CREATING CIRCLES

A Handbook on Art-making with Young People to Address Gender-based Violence
This Handbook is dedicated to all the girls and young women at the Circles Within Circles Conference in Montebello, Quebec, whose artwork and testimonies inspired this work.

We carry your stories with us.
This Handbook comes out of the Circles Within Circles project supported by the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, an independent and nonpartisan charity established in 2001 as a living memorial to the former prime minister of Canada. In 2002, with the support of the House of Commons, the Government of Canada endowed the Foundation with the Advanced Research in the Humanities and Human Sciences Fund. The Foundation also benefits from private donations.

As a 2017 Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation Fellow, I am very grateful to the Foundation for its financial support, and its enthusiasm for a project that brings together girls and young women (along with researchers and NGOs) from so many countries as part of its ‘Canada in the World’ thematic area. Circles Within Circles has several components including a summit event that took place in Montebello, Quebec, July 8-11, an international travelling exhibition, and this document Creating Circles: A Handbook on Art-making with Young People to Address Gender-based Violence, in support of participatory arts-based practices.

I would also like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the International Development Research Centre for their ongoing support for the umbrella study, Networks for Change and Well-being: Girl-Led ‘from the ground up’ Policy Making to Address Sexual Violence in Canada and South Africa and the co-PI on the project, Professor Relebohile Moletsane.

Creating Circles: A Handbook on Art-making with Young People to Address Gender-based Violence joins the growing number of toolkits and guides meant to support participatory visual and arts-based initiatives in different contexts. I am grateful to all those working in this burgeoning community.

Finally, I would like to thank all the participants who came to Montebello for Circles Within Circles and in particular the amazing facilitators and the team from McGill University who supported this exciting endeavour in so many ways, including co-producing this Handbook.

**Claudia Mitchell, PhD, FRSC**

James McGill Professor
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Welcome to Creating Circles: A Handbook on Art-making with Young People to Address Gender-based Violence. Gender-based violence as a global concern affects the lives of millions of girls and young women. Participatory visual and other arts-based methods are increasingly being used as ways to engage young women and men in co-producing knowledge about critical concerns such as sexual violence in their everyday lives. Tools and approaches such as the use of photovoice (working with photography), cellphilming (cellphone + video) or participatory video, and collage making can be very useful ways to ‘make visual’ issues and themes that can otherwise be difficult to put into words. How do young people see the issues and what do they think needs to happen to change the situation? How can various stakeholders participate (and respond) to the issues?

This Handbook is about creating circles for change through art-making and various visual methods. When participatory arts-based work is done in a group setting there are many opportunities for creating circles as a collective voice for change. At the same time, exhibiting and screening the productions created through arts-based methods can spark dialogue. This work has the possibility of being seen ‘over and over and over’ again, reaching many different audiences—so that the circle gets bigger.

Creating Circles is meant to serve as a resource for those working with young people in schools or community settings to address sexual or gender-based violence. Many of the ideas found in this Handbook started out as a suite of activities at an international conference ‘Circles Within Circles’ held in Montebello, Quebec in July, 2018, an event involving Indigenous girls and young women from sites across Canada and young people from South Africa and Sweden, all of whom had previous experiences with arts-based methods to address sexual violence. It also built upon narratives shared through participatory artwork produced by girls and young women in Kenya and Ethiopia, who were unable to attend in person.

Globally, close to 35% of women have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime, much of which occurs at the hands of their intimate partner.1 Approximately 120 million girls (just over 10%) have experienced sexual violence at some point in their lives.2 Other common forms of violence against girls and women include early and forced marriage, human trafficking, and female genital mutilation. The prevalence of experiences of sexual violence and harassment have recently been illuminated by the #MeToo movement, which emerged from the United States but has spread around the world, taken up in countries including South Africa and Nigeria, and adapted to different linguistic contexts through new hashtags such as #яне боюсь сказати (I’m Not Afraid to Speak) in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, or #AgressionsNonDénoncées (Undisclosed Aggressions) in Francophone Canada.
In this work, ‘sexual violence’ is defined as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting.” The broader term ‘gender-based violence’ is also used in the Handbook, defined as the abuse of power over another person based on their gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender. It disproportionately affects women and girls, as well as LGBTQ+ and gender-nonconforming people, and can refer to sexual, physical, emotional and psychological assault or harassment that results in harm or suffering.

While the recognition given to the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence by social media campaigns is recent, it has been widely known for decades by government, non-government and multilateral stakeholders, who have worked at local, national and international levels, that it is critical to raise awareness and provide programming that supports girls and young women. Recently, however, it is increasingly understood that initiatives designed to support girls and young women have to involve them in order to be appropriate, relevant, accessible and effective. In doing so, it is vital to consult young people, and to recognize the gendered nature of participation. Above all, this work needs to value girls and young women as both ‘knowers’ who are experts in their own lives and who understand the world differently from adults, and as actors. This Handbook highlights the use of participatory visual and arts-based methods as engaging ways to invite girls and young women’s views on sexual violence in their communities, and attends to some of the ethical issues that should be considered during the process.

As a resource, Creating Circles offers a step-by-step illustrated ‘how to’ of various arts-based activities. But it also goes beyond this by including reflections and tips by the facilitators who led the workshops at Circles Within Circles, and through the inclusion of ideas for follow-up reflexivity and dialogue as key components of doing arts-based work related to such a sensitive issue as sexual violence. Given the international context for Circles Within Circles, by including both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, and adults working as allies or accomplices with young people, it recognizes the importance of offering ideas and strategies for creating safe spaces for this work. In so doing, it takes seriously the idea of ‘doing most good and least harm.’ As a special feature, the Handbook includes short reflections written by both youth and adult participants about engaging with the various arts-based methods in participatory workshops. These short writings offer a sense of ‘being there,’ serve as evidence of the power of this work, and offer an invitation to use the arts-based methods in future participatory work with young people geared toward creating a more just world.
The most vital of all contributions were the voices and artistic expressions of Indigenous girls and young women, whose leadership and lived experiences informed the dialogue around urgent changes needed locally and globally.
The four-day program was designed around participatory and arts-based workshops such as cellphilming (video production with tablets and mobile phones), photovoice, and collage. Time was built into each activity for ‘share-back’ sessions in smaller and larger circles, which was not only enlightening but also inspiring to think-with and feel-with the participants and their evocative visual productions.

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

One young woman who had flown in from a small north western Canadian community expressed with great emotion how powerful it was for her to find herself among so many strong Black women. Several Indigenous girls drew their courage from their friends and family relations (sisters and cousins) who were also present to share songs and dances such as the jingle dress dance, that they brought from their communities.
Early on the first morning several event organizers mounted the international exhibition Speaking Back: Youth-led Perspectives on Combating Sexual Violence, and prepared for the arrival of participants. The lobby of the Fairmont—where Leann Brown and Jennifer Coutlee were spryly managing the registration tables—was humming with animated conversations between the newly acquainted arrivals.

Many younger attendees made swift moves to get in some swimming in the outdoor pool after their long journey by plane and bus, all before dinner. All meals apart from breakfast were served outside, where conversations in the open air flowed informally in the relaxed atmosphere.

It was here on the first evening on the terrace where the first participatory arts-based activity took place to create the Picturing Consent clothesline, which remained on display for the duration of Circles Within Circles.

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

Having the opportunity to participate in this transnational retreat, I was particularly struck by the girl-led discussions about resistance; especially resonant, resisting gender norms that intersect with negative stereotypes about Indigeneity. A group of young Indigenous women, the Sohki Iskewew (Strong Women) from the Saskatoon/Treaty 6/Traditional Homeland of the Metis, donned red ribbon skirts that they had made by hand—the colour red to honour Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

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

We heard from one group of Indigenous young women from South Africa, called Girls Leading Change, about ‘saying goodbye to the obedient, submissive woman.’ Some other poignant rallying calls: “Being Indigenous is not a risk factor (for gender-based violence); colonialism is a risk factor”; and, “The translation of resilience in Indigenous terms means resistance and creating a positive self-identity.”

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

— Pamela Lamb, Participant, McGill University
The first morning was opened by Elder Sedalia Kawennnotas Fazio. The morning filled with presentations from all the different field sites in Canada, South Africa, Sweden and Russia participating in Circles Within Circles. Groups used song, dance and other performance modes along with power point presentations and video screenings to highlight critical issues in the various contexts.

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

In the International Stakeholders’ Forum researchers, policy makers, NGOs, civil society, and teachers came together in small groups to discuss how each stakeholder may be part of making significant change. Stakeholders were prompted to reflect on how the multigenerational and transnational perspectives expressed at Circles Within Circles contribute to their knowledge and learning. In addition to considering new challenges or new potential solutions, stakeholders shared their hopes for future actions for girl-led or youth-led organizations.

The Speaking Back: Youth-led Perspectives on Combating Sexual Violence art exhibition was officially opened in the early evening. The exhibition showcased visual works (drawing, mapping, photovoice, cellphilms, and other material productions) representing and addressing sexual violence from Canada, South Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sweden, and Russia. Representatives from each site introduced their works, explained the importance of creating their images, and drew the audience’s attention to particular aspects to reflect upon when viewing the images.

“I personally enjoyed meeting such amazing people and learning a lot about how us girls can speak up for ourselves and be brave. I think that was very important because we need to have a voice for our women and young girls in our communities to be honoured and respected. I think that learning about all of that made me a more brave person. I liked eating with everyone, the groups where we made those posters with our reflections on what we learned, because we worked together as a group to share our vision, and when we sat around the fire and sang.

— Amelia Green, Participant, Sisters Rising
On this memorable evening with dinner, performance and an open mic on the terrace, attendees were so entertained, enlivened and encouraged by special musical guests DJ PØPTRT and Dayna Danger that they broke out in dance. With the principal focus of the conference on girl-led approaches to addressing sexual violence, the shared song and dance here, and later at the bonfire, invigorated high and hopeful collective energies.

Iehente Foote (L), Dayna Danger (M), Elder Sedalia Kawennotas Fazio (R) performing at the Open Mic night

Boarding the plane to Montreal on July 7th with our Sisters Rising team, I found myself filled with an excited, nervous energy. I realized how important this opportunity was for our participants. Many of the youth we work alongside live in rural and isolated communities, tucked away in some of the most Northern regions of BC. This meant that many girls and their volunteer chaperones had travelled for days, taking boats and smaller airplanes to finally meet us in Vancouver to start the final leg of our journey to the Circles Within Circles event.

In the days that followed, strengthened connections were forged for our small but mighty Sisters Rising group. Our participants had the chance to explore Montreal, taking in the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of many different cultures and diverse ways of life. We then spent 4 days in Montebello for the Circles event, which provided opportunities for our girls to learn and grow as individuals—actively participating in conversations about gender-based violence and the ongoing impacts of colonization, sharing their experiences as Indigenous girls and young women with people from all around the world. Speaking for the first time in front of an international audience, including the sharing of songs and drumming passed down from family and kin, was an incredible feat. As the days went on, I was privileged to see the bonds of friendship and sisterhood being woven together. Watching the confidence of the youngest members of our team increase with each passing day—including the power of raising our voices proudly in song and community—was an honour to witness and participate in. This event solidified my already existing knowledge that Indigenous girls and women are experts on their lives and experiences, and are crucial knowledge-holders and change-makers. It reminded me that we are always more strong and powerful when we are together.

I was recently asked the question: “What is your medicine”? I was heartened by the answer that came to mind at this profound inquiry. The sisterhood of Sisters Rising—our connections, community, love, support, trust and encouragement of one another—are all movements toward the decolonial futurity that I dream of. May we all find such good medicine in the beauty and love of sisterhood.

