GenerationEquality, #OrangeTheWorld, #16DaysOfActivism, and #16Days.

Our efforts on social media may be limited by the algorithms and advertisements that take away from the conversation and campaign and disrupt the flow of information—but our personal and individual conversations with the whole team, community and stakeholders are where we achieve real engagement. There were such enthusiastic responses from academics and community scholars at the field sites.

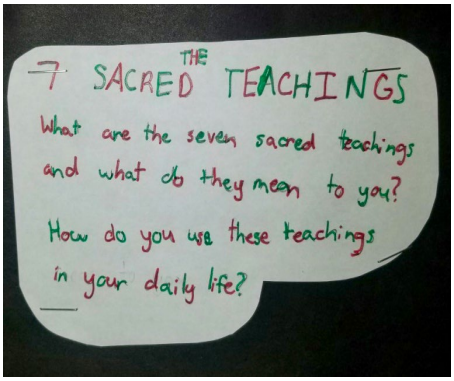
They were excited to see the work of youth participants celebrated in such concise, creative, accessible and shareable ways—making it easier to share these celebratory pieces with the youth themselves. We hope to continue

to foster collaboration and increase social capital between academics and community organizations alike; engage with future campaigns and allow us to continue to work closely with partners and allies to demand action and accountability from governments.

Even excitingly, the campaign was also replicated on a bulletin board at St. Marguerite School, Treaty 6 and the traditional homeland of the Métis (Saskatoon). Jennifer Altenberg, Young Indigenous Women's Utopia group leader and a Grade 7 Teacher at St. Marguerite, took the opportunity to take the campaign off-line to the school hallways. The printed calendar of posts was displayed, and the youth had the opportunity to respond by pinning their own thoughts and comments. It was great to see this work exist in such a dynamic educational context—giving a different kind of life to the campaign. More important than social media analytics, we are inspired by these meaningful conversations, and how much action follows from this campaign.

Clearly, social media is not the answer to ending gender-based violence. However, shedding light on such initiatives inspires groups and individuals to tackle the root causes through policy-making, community engagement and participatory methods to make the lives of girls and young women safer. With social media, we have a powerful tool at our fingertips that can share pieces of content all over the world in seconds—but more importantly, such intentional and planned social media campaigns allow us to check-in and collaborate with our established real-world communities. As we work together on knowledge mobilization activities, we reflect, we share, we connect, we celebrate, we create content, we make meaning and we are inspired to keep going and incite more real-world work and activism.

See also our response to the Sexual Violence Research Initiative's request for input on 16 Days of Activism Campaigns.



Posters of the 16 Days Campaign on a bulletin board at St. Marguerite School, Treaty 6 and the traditional homeland of the Métis (Saskatoon)

'The Girl in the Pandemic' Webinar

October 20, 2020 | McGill University

The Girl in the Pandemic Webinar, co-sponsored by the Institute for Health and Social Policy at McGill University and the Institute for Human Development and Well-being brought together speakers across projects in three countries, South Africa, Ethiopia and Canada (Quebec) addressing critical issues related to gender inequalities and young people. Speakers included: Relebohile Moletsane from *Networks4Change*, Eleni Negash and Hannah Pugh from the Agricultural Transformation Through Stronger Vocational Education, and Jennifer Thompson and Katherine Frohlich from Myriagone at the University of Montreal.

The speakers highlighted the precariousness of girls and young women in a time of distancing, but also some of the ways that girls and young women are taking up the issues, something that was highlighted in the presentation by Marianne Dupré-Deslandes, one of the young people who participated in a cellphilm-making project at the University of Montreal. To hear the full recording of this lively session, visit: https://mcgill.ca/x/oPT

Welcome!

We welcome Dr. Deby Maia as a new Postdoctoral Fellow attached to *More Than Words* and *Networks4Change*

Postdoctoral Project

Although efforts have been made to reduce sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) towards Indigenous women, the *Committee on Citizen Relations of the Assemblée National du Québec* (2018) states clearly that "current initiatives are not enough". In an SGBV context, the body plays a critical role: 77% of Indigenous victims of violence reported long-term psychological and physical effects such as body image, movement style and physical expression. A promising, but very understudied area of SGBV in arts-based intervention research is the idea of focusing on the body itself. Despite the high significance of body movement on Indigenous cultures and the crucial role of the body in SGBV contexts, there is a paucity of initiatives that specifically examine the use of body-based approaches in the educational field especially for addressing issues around and preventing sexual violence against Indigenous girls and young women. What I hope to be able to do in this postdoctoral research is to provide ways to implement body work as an arts-based tool with Indigenous girls and young women as part of a social change framework, allowing leadership to be built among Indigenous youth as mentors to younger community members; and helping to develop body-and-movement interventions for preventing SGBV against Indigenous girls and young women. Using participatory methodologies, I intend to assure that research participants are 'hands-on' actors in the research process and will be able to use the results to apply to their own lives and lives of other community members.

Biography

I was born in Brazil in a place where an intimate connection with nature, with spirituality and with diverse ethnic groups is what we call "life". African, Portuguese and Indigenous traditions have always been part of my everyday life which has allowed me to develop a vision of human beings as a wide community as well as a great respect for our particularities. Regarding formal studies, I have a PhD in *Études et pratiques des arts at the Université du Québec à Montréal* (Canada) and in *Performing Arts* at the *Universidade Federal da Bahia* (Brazil) with the thesis "*L'enseignement de la danse de María Fux: Fondements et pratiques*." My Masters' degree was developed in the *Clinical Psychology and Culture* program at the *Universidade de Brasília* (Brazil) and I have an undergraduate and a graduate degree in Psychology from the *Universidade Federal de Uberlândia* (Brazil).

