

Courage Catalysts: Creating Consent Culture on Campus

A Toolkit by Students, for Students

POSSIBILITY
SEEDS

COURAGETOACT.CA
#IHaveTheCourageToAct

Land Acknowledgement

We would like to begin by acknowledging that this work is taking place on and across the traditional territories of many Indigenous nations. We recognize that gender-based violence is one form of violence caused by colonialism that is used to marginalize and dispossess Indigenous peoples from their lands and waters. Our work on campuses and in our communities must centre this truth as we strive to end gender-based violence. We commit to continuing to learn and grow and to take an anti-colonial and inclusive approach to the work we engage with. It is our intention to honour this responsibility.

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About Possibility Seeds

We are a leading project management and policy development social purpose enterprise that works alongside communities, organizations, and institutions to cultivate gender equity. Courage to Act, a national initiative to address and prevent gender-based violence at Canadian post-secondary institutions, is led by Possibility Seeds, a social purpose enterprise that works alongside clients to create, connect and cultivate gender justice. Learn more about our work at www.possibilityseeds.ca.

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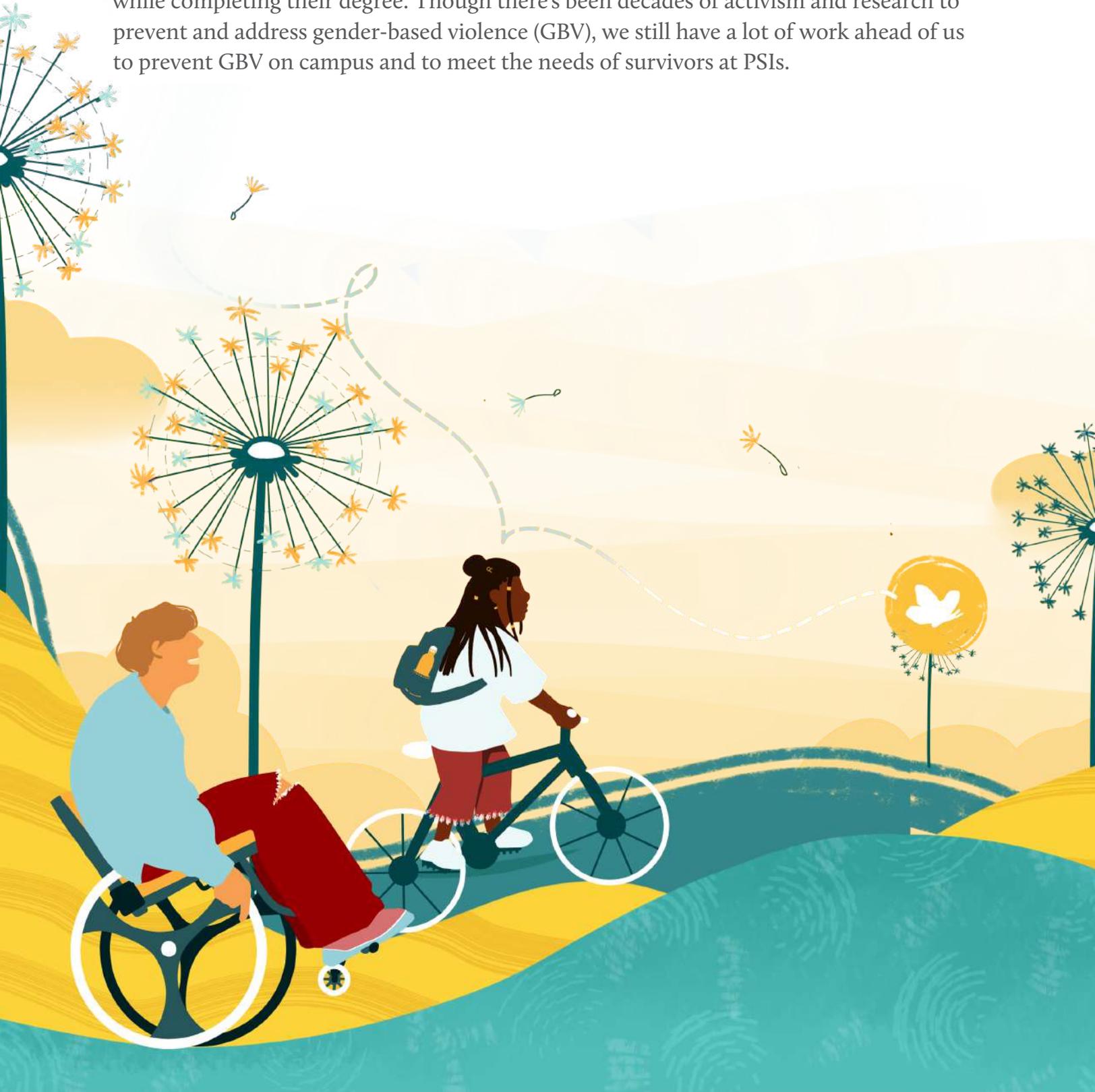


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INTRODUCTION

Being a student at a post-secondary institution (PSI) comes with many challenges: balancing academic commitments, maintaining a social life on and off campus, working, and family responsibilities—to name a few things. On top of these pressures, more than 71% of Canadian students experienced or witnessed unwanted sexualized behaviours while completing their degree. Though there’s been decades of activism and research to prevent and address gender-based violence (GBV), we still have a lot of work ahead of us to prevent GBV on campus and to meet the needs of survivors at PSIs.