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

Each story was discussed in the group through the designated lenses of facts, emotion, turning points, and what's missing. Participants had opportunities to collectively reflect on what some of the challenges are to addressing gender-based violence, what is needed now, and what each individual hopes for change in their community.

Imagining A Future was a collaborative and reflective activity that led to the production of a collective girlfesto. The session started with participants considering the questions:

- How do the art works add to your knowledge of girls’ and young women’s experiences of gender-based violence and sexual violence?
- In looking at these images what are some of the things that you think need changing?
- What are some of the ways you may take action to address gender-based violence and sexual violence?

Generating the Girlfesto was the final and most astonishing participant collaboration. Groups generated a list of declarations—statements that concretized the themes that surfaced in the art walk and the discussions that followed. There was no fading of creative energy here; lists were powerfully formulated as mottos, slogans and artwork, and then compiled together. It was decided collectively that the proposed ‘Montebello Manifesto’ would instead become the Montebello Girlfesto—a shared group statement of ideas and recommendations based on the views of girls and young women to take forward and advocate for more safe, liberating spaces.

Elder Sedalia Kawennotas Fazio closed the retreat in ceremony. In doing so, she recognized the leadership demonstrated by the young Indigenous girls present, and reminded all the participants about the commitments they had made to each other, as well as the importance of acting in peace and solidarity with the land and all of its creatures that allowed us to gather and work together.

The Cellphilming ‘How We See It’ Workshop offered participants the opportunity to work in groups to create public service announcements in “How We See It: Sending a Message about Addressing Gender-Based Violence.” Each group screened their cellphilm to the whole group, followed by a facilitated discussion around main themes, similarities and differences, and also about what stories were missing. One group decided not to appear on camera though used their voices in the audio mix to narrate their media message. Theirs was a poignantly creative rendering of metaphor and message: small stones thrown against a larger rock, and with each strike the harm inflicted by gender-based violence, often invisible, was made audibly visible.
The following groups and organizations were represented during the Circles Within Circles event, and contributed to the Girlfesto:

- Indigenous Young Women’s Utopia;
- Sisters Rising;
- Eskasoni Mental Health and Social Work Service;
- Gender Activists;
- Ange Secondary School;
- McGill University;
- University of Victoria;
- Mount Saint Vincent University;
- York University;
- Nelson Mandela University;
- University of KwaZulu-Natal;
- First Nations University;
- G(irls) 20;
- United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI);
- Girls Action Foundation;
- Canadian Women’s Foundation;
- Pauktuutit (Inuit Women of Canada);
- Gorbachev Foundation;
- Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights; and
- Trudeau Foundation Scholars.

Additionally, the following groups were unable to be present physically but contributed artwork and commentary that was exhibited in the Speaking Back: Youth-led Perspectives on Combating Sexual Violence art exhibition and inspired dialogue during the Circles Within Circles event:

- Girls Leading Change (South Africa, one member of Girls Leading Change Skyped in and all members of the group submitted video capsules);
- Young Girls Leading Change (South Africa);
- Social Ills Fighters (South Africa);
- Leaders for Young Women’s Success (South Africa);
- Kenya Korogocho Girls and Young Women; and
- ATVET students in the Woreta, Wolaito Soddo, Maichew, Nedgo in Ethiopia.

**CONTRIBUTORS**

The red ribbon skirts, made by hand and donned by the young Indigenous women (below), honour missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

Sohki Iskewew (Strong Women) in their red ribbon skirts
Creating Safe Spaces

Considerations for Engaging Young People in Participatory Arts-based Activities

Throughout the various sections of this Handbook, there are a number of ideas for creating safe spaces that are specific to the particular activity or method being discussed (e.g. cellphilms and collage-making). However, there are several umbrella recommendations that cut across the various methods, particularly when young people are participating in gatherings with new people (as in the case of a national or international gathering) and there may be mixed groupings of adults and young people.

The following offers considerations for participatory arts-based work with young people, highlighting some of the tensions or complications of implementing standard principles in practice. These suggestions draw from the experience at Circles Within Circles as well as other events that used participatory arts-based methods to address sensitive issues such as gender-based violence with young people.

— Chantal Adams, Facilitator, Sisters Rising

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

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

This work could not be done without the Sisters Rising team coming together, helping each other, using our own individual and collective strengths, and providing a loving sisterhood. I am very grateful for our team and cannot express my gratitude enough. Here is to learning so much from them and alongside them; may our journey together continue and stay strong.
PREPARATION
It is critical to ensure that there is time to brief the group in advance about what to expect (and also key for the organizers to ensure that the information is available in advance), including a clarification of the event’s objectives and who will be present.

A preparatory session should not only cover the itinerary, but also focus on what the space will look and feel like, what the expectations will be for facilitators and participants, and how to conduct themselves so that they do not feel ‘out of place.’ It should also address any dangers or risks related to the environment and establish rules such as a buddy system or the importance of always travelling in a group.

COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENT
Once gathered together, foster a sense of community through structured activities that are just for fun. Fill them with music, nature and energy, and plan to have meals together in a different space from where the activities are occurring, if possible. Beyond the space created by the event, organizers should consider the broader environment where the event or activity is occurring. Workshops and conferences may take place in hotels, on university campuses or in other public spaces. While it may be impossible to fully monitor the environment, organizers and youth leaders need to ensure as much as possible that the setting feels safe, including by speaking with the hotel or campus staff ahead of time and/or during the event.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT
Providing participants with emotional support begins prior to the event and continues throughout. Organizers should make sure that everyone is aware of how to access support (e.g. elders, counsellors or youth leaders), and that these people are known and approachable to young participants 24 hours per day.

To provide pro-active emotional support, small group check-ins or ‘feeling circles’ at the end of each day or if tensions are observed to be running high is useful to make sure that everyone is feeling safe physically and emotionally, and ensures it is not incumbent upon the young people to reach out and ask for support.

ETHICS & VISIBILITY
Ethical issues are taken up in detail in many of the sections of the Handbook that describe the use of arts-based methods. In participatory visual activities such as cellphilming and photovoice it is important to make sure that participants are made aware of specific ethical concerns such as only taking pictures of people who are already part of the event and who agree to be filmed or photographed.

Using a ‘no faces’ approach can also be helpful (and can also inspire creativity). If the participatory activities also include a research component, then clearly all protocols of a Research Ethics Board (REB) must be respected.
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

In arts-based events where participation is a key component, it is important to both encourage participants to try out new activities but also to assure young people that it is always possible to opt out of an activity. This is a widely established principle, but it can be challenging and intimidating for young people to exercise this option, particularly in a large intergenerational group where they do not know everyone. Consequently, they may feel compelled to participate. To avoid this, establish clear modes of subtly opting out without disrupting the larger group.

For example, young people can exercise the decision to opt out simply by not engaging in the activity—putting their head down, withdrawing or walking away. Arrange to have safe alternative activities for them to engage in, such as headphones for listening to music, art or journaling materials, in a corner of the room. This way they can leave to do something else without asking permission. These options, however, have to be made clear to all facilitators so that they understand what is going on when some of their participants are disengaging in these ways. If many are doing so, the facilitators should consider whether the activity needs to be adapted to better meet the needs of young people.

INTERGENERATIONAL DYNAMICS

Mixed groups of adults and young people provide wonderful intergenerational learning opportunities, but they may also offer particular sensitivities. It is important to enable younger participants to share their views with adult stakeholders, but also to avoid the ‘fish bowl’ sensation of adults watching young participants make art. Ensure that there are activities planned for adult stakeholders to break out and work with each other to unpack the meaning of what the young people are sharing and the significance for their work; this also creates time for young people to create art on their own without feeling that they are being watched.

YOUTH-LED ACTIVITIES

As much as possible (and unless there is a strong reason for mixed-age groupings), young people should be free to choose their groups, and if they wish to work on their own that too should be an option. When planning activities, think through principles such as democratic or consensus-based decision making, and the need for building in more time to allow lengthy discussions that accompany these processes. A step further is to invite young participants who are interested to lead some activities themselves. To do so, this needs to be planned with them in advance, with the support of an in-person youth leader, so that they are prepared and confident to lead the activity.

‘NO FACES’ APPROACH

The ‘no faces’ approach encourages participants to take photographs that do not focus primarily on people’s faces, but rather on objects, places, buildings, and scenes, or on unidentifiable parts of the body, at a distance, or in the shadow/background.
I believe Native women face things like racism, sexualization and a lot of discrimination. For example, our trip to Montebello was truly amazing, but while at the resort my sister and I still received a lot of sideways glances and treatment from a variety of guests. It made me realize that even though we were supposed to be there, we are not treated equally as Native women. On another note, at the pool one Caucasian lady was making plans with her kids and casually commented, “but first mommy needs a drink”. In my opinion, a Native mom could never make a comment like this and be seen as funny; rather we would be judged negatively and it would bring up stereotypes.

These stereotypes are part of the reason why Native children have the highest rates of being in foster care in the whole country. We are never given a second chance. If it were a Native mom or family in that situation, a mother would be investigated for neglect, might lose her children and have to jump through a series of hoops to get them back. Our children get removed more than any other children in Canada because Native parents are judged to be not good enough. I believe that letting it happen with little to no action is what allows people to think this way.

Some of the strengths our Native women have is strength of spirit, strong communication, and moving forward to work towards what they believe, even with bumps in the road such as racism and gender discrimination. In my experience with Sisters Rising and at Circles Within Circles, it was just amazing to see all of these Native girls and women come together to talk about their experiences to heal and educate one another.

The morning of the first full day was the best for me, meeting everyone and learning from the presentations across sites (although trigger warnings would have been appreciated before certain pieces of work). I would have been inclined to participate more if workshops were led by ladies/youth from the different sites (i.e. Eskasoni/Saskatoon).

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

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

I had a great time at the Circles Within Circles conference. I was especially inspired by the group of girls who travelled from Treaty Six, and their work about gender-based violence. I think it is important for young women to learn about gender based violence. I am thankful that my cousins and I had this opportunity to travel and learn about this global issue. It actually gave me goosebumps to see and hear my cousin introduce herself to the circle at the conference in our language. When my cousins shared several songs, they made me so proud to see them claiming our traditions.

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

— Kathryn McLeod, Amber Lewis, Kyla Elliott, and anonymous, Sisters Rising Participants
PARTICIPATORY VISUAL AND ARTS-BASED TOOLS AND ACTIVITIES

The following overviews describe some of the visual and arts-based tools and activities that were used at Circles Within Circles. Each section combines step-by-step instructions for facilitating an activity with a description of how the activity unfolded at Circles Within Circles, as well as reflections from the activity facilitator and/or participants. The instructions are intended to provide flexible guidance, as each activity or tool can be adapted for use with participants of varying ages and in different contexts.
A Hands for Change activity invites participants to use their hands to artistically create a symbolic representation of a social phenomenon (e.g. picturing consent, picturing human rights) and to think of a slogan or caption that goes with the representation.

A digital camera or other device is used by the facilitator or another participant to take a picture of the hand(s). A small portable photo printer is on hand so that the pictures can be printed out right on site. Then it is possible for the participant to write the slogan or caption directly onto the picture with a permanent marker.

The Hands for Change activity comes out of work with Photovoice, an arts-based participatory visual methodology where participants use digital cameras to explore social issues within their communities. This activity uses cameras to symbolically express the notion of Picturing Consent by inviting participants to photograph their hands while making visual representations of consent.

The activity makes it possible to participate in brief but meaningful ways. It is helpful to have the Hands activity set up throughout a conference so that people can participate during their breaks or lunch. Typically, each ‘engagement’ lasts only a few minutes.
SETTING UP

EQUIPMENT
Digital cameras, tablets or iPads; one or more portable printers.

MATERIAL
Photo printing paper; cartridges; sharpies (permanent markers); clothes pegs and clothesline.