Since 2002 I have been joining dance groups in Brazil and Argentina as a dancer, percussion player and researcher (Brazilian Dances Group: *Baiadô* and the Dance / Theater Group *Anônimos da Silva*). I am also a member of the Global Directory *Who's Who* in Dance (*Conseil International de la Danse*—UNESCO). My formal educational and practices background include:

- Researchers in Brazilian Dances,
- Contemporary Dance Techniques,
- Contact—Improvisation,
- Martial Arts;
- Dance Movement Therapy,
- *Danzaterapia* (María Fux),
- Somatic Education Methods as Resources for Education,
- Artistic Creation,
- Sociocultural Inclusion, and
- Illness Prevention.

My practice emphasizes interdisciplinary approaches to Embodiment, Community Psychology, increasing of creativity and innovation in formal and informal education systems in Brazil and abroad.

Congratulations!

Emily Booker, Pathy Fellow 2021-2022

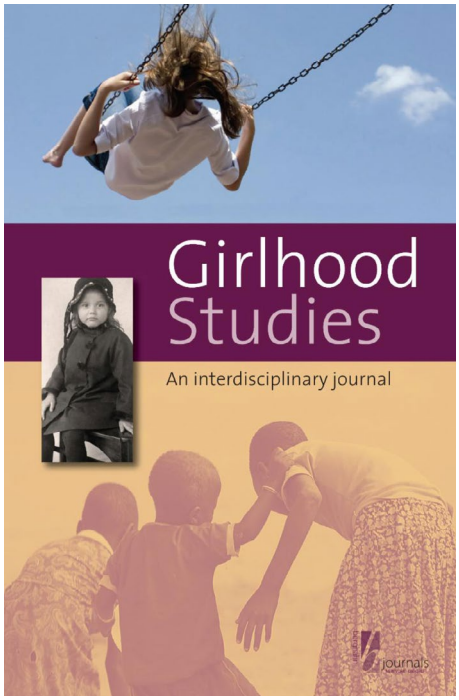
We are delighted to share the good news that Emily Booker has been selected as a young leader for the 2021-22 Pathy Foundation Fellowship at Coady International Institute! Emily will be developing a *Girl Group to Empower Youth* in North Vancouver, BC, Canada. Meet the 2021-2022 fellows here!

The online Girl Group will connect self-identified femme or female youth 14 to 18, including but not limited to trans, non-binary, gender fluid, 2spirit and any other youth female/femme identified youth in the community of North Vancouver. Facilitated by Emily, this online girl group will engage in arts-based activities and feature workshops and presentations from female/femme-identified leaders or champions of gender justice in the community. The initiative will create a space that will empower youth in their gender identity and counter sexism in the community.

In the largest cohort yet, six fellows from the previously deferred 2020-21 program will join ten new fellows for a cohort of 16. Each fellow will work with a community with which they have a connection, to foster sustainable positive social change in Canada and around the world. Community initiatives have been adapted to the current global context, and will be responsive to changes in COVID-19 spread and response in local communities around the globe.

The Pathy Family Foundation supports each fellow with funding of up to $40,000.

Publications



[Themed Issue] Girlhood Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal

The Lives of Girls and Young Women in the Time of COVID-19 (Volume 13: Issue 3)

Editors: Claudia Mitchell & Ann Smith

In December, 2020 *Girlhood Studies* published an issue centered around ***The Lives of Girls and Young Women in the Time of COVID-19***. The pandemic has exacerbated gender inequalities and negative affected health. Girls and young women around the world are facing increasing levels of precariousness as a result of health measures taken to curb the transmission of the virus. The lack of privacy in the households makes it more difficult to carry on face-to-face or technology driven programming carried out by NGOs. In some cases, working to combat sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) could potentially do more harm than good.

These were some of the issues raised when the editors put out a call for articles in May, 2020. It was some months after the pandemic started and the editors were wondering who would be able to do empirical research or write articles while doing home schooling. In spite of all expectations, many proposals were received!

This issue of *Girlhood Studies* comprehends a collection of articles representing the situation of girls and young women in different countries, including Russia, China, US, Canada, Jordan, Kenya, and Bangladesh. The authors address a wide range of concerns and use innovative methods and tools such as using online platforms to do participatory visual work or conduct interviews, or testing out new genres of representation such as a visual novella or comic books.