If you're coming to this toolkit frustrated about the pervasiveness of violence on campus, know you are not alone. In fact, this toolkit was designed by diverse student advocates from across Canada who felt a similar frustration. We became involved in advocacy work for a variety of reasons, such as witnessing injustice, supporting our friends in the aftermath of GBV on campus, or navigating sexualized violence ourselves. We had an incredible opportunity to collaboratively create the kinds of tools we wished we had when organizing on campus, and we hope it will be helpful to you.

If you are someone who strives to see a growing consent culture at your PSI, this guide will walk you through tools that may help you reach that goal.

Written by leading student activists from across Canada,

THIS TOOLKIT WILL HELP YOU BUILD A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR ADVOCACY ON CAMPUS THROUGH THINGS LIKE:

- Talking to media
- Creating support through self care and community organizing
- Advocating to administration and government
- Creating a petition or campaign
- Doing community consultation
- Self-soothing.

Each topic is a sliver of what you may encounter as you wade into the waters of student advocacy. We hope that, in bringing each piece together, you find yourself equipped to dive in and create waves of change that will be felt for a long time.

References:

Burczycka, M. (2020, September 14). *Students' experiences of unwanted sexualized behaviours and sexual assault at postsecondary schools in the Canadian provinces, 2019*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2020001/article/00005-eng.htm>



Student Stories



Alannah McKay

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

A

Alannah McKay

I was raised in a very matriarchal family: The women would lead and make the decisions. That was definitely my mom and my grandma. I saw how strong and resilient they were and I really admired that. I grew up in a very stable home but in the inner city of Winnipeg, so there was lots going on around me — Indigenous people being incarcerated, subject to racial slurs, not being helped by the cops, their kids being taken away by child and family services. It was all so normalized. I became an auntie when I was 7. My older siblings — who are older than me by about 10 years — both had kids under age 18. By the time I was 12, I had five nieces. I would see my older sister struggle. My sister went through literally everything, all the injustices that impact Indigenous women and can start at a very young age. I wanted my nieces to know there were other pathways they could take.

I am a first-generation university student, and with that comes a lot of responsibility. Apparently I was talking about going to university from a very young age. My stepdad was really encouraging, pushing

me to get my education. And when I was 13, my mom started going to school to study Indigenous languages. She wanted to finish school and get her education before her children did. She was so determined. That's when I started to learn what it meant to be an Anishnaabe woman — I say I am Anishinaew, because my dad's side is Cree and Oji-Cree. Growing up, I was always in love with the idea of our language and wanting to know it.

When I started university, I was still living at home and working two jobs. It was like two different worlds. My family supported me in any way they could. But then my mom, who had gotten in a bad car accident in my Grade 12 year, soon after her recovery was diagnosed with lung cancer. She ended up passing away before my second year. I thought about taking a break but my family said my mom would want me to continue with school. That kept me going. Then my grandma got sick and passed away that fall. I failed every single class in my third year. I went to see an academic advisor and she helped me navigate everything.

I started hanging out in the University of Manitoba Indigenous students' association lounge and I remember overhearing their meetings while I studied. I didn't know anyone at all but remember they were planning a big event one time and I chimed in **"Have you talked to so and so?"** And they said, **"No...but that's a good idea."** I ended up running for the Director of Finance role because I'd worked at a bank. I remember people in that group helping me so much — with enrolling for online courses, connecting me with resources, everything.

My mom and my grandmother were always the people I went to for support, but now I was like, **"OK now I know other Indigenous people and I know other Indigenous youth and women who need support."**

I took Intro to Anishinaabemowin in first year and loved it, so soon after becoming involved with the University of Manitoba Indigenous Students' Association. I helped with what was known as ReconciliACTION, a campaign that led to the passage of a motion to enact the 16th call to action from the Truth and Types of Things Reconciliation Commission Report — to implement an Indigenous languages program at universities. It was unanimously passed by the student union and it ended up

going to the Canadian Federation of Students' annual general meeting in Ottawa and became a national campaign. It was exciting to witness this kind of change, but I had imposter syndrome — I grew up in the inner-city, I never would've imagined doing these types of things.

I continued my advocacy work as part of the University of Manitoba Indigenous Students' Association (UMISA). Along with other Indigenous women in our community, I helped to start the University of Manitoba Indigenous Womxn's Council. In the first year, we were able to ensure there were safe spaces for women to breastfeed, that there was access to menstrual products free of cost. During my term as co-president of UMISA I made the role of the University of Manitoba Indigenous Womxn's Council an executive position on our council to make sure those voices were always heard. I knew the Womxn's Council was vital to campus, to make sure Indigenous women and students knew they had a safe space to go and talk and come gather to heal together. Since the creation of the Womxn's council, we've hosted many cultural events such as Ribbon Skirt Workshop's and Women Speaker series.

I've also pushed for Indigenous representation in student government — to make sure Indigenous students were never put on the back burner. Now I'm national treasurer for the Canadian Federation of Students.