SPACE
A space with a stable wall or poles where clotheslines can be tied. The space should also have power outlets to connect the printers and charge cameras and tablets should there be a need.

FACILITATORS
Ideally there are two facilitators to keep the activity moving. There may be several cameras and printers in use at the same time.
The facilitators can also emphasize a ‘no-faces approach’ which involves the use of hands, as these pose fewer ethical challenges related to anonymity and confidentiality.

PARTICIPANTS
• Participants can participate in the Photo activity as a group (2 of 3 sets of hands together) or individually, whichever they prefer or are comfortable with.
• Participants do not need literacy skills to take part.

TIME
The hands for change activity might be conducted throughout the duration of a workshop or simply when participants have the chance, such as during session breaks or as part of a specific session.

INSTRUCTIONS
• Either alone or with others, participants make symbols and gestures that represent a concept such as ‘consent’ with their hands
• Take a picture of the hand gestures using a digital camera
• Print the photos using one of the portable printers
• Using a permanent marker, write a message about consent directly on the picture
• Display pictures using a clothesline and clothespins in a corridor gallery space to show the different meanings of consent and sexual/gender-based violence.

A participant shows that intimacy does not mean an automatic consent
An optional activity would be to have participants view all the images produced and reflect on what they see by responding to the following questions:

- What are the main messages?
- Are there any surprises?
- Who should see this exhibition?
- Do you have any ideas on what you could do to educate others about consent?

Young girls have a lot to say about sexual violence. They also want to be part of the fight to end it. Listen to them and learn from them. They are not the future, they are today’s changemakers.

— Sally Dimachki, Participant, G(irls)20

On site printing out of pictures taken by participants for the photo activity
This activity explored the concept of consent in community and education contexts and environments. The event coordinator introduced participants to the activity and gave the prompt question “What does consent mean in your community?” to guide participants during the Hands for Change photo activity.

There were also already a couple of examples of photos based on the prompt hanging on the clothesline. The collaborative nature of a photo activity was demonstrated in the way the participants came together to discuss what consent looked like to them.

Some participants chose to work individually while other chose to work in groups to take pictures of their hands to show what consent meant to them. Brainstorming about what consent meant took different directions; participants from the same community gathered together and took pictures of their hands and feet and as well as other objects that symbolized consent. They then wrote their message or caption directly on to the photo.

Whether individually or in groups, most participants preferred to create their symbols and let the facilitators take the actual photo. To validate that the symbols were captured in the way the participants wanted them, the facilitators and participants reviewed the photos on the digital camera. In cases where the participants did not like the photos, the facilitators deleted them and took repeated shots until the desired image was captured.

Some younger participants at the event were not sure what the term ‘consent’ meant when asked to respond to the prompt; this question provoked an important discussion among participants on consent, and also gave the facilitators an opportunity to encourage dialogue.

There were many different images produced as part of the Hands for Change photo activity. Some, for example, were images of groups of participants using their hands and, in some cases, feet locked together, a STOP road sign, or flowers held in hands. Individual participants also used their palms and hands to create images that symbolized consent.

A ‘line of consent’ to exhibit the Hands of Change images
Using a photo activity with young women and girls around gender-based violence is a powerful way for them to talk about ways in which they experience gender-based violence in their communities and have their voices heard in challenging the societal norms that support gender-based violence. Tapping into the ineffable effect of visual images related to gender-based violence by creating an immediate display in a public place can draw attention to issues during, for example, a sexual awareness campaign week or for International Women’s Day. The facilitators must explain to the participants how the images they create will be used before they take part in the activity.

Given that a photo activity uses hands or other body parts, it is important to educate the participants on visual ethics and make them aware of the consequences of having their faces or other identifiable body parts in such an activity. The following should be considered:

**ETHICS**

A key issue in this activity, especially when working with photos, is to make sure that people’s faces are not in the picture in order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. Even focusing on hands, it is still possible that the photographer will accidentally get the face or faces of people. Encourage people to take close-ups of the hands so this risk will be minimized. Other unidentifiable body parts such as legs may also be used in such a photo activity.

**EXHIBITING**

It is important to have an easy way to exhibit the photographs right on the spot so that everyone can see the growing number of ideas and images. This can be done in a variety of ways; at Circles Within Circles the consent images were displayed outside on a clothesline, floating in the wind and shining in the sun.
CONDUCTING A COLLAGE WORKSHOP

Collage as an arts-based participatory visual methodology can be defined as “the process of cutting and sticking found images and image fragments from popular print/magazines onto cardstocks in order to represent a concept or tell a story.”

Collage making can be a low-tech process of both learning to see and seeing that helps to increase participants visualizing capabilities to learn and reflect the very way we see the world:

“The objects and images are given meaning not from something within themselves, but rather through the way we perceive they stand in relationship to one another.”

Collage making as part of a participatory visual workshops is usually guided by a prompt question.

In this International Collage Workshop, the prompt question that guided the collage making was:

“What does gender-based violence look like in your community?”

Participants visually responded to this question using found images from magazines. This visual arts activity allowed participants to be creative with images to show rather than tell how they felt about the issue.
### Setting Up

#### Material
Magazines, glue sticks, scissors, sticky notes, coloured pens, and card board papers cut into required sizes, old magazines and newspapers of different genres as available.

#### Space
Large workspace with tables or chairs set up for participants to work on their collage creations and display of the final products.

#### Facilitators
There should be at least two facilitators to explain the instructions at the start of the collage making workshop to explain the theme of the workshop, the prompt question, the available resources for the collage creators and to keep track of time.

They can also circulate among groups of participants to offer any needed assistance.

#### Participants
- Can vary based on the theme or prompt of the workshop.
- The number of people in each group can vary based on the number of participants. A good number for a group is five or six people.

#### Time
This activity varies based on the time available, which depends on the project. Approximately 1.5 hours should allow collage creators to finish their creations, discuss within their smaller groups and present to the larger group.

### Step 1
The facilitators ask the participants to form themselves into groups of 4-6 people and arrange themselves so that they can share magazines, glue and scissors.

(5 minutes)

### Step 2
Participants work on creating their own individual collages. This step should give participants time to look through magazines, cut out pictures and arrange the pictures on sheets of paper.

The following questions can be used to guide the collage making:

1. What is the issue?
2. Why is it important?

(20-30 minutes)

### Step 3
Participants will share the stories of their collages with the group. Each person can hold up her collage and talk about it, possibly addressing the following questions:

- Does it have a title or slogan?
- What is the issue?
- Why is it important?

(5-10 minutes)
Small group discussions about the collages ensue. Discussion prompts can include:

1. Look at all the collages in the group and discuss the emerging themes
2. What are the similarities and differences?
3. Jot the themes down on the flipchart
4. What story do the collages in your group as a whole tell about gender-based violence?

(15-20 minutes)

The participants in each small group can then present their collages to the larger group.

(15-20 minutes)

It is important to do this after participants have had a chance to make their own collage and talk about it, but also to see others’. These could be discussed in small groups or it could be done with the whole group.

1. What have you learnt?
2. Why does it matter?
3. What will you do with what you have learnt when you go back to your school/community/organization?

(10 minutes)

I pored through magazines to see what would best reflect my life. Memories of abusive relationships are always a part of me. I am who I am because of what I experienced. I now recognize that there was a reason for this part of my life. I now share my story so that others do not have to accept violence and abuse. We can learn to speak for ourselves and to be strong within our own right.

— Angelina Weenie, Participant, First Nations University of Canada
Participants freely formed and joined groups of their choice in which they worked to create their collages. Every participant in the Collage Making Workshop artistically and creatively used the available material to create a story with which they could relate to gender-based violence.

Looking at the collages created by participants at the workshop and listening to the stories that inspired their collage making, it is evident that various forms of gender-based violence are presented within the print media, as every collage creator could get portrayals of gender-based violence that they could relate to based on their experiences within their communities.

A total of 19 collages were created by the youth participants at the Circles Within Circles workshop, including the two examples shown here.

"Working individually on a collage allows time for reflection and working through what one remembers of gender-based violence in the community (which could include own experiences) and for making choices of what one wants to reveal or how one wants to reveal it. I think this is important and that we, as facilitators, should make this clear at the outset of the collage-making workshop ... I remember hearing one of the participants say how she appreciated the time to do this work and how she could express the difficult work in an artful and playful way. While working individually in making the collage, the circles of participants shared insights and ideas with each other, learning from each other and potentially supporting each other ..."
Collage making with young people around issues of gender-based violence presents a lot of possibilities for participants to create and present the world in their own view through the use of pre-existing images. It offers a safe space where young women and girls can show interaction of objects and images in different spaces and assemble them in relation to each other to produce or interrupt gender-based violence. Because low-tech collage making uses images that already exist in print media, it can be an effective way to both show and challenge how the media narratives directly or indirectly perpetuate or conform to gender-based violence in society.

One of the challenges in making collages might be the actual material content of images in the magazines or newspapers. The use of popular magazines can sometimes be limiting in their representations in terms of race or class, and participants in different contexts may not relate to them. Collage making is a very adaptable activity and can include other art materials and found objects.

Collage making might also look too simplistic in the beginning and participants may at first be reluctant to engage because the cutting and gluing may seem like an activity meant for children. However, typically participants get ‘hooked’ once they start and the dialogue that ensues as they are making their collages or talking about them tends to be very rich.

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**KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

**MULTIPLE POSSIBILITIES**

Collage making with young people around issues of gender-based violence presents a lot of possibilities for participants to create and present the world in their own view through the use of pre-existing images. It offers a safe space where young women and girls can show interaction of objects and images in different spaces and assemble them in relation to each other to produce or interrupt gender-based violence. Because low-tech collage making uses images that already exist in print media, it can be an effective way to both show and challenge how the media narratives directly or indirectly perpetuate or conform to gender-based violence in society.

**TYPES OF MATERIALS**

One of the challenges in making collages might be the actual material content of images in the magazines or newspapers. The use of popular magazines can sometimes be limiting in their representations in terms of race or class, and participants in different contexts may not relate to them. Collage making is a very adaptable activity and can include other art materials and found objects.

**TRY IT**

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... It was important for the circles of participants to see the other circles’ work and hear about each other’s experiences in communities and so they presented their work to the audience. The power of showing the artful collages to an audience deepens the translational learnings and expands the horizons of participants and facilitators, especially when looking for similarities and differences, and asking why there are similarities and differences, and how these might inform interventions. As with any participatory work the participant always has the choice to withdraw at any phase of the work ... a choice which should be respected.

— Naydene de Lange, Facilitator, Nelson Mandela University

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An art exhibition is the showing of images and objects (often with words) with the intention to communicate something to various audiences. Planning an exhibition involves conceptualizing and organizing diverse visual, material, and spatial elements to create a new configuration that visitors or participants move through.

In participatory visual work or community-based research, an art exhibition explores, represents and displays what has been learned about an issue, at the same time that it offers an opportunity for exchanging ideas and new learning. In participatory visual work with young people, it is a key way for youth-led art to reach audiences. The element of participatory curation can be an important extension of participatory visual work.

Exhibitions can range from very simple designs (even enlarged photos or drawings hung on a clothes line or wire) to ones that require framing of images and more extensive installation procedures. Key deciding factors include cost, level of participant/artist involvement, durability, safety, the space available, and finding appropriate places to reach various audiences.

Art exhibitions display and contextualize images, objects, ideas and experiences to the public. What makes them relevant is that they make art accessible to different audiences, reflecting the interests and concerns of diverse groups of people.
**Title & Curatorial Statement**

Most exhibitions have a specific title:

- **Seeing is Believing**
- **Speaking Back: Youth-led Perspectives on Combating Sexual Violence**
- **Personal Belongings**

The exhibition also includes a short statement, called a **curatorial statement** (often no more than 100-200 words) written by the curator or the team who created the exhibition. In participatory visual work, the statement may be co-written with the participants. It is important to conceptualize a curatorial statement that clearly communicates the intention of the exhibition to the viewers, as it is the concept that guides the intended way for the public to perceive the exhibition.