In recognition of International Women's Day, Berghahn Journals is offering free access to *Girlhood Studies* until March 15. To access, use code **IWD21**. Visit:

https://mcgill.ca/x/owk

Table of Contents

Editorial

The Lives of Girls and Young Women in the Time of COVID-19

Claudia Mitchell & Ann Smith

Articles

Russian Girls Construct Freedom and Safety in Pandemic Times

Olga Zdravomyslova & Elena Onegina

Left Behind by COVID-19: Experiences of "Left-Behind" Girls in Rural China

Jue Wang

The Girlhood Project: Pivoting our Model with Girls During COVID-19

Cheryl Weiner, Kathryn Van Demark, Sarah Doyle, Jocelyn Martinez, Fia Walklet, & Amy Rutstein-Riley

"Some Things Just Won't Go Back:" Teen Girls' Online Dating Relationships during COVID-19

Alanna Goldstein & Sarah Flicker

Ghostly Presences OUT THERE: Transgender Girls and Their Families in the Time of COVID

Sally Campbell Galman

Kokums to the *Ikswêsisisak*: COVID-19 and Urban Métis Girls and Young Women

Carly Jones, Renée Monchalin, Cheryllee Bourgeois, & Janet Smylie

Girls, Homelessness, and COVID-19: The Urgent Need for Research Action

Kaitlin Shwan, Erin Dej, & Alicia Versteegh

Pre-pandemic Influences on Kenyan Girls' Transitions to Adulthood during COVID-19

Meghan Bellerose, Maryama Diaw, Jessie Pinchoff, Beth Kangwana, & Karen Austrian

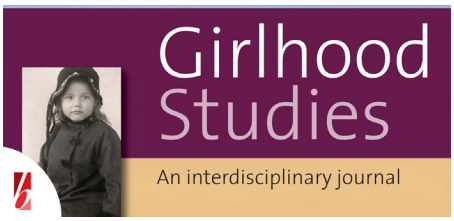
Social Isolation and Disrupted Privacy: Impacts of COVID-19 on Adolescent Girls in Humanitarian Contexts

Sarah Baird, Sarah Alheiwidi, Rebecca Dutton, Khadija Mitu, Erin Oakley, Tassew Woldehanna, & Nicola Jones

Visual Essay

Intersectional Pandemics in Bangladesh: The Effects of COVID-19 on Girls

Nasrin Siddiqa



Girls and Representations of Rape Culture (Volume 14, Issue 1)

Guest Editor: Roxanne Harde, University of Alberta

As Roxanne Harde, the guest editor of this special issue made clear in her call for proposals:

> *Rape culture generally denotes a society or environment whose prevailing social attitudes have the effect of normalizing or trivializing sexual assault and abuse. While this description seems straightforward, people nonetheless have difficulty in recognizing what rape culture is, what it is not, or where and how it operates. It is not, for example, only about rape, nor is it about criminalizing alternative or non-normative sexual practices. It is not about disempowering women and girls and criminalizing men. Recognizing rape culture means understanding that it informs sexual and social life and understanding that unless we change the way we think, act, and speak about females and about sexuality, nothing will change. But that sea-change may come about through the power of girls' agency and their ability to be political actors and reshape the societies in which they live.*

This special issue of *Girlhood Studies*, with its particular emphasis on literary and visual representations, presents us with articles that use a range of methodological approaches to analyze how girls and young women react to and against, are represented as part of, and are affected by such representations of rape culture.

In recognition of International Women's Day, Berghahn Journals is offering free access to *Girlhood Studies* until March 15. To access, use code **IWD21**:

https://mcgill.ca/x/oPN

Table of Contents

Consent is not as Simple as Tea: Student Activism against Rape Culture

Brittany Adams

The Saint Mary's Rape Chant: A Discourse Analysis of Media Coverage

Lyndsay Anderson & Marnina Gonick

"Speak with Girls, Not for Them": Supporting Girls' Action Against Rape Culture

Alexe Bernier & Sarah Winstanley

Sexual Abuse of Girls in Post-Revolutionary Mexico: Between Legitimation and Punishment

Susana Sosenski

(Para)normalizing Rape Culture: Possession as Rape in Young Adult Paranormal Romance

Annika Herb

Fantasies of the Good Life: Responding to Rape Culture in 13 Reasons Why

Cameron Greensmith & Joceyln Sakal Froese

Exposing Flaws of Affirmative Consent through Contemporary American Teen Films

Michele Meek

Addressing Rape Culture through Folktale Adaptation in Malaysian Young Adult Literature

Sharifah Aishah Osman

Visual Essay

Reflecting Inwardly in Order to Act Outwardly

Katy Lewis

Not That Grateful: Survivor Resistance in Rape Culture

Janet Wesselius

Mentoring: A Literature Review

Leann Brown | McGill University

Developed through the *More Than Words* and *Networks4Change* projects, the literature review highlights the academic and gray literature produced on mentoring, with a special consideration of mentoring for Indigenous youth, and especially mentoring in relation to adolescent girls and young women. The production of this literature review is situated in the work done by girls, women and the other individuals and groups associated with both *Networks4Change* and *More Than Words*.Developed by Emily Booker the review is divided into four main parts:

Part One: Why Mentoring

Highlights benefits of mentoring that have been uncovered in the literature.

Part Two: The Nuts and Bolts of the Mentoring Literature

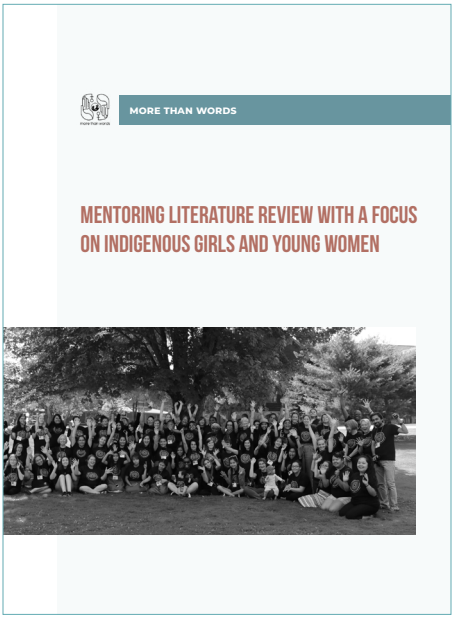
Breaks down the many different types of mentoring, mentoring settings, and important components of creating mentoring programs from the literature.