I am a self-proclaimed shy person — I never used to speak up. Then one day, I was just like,

“OK, I've been silent for a bit too long.”

After I lost my mom and my grandma, I really came out of my shell. Being an Indigenous woman, being in these spaces where my voice was always pushed to be diminished, I'm now the one standing up saying, **“No, I'm not going to have it.”**

It can be harsh navigating academia as an Indigenous woman, but I knew I was not alone. While my educational journey had a lot of barriers, not knowing how I was supposed to navigate it all on my own is one big reason why I started to pave a path for Indigenous students and women.

Growing up being the first of anything holds a lot of responsibility you have to your community. I wanted to make sure I was breaking down those barriers for those coming after me, while breaking intergenerational curses. I needed to become the role model that I needed.



Aubrianna Snow

MACEWAN UNIVERSITY

A

Aubrianna Snow

Growing up, people perceived me as Indigenous, but I didn't grow up with my culture. My grandmother was half Mi'kmaq and she didn't grow up on a reserve, though her family tried to keep the language. After she died, it just didn't really pass on.

When I got to MacEwan, I watched a discussion with an elder at the kihêw waciston (KW) Indigenous Centre. He was talking about his history, his struggles with addiction and growing up in the foster system and the things he had to overcome. There was something about the way his connection to culture helped him heal. I remember really wanting that for myself. This sparked my interest in social justice, particularly Indigenous issues, and made me want to reconnect with that part of who I am. A lot of my work in sexual violence comes from my own history of trauma, from a lot of stuff that happened to me when I was younger. One day, while in university, I just decided I wanted to channel all of that energy into something more positive and help the community.

Once I dove in and got involved in student politics, gender-based violence issues became central to my advocacy: We worked on the University Students Offering Leadership on Violence Elimination (USOLVE) planning initiative, which was part of the sexual violence prevention office at our school. We would plan events and table initiatives. I learned that sexual violence was a far more common experience than I thought it was — looking back, I barely learned anything about consent in high school.

As I moved on to the role of vice-president student life, I learned what a challenge it can be to get institutions to look beyond the bottom line. It's one thing to talk a big game about how people should be organizing and how great it is to see equity initiatives on campus, but it really speaks volumes when budget cuts come and those are the first things to go. My push to create a sexual violence policy for the student union and to form an advocacy group around this issue came after the university cut some of the budget for their Office of Sexual Violence Prevention,

Education and Response. The only group offering significant student representation on this issue at MacEwan was eliminated at the end of the 2019-2020 academic year, and we're still working to fill that gap. The biggest challenge in creating a standalone policy has been the lack of structure in planning. This advocacy group will be different from the one that was slashed by the university so we have to start from scratch.

I don't see myself as an authority on the subject of gender-based violence — this whole experience has been an instance of,

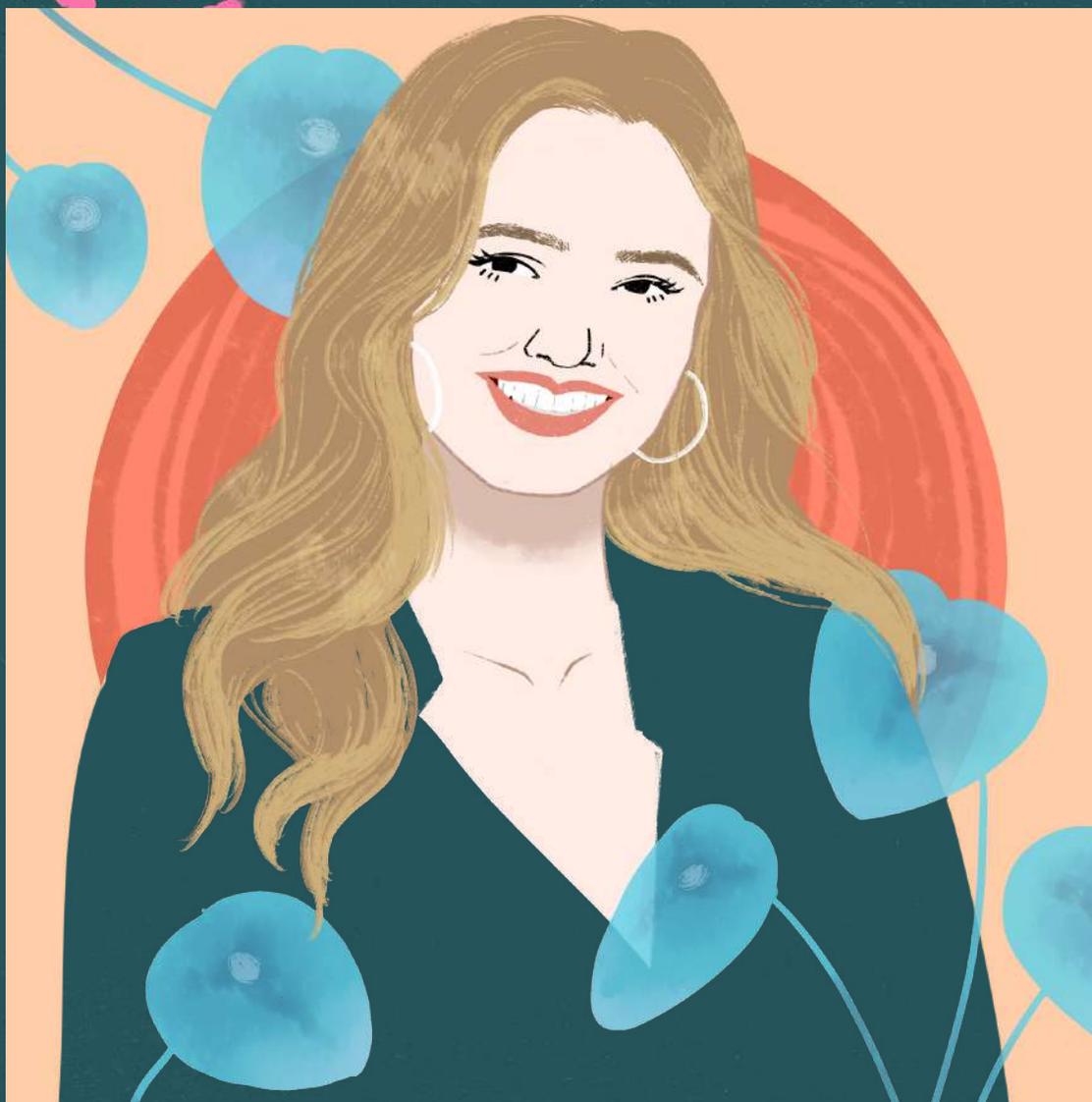
“If not me, then who?”