A curatorial statement intends to select, organize and contextualize diverse artistic expressions to link shared themes or aesthetic approaches and communicate their meaning in new ways. It also offers a brief guide to the public as to how they might view the exhibition.

For example, see the curatorial statement from **Speaking Back: Youth-led Perspectives on Combating Sexual Violence**.

**Curatorial Statement**

Sexual violence as a global concern affects the lives of millions of girls and women. How girls and young women themselves see the issues is a critical feature of finding solutions. The images in this exhibition ‘speak back’ in a variety of ways to the experiences of girls and young women in their everyday lives and in so doing challenge the status quo. Most of the images were produced by girls and young women. Some of the images show them ‘in action’ actually creating the images. Other images produced by young men highlight the significance of voices of boys and young men as part of the solution. Brought together as part of the Circles Within Circles: Transnational Perspectives on Youth-led ‘From the Ground Up’ Approaches to Combating Sexual Violence project, the images were created by young people, primarily girls and young women, from 6 countries in both the Global North and Global South. The groups participating included Indigenous youth from Canada and South Africa, along with work produced by youth in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sweden and Russia. The work represents school, community and post-secondary settings, and draws on urban and rural experiences. What cuts across the work is the use of participatory arts-based methods such as photovoice, cellphilm production and other forms of art-making in expressing the concerns. Taken together the images provoke many questions. What can we learn from the collective voices of young people? How can looking across sites and across different country contexts deepen an understanding of the issues and the solutions? How can young people be at the centre of creating change? Speaking Back is part of an international travelling exhibition aimed at supporting dialogue and action. (2018).
It is important to have a specific body of work already created for the exhibition. It is recommended that the art has a unifying theme, which can be based on a specific concept or media.

It is advisable to label the artwork on display, including the name of the artist(s) and the title of each piece (along with year of production and technique). In some cases, such as working with minors and where anonymity has to be respected, labelling may not be possible.

More than a place in which art is shown, the exhibition space transmits the combined efforts and intentions of the artist(s), curator, and hosting venue.

For example, a school, community centre, lobby of a government building, or even a petrol station may be the most appropriate place to reach the intended audience.

The visitors’ experience and understanding of an art exhibition is affected by the space in which it is exhibited, including the form in which the works are distributed, the lighting, the temperature, the noise, the interaction with other visitors, among other elements.

To choose an effective exhibition space, one must consider how the location relates with and affects the artwork, including:

- Physical characteristics of the space: Location, size, available surfaces, light, temperature, etc.
- Historical, social, cultural, commercial, environmental and other critical implications of the space.
- Accessibility for the intended audiences.

A single person can do all the work involved in the steps of process for creating an art exhibition, but typically in participatory visual work it should involve as much as possible the people who actually produced the art. This team may include:

**ARTISTS (CREATIVE ROLE)**

Person(s) who produces the artwork

**CURATORS (INTELLECTUAL ROLE)**

Person(s) who preserves or safeguards the heritage of art; selects new work; connects to art history; and displays or arranges the work. In participatory visual projects, the producers may be part of the curation process.

**EXHIBITION COORDINATOR (LOGISTICAL ROLE)**

Person who coordinates, organizes, implements and promotes all the different aspects of the art exhibition. Links the work of the artist(s), curator(s), technician and space administrators, among others.

**TECHNICIAN (HANDS-ON ROLE)**

Person responsible for the installation and removal of exhibitions in the space.
The person(s) responsible for installing the work needs to measure the exhibition space and plan in advance how they will hang the artworks. It is important to examine the space closely to figure out how to hang the works, especially if it is not a gallery with built-in rails. Make sure you have hanging equipment suitable for the space you will be displaying in. If the space lacks an adequate wall hanging infrastructure you may have to hire stands from an exhibition hire company, or find ways of suspending the work from the ceiling or other available structures with threads or wire.

The tools needed for installing the artwork depend on the characteristics of the art that will be exhibited in the space. However, it is advisable to have at least the following:

**TAPE MEASURE**
Measuring the height/center-line of the artwork, the distance between artwork, where the nail goes in relation to where the piece hangs on the wall.

**MASKING/PAINTERS/ACID-FREE TAPE**
For making tiny marks that reference where the artwork hangs on the wall.

**TORPEDO LEVEL**
Useful in making sure your artwork is level.

**NAILS FOR HANGING ARTWORK**
Nails come in all shapes and sizes. Nails can be fastened to a material using a hammer. Note: for harder surfaces (such as concrete), it is best to use screws and a screwdriver.

**HAMMER AND/OR SCREWDRIVERS**

**WORK GLOVES**
Worn when handling lights.

A special feature of an exhibition is always the opening or closing gala event where everyone gets to celebrate the final look of the exhibition. In most participatory visual projects, the research team is generally responsible for the organization of the reception, but in collaboration with the youth (‘Who would you like to see your images?’). Make a list of guests, send the invitations and get the refreshments that will be provided at the reception in advance.

Document the exhibition with photographs and/or video. Identify who will be documenting the work in advance, how they will do so and for what purposes.

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**HAMMER AND/OR SCREWDRIVERS**

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Worn when handling lights.

Who is responsible for transporting the work? When must the work arrive and be returned?

Is the artwork insured during the exhibition, while it is in transit or while in storage?

It is important to know if some of the pieces require special equipment (such as a slide projector, audio or video equipment, etc.) and if there are special instructions for installing or maintaining the work.
WHAT HAPPENED AT CIRCLES WITHIN CIRCLES

The work presented in the Speaking Back: Youth-led Perspectives on Combating Sexual Violence exhibition was created prior to the Circles Within Circles event. As stated in the curatorial statement:

“...the images were created by young people, primarily girls and young women, from six countries in both the Global North and Global South. The groups participating included Indigenous youth from Canada and South Africa, along with work produced by youth in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sweden and Russia.”

Most of the images were produced by the girls and young women who later participated in the Circles Within Circles event, and some of the pictures actually show them creating the images displayed in the panels.

PANELS

The exhibition consisted of 16 panels of 85 cm x 120 cm, printed on vinyl, which is more resistant to traveling and being exhibited in diverse contexts, including exterior spaces. This was very important because the Speaking Back exhibition is meant to travel to other parts of Canada, South Africa and other parts of the world. The panels were suspended from a galvanized steel cable with clear PVC coating, that had been extended across the space. Some African fabrics accompanied the display, giving some colour and context to the exhibition.

PRESENTATION

As stated in the curatorial statement for Speaking Back, the work was produced and exhibited to “speak back” in a variety of ways to the experiences of girls and young women in their everyday lives and in so doing challenge the status quo.” The exhibition was presented in a curling rink, a large space that easily accommodated the 16 panels. The images that were displayed in these panels were produced using participatory arts-based methods such as photovoice, cellphilim production and other forms of art-making. It was designed to be an international travelling exhibition, supporting dialogue and action. A few blank panels were installed in the exhibition space for the Circles Within Circles event, providing the opportunity to incorporate some of the work done during the working sessions and inviting participants to speak back in creative and constructive ways to the exhibition itself.

CHALLENGES

The main challenges in mounting the exhibition in the curling rink space were related to working out how to suspend the panels from the beams. The large size of the space was also a challenge and it was important to try to create a slightly more intimate space. Part of the rink was closed off by the African cloth. Additionally, the cloth helped to create colourful interludes.
At the close of Circles Within Circles, I was in a group of adult researchers and policymakers working on our contribution to the Montebello Girlfesto. Before we began our discussions, we took time to walk through the Art Exhibition and immerse ourselves in the narratives that girls had created about their experiences of sexual violence. We looked at the art they had produced in the previous days at Circles Within Circles and prior to the event. When we came back together, our work to produce a list of demands for the Girlfesto drew from our own perspectives as policymakers and researchers working in this area, but also built on the messages and experiences of girls from around the world. Being able to return to the Art Exhibition throughout the Circles Within Circles meant we had the opportunity to continuously recenter our work on the messages that girls wanted us to hear.

— Catherine Vanner, Participant, McGill University
When setting up an exhibition that involves the work of young people, it is important to try to involve them as much as possible. Many of the participants at Circles Within Circles had already been involved in mounting exhibitions in their own communities. In this case, each fieldsite selected 10-15 images to include in the exhibition.

In many of these sites, the artists themselves were involved in selecting the images and producing the curatorial text to go with their panel, and we went back to each group (the leader and where possible the youth) before the panels were printed so that they could be sure that the images, lay out and text were appropriate. This is an important step so that the artist-participants have one last chance to review the material.

Given the sensitive nature of work related to addressing sexual and gender-based violence, it is very important that there is careful attention to making sure the artists are not in a more vulnerable position because of showing their art.

Often Ethics Review Boards insist that real names of minors are not attached to individual images.

The actual viewing of an exhibition is not something to take for granted. Suddenly seeing your own work mounted/framed amidst a collection made up of many other pieces of art can be overwhelming, especially if you are looking at it in the company of people you don’t know.

Facilitators may discuss this with participants ahead of time with a few questions, such as:

What does it mean to go to an exhibition?
What do you look at?

Helping participants to think about what they might say about their own images if they will have a chance to talk about them at the exhibition will also be helpful. A facilitator or another member of the team can guide participants on the viewing process, particularly if it is the first time the participants have displayed their work in an exhibition.

The same images may be exhibited in different arrangements because of the size of the venue, audience and so on.

For Speaking Back at Montebello, the space was vast, so effort was made to create a more intimate space through the addition of African cloth. At another exhibition space, the panels might have to be much closer together and the whole effect will be different. This is part of ‘the art of exhibiting’.

The images may also take on a completely different form and become, for example, a virtual exhibition or part of an exhibition catalogue.

A virtual exhibition will use an online platform and the images may have to be arranged in quite a different form from the original design of the exhibition.

Arranging and printing the images in a book/exhibition catalogue may mean moving away from the panel idea used in Montebello. Working this out could be another example of participatory curation if the participants can be involved in working with designing a book project.
CONVENING AN INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS’ FORUM

An International Stakeholders’ Forum is meant to foster dialogue. It draws on the experience and expertise of diverse actors and groups focusing on girls and young women and sexual and gender-based violence: researchers, people from local, national and international NGOs and civil societies, and various professionals such as teachers and social workers.

At Circles Within Circles, the forum offered an opportunity for the adults attending this youth-focused event to engage in dialogues about the responsibilities of adults to bring about change. This can help stakeholders focus on how to be the messengers of young people and translate their messages in the language of policymakers. Such a forum could be a component of a larger conference or it could be its own event.

Regardless, participants should have already had the advantage of hearing first hand what young people’s requests around the issue of gender-based violence is. The forum inspires adults to become more results-oriented and focus on what needs to change.
HOW TO ORGANIZE A FORUM

MATERIAL

Flipchart, flipchart papers, packing tape, post-its, different colour markers, different colour corsages made from ribbons, safety pins (or any other type of pin) to attach the corsages to participants shirts.

SPACE/INFRASTRUCTURE

Large room (for 30 – 40 people) and a few large tables that can each provide a working space for different actors working in smaller groups.

FACILITATORS

There should be at least one facilitator and an assistant to help set up and collect the final produced material at the end.

PARTICIPANTS

- Ideally, participants are adults who are in positions that can impact policy one way or another. The participants can be broken down to three or four groups based on their profession/ expertise or representing different stakeholder interests: funding, research, education and so on.
- These groups can include (but are not limited to) researchers, civil society, government representatives and teachers. The key is to choose to invite participants with diverse expertise, so that it encourages a rich conversation.