Part Three: Considerations from Mentoring Marginalized and Indigenous Youth

Engages with the more recent body of literature on mentoring programs created for marginalized youth.

Part Four: Intergenerational Mentoring and Indigenous Girls

Highlights the importance of intergenerational mentoring for Indigenous girls, Auntyship and Aunty mentoring models, peer-to-peer mentoring between Indigenous girls and young women, and lessons learned from the different ways mentoring has been engaged with by Indigenous girls in Canada and South Africa.



The *Mentoring Literature Review with a Focus on Indigenous Girls and Young Women* can be found here:

https://mcgill.ca/x/oPp

Girlfesto

The Girlfesto is now available in Mi'kmaq! This is one of the languages spoken in the Atlantic Provinces of Canada and the Gaspé Peninsula of Québec. We are grateful to Michael R. Denny, Red Road Project Coordinator, for translating the Girlfesto to Mi'kmaq. This is an effort to preserve the culture and allow the document to be known by more people in their own language!

With this new translation, the Girlfesto is accessible in ten languages … and there are more to come!

If you would like to translate the Girlfesto to another language, contact us at: **avril.riostorres@mcgill.ca**.

Current translated Girlfestos:

- Afrikaans
- English
- English in Dyslexie font
- French
- Inuktituk
- isiZulu
- Kanien'kéha
- Mi'kmaq
- Russian
- Swedish
- Mohawk
- Xhosa

To access the Girlfesto in Mi'kmaq,visit: https://mcgill.ca/x/oPS

For all the versions of the Girlfesto, visit: https://mcgill.ca/x/oP5

Girlfesto in Dyslexie Font

Sabrina Gill

This newest iteration of the Girlfesto is written in English, but has been designed and restructured to be more accessible. It uses a font called 'Dyslexie', which is a font developed by dyslexic graphic designer Christian Boer as his graduate project at the University of Twente. The typeface was designed to make words more legible and readable for people with Dyslexia.

Dyslexia is defined by the International Dyslexia Association as:

> *A specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities.*

Dyslexia is not linked to intelligence, and many of our world's brightest minds, such as Whoopi Goldberg and Leonardo da Vinci, are dyslexic. Dyslexia is more common than one might assume. In 2017, Dyslexia International estimated that 5-10% of the global population, around 700 million people, are dyslexic. Each person experiences dyslexia in different ways, with the Dyslexie website outlining 37 symptoms of dyslexia.

The font has included several design aspects that make it more legible. It has a heavier emphasis on the bottom of each letter, which prevents letters from being turned upside down. There is wider spacing, which avoids a crowding effect. Letters sit on a mild incline, making them easier to distinguish.

The Dyslexie font has won several awards for its innovation towards a more inclusive world, such as the 2011 Smart Future Minds Awards and the 2013 Design to Improve Life Awards. However, it is important to remember that every person experiences dyslexia in different ways, and that this font is not necessarily the ideal solution for all dyslexic individuals. Many prefer other fonts or methods of reading text.

The *Networks4Change* team is committed to making the Girlfesto as accessible and widely available as possible, as we have done so through various translations. We hope to continue growing as an inclusive organisation, and believe that having the Girlfesto available in the Dyslexie font is a step in the right direction.