Some of my most rewarding experiences doing this work on campus have been with the MacEwan Anti-Violence Education Network (MAVEN). We would

present an hour-long workshop on consent and sexual violence to pretty much whatever group or class would have us.

Seeing light bulbs go off in people's heads, maybe realizing how they've perpetuated gender-based violence or realizing that sexual violence happened to them, watching people making those connections is the most rewarding thing ever for me. I feel like it makes a real tangible difference on campus, and it can make a difference in the campus climate long term. And it 100% is possible to work with administration to get things done: I've spent much of 2020 working with MacEwan to form a student advisory group on gender-based violence.

Changing this climate is really important to me, particularly as I lean into my own journey of getting in touch with my culture. There is something so deeply interconnected about the nature of sexual violence and the lives of Indigenous women and colonialism. In recent years, I learned beadwork from an elder at KW, just a basic flat-stitch. It's a peaceful way for me to kind of reconnect through art. It's also a very mindful thing for me. I took an online class in Mi'kmaq, and now I'm teaching my mom a bit of what I've learned. The more I discover about myself and my history and the land I'm on, the better I can understand the struggles of others and the more I'm able to help them and myself.



Catherine Dunne

WESTERN UNIVERSITY



Catherine Dunne

I first started thinking about social justice in high school when I was seeking treatment for a pretty severe eating disorder. My psychologist at the time told me about how anorexia was a feminist issue — the way our culture encourages us to police our food and police our body image takes our energy from the things that we're passionate about. And I'm a pretty passionate person. I think that that made me realize that I had so many things I wanted to achieve — like to eventually pursue medicine and fight for reproductive justice — but couldn't pursue them because my eating disorder was holding me back. That helped me start thinking about my recovery journey as part of that larger social justice fight.

When I was in second-year university, I became a residence advisor and one of the very first things I responded to was an incident of sexual assault. It was very tricky for me to navigate and support the survivor not only because I was only 19 but because I had been assaulted in my first year and hadn't really come to terms with it yet. Looking back, I think

supporting her was also my own unconscious way of supporting myself. She ended up launching an official residence complaint which revealed to me how school policy responded to sexual violence — the process was convoluted and I knew that survivors deserved better. Homecoming happened around the same time and I had noticed a bed sheet hanging in the window of one of the frat houses on campus. Someone had written on it, **"No Means Yes, Yes means Anal."**

Earlier in the year, I had joined the Gender Equality Network Committee, so I went to them and said, **"We've got to do something about this; this, is despicable."** So we recreated the bed sheet but crossed out and corrected it to read, **"No Means No."**

We hung it in the atrium of the University Community Centre (UCC) for a week.

I wanted to say,

**"No, this is not OK,
rape culture is not OK."**

Halfway through my second year, a position opened up on the university student council to be an advocacy research intern. I applied, got the job and eventually moved on to do research and policy for the student council specifically related to academic advocacy. Then came my summer internship with the Ontario University Students' Association, where I got really frustrated with the organization for not taking a strong stance against the new provincial government's decision to roll back the sex-ed curriculum, which taught consent. That fall, I returned to campus and said, **"We need to do something about Western's sexual violence policy because it's really bad."**

So, we did a comprehensive review that graded them a D. When I became University Student Council vice president, there hadn't been significant changes to the policy since I had done that evaluation. So we did a full review and it's in a much better place than it was — it prioritizes survivors and support, response and education and changed the disclosure procedures entirely. There are still some bumps I had to negotiate with respect to residence. They didn't fully eliminate a problematic procedure, which was that residence advisors had to contact a manager

immediately if a survivor disclosed an assault to you. It's written down now, though, at least — publicly available on the website. And there are ramifications and parameters around it. It's not perfect, but it's a lot better than it was.