TIME

This activity will take approximately 1.5-2 hours. The forum could be scheduled to follow a review of girls’ and young women’s work, if the intention is to draw on their experiences.

GETTING STARTED

1. Place different colour corsages made from ribbons in one place (see image below), with each colour representing a different interest group or category.

2. Introduce categories of stakeholders to participants. Categories may vary depending on who is in the room (research, education, policy making, communication).

3. Ask participants to choose a category that describes them best. If participants feel they fit in more than one category, ask them to choose the one that represents them the most in their work.

4. Assign a colour to each category and then guide participants to choose a corsage in the colour that goes with their category.

5. Assign a table to each colour and ask participants to sit at their table.

6. Facilitator introduces herself. The facilitator may choose to share some information, such as how her work relates to policy making.
DIALOGUES & PROPOSALS

7. Facilitator uses prompts to encourage reflections on previous sessions/days and to help move conversations forward in each group. Possible prompts include:
   a. What did we learn when we listened to the presentations from the girls and young women we heard from [in a previous session]?
   b. What needs to change?
   c. What can we do (as Researchers? Policymakers? NGO groups? Educators?)

8. Allow groups to create ‘working papers’ by discussing the questions and summarizing their findings on the flipchart papers (this part may take up to approximately 40 minutes).

REPRESENTING & EXTENDING DIALOGUE

9. Have each group summarize the findings from their working papers in any form (artistic or straightforward presentation) for presentation to the larger audience (all attendees in the event).

10. Ask each group to choose one speaker to present their group’s findings to everyone in the room.

11. Bring the participants back to gather with other attendees.

“

[This activity] allowed a good deal of content to be shared very quickly—getting ideas and information out of the way early. Also, it allowed different stakeholders to recognize themselves as distinct contributors, which in the structure of the event allowed them to each see their role. For the time given to the design and the actual event, it was surprisingly effective. More impressive than anything however, was the nature of the feedback, which spoke volumes with very few words.

While the session itself was mostly talking and writing, the groups shared their feedback using movement more than words, allowing the meaning to be shared without needing to reply to all the discussions. The changing minds and being changed by ‘dance’ by the educators was very memorable, as was the dramatic presentation by the researchers who reduced their long analysis to a handful of individual words about barriers to change which they then tore up, illustrating what research can do.

Amazing.

—Nora Fyles, Facilitator, UNGEI

”
WHAT HAPPENED AT CIRCLES WITHIN CIRCLES

Nora Fyles, Director of UNGEI, was the facilitator of this activity. Nora welcomed the approximately 30 participants and began the activity by introducing categories of stakeholders.

CATEGORIES

In this event, three categories were introduced: researchers, civil society, and educators. There were corsages made from ribbons in three different colours, each representing one category. Researchers were gold, civil society was red, and educators were blue. Participants were asked to choose a corsage in a colour that fit their category. Some participants fit in more than one category and were tempted to mix two or sometimes three corsages to represent different colours. Nora asked them specifically to choose only one category (therefore one colour corsage) based on the more dominant role they play in their professional life. People with similar colour corsages sat around the same roundtable. Everyone was eager to start the activity.

PROMPTS

Nora started off by introducing herself, her partnership work with UNGEI to bring stakeholders together, and why it is so important to draw on different actors. She emphasized how we are all richer for the exchange of multi-stakeholder partnerships. Then participants were asked to reflect on the previous session recounting the research done by the girl groups who had each presented arts-based work taking place at their field site. Groups were asked to respond to the questions:

‘What did we hear?’ ‘What are the new challenges we heard that we would like to address?’

There was an emphasis on ‘what is new’ or ‘what we did not already know’. The groups then moved to the next prompt:

‘What needs to change?’

DISCUSSION

In the small group of educators, participants asked each other ‘what about the boys?’ They discussed that boys could be considered as potential perpetrators or peacemakers. However, there is usually a burden on girls to be the change agents in the gender-based violence context and there is less responsibility on boys. Regardless, it is important to have girls’ leadership. It is girls who should have the opportunity to invite the boys to take part as peacemakers. The group also discussed the importance of emphasizing gender-based violence instead of violence against girls, which avoids a victim-perpetrator dichotomy and can be inclusive of gendered violence against boys as well. The group discussed their roles and responsibilities as educators, and the need for activist pedagogy, as didactic pedagogy is unlikely to trigger change. In the researchers group, there was an emphasis on using creative ways to allocate budget to providing resources in communities in the fight against gender-based violence.

ISSUES

An underlying issue was that what researchers felt was important in the context of the fight against gender-based violence, such as arts-based work in communities, was not necessarily considered important by funding agencies. Researchers hoped that allocating a budget for appropriate resources in the community could eventually change policies around gender-based violence. Also, researchers discussed how freedom in spending the budget (for example, in supporting community actors in the fight against gender-based violence) could make a difference in the policy outcome. As a solution, it was suggested to approach a policymaker before applying for a grant and get them on board. Researchers felt that any policy proposed by the research would have a better chance of being implemented if it had the support of a policymaker.
The groups were then encouraged to discuss the unique contributions of each stakeholder group. After the small group discussions, each group shared their responses with the rest of the participants. The facilitator and the assistant connected and gathered all ideas/suggestions from all three groups on flipchart papers using post-its and tearing and patching pieces of the small group papers together to bring multiple groups' perspectives together (see image, right). The results were reflections upon what stood out to each from the other groups and highlighted the key factors of change such as negating gender norms, engaging boys and men as allies, or educating children at a younger age to raise awareness around the issue of gender-based violence.

Then, each group was asked to present their work in an artistic or non-artistic form. For example, the researchers chose to present their work in the form of a 'herald' (see image, below). Finally, we gathered with the other groups to showcase the result of each group’s work.

‘Coming out’ of that conference I have felt more motivated to carry on doing this work. It is not easy, it is difficult, but we have to do it, because girls’ lives are at stake. In one of the sessions I was able to participate with young and old feminist women in how sexual violence looked like in schools how it can be addressed. This touched on how the curriculum of pre-service teachers may be reshaped, school policy and inside the classroom. The idea of welcoming the whole self, come out of that group. Where the learners and educators are able to bring in their entire selves. This means the emotions of the teacher, their many other identities and those of the learners are part of the curriculum. Which in one way may start to end the silence of sexual violence in schools not only for young girls but for all learners.

— Nkonzo Emmanual Mkhize, Participant, University of KwaZulu-Natal
KEY CONSIDERATIONS

1. CHOOSING A ROLE

Participants often wear more than one hat in their professional life such as educator/researcher. It is important for the purpose of this activity for participants to choose one role so they can proceed with the activity, even though they may feel conflicted by having to make this decision.

2. TIME FOR EMOTIONS

Be mindful of the time, as each group will probably have a lot to offer for each prompt. However, it is also important to remember that these conversations may get emotional and bring back difficult memories. Consequently, it may be difficult for the small groups to move from one prompt to another. Therefore, facilitators need think about the ultimate goal of this activity. Is the goal:

a. producing a final product in order to present something to a larger audience and inspire further conversation, or

b. bringing stakeholders together to discuss the issues of gender-based violence, solutions and recommendations and, through that connect and build communities of practice where future collaborations can be made possible?

If it is the former, give participants reminders and encourage them to move on to next step when it is time. Note this can always pose a risk of losing meaningful conversations in the process. If it is the latter, each prompt may take longer and participants may not get through all questions.

3. YOUTH-CENTERED

Remind participants to keep in mind the questions:

‘What did we just hear?’ or

‘What are the girls and young women telling us?’

A key aspect of having adults and young people at the same event (though not always working in the same session together) is to pay attention to the evidence being shared. This could be facilitated by having some of the young people’s artwork in the room, where the adult participants could revisit the artwork in order to be reminded of what they just heard. Or, if themes emerged from other sessions, they could be presented to the participants in this session to inspire and guide the group discussions.
A cellphilm is a short film made on a cellphone, tablet, or other mobile device. **Media Message Cellphilms**, based on the idea of Public Service Announcements (PSAs), are short (30 seconds to a minute long) cellphilms that communicate a very specific message of action to a particular audience.

Media Message Cellphilms raise awareness about an important social issue. Often the explicit message in the cellphilm (typically a slogan or statement) is in the form of a poster, cue card or in the form of direct speech. Evidence, such as statistics that describe the social problem, can help strengthen the message.
HOW TO PRODUCE A ‘MEDIA MESSAGE CELLPHILM’

**EQUIPMENT**

Any kind of cellphone or tablet that records videos, laptop and charger, projector and screen

**MATERIAL**

Flipchart papers, markers

**SPACE/INFRASTRUCTURE**

Large workspace with tables and chairs, set up to enable collaborative work on the storyboarding, screening the videos and reflection on the cellphilms.

**FACILITATORS**

There should be at least one workshop facilitator to explain the instructions at the outset, respond to questions, manage technical issues, and keep the groups on track and on time. In workshops with several groups it is advisable to have at least two facilitators, because groups might face technical-related issues in the process of making the videos or uploading them to the laptops.

**PARTICIPANTS**

- Can vary based on the subject of the media message cellphilm or the prompt of the session;
- Should be grouped together according to where they feel most comfortable and empowered;
- The number of people in each group can vary, but a group of 5 or 6 works well.

**TIME**

This activity should take approximately 3-4 hours to move through the cellphilm-making step, produce cellphilms, screen them and reflect or plan future actions.

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**PREPARATION**

Prior to having the participants work in small groups, explain the process outlined below to the whole group. At this time, it is a good idea to screen a few media message cellphilms as examples. Because they are short, it is possible to screen several examples so that participants have an idea of a range of possibilities and approaches. Here are three samples of media message cellphilms:

- Transgender Awareness
- Where Do We Start?
- Active Bystander

**BRAINSTORM**

In small groups, to identify an issue for your media message cellphilm, brainstorm and write down as many specific issues related to the topic as you can think of. For example, issues related to gender-based violence might include:

- Creating better lighting on campus,
- Girls’ right to walk safely down the street,
- Taking action if you witness gender-based violence as a bystander.

Once you have listed a number of different issues, choose one to make your media message cellphilm about.

**EVIDENCE**

It is optional, but often very helpful, to write a short text which offers some evidence for the problem you are addressing. Since this can become part of your cellphilm, check spelling and layout carefully. Make sure to include the source for your statistic.

(20+ minutes)
Have an audience in mind. Consider who you want to influence, and what you want them to do. Your audience could include government, other young women, health-care providers etc. Develop a clear message that you want to communicate to your chosen audience.

For example: “Female students should be able to walk safely on university campuses” or “Don’t just stand by and watch gender-based violence. Act!” Consider writing the message clearly on a piece of paper so that you can film it.

Plan out the sequence for the cellphilm. Make sure that the problem or the message is clearly stated or written or spoken somewhere in the cellphilm. Include credits (a list of people from your group and their roles). For an example of storyboard see the template below.

MEDIA MESSAGE CELLPHILM STORYBOARD TEMPLATE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUE</th>
<th>MESSAGE</th>
<th>CREDITS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Sound tips

If people are speaking, make sure the phone/tablet microphone is as close as possible to the speaker. Ideally there is a supplementary microphone as well. Remind the participants to not block the microphone with their fingers. They also need to try and eliminate all background noise. It is optional to include sound or music. Also highlight it to the participants to stick to the direction of their filming. If they hold their device in a portrait (vertical) direction, they need to keep that direction till the end of their recording. It is also the same if they are recording in a landscape (horizontal) direction.