You can access the Girlfesto in Dyslexie font here: https://mcgill.ca/x/oPq

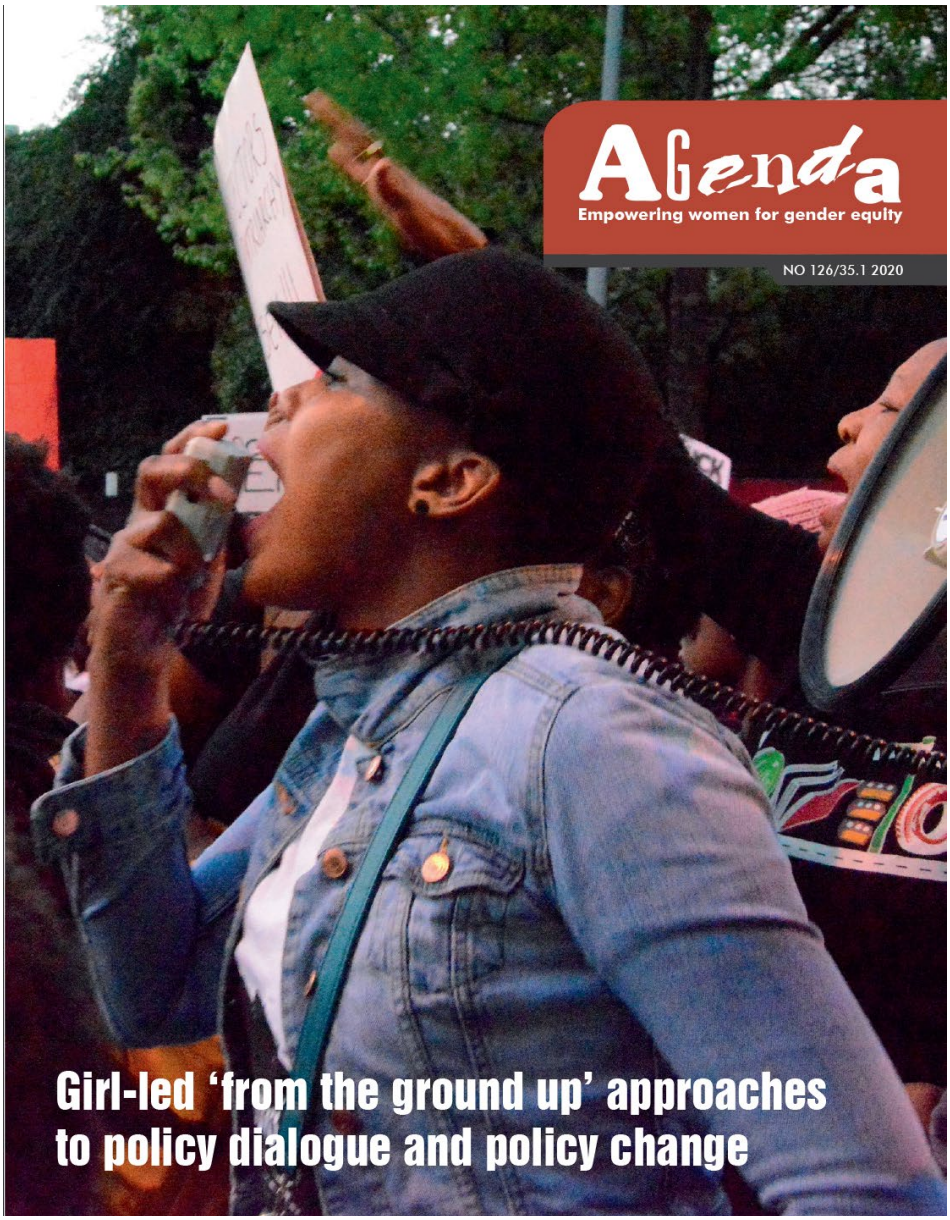
Agenda
Empowering women for gender equity

What's Policy got to do with it? Girl-led 'From the Ground Up' Approaches to Policy Dialogue and Policy Change

Guest Editors: Claudia Mitchell, Relebohile Moletsane, & Shakira Choonara

For this issue of *Agenda*, we were focusing on articles and other forms of writing and art work that respond to questions about girl-led/young women-led 'from the ground up' approaches to policy-dialogue and policy-making, particularly in the context of gender-based violence and related areas of femicide, sexual assaults and rapes, early and unwanted pregnancy, access to child grants, forced and early marriages and so on.

For more than a decade, researchers working in community-based research, especially using participatory visual and arts-based approaches such as digital storytelling, photovoice and participatory video, and cellphilming, have been asking 'so what' questions, but particularly questions related to change through various forms of policy. Recognizing that the idea of policy change at a macro level typically calls for long term initiatives over time, and that policy change does not necessarily guarantee any type of real change 'on the ground' as can be seen in all too familiar 'policy rich' and 'implementation poor' contexts, we invited contributors to consider the vast range of possibilities for what policy making, policy dialogue and policy processes might mean, particularly in the context of those who are normally excluded from policy dialogue. Four of the submissions for this Special Issue draw on the authors attached to *Networks4Change* fieldwork.



"Everything is written there, there should be something that is going to follow": A girlfesto as a strategy for girl-led activism in rural communities

Naydene de Lange & Relebohile Moletsane

This article reports on the work of the Girls Leading Change (GLC), a group of young African women teachers from rural South Africa, who worked with a Girlfesto that focuses on addressing gender-based violence (GBV). An international group of girls and women who had come together for the *Circles within Circles* retreat in Montebello, Canada, developed the Girlfesto. Using the lens of girl activism in the context of policy dialogue, we offer an analysis of the young women teachers' engagement with and speaking back to the girl-informed Girlfesto. After having read the Montebello Girlfesto the 11 members of the GLC, working in small groups In a workshop setting, were asked what they thought about the Girlfesto, what they could add to it, and what they could do with it in South African rural contexts. The feedback and ensuing group discussion were recorded and transcribed. Using thematic analysis, several themes relating to young women as sociopolitical actors were identified: activism as starting with themselves; taking the Girlfesto to the community; and actioning the Girlfesto for social change. The GLC members revealed their growing political awareness about the complexities of going beyond words to a practice of activism to address GBV in the schools they teach at and in the communities in which they live. Beyond inserting their voices in the Girlfesto, the discussions enabled the young women teachers to reflect on their tools for girl-led activism and policy dialogue in schools and communities. The findings suggest that enabling girls and young women to engage in transnational work focusing on addressing GBV creates a space to learn from each other and to refine their learning to suit a particular local context.

"We have heard you but we are not changing anything": Policymakers as audience to a photovoice exhibition on challenges to school re-entry for young mothers in Kenya

Milkya Nyariro

The policy-making process can be complex and hierarchical and can often disenfranchise many people. Policy dialogues seldom enlist marginalised populations such as girls and young women who are the intended policy beneficiaries of key areas related to their sexuality and well-being. To address this, researchers working with girls and young women are increasingly adopting arts-based participatory visual methods such as photovoice, cellphilms, drawings and collage, among others, to conduct girl-led research. The goals of using the products of these research approaches are to inform policy and decision making and incorporate the voices of this marginalised group in such conversations on issues that concern them. However, this is not without its challenges. This focus reflects on policymakers' responses to a photovoice exhibition and the policy dialogue that followed.