The biggest challenge I faced as a student organizer was access to the decision-makers. While my advocacy started with wanting to help the student I cared about and raise awareness about rape culture and gender-based violence on campus, I also wanted to make concrete and lasting change. I had to run for student government to ensure the file got prioritized at the provincial level, which is why I ran to be OUSA president.

In 2019/2020, we revamped their sexual violence policy. I also pushed to boost funding for the Campus Safety Grant, and the release of the Student Voices on Sexual Violence data.

This was important because while the provincial government committed to doubling the funding, it didn't equip us with tools to build long-term programs and supports for students. After lots of advocacy, and a commitment from the now-dissolved Liberal government to run the survey, we finally got the full data in the winter of 2020.

It was a historic win and critical to ensuring we can assess what the culture looks like from campus to campus and hold institutions accountable on investing in systemic change.

I care deeply about changing the system, because I think you can. My initial advocacy was an act of resistance to get better and fight. Then it was resistance because of the trauma I and others around me endured.

Now I think about anti-Black racism, and missing or murdered Indigenous women. If we're going to do this social justice work we've got to do, we've got to do it to the best of our ability. We can't just pick and choose which causes we care about, because they're all so interlinked.



Chenthoori Malankov

YORK UNIVERSITY

C

Chenthoori Malankov

When I was eight or nine, I stood at the corner of Finch and Weston Roads in North York holding a bristol board sign. My Dad had me write on it: **"People are Hungry, No one Should be Hungry."** I thought it was so embarrassing, but in hindsight it was my introduction to what it means to see a problem and think about what you can do to address it.

This sign was pointing people to a local vegetarian food bank — the first of its kind in Ontario — founded and run by my Dad. My parents were both community activists in their home country of Sri Lanka and came here as refugees, fleeing genocide and civil war. My Dad would tell me, **"Right now, we have a house, we have food — so many people don't have that."** I was like **"Really?"** I would help him all through high school at the food banks, and at the other locations as it expanded.

When I started at York University, I would hang out at Vari Hall, an area where students would get together and mobilize. I remember being there, in 2010, when the undergraduates' student union

was lobbying for a sexual violence policy. There were cops; there were lots of protesters. It's where the officer made the comment that led to the launch of the Slut Walk that year — about how women shouldn't dress a certain way if they don't want to be sexually assaulted. The then-vice-president of the student union stood up and said, **"I can't believe you would say something like that."** I remember thinking, **"Wow, I can't believe this woman is talking back to the police."** I was inspired.

So I got involved: I volunteered at the Sexual Assault Survivor Support Line (SASSL) and eventually started to work there. In my second year, I sat on the advisory committee for York's sexual assault policy. We were advocating to put an end to the tribunal system, which really didn't help survivors and was far too bureaucratic. It wasn't until I became a support person that I realized how flawed the system was. No one on the tribunal had experience dealing with survivors who are so often retraumatized in a process like that. It was a difficult and nerve-wracking

process — we had a lot to take on. York removed its tribunal process and became one of the first to do so. And luckily, the survivor I was representing while this was going on won her case. It gave me hope — so often when you try to work with administration, it feels very black and white. But we ultimately had the same goal, to do what was best for the survivor. I saw how possible it was to work together. We hung it in the atrium of the University Community Centre (UCC) for a week.

Then I found myself back in Vari Hall — four years after seeing that student leader’s act of resistance — talking with students as a newly elected student union vice-president. Students were saying they were really feeling stressed and would love to see more breaks to help with mental health.

It reminded me that when I was in first year, we had a fall reading week — it just kind of disappeared the next year with no discussion. When I was elected president of the York Federation of Students

that winter term, I got a seat in the senate. I created a policy, drawing from stats that showed a high demand among students for mental health supports in the first few weeks of school, and showing how other schools used the week to help address mental health on campus. The university reinstated the fall reading week, and now York has many more mental health supports for students, including the Bennett Centre for mental health and disability supports and our student-run wellness center.

It’s a part of the institution’s responsibility to provide that space for a student to say,

“I don’t need medical support, but I need a space where I can just breathe and do homework and get a cup of tea.”

That’s had a ripple effect on campus.

I lost both my parents when I was still early in my university career, so they didn’t get to see me do a lot of this work. But I know they’d be proud and tell me to keep going. If there’s anything my parents both taught me, it’s that when you see injustice, you never stay silent. That’s stayed with me far beyond the university campus.



Emma Kuzmyk

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY

E

Emma Kuzmyk

My activism began in the Fall of 2017. I was 18 years old, and it was my very first semester at university. It wasn't until two years later, however, that I began to identify myself as an activist, and not until now, two years after that, that I've begun to release myself from that title.

When I first came to St. Francis Xavier University (St.FX), absolutely everything was new to me. It was my first time away from home, my first time being independent, and I was in a province where I didn't know a soul. That initial independence was exciting. I had dreamt for years of being able to reinvent myself, as many unpopular teenagers do, and felt like university would be the perfect opportunity. While attempting to do so, however, I found myself in unfamiliar situations. I was drinking and partying more, and hearing about, witnessing, or experiencing sexual assault was already becoming a devastatingly frequent part of my university experience. When we started to talk about campus sexualized violence in my Women and Gender Studies class, I

Written By: Emma Kuzmyk

remember feeling like I didn't need to pay attention. Like I had already learned enough.