It is important that the camera person holds the device in the same direction (either portrait or landscape) throughout the whole recording.
WHAT HAPPENED AT CIRCLES WITHIN CIRCLES

The cellphilm workshop happened on the third day of the Circles Within Circles event. Having spent two days prior analyzing the issue of gender-based violence and girls’ participation in addressing gender-based violence, our sense of the room was that people were anxious to create and say something about taking action.

After some deliberation (Do we keep peers together? Do we group people together by age? Do we group them together by area of specialization?), the participants were divided into small groups [by counting out 1-6] that contained a mix of representatives from different age groups, regions and organizations. With a few exceptions, groups included people of different genders, sexualities, races, ages, nationalities, etc. However, some groups re-organized themselves to stay with their colleagues and friends. The group sizes ranged from approximately 5-10 people.

Before starting the actual video making, the facilitator, Katie MacEntee, took a few minutes to talk about “What is a Cellphilm?” and “What is a Media Message Cellphilm?”, with some examples of Media Message Cellphilms that we watched together. Then she explained the first five steps of creating a Media Message Cellphilm as described previously. Before shooting the cellphilms, Hani Sadati gave an introduction of how to use the tablets and how to work the pause-shoot-pause-shoot rule.

“When you give youth a space to have their voices heard, magic happens.”
—Sally Dimachki, Participant, G(irls)20
Groups took between 30 and 60 minutes to prepare and to film their cellphilms. Some groups had very clear ideas of the issue that they wanted to address and the message that they wanted to send the audience using their cellphilm.

We noticed that leadership was very important. The faster groups, we observed, usually had someone who took the lead. Groups that took longer struggled with deciding on an issue to address or needed extra time to organize supplementary images and media to include in their cellphilm.

In total, six cellphilms were produced in the Circles Within Circles workshop. Among them, one cellphilm didn’t have a title, but the titles of the other 5 include:

- “It is not funny when...”
- “Violence Against Women”
- Girls Speaking Back to Micro-AGGRESSION”
- “Cyberbullying”
- “Shared Experiences of Indigenous Women: Canada and South Africa”

After downloading the videos on a laptop, which was connected to a projector, the videos were screened and the producers came to the front of the room to reflect on their experience and answer audience’s questions.

“I was hesitant to engage, as I had no experience and am a bit camera shy. What happened was that in the making of the cellphilm the group members all became searchers and creators in the project, leaving title, age, and experience behind. The most knowledgeable of the group members were the girls, and they guided the project. We all had a role, but the girls’ experience of the cyberspace and knowledge of the risks this can introduce were the most important resource. The cellphilms we produced that afternoon were amazing! I was truly blown away.

— Nora Fyles, Participant, UNGEI

Screening the cellphilms
It is important for all participants in a group to feel confident to express themselves, especially if there is an intergenerational group producing the film together. It is the responsibility of the small group facilitator to ensure that all participants have the opportunity to speak and contribute to the process. Some individuals may not be comfortable sharing ideas in front of the whole group.

The small group facilitator can ask these individuals separately if they have any ideas, and divide tasks such as designing props or conducting research that enable all participants to contribute in ways that play to their individual strengths.

The small groups may have conflicting viewpoints about the direction that a cellphilm should take. It is important that all participants feel safe to express their views, and that all group members feel comfortable with the cellphilm produced. Dialogue, however, has to be balanced with responding to time pressures.

Ensure sufficient time is allocated to allow for some deliberation and negotiation, and speak to small group facilitators about the need for compromise in mediating creative differences among the group.

The Circles Within Circles Cellphilm-making process was unique for me, because it was the first time I explored the use of Media Message Cellphilms. As I prepared for the workshop, I was excited about working with this new genre. I spent some time looking online at Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and getting a better feel of different strategies that people had used to: 1) highlight their chosen issue; 2) communicate evidence of the issue and the need for change; and 3) drive a message of action home to the viewer. There are a ton of PSAs on line! Some are really slick, with lots of fancy filming and editing. Others are much simpler, were likely made without the specialized skills of a film editor. What I realized in my research is that regardless of the ‘quality’ of the production, PSAs get their power from their clarity of message.

The cellphilms that the participants produced reinforced my ideas on the clarity of message. Participants produced poignant media that, for the most part, zeroed in on a particular issue and presented some form of action or response. However, the participants’ work was how the groups were able to take the Media Message template and adapt it to their chosen topic. The groups worked together differently. Some quickly decided on a topic, threw together a quick storyboard and shot their cellphilm. Other groups struggled to decide on one idea, or spent the majority of the time finding support for their argument.

— Katie MacEntee, Facilitator, York University
**Found Poetry** is a collaborative writing activity inspired by the surrealist poets. Surrealist poems are created through ‘associative thinking,’ or thinking without control. This is similar to the kinds of thinking that happen in play or in dreams. There is no end goal with spontaneous thinking; it is pure imagination, and the results can be surprising.

Found Poetry stimulates free play of thought through a game of hide-and-seek, but with concealed phrases rather than human players. There are two common versions of this activity:

1. **literary collage-making**, which may be done individually or in groups, where words found in print media (such as magazines or newspapers) are cut out and arranged to form a poem;

2. **a collaborative writing activity engaging multiple participants**.

This guide describes the Found Poetry collaborative writing activity.

Found Poetry can work as a stand-alone written dialogue activity, or could also be devoted to the idea of ‘speaking back’ to another arts-based activity, such as ‘speaking back’ to images and ideas produced in a participatory visual workshop (e.g. cellphilming, collage, photovoice).

There are few rules to this game: three, in fact.

**Rule 1**: Take inspiration from the topic and phrase written on the paper. Respond in writing with the first thought that comes into your head.

**Rule 2**: No editing required—or desired. Perfect grammar and complete sentences don’t sound very surreal. So be like the surrealist poets: if your sentences sound unusual or dreamlike, you’re doing great!

**Rule 3**: Resist the temptation to unfold the paper until it is full; the final revelation will only surprise you if you never saw it coming.
SETTING UP

MATERIALS
• Lined paper (you may use 8 x 10 sheets of paper folded and cut length-wise to make twice as many 4 x 10 sheets of paper)
• Pens or pencil crayons

TIMEFRAME
• 5 minutes to form groups
• 5 minutes to explain activity
• 15 minutes to generate found poems
• 20 minutes for reading the poems aloud, or performing them spoken-word style

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Form several groups with between 4 and 10 participants per found poetry group.

2. Ensure that each participant receives a piece of paper and a pen or pencil crayon.

3. Ask each participant to choose a theme that they will write on the bottom right corner of their piece of paper. A list of themes may be provided by the activity facilitator, which relates to the topic of the event Examples: consent, equity, voice.

4. Write two lines of text at the top of the paper (it can be an incomplete sentence) that relate in some way to the theme written on the bottom right corner of the paper (see image).

5. Fold the first line of text backwards so that only the second line of text shows. It’s okay if the words that are left unfolded don’t make sense alone.

6. Pass your piece of paper to the person to your right, and receive another piece of paper from the person to your left. Important: Resist the temptation to read the text that has been folded backwards.
Read the line of text at the top of the folded paper as well as the theme on the bottom right corner. Respond to what you read in one line of text then fold over the previous line so that only your line is visible.

Repeat steps 4 to 6 until one side of the piece of paper is filled with text (see image, top right).

Unfold the piece of paper and take turns reading the found poems aloud to the group (see image, bottom right).

If time allows, have the group reflect on how the poems speak back to the themes of the conference as a whole.

Encourage participants to perform a spoken word reading of their found poems, perhaps at a closing event.

WHAT HAPPENED AT CIRCLES WITHIN CIRCLES

While we did not end up having enough time to conduct the found poetry workshop at the Circles Within Circles event, we did play a round with six organizers prior. We worked with themes related to girls’ safety, agency, consent and voice.

Participants, prior to Circles Within Circles, were free to choose their own subject, and while two participants chose ‘consent,’ those two resulting poems were found to be very different from one another—each taking inspiration from the unique phrases generated. The six found poems were quite successful, and participants were indeed surprised and touched at the poetic results.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Depending on how much time is allotted for the activity, you may play several rounds. Usually successive rounds go faster than the first as participants come to know what to expect and get faster at generating stream-of-consciousness type phrases.

In other words, with some practice participants become less concerned with creating clever sentences, knowing that the sum is greater than the parts.
CREATING A ‘GIRLFESTO’

A **girlfesto** is a declaration of demands, recommendations and commitments that arises from the work of girls and young women. It is best developed at the conclusion of a group’s work together to reflect the discussions that took place during the preceding activities.

It is usually outward-facing, directed toward policymakers and other influential changemakers, but can also contain commitments from the participants themselves.

As stated in the conclusion of the Montebello Girlfesto, a girlfesto:

“...acknowledges the key role that girls and young women can play in conceptualizing, planning and facilitating events related to their lives and concerns. Above all, it recognizes the importance of listening to the voices of girls and young women and emphasizes girl-led and young women-led dialogue and learning opportunities.”
HOW TO PRODUCE A ‘GIRLFESTO’

EQUIPMENT
Laptop and charger, projector, screen

MATERIAL
Flip chart paper, markers, artwork and/or other resources previously produced by participants

SPACE
- Large workspace with tables and chairs
- Accessibility to artwork produced in previous sessions if applicable
- Set up to enable collaborative reflection on art

FACILITATORS
At least one large group facilitator should explain the instructions at the outset, be a resource for clarifying questions and keep the groups on track and on time. Each small group may select a facilitator to serve the same function in their small space.

PARTICIPANTS
- Must include girls (middle or secondary-school age) and/or young women who have been involved in previous knowledge-building activities together
- Should be grouped together according to how they feel most comfortable and empowered; for most young people, this will be with a group of other young people as well as a trusted older facilitator
- Ideal for a large group—minimum six and maximum sixty—split into groups of approximately 6 people.

TIME
Approximately 3 hours to produce a series of ‘rough draft’ girlfestos (one per small group) that can be compiled into a single document to be polished afterward.

PREPARE
- Introduce the objectives of the session, including a description of a girlfesto (possibly with an example) and an overview of the steps below.
- As a large group, review highlights of the event, including the different genres of creative productions and the messages that were generated.
- Ask small groups to assemble, keeping previously established groups of young people together with a trusted adult facilitator when possible.
- Invite groups to review the artwork and/or other resources produced by the broader collective during and/or preceding their time together. This may include a gallery walk of artwork, a review of written documents drafted, or a summary of videos produced. Ideally this step will involve people getting out of their seats and moving around. Members can look at artwork in groups or reflect independently.
**DISCUSSION**

Groups return to their tables and collectively discuss the artwork or other materials. Ask the groups to generate a few themes that describe what they saw and discussed, using prompts including:

a. What stood out for you?
b. How do the various materials produced interact with one another?
c. How do the materials add to your knowledge of girls’ and young women’s experiences of gender-based violence and sexual violence?
d. In looking at these materials, what are some things that we think need to change?
e. What are some ways you may take action to address gender-based violence and sexual violence?

**LIST OF STATEMENTS**

Develop a list of statements that concretize the themes that surfaced in the review of materials and subsequent discussions. Think about what you want to say as a group and explain why. In addition to statements this can include lists, mottos, slogans and artwork.

**ORGANIZE CONTENTS**

Small groups can organize the content of their statements in the form of a girlfesto. This process can be free-flowing and emerge from the participants. If useful, the small group facilitator may suggest ideas be organized into categories such as the following:

- **OUR VISION**
- **WE BELIEVE**
- **WE WANT**
- **WE DEMAND**
- **WE COMMIT TO**
- **HOW WE WILL GET THERE**

**REVIEW**

Small groups review their work and ask each other:

a. Is anything missing?
b. Are our main messages clearly communicated?
c. Could we be more clear in what we are demanding?