The exhibition came out of a study which used photovoice to explore the challenges of 15 pregnant girls and young mothers in Nairobi, Kenya to staying in or re-entering the school system. Analysis of a personal experience using the photovoice exhibition to generate a dialogue with policymakers reveals that despite recent efforts to democratise, policymaking is still exclusive and hierarchical. While the photovoice exhibition demonstrated how girls can, in theory, lead from the ground up in policymaking through arts-based participatory research approaches, getting the policymakers to engage with the exhibition in which the girls identified contextual factors that keep them out of school proved to be more complex. Policymakers might still show resistance to the views of other policy stakeholders, particularly the policy beneficiaries who are often at the outer margin; this can be due to the power dynamic and elitism that exist among the different groups and individuals involved in policymaking. The views of policy beneficiaries are crucial in formulating effective policies—but are currently not considered by policymakers.

Participants at the validation workshop for school re-entry policies at KICD, Nairobi

One of the photovoice exhibition panels

"We need to do public health differently in this community": A reflexive analysis of participatory video, affective relations, and the policy process

Pamela Lamb

In this article, I reflect on the following question: What would it look like to begin health policy processes with awareness of colonial legacies, and especially affective attunement to the ways in which they affect Indigenous young peoples' everyday lives?

My professional experiences in healthcare made me critically aware of the systemic barriers and prejudices that Indigenous peoples face in accessing equitable health services, such as inadequate and culturally inappropriate healthcare services. Having worked for over a decade in acute care and community health settings in Canada, I have witnessed the social determinants of health materialize in the personal narratives shared by diverse clients. Yet reflecting on my own nursing education, which I undertook over a decade ago, I had never encountered curricula that addressed discrimination and/or disparities in the provision of healthcare.

Although the focus of this article is the settler-colonial context of Canada, health inequities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations are not unique to the West. As but one example, despite efforts to redress the legislated inequality of apartheid, health inequities and discriminations in health systems persist for many Indigenous South Africans. The breach of rights that links colonization and poor health outcomes for Indigenous peoples is seen globally. While forms of structural racism—socioeconomic and political disadvantages, and cultural oppression—are avoidable, they persist in postcolonial contexts across the Global North/South divide.

There is much that health professionals and policymakers can learn from the everyday life experiences of those they serve. Considering how knowledge of bodies and behaviors is socially constructed, and asking 'whose knowledge counts?', may lead to more equitable forms of healthcare and legislation. Deconstructing power relations by asking 'who is serving whom?' may lead to greater accountability in efforts to redress systematic violations of Indigenous peoples' right to health.

Yet how do emotions foster or foreclose opportunities to learn from others?

Through my involvement as a research assistant with *Networks4Change*, I have experienced how participatory visual media can build bridges for difficult feelings, creating the grounds for both flourishing and friction. I have been inspired by the many creative modes of engagement that participants have contributed to the project, such as the *Montebello Girlfesto* and books like *14 Times a Woman*.

I have also learnt how a feminist approach to affect theory can be vital to work concerned with women and girls' emotional lives and labors. For instance, it may reveal how Indigenous youth and non-Indigenous policymakers may have similar feelings about colonial legacies but may have very different relationships to those feelings.

In this reflexive analysis I explore feelings evoked at a participatory video screening intended to provoke policy dialogue around the health and wellbeing of Indigenous youth. I reflect on the impact of youth-produced participatory video on the policy process through the concept of affective relations. Mapping out how feelings matter, and how our relationships to those feelings matter, I highlight some of the challenges and possibilities of affective learning through participatory visual research.

Schoolgirls leading their rural community in dialogue to address gender-based violence

Ntomboxolo Yamile

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a "wicked problem" in communities all over the world and requires a concerted effort from everyone to address it. While it is most often women and girls who bear the brunt of the violence, their voices are often silenced or ignored. In my work in a rural community in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, I worked with the girl participants to develop a digital dialogue tool to engage the school community in several community dialogues to address GBV, and, in so doing, make their voices heard.

This article responds to the question: What are the schoolgirls' experiences of using the digital dialogue tool in engaging rural school communities in dialogue to address GBV? To explore and understand their experiences, focus group discussions were used; these were recorded, transcribed and thematically analysed. Critical audience engagement was used as a theoretical framework to make meaning of the participants' experiences of engaging with the audience in the community dialogues. Three themes emerged from the girls' experiences: feeling motivated to tackle the problem, creating a generative space for dialogue, and girls enabling relationships. The findings position girls as socio-political actors, which has implications for policy makers and how they might respond to communities, as well as for community-based researchers seeking to expand the 'reach' of the research. This study is significant as it focuses on girls' voices in leading a community dialogue as an intervention to address GBV in a rural school community.