In that first semester, it felt like sexualized violence was all around me, and I knew I wasn't the only one experiencing that. Partway through the semester, there was a very publicized case of sexual assault, and my soccer teammates leapt into action by creating an awareness campaign called StFX Strong with the slogan "**We Stand Together, End Sexual Violence.**"

At the time, working on the campaign was the only thing I wanted to do. My classes felt minuscule and unimportant compared to the problems I was seeing around me, and I began to fall behind. The dedication my teammates had to the campaign was huge, and the logo and slogan were being shared by what felt like the entire campus. We made buttons, stickers, and t-shirts, and collected donations, and in an attempt to gain more traction for the campaign, [I also shared a spoken word poem on YouTube.](#)



I've been writing poetry for as long as I can remember, but I never shared it publicly before that year—mostly because it always felt so private, so personal. And the poem that I shared *was* personal. It was one that I had written in class when I should have been paying attention, and in the confines of my notebook, it was mine. It was about me and only me. But when I reread it later in my residence building, where I knew that violence had been taking place for decades before I moved in, it didn't feel like it could be mine anymore. That's when I edited it, when it stopped being about me and started being about everything. And when it felt like it wasn't just about me anymore, I decided I could share it, that it might help the campaign grow even more.

Truthfully, I didn't think that much would come from it. I just wanted to participate in the movement happening around me, to say *something*. I woke up the next morning to overwhelming messages and questions about the poem, and to reporters asking to speak to me about it. And so I told them about the movement my teammates had created, about the climate on campus, about the making of the video. Then those interviews were published in articles for the National Post,

CBC, CTV, just about everywhere I looked. The articles brought thousands of views to the video, and my first and last name were attached to it all. At the time, I didn't quite realize what I had done. I think I'm still just learning.

After sharing the video, I started being asked to speak at multiple events, rallies, and protests. I always said yes. I was approached about a job at the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association, and I applied. I worked there for two summers, helping out with the Waves of Change program, and I did love the work. But it was also so exhausting, and so difficult. In my second year, I was encouraged by my peers to run for Vice President of the Students' Union, a position which sat on committees like the Sexual Violence Prevention committee, and the Sexual Violence Policy committee. So I ran, and I got the position. In my third year, that meant putting soccer, a sport I love, second. Often, it also meant putting my studies second. Both my professors and my coach encouraged me to refocus, but being elected by the student body meant I had a duty to represent them. My grades dropped, and eventually, I couldn't continue with soccer anymore.

Most days, I was just beyond overwhelmed and feeling so burnt out. But there were things reminding me that the work I was doing *was* making a difference, that it was *important*. One of these things, and perhaps the thing I'm most proud of, is the StFX Peer Support Program that a friend and I co-founded. Getting the program up and running and turning it into a physical space took years and so many meetings, so many obstacles, so many roadblocks, but now if you head up to the fourth floor of the Bloomfield building on campus, you'll find a welcoming room run by dozens of volunteers who are dedicated to finding help and providing support for students. A program that has continued to and will continue to operate even after my friend and I have graduated. A program that I know I needed during that very first semester.

When I graduated this past spring, it was with bittersweet feelings. In a way, I had done it. I had survived. I had made it to the end. But I had *barely* made it. Throughout March and April, it felt like I was just scraping pieces of myself towards the finish line. Nothing felt right. I was being contacted about awards I won for my 'service to the community,' but I felt like a fraud. I won the Larkin Award

for students with strong academic and athletic careers, but all I could think about was how I *wasn't* an athlete anymore and hadn't been for over a year. At graduation, I won the StFX AUT Book Prize for my commitment to justice and my "**high academic standing**," but I had also just failed my honours thesis and barely graduated because of it.

I don't like to focus on regrets, because I know that the past is in the past.