**SHARE**

- Come back together as a large group. Each small group presents their draft to the larger group. A notetaker captures the main messages from each group on a laptop that is projected so that the whole large group can see it.
- Invite policymakers and representatives from other influential organizations to respond to the declarations. They can reflect on what they learned from the girlfestos and the broader event, and state their commitment to act upon the recommendations of the girlfesto and share it within their network.
WHAT HAPPENED AT CIRCLES WITHIN CIRCLES

The production of the Montebello Girlfesto (see following pages) was the culminating activity of Circles Within Circles. It was charged with enthusiasm, optimism, hope and energy. The term ‘girlfesto’ emerged from one of the groups of young people at the Circles Within Circles event, making it the first time that a girlfesto has ever been produced.

The activity had initially been described as an exercise to produce a ‘manifesto’, but the young participants’ reframing of the document challenged the centrality of men’s narratives, reflecting the critical feminist energy that characterized much of the event.

Before starting on the production of the small group girlfestos, the groups of participants took ‘gallery walks’ to review the artwork produced during the previous days of the Circles Within Circles event. They visited the art exhibition and looked through the collages, photovoice, international stakeholder discussions, and other artwork and research products that were developed in the preceding days and in the lead up to Circles Within Circles, including artwork from participants who were not able to be present at Circles Within Circles.

In this way, the Montebello Girlfesto drew from the knowledge and experiences of not only the girls and young women in the room, but also from others who had contributed from afar.
Circles Within Circles: Girlfesto

‘WE ARE UNCOMPROMISING!
WE WILL END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE!’

Quebec | 8-11 July 2018

Montebello Girlfesto*

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

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

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

Contributors to the Montebello Girlfesto:

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

* The Montebello Girlfesto is a work-in-progress.
We want freedom, not just safety

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

VISION
‘We want freedom, not just safety.’
Our vision for an ideal world without gender-based violence demands valorization of the principles of Equity, Equality, Justice and Dignity for all people. This vision is characterized by practices that celebrate diversity, using open communication and active listening. It is illustrated by the following image, created by a group of girls and young women participating in Circles Within Circles, to show the kind of world that they are committed to creating.

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

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

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

CONCLUSION
This Girlfesto acknowledges the key role that girls and young women can play in conceptualizing, planning and facilitating events related to their lives and concerns. Above all, it recognizes the importance of listening to the voices of girls and young women and emphasizes the value of girl-led and young women-led dialogue and learning opportunities.
Indigenous Girls from Treaty 6
Territory and homeland of the
Metis want safer communities,
free from drugs/alcohol and
violence. This means restoring our
treaty rights and land sovereignty
natural laws and freedom to exist
as ourselves that have been taken
away.
The Girlfesto is a beautiful document—thanks so much for sharing with me ... I have learnt a lot from trying to bring the perspectives of (young) women together with those in positions of power to come up with joint solutions ... and find that decision-makers (in my case doctors and social workers) often have great insights in where the system breaks down and stops them from providing the care/solutions that women are asking for (and that they also often feel powerless against the bigger system to try and change it). I think my takeaway from all this (including my participation at Circles) is the importance of small-scale but meaningful change at every level.

— Anna Dion, Participant, McGill University

The small group girlfestos produced differed dramatically from one another, reflecting the variation among the age, perspectives and experiences of the Circles Within Circles participants. Some groups created artistic visual depictions [see examples on p. 56, 58] of what they had accomplished, enjoyed and discussed at the event. Others were listed in bullet points or in a brainstorming format with writing in all directions.

Some reflected on the joy found in time spent with friends in a new and exciting space, whereas others created a list of written demands and commitments that targeted policymakers. For example, some messages spoke to the need for the inclusion of men and boys and a broader definition of gender that recognized a range of gender identities.

Others spoke with an urgent decolonizing critique on the connections between land and body sovereignty, and the importance of respecting Indigenous governance structures in order to ensure the security of Indigenous women and girls.

The girlfesto production served as a powerful closing activity for Circles Within Circles. Participants demonstrated a high level of support for each other’s girlfestos, cheering and applauding as each small group presented their work. It generated a sense of productivity and accomplishment by pulling together the discussions from the previous days’ work.

After the work was presented, Nora Fyles from UNGEI and Beth Malcolm from the Canadian Women’s Foundation spoke about their commitment to share the girlfesto within their networks and communities, recognizing the girls as changemakers with the voices and connections to make a difference in their communities and in the world. In response, girl participants spoke about the need for more meetings like this—that bring girls together and show them that their voices are heard.

Following the event, a team of organizers reviewed each group’s draft girlfesto and compiled them together. This was shared with participants for their review and resulted in the final Montebello Girlfesto that was shared out with all Circles Within Circles participants and other relevant stakeholders.
I was randomly selected to type out the collective list of declarations, and I found it hard to keep up with the fervent pace of speakers reading their lists aloud. I felt like I was witnessing a spontaneously inspired performance. With the typed text projected onto a screen for all to see as the Girffesto was being generated, the speakers built momentum echoing their group’s mettle as they forewent the microphone and raised their voices.

— Pamela Lamb, Participant, McGill University

This was part of the final day activities and so happened when many of the folks had warmed up to each other and knew something of each other’s work. It had been hoped that the girls would be comfortable working in mixed groups by this point, but they preferred to stay in the groups they came with. I am often disappointed when this happens, for myself, as I miss the chance to work directly with the girls whose work I have come to admire and I miss being directly connected to the words and actions of girls as they develop their ideas. Even with all this I understand that for girls, they would much rather work with their own groups, that friendship and peers are more comfortable and enriching spaces for them than working with unknown adults and that trust and safety are built over weeks of working together, not after hours or days.

As the work came together, gathering input from each group, one after the other, I was amazed, encouraged, relieved and touched to see that this was done with care, concern, picking up on each other’s point and little was questioned or debated. That’s pretty unusual in the circles I usually work in. I believe this is because there was no doubt in anyone’s mind that girls’ calls for justice, safety, equality, autonomy were deeply connected to their personal experience and this came shining through. Who can argue with this? The centrality of Indigenous girls was one of the most important outcomes of the development of the girlfesto on that day.

— Anuradha Dugal, Facilitator, Canadian Women’s Foundation
KEY CONSIDERATIONS

1. FLEXIBILITY

Small group facilitators have a delicate task that requires balancing the provision of instructions regarding expectations for the activity with flexibility to allow the young people to take the project in new directions. This could include enabling the young participants to reframe the product and infuse it with their own expectations and objectives. It is important that the instructions and expectations are clarified, as well as the opportunity for young people to change the outcome of the process if they choose to do so.

2. ANONYMITY

All identifying information should be removed from the girlfesto before it is shared publicly. Even so, young participants need to be reminded that the work they are doing in producing girlfestos will be widely shared beyond the members of the event. Who it will be shared with and how should be stated clearly and repeatedly. The implications of sharing it, both positive in terms of impact and possible risks such as negative social feedback, should be discussed in the large and small groups.

3. CONSENT

As with all activities, the opportunity to not participate in the production of the girlfesto should be stressed, and a safe space for journaling, doing artwork, and speaking with an Elder or other trusted adult should be provided for participants who opt not to join this activity.

4. COMFORT

Young people should be able to participate in groups where they feel comfortable sharing so that they can drive the direction, agenda and methods used to produce the girlfestos. This is critical to have a ‘girl-led’ process that is based on priorities and perspectives of participating young people.
CONCLUSION

The arts-based tools and activities used at Circles Within Circles provided powerful modes of connecting with girls and young women. The international and intergenerational nature of the event provided a direct forum for girls to speak to adults in positions of power and influence, and the opportunity for individuals from government, civil society, universities and other service institutions to listen to young people and unpack how their messages could influence their work. The use of art and other participatory visual methods enabled a blending of voices and perspectives into collaborative products such as the Girlfesto, as well as individual or group art pieces such as the Collages that focused on young people’s perspectives.

The group at Circles Within Circles was highly diverse, with participants whose ages spanned many decades and who identified with homelands and ancestors from multiple continents. Some participants came as individuals and some came as groups. Among these groups, some had been working together for many years, while others had formed in order to travel to Montebello together. In each other, the participants found solidarity that spanned their differences, as demonstrated by observations about the similar spirit that connected Indigenous practices and people from Canada and South Africa, or expressions of admiration for the sense of community in a group of girls or embodied in the leadership of a single young woman. The attention to balancing reflection and creation, work and play, spirituality and advocacy resulted in a sense of community and inspiration that lingered long afterward with those who were present.

This Handbook shares reflections on how to use these activities in future participatory work with young people in safe and empowering spaces. It recognizes that unanticipated challenges will inevitably arise, that there will always be room for improvement, and that some approaches that work effectively in one context will be less effective in another.
A main lesson learned regarding participatory work with young people, regardless of whether this takes place in classrooms, research, community organizing, or other forms of consultation, is that the principles of reflexivity, flexibility and the best interests of the participants are paramount and should guide all stages of preparation and implementation of the event or activity. As such, there is no ‘recipe’ set of steps or guidance for prescribing a successful participatory initiative. The reflections here are shared to witness the incredible work that took place over four days in July, 2018, and to provide a spark and some suggestions to inspire future participatory research or advocacy with young people—work that will look different, but will be equally incredible.

“During the conference in Montebello I learned it’s important for girls to speak and let their voices be heard, I think it’s important because everyone deserves to be heard. I also learned that it’s okay to speak up because nobody will judge you. What really stood out for me was that every young girl in our community and other communities deserves to have a voice and speak up for themselves.

I loved making the poster we all made and how it turned out, I liked that me and a group came together and made a video about how violence is never ok. And I most enjoyed listening to the Saskatoon girls sing and our Sisters Rising group sharing, drumming and singing.

— Grace Sutherland, Participant, Sisters Rising
ORGANIZATIONS & PARTNERS

UNIVERSITIES

FIRST NATIONS UNIVERSITY | SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA
The First Nations University of Canada provides an opportunity for students of all nations to learn in an environment of First Nations cultures and values. The university is a special place of learning where we recognize the spiritual power of knowledge and where knowledge is respected and promoted. In following the paths given to us by the Creator, the First Nations have a unique vision to contribute to higher education. With the diversity and scope of the First Nations degree programs, the university occupies a unique role in Canadian higher education. The university promotes a high quality of education, research and publication.

MCGILL UNIVERSITY, PARTICIPATORY CULTURES LAB | MONTREAL, CANADA
The Participatory Cultures Lab is located at McGill university, Montreal and is organized around the study and use of visual and other participatory approaches to research and social action, and involves the work of collaborators and research students engaged in the study of participatory research. Central to the interests of team, this work includes the study and use of such visual tools as digital storytelling, photovoice, participatory video, participatory archiving, cellphilms, objects and things, collage, and other arts-based approaches in the process of collecting, analyzing, and working with research data. It also links to memory work, self-study and to various autoethnographic approaches to research. The work links to issues of social justice, focusing on such areas as youth sexuality and HIV and AIDS, gender-based violence, food security, and poverty alleviation.

MOUNT SAINT VICTEN UNIVERSEITY | HALIFAX, CANADA
Established in 1873, Mount Saint Vincent University (the Mount) is set on a beautiful treed campus overlooking the waters of the Bedford Basin and is just minutes from downtown Halifax. A diverse mix of women and men from across Canada and more than 50 other countries take advantage of the Mount’s programs and unique sense of community.

NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY | PORT ELIZABETH, SOUTH AFRICA
Nelson Mandela University, formerly known as University of Port Elizabeth (UPE), is a South African university with its main administration in the coastal city of Port Elizabeth. Nelson Mandela University was founded through a merger of three institutions in January 2005, but its history dates back to 1882, with the foundation of the Port Elizabeth Art School. The University draws international students from all over the world.
Centre for Visual Methodologies for Social Change (University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa) is a unit established in the School of Education in 2004, focusing on the use of participatory visual methodologies in community based research. Much of the work focuses on addressing HIV and AIDS and gender based violence. The CVM is South African 'hub' for Networks for Change. The University of KwaZulu-Natal was formed on 1 January 2004 as a result of the merger between the University of Durban-Westville and the University of Natal. The new university brings together rich histories and is a truly African institution that is academically excellent, innovative in research, critically engaged with society and demographically representative, redressing the disadvantages, inequities and imbalances of the past.

The University of Victoria offers innovative programs for more than 20,000 students. Dynamic, hands-on learning, research that makes a vital impact, and discovery and innovation in Canada’s most extraordinary academic environment provide an edge that can’t be found anywhere else. UVic has adopted an Indigenous focus, from language revitalization to Indigenous law, University of Victoria researchers are working with Indigenous communities and organizations in Canada and around the world to understand, preserve and celebrate Indigenous traditions and cultures.

York University is known for championing new ways of thinking that drive teaching and research excellence. Meaningful and sometimes unexpected careers result from cross-disciplinary programming, innovative course design and diverse experiential education opportunities. York is committed to giving a broad demographic of students access to a high quality, research-intensive learning environment committed to the public good.

UNGEI strives to promote girls’ education and gender equality through policy advocacy and support to governments and other development actors to deliver on the gender and education-related Sustainable Development Goals. UNGEI promotes the building of evidence and sharing of good practice in girls’ education and gender equality, and seeks to strengthen collaboration and partnership.
ORGANIZATIONS & PARTNERS

CANADIAN WOMEN’S FOUNDATION | CANADA
The Canadian Women’s Foundation is Canada’s public foundation for women and girls. We are helping women and girls, because they face distinct barriers that require distinct solutions. We also focus on women and girls because improving gender equality improves economic and social conditions for everyone. The Foundation embraces an inclusive definition of “women” and “girls” that includes people who identify as women, girls, trans, genderqueer, and gender non-binary.

G(irls)20
Launched in 2009 at the Clinton Global Initiative, G(irls)20 places young women at the centre of decision-making processes. Through our signature programs, Global Summit and Girls on Boards, we make strategic investments in young women through education and training, building networks, and access to unparalleled opportunities at home and abroad. While advocating for change at the global level through the annual G(irls)20 Global Summit, we are invested in changing the status quo for women at decision-making tables in communities across Canada by placing Girls on Boards.

GIRLS ACTION FOUNDATION | MONTREAL, CANADA
Girls Action is based in Montreal with a large national network that creates initiatives and programming to encouraged girls to discover their power and create positive change in their lives and communities. Reaching girls and young women across Canada, 90% are in marginalized communities including Northern, remote, and inner city communities. Initiatives, including Girl’s Clubs, nurture the leadership of girls and young women by providing access to resources, networks, mentors, and opportunities to build new skills.

GORBACHEV FOUNDATION | RUSSIA
The Raisa Maximovna Gorbachev Club is an on-going project of the Gorbachev Foundation. The Club was set up by Raisa Gorbachev—wife of Mikhail Gorbachev—in 1997 as a venue to debate socially important issues and provide representation for and practical support to those projects that intend to actively involve women. The Club holds conferences, carries out charity campaigns and research projects. The Club initiates public discussions of such burning problems as gender violence, gender inequality and obstacles to women’s participation in public politics. The Club’s events are attended by scholars, public leaders, journalists and representatives of non-governmental organizations.
NATIVE WOMEN’S SHELTER OF MONTREAL | MONTREAL, CANADA

The goal of the NWSM is to provide a safe environment where women can begin to rebuild their lives. Support and frontline services are made available to First Nations, Inuit and Métis (Aboriginal) women and children to promote their empowerment and independence. The NWSM is the only women’s shelter in Montreal that provides services exclusively to Aboriginal women and their children. The shelter is open 24 hours a day 365 days a year. In-house programs as well as an outreach programs are provided, including 20 workshops a month which range from art therapy to traditional teachings.

PAUKTUUTIT: INUIT WOMEN OF CANADA | OTTAWA, CANADA

Pauktuutit is the national representative organization of Inuit women in Canada and is governed by a 14-member Board of Directors from across Canada. Pauktuutit fosters greater awareness of the needs of Inuit women, advocates for equality and social improvements, and encourages Inuit women's full participation in the community, regional and national life of Canada.

PIERRE ELLIOT TRUDEAU FOUNDATION | CANADA

The Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation is an independent and non-partisan charity established in 2001 as a living memorial to the former prime minister. In 2002, with the support of the House of Commons, the Government of Canada endowed the Foundation with the Advanced Research in the Humanities and Human Sciences Fund. The Foundation also benefits from private donations. By granting doctoral scholarships, awarding fellowships, appointing mentors, and holding public events, the Foundation encourages critical reflection and action in four areas important to Canadians: human rights and dignity, responsible citizenship, Canada and the world, and people and their natural environment.

YOUTH COALITION FOR SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Youth Coalition is an international organization of young people (ages 18-29 years) committed to promoting adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive rights at the national, regional and international levels. We are students, researchers, lawyers, health care professionals, educators, development workers, and most importantly, we are all dedicated activists. The Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights aims to ensure that the sexual and reproductive rights of all young people are respected, guaranteed and promoted, and strives to secure the meaningful participation of young people in decision-making that affects their lives, by advocating, generating knowledge, sharing information, building partnerships and training young activists with a focus on the regional and international levels.
ORGANIZATIONS & PARTNERS

ANGE SECONDARY SCHOOL | SWEDEN

The participants from Ange Secondary School at Circles within Circles have been part of a photovoice project headed up by Mid Sweden University working with the Univeristy of KwaZulu-Natal. The project is called ‘A transnational study of intersection of rurality, gender and violence against girls and young women: An urgent matter in both the Global North and the Global South (TGRAN).’

ESKASONI MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORK SERVICE | NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA

This project, as part of Networks for Change is made up of 8 young co-researchers from Eskasoni. The community is located on Cape Breton Island, within the Unama’gi district of Mi’kmaq territory (Nova Scotia, Atlantic Canada). The community has approximately 4,355 people and is the largest Aboriginal community in Atlantic Canada. We are partnering with Eskasoni Mental Health Services (EMHS) to conduct Networks for Change and Wellbeing in our research site. EMHS uses a community development approach, where the community as a whole is the client. Using the medicine wheel and a two-eyed seeing approach, the intent is to attend to the basic needs of the community (financial planning, new parent support, etc.) together with relationship building activities (Halloween events, Easter egg hunts, and so forth) to ensure that service provision is extended. These aspects of service provision provide additional supports to formal mental health service provision.

GENDER ACTIVISTS | SOUTH AFRICA

The Gender Activists came together as a student-led group of students and staff from the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s School of Education in South Africa during a series of workshops from 2017-2018. The group aims to understand gender-based violence on campus, and address it.

GIRLS LEADING CHANGE | SOUTH AFRICA

In Nelson Mandela University in 2013 the project, Digital media for change and well-being: Girl-led ‘from the ground up’ policy-making in addressing sexual violence in South Africa, was initiated and began working with a group of first year education students who came from rural areas, to explore sexual violence. The open invitation brought 14 young women together to explore their feeling safe at university—an issue of concern to universities in South Africa, but also to universities worldwide. Girls Leading Change have since worked together, presenting their findings to elicit dialogue with various policy makers within the faculty and university, but also at a variety of local and international forums. Their engagement in the project has enabled them to take up their agency—individually and collectively—in speaking out against injustices in various spaces.
INDIGENOUS YOUNG WOMEN’S UTOPIA | TREATY 6/SASKATOON, CANADA

Sohki iskewew (strong women)—the Saskatoon/Treaty 6/Traditional Home—land of the Metis site has continued to work with 8 young Indigenous women to explore and navigate the colonial and gendered violent context that we survive and exist in. Empowered by each other and our Nehiwayan and Michif ways, these young women continue to explore self-love as our first form of resistance. Currently, we have made ribbon skirts that were accompanied by teachings around rape-culture, our bodies, and traditional protocols. We have also participated in a full moon ceremony that strengthens our spirits and bonds us as women. We will be co-authoring an anthology of poetry, spoken word, and visual art showcasing our hopes, dreams, and experiences. Prayer and ceremony lead our sessions, we know that our ancestors prayed for us to be together to do this work. We continue to listen and learn from each other! Hiy hiy ekosi!

KOROGOCHO YOUNG MOTHERS | NAIROBI, KENYA

Korogocho Young Mothers are a group of girls and young women who dropped out of school due to unplanned teenage pregnancy and are living in the urban slum of Korogocho in Nairobi, Kenya. This was an amorphous group formed to participate in a research project to explore the barriers to school continuation and re-entry for young mothers in the community. 15 young mothers participated in a Photovoice project to explore the challenges to their school continuation and completion. The photo narratives that they created identified socio-cultural and economic issues that keep young mothers out of school. From the photo narratives, an exhibition has been curated for display by the community, researchers, school policy implementers and policy decision makers to start a conversation on reformulating the existing “Back to school policy” in Kenya that would support young mothers to go back to school and complete their education.

LEADERS FOR YOUNG WOMEN’S SUCCESS | KHETHANI, SOUTH AFRICA

Leaders for Young Women’s Success is a group of girls and young women from Khethani, a rural area in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. They create artwork, including collages, photographs, drawings, storyboards, and images, from cellphilms and digital stories, tell a story of what Gender-based Violence looks like in their community. They show how poverty, substance abuse, gender norms and hegemonic masculinity make girls and young women vulnerable to GBV. The stories told by the L4YWS artefacts reveal that girls and young women in their community bear the extremely harsh consequences of GBV, which include pregnancy, HIV, and even death, largely on their own. Importantly, however, the L4YWS artwork also show that the they hope to create change in their community through collective action.
SISTERS RISING | VICTORIA, CANADA

Sisters Rising is an Indigenous-led research project based in British Columbia, part of the Networks4Change project. Sisters Rising works with communities and organizations to conduct art- and land-based workshops with Indigenous girls, young women, and youth of all genders, including 2spirit and LGBTQ+ youth, using a trans-generational framework. Research on sexualized violence in our communities tends to focus on the impact of risk and trauma, and on the legal, social and psychological costs of interventions. Our project uses art and land-based materials and teachings as a form of restorying and rebodying colonial violence. Activities have included circles with Elders, walks on the land, art and collage-making, tanning hides, working with wool, stone, hide and cedar digital storytelling, painting, image collages, mask-making, spoken word and traditional felt and beading work.

SOCIAL ILLS FIGHTERS | LOSKOP, SOUTH AFRICA

Social Ills Fighters are a group of girls and young women from Loskop, a rural area near the Drakensberg in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The group creates artwork in response to what Gender-based Violence (GBV) looks like in the SIFs’ community. They show how cultural practices, including forced and early marriage, and traditional gender norms can be and are experienced by girls and young women as violence. The also illustrate how poverty exacerbates and contributes to the vulnerability of girls and young women in rural settings. In spite of these challenges, the stories told have also begun to show how, by working with stakeholders in their community such as the police, schools and traditional leadership, the SIFs hope to create change in their community.

YOUNG GIRLS LEADING CHANGE | EASTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

The Young Girls Leading Change is a group of 7 girls who started working together in 2015 in the Networks4Change project, to address gender-based violence in their rural school and community. They have been using participatory visual methodologies to explore what gender-based violence looks like in their community and what to do about it. The cellphilsms they made helped them to think of what messages they would like to share with the school and community resulting in a set of policy posters and action briefs, which have been used in dialogue with several audiences. The work produced by the girls show how they think the difficult issue of gender-based violence could be addressed in the school and community.
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15. Picture retrieved from: https://medium.com