The girls held a dialogue in the community hall and used a digital dialogue tool to talk about their work

Toolkits

A Toolkit on Creative Approaches to Studying Change: Looking Back and Determining that Path Ahead

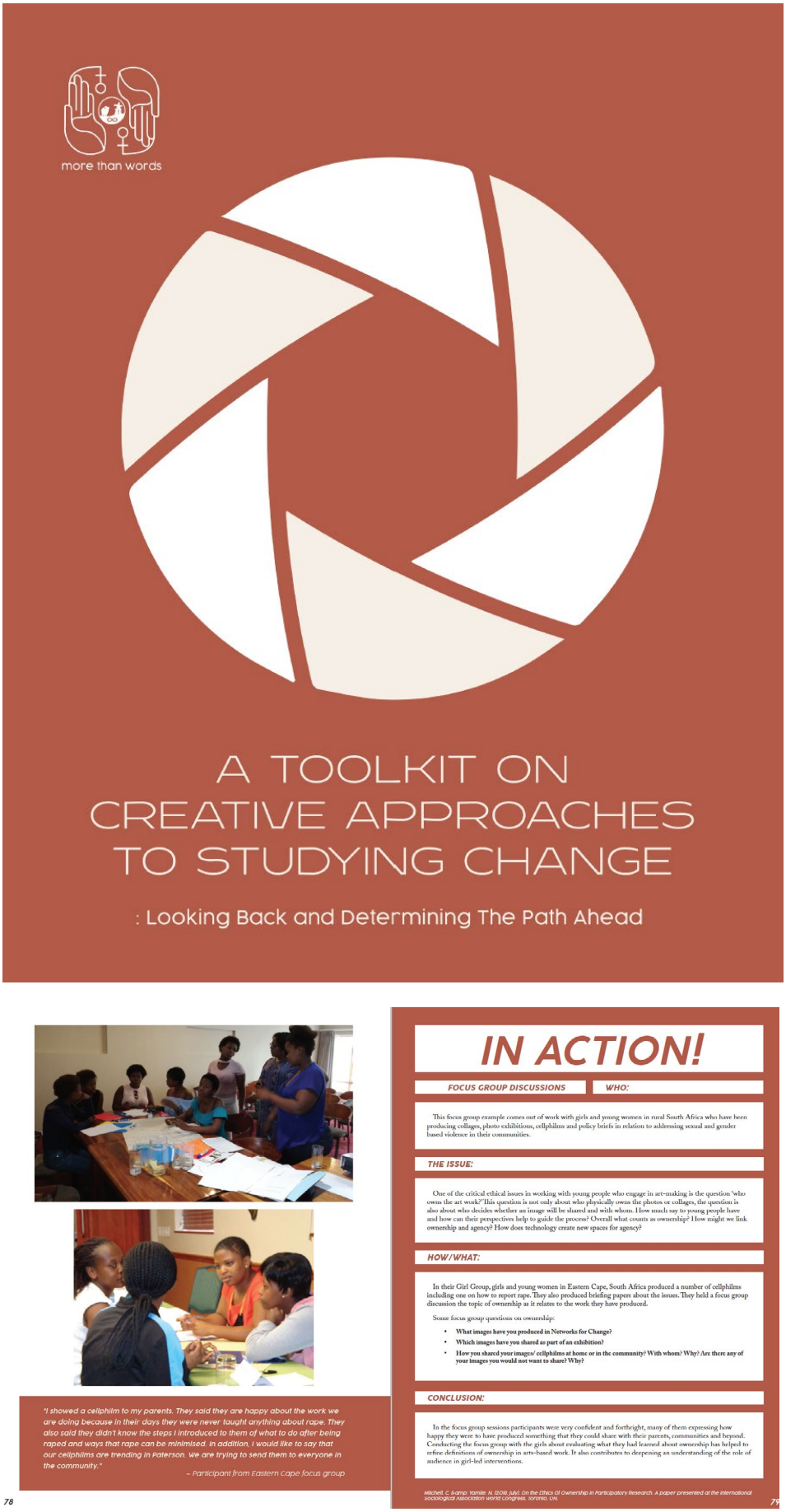
Leann Brown, McGill University

This toolkit, prepared by Emily Booker and Allison McCook, builds on the tools and approaches outlined in "Looking Back and Determining the Path Ahead," drawing on the methods outlined in this evaluation framework and providing insight into real world application. It serves as an overview of methods that can be used to evaluate 'what happened' and the difference an arts-based, youth-led and Indigenous focused project is making among its participants, assessing how it is functioning, how well it has met its original goal(s), as well as illuminating areas that can be improved on.

This resource offers a step-by-step guide to the implementation and use of each tool, when it is most useful, along with advantages and disadvantages. A key feature of the toolkit is the *IN ACTION!* examples which showcase different ways the methods of evaluation have successfully been employed, primarily drawing on Indigenous youth-led examples from *Networks4Change*. Real-world applications of cellphilming, photovoice, drawing, most significant change, youth-led surveys, and more can be used to help researchers or communities determine which tools are best suited to their projects.

We acknowledge the work of Suzanne Methot, a Nehiyaw (Cree) writer, editor, educator, and community worker, for her extensive content review and advice. We are thankful to Gabrielle Giroux, proud Dene woman from Hatchet Lake First Nation and founder of Encore Graphics for her beautiful and thoughtful design work. The production of this toolkit draws on the work of so many colleagues attached in one way or another to the Participatory Cultures Lab (through work in Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, and South Africa) and who have, over the last decade, been committed to the idea of collective learning, working on and adapting a variety of toolkits and guides in support of participatory and arts-based methodologies. To access the toolkit, visit:

https://mcgill.ca/x/oPc



IN ACTION! Focus Group Discussions example in *A Toolkit on Creative Approaches to Studying Change: Looking Back and Determining that Path Ahead*