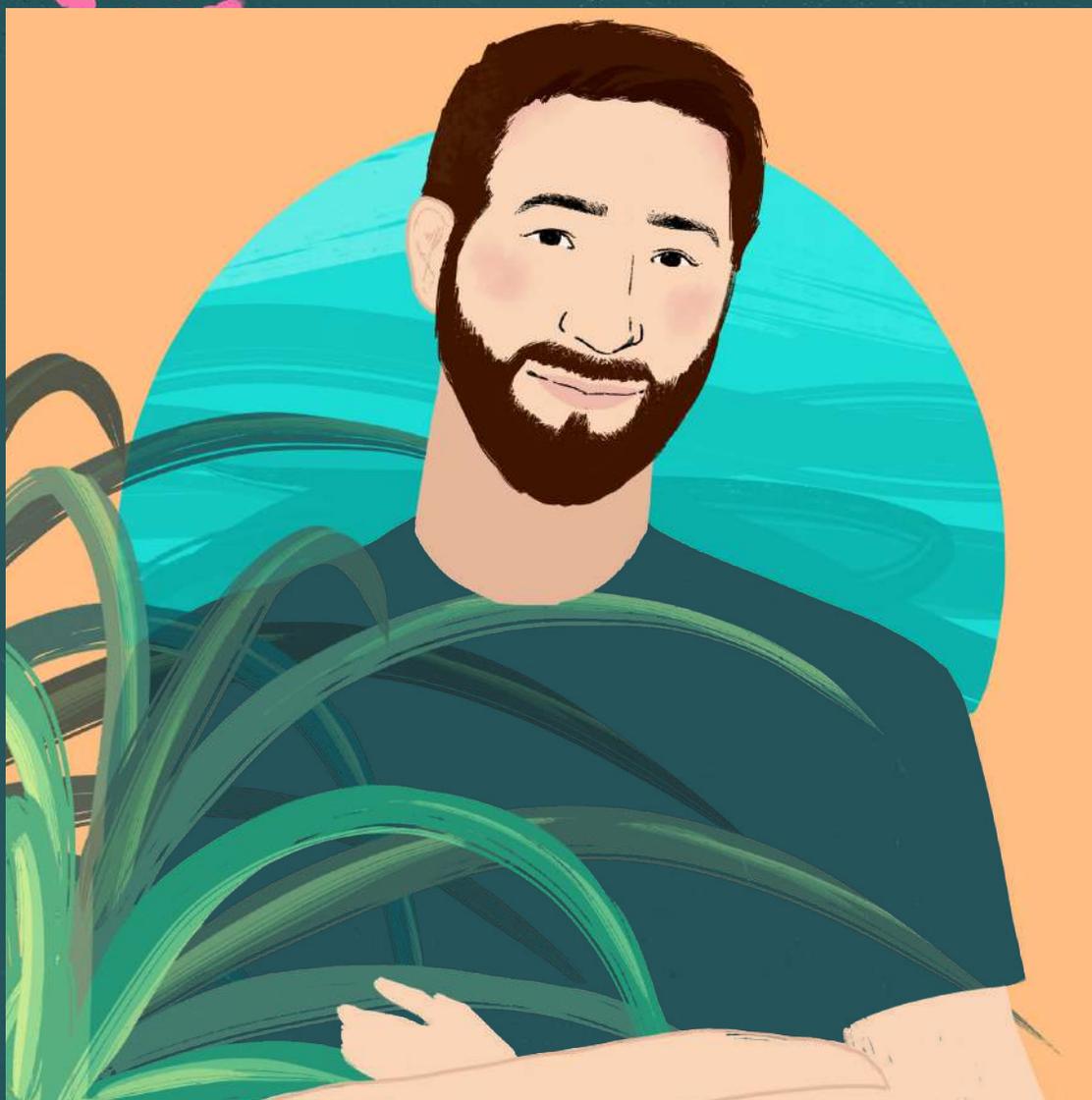
I know that I was doing the best I could in the situations I was in.

But if I could go back, I think I might try and put myself first more often.

To know when I was stretched too thin. To realize when I was doing what I thought I should be doing instead of what I wanted to be doing. To understand my own limits. To give myself a break. *To say no.*



Since I shared that poem in my first year, I've been asked to tell my story dozens of times, and there are so many times when I wish I could have worded it differently, or been more private, or not shared certain details, or maybe just not attached my name so that I wouldn't feel so pressured to continue doing work that was so painful for me. Ultimately, I have learned to say no. To put myself first and to reinvent my life and career path in a way that allows me to do what I want and need, even when it's not necessarily what's expected, and I think that's the message that I want to share—that engaging in this type of work is so incredibly brave, but sometimes, so is knowing when it's time to step away.



Francis Prévost

UNIVERSITY OF MONTREAL

F

Francis Prévost

I grew up in quite a diverse neighbourhood in the northwest part of Montreal and learned English by travelling across Canada. When I was younger, I wanted to become a journalist — I was always a dreamer in school, always talking to a lot of other people. But then, in CEGEP (Quebec's public junior college system), I took a politics class and I was so interested in how politics is not just in parliament or the national assembly — it's all around us and really impacts people's lives. That interest in politics is what got me through school and led me to pursue a Bachelor's in Political Science at Université de Montréal. I haven't stopped since.

Once I got to university, I dove right into campus level activism during orientation week. I saw someone from the students' association out there connecting with students and it piqued my interest. I learned that this was an elected position in which the representative connects with all the other student associations and represents their political positions. I thought this role could marry my interest in politics, my

desire to make progress on issues and directly impact the lives of my peers. So I ran on a platform informed by what students told me they needed and were looking for and three weeks later, I was elected vice-president external for the students' association. It was an exciting role, something totally different from what I was learning in my classes.

Sexual violence advocacy first came on my radar while I was in student government during the first year of my Masters' when a fellow student told me there had been a complaint of sexual violence made in the political science department. The woman who made the complaint had just been referred to an outside resource, which wasn't a good enough response. I went to the department head and asked, **"Is there a procedure inside the department to treat a complaint like this with more respect to the victim?"**

The only answer I got was a resounding **"No."** They also said they didn't have time to handle complaints like this. So we made a coalition with other programs in the same department



and lobbied them until they created a committee made up of students, teachers and support staff to address the problem and put a procedure in place. This procedure would keep complaints confidential and anonymous if the student chose and would be trauma-informed, rather than making them repeat their story many times.