Cellphones, Connections, & Community: A Toolkit for Community-led Organizations

Darshan Daryanani, McGill University

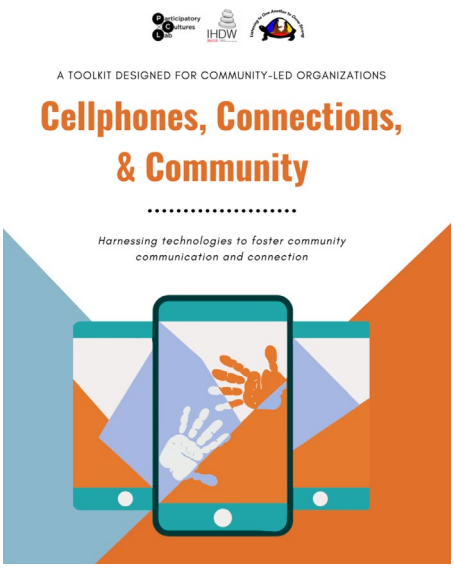
We are excited to launch the *Cellphones, Connections and Community: Harnessing Technologies to Foster Community Communication and Connection toolkit*, a collaboration between the *Listening to One Another to Grow Strong* (LTOA) program, the *Institute for Human Development and Well-being* (IHDW), and the *Participatory Cultures Lab* (PCL). The intention of the toolkit to promote wellbeing and connection in the communities around us.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, with many organizations pivoting their service delivery strategies to online platforms such as Zoom, mobile technologies and digital platforms have dramatically increased in use as individuals and communities depend on their use to communicate, connect and receive services. Cellphones are everyday tools that are readily accessible and easily usable by a majority of people and used on a regular basis. With the development of smartphone technology, they have become a primary means through which people document life, share ideas, and store information. They are also used to create content through photos and videos, as well as share content through social media applications. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, cellphones have allowed individuals and families to stay connected through text messaging and long-distance calling, all of which have been made easier through social media apps such as Facebook and Instagram. Through the activities in this toolkit, we hope that meaningful and mindful engagement with friends and family online can compensate for diminished face-to-face interactions, due to busy schedules or current social distancing measures.

About the Toolkit

Most of the activities in this toolkit are organized around the idea of "What can communities and families do with a cellphone?" While we recognize that access to technology itself may be a challenge and 'not for everyone', we are committed to the idea that even minimal access to technology can go a long way to help families feel less isolated. The activities in the toolkit are aimed at bringing people together to share their lived experiences and learn from each other. However, many of the activities can be also conducted independently, as a means for individuals to stay healthy, stimulated and active.

The toolkit is divided into sections based on activity themes, including film-based activities like cellphilming and photovoice, movement-based activities like running, yoga and dance choreography, art-based activities such as collage making, creative writing and making musical playlist, food-based activities like hosting a virtual dinner party, a cooking show and creating a cookbook, literature-based activities like storytelling and story-boarding. The activities are described in a step-by-step process, with tips and tricks, material lists, and prompts for guidance. The toolkit also includes a section on utilizing online information storage, programs, and platforms, that will allow you to make the best use of your digital device.



Thank You!

The joint teams began working together in May 2020 brought together a variety of perspectives and talents to brainstorm ideas on how to help community organizations mobilize online technologies to facilitate program activities in the time of COVID-19.

We would like to thank members of the LTOA team who organized and reviewed drafts of the document over the past few months: Leah Birch, Tristan Supino, and Michaela Field, and a group of summer interns and research assistants from the IHDW for their brainstorming and creativity in organizing this toolkit: Darshan Daryanani, Nesa Bandarchian Rashti, Sahar Fazeli, Joy Hannam, Colette Anton, Mary-Lynne Loftus, and Sonia Bucan. You can access the toolkit here:

https://mcgill.ca/x/oPG

Briefing Paper

Nesa Bandarchian & Sahar Fazeli

Coming Soon

Towards Developing an Indigenous Girl-led Framework on Well-being

The *Networks4Change's* main activities are wrapping up after almost seven years.

Over the last couple of years several Briefing Papers have been published:

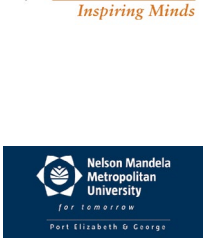
- Ethics of Participatory Visual Research to Address Gender-based Violence,
- Using Everyday Media Making Tools to Address Gender-based Violence, and
- Girl Groups to Address Sexual Violence.

These Briefing Papers are meant to address the critical question:

> *What we have learned about the well-being of Indigenous girls and young women of Canada and South Africa through their engagement in arts-based methods?*

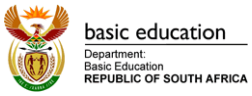
In this new Briefing Paper, the focus is on re-imagining well-being of Indigenous girls and young women. The paper looks at how activism, resurgence, self-love and 'paying forward' beneficence can be looked at in the context of well-being.

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
moletsaner@ukzn.ac.za
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Project Website

Canada
www.networks4change.ca

South Africa
www.networks4change.co.za

Project Coordinators

Avril Rios
avril.riostorres@mcgill.ca

Lisa Wiebesiek
wiebesiekl@ukzn.ac.za

Addresses

Participatory Cultures Lab, McGill University
3715 Peel Street, Room 221,
Montreal, QC, H3A 1X1, Canada
participatoryculturelab.com

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

IDRC | CRDI

SSHRC CRSH

Cover Design by Freepik

Fatima Khan, Communications, *Networks4Change*