There was some resistance to this at first — administrators didn't really understand why it was necessary. They thought since there was a procedure at the university level it wasn't necessary to have one in the department specifically. But that didn't consider how most students would likely come forward to their department than the broader school. What was going to be there for them? We wanted to create a first step to getting help in a more familiar setting for students, which would make the whole process easier.

The new process requires transparency, that they keep the victim informed. They also give them agency along the way,

“Here are your options; you can stop whenever you want if you feel uncomfortable etc.”

That process is still in place today at department levels in the university.

I continued with the campus-wide student association to work with many other student groups on issues of sexual violence, particularly on a provincial bill that made it mandatory for universities to train every student, teacher and staff member on sexual violence. It had accountability measures too: If you don't do the training, you couldn't get your final grades. Each university had different ways of enforcing it. My job, as VP external for the students' association was to spot what was missing from the bill and find ways to address that stuff, whether it was within the training or on how to enforce it or encourage people to do it as well as the actual content of the training, how that might be improved. It was a huge win to have that bill passed in 2018, although there were still some things missing. Now every student that goes to a CEGEP or university in Quebec has to do that training at some point.





Lately, I've been working on broader issues of accessibility — unpaid internships, to actually get changes made legislatively so interns would be recognized as workers and get paid. I've also done a lot of work on affordable housing because we've realized

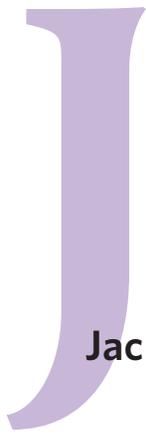
the main expenses for any student are rent, food, electricity. Some are even quitting school because of these expenses. I became socio-political affairs coordinator for our provincial students' association doing this advocacy for schools across Quebec.

I do see politics and activism as different things, but they're two paths that intertwine. You can do politics without being an activist — making change and impacting people's lives. But I think you're better off if you're both. You have that passion to make life better for people. Yes, this work requires long hours and you're not going to get many thanks from people. But when you do hear that the legislation you helped modify helped someone stay in college, helped them pay rent, that's the best feeling ever.



Jackie Toner

UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK



Jackie Toner

I was born and raised in Saint John, New Brunswick which is a mill town and not very progressive. When I moved to Fredericton, NB, for university, I started to be around people who have different experiences and who come from completely different walks of life. I found other queer people I could identify with and from that point on, I was definitely bit by the advocacy bug.

It was clear to me during my orientation week that there were a lot of old traditions at UNB — one of the oldest English-speaking post-secondary institutions in Canada — that were pretty sexist and homophobic. I remember being really amped for one they called Sex and Ice Cream (mostly because I love ice cream). But when it was time to participate, the group was divided by **“sex”** and all the guys went upstairs and all the girls stayed downstairs. Then they asked the opposite sex questions about sex, then traded and answered them all together as a group. I thought **“Am I supposed to be upstairs with the guys because I want to ask questions to the women in the room?”** It was so weird and

uncomfortable. Not to mention, it ran late so we didn’t even have time for ice cream.

When I became a residence advisor (RA) in my second year, I knew there were a lot of things I wanted to change, including this tradition. Not only was it uncomfortable for queer students, but what about those who are more introverted? Those who identified as Trans*? Those with varying sexual experience? I went to the residence coordinators and said, **“Can we change this?”** That same year, we ran a pilot project with a few residences where instead of raising your hand, you could text your answer through an anonymous platform. We also mixed the groups by floor, not by one’s **“biological sex.”** We also included questions that were coming from different sexual and gender orientations. While it didn’t run as smoothly as I’d hoped, it was a good start.

After that second orientation week, I started to advocate for gender-neutral washrooms across the residences at UNB. We had some pushback, particularly in the co-ed

houses, and had to navigate rape myths and a few concerns people had. We did lots of training with RAs for how to educate students and their parents on this change, but by the time I had finished as an RA, I think every single residences' washrooms were gender-neutral.

By the end of my second year, I ran for the role of LGBTQ counsellor for our student council. I thought **"OK, if I'm fighting for gender-neutral washrooms in residence, I need to be doing the same thing across all of campus."** Joining the student council turned out to be the best way to do this because of the increased resources and access to administration. It helped to not just be some random student.

The next year, I was in a situation in which I was expected to work with an RA who had sexually assaulted me at the end of my second year of university. While that experience was not easy, it steered me toward a new focus of advocacy: Helping to eradicate sexual violence on campus.

The summer going into my fourth and last year of my undergrad, I was invited to join the sexual violence prevention task-force committee. The committee introduced me to Maggie Forsythe, the Campus Sexual Assault

Support Advocate. While talking one day after a meeting, Sex and Ice Cream came up. I was like, **"Yeah, I really hate that tradition."** But she saw the opportunity for a lot of education on safe sex practices and consent. So, with Maggie, we completely reinvented the wheel beyond the pilot — we held events with 200-250 students and had them answer their own questions anonymously through a polling website, so they got responses in real-time. We also had a panel of experts — someone from the queer community, a nurse practitioner and Maggie for the sexual violence piece. And we had the lead RAs share their perspectives by answering some of the questions students had. We created different booklets and instruction manuals connected to the event, and now all of the residences run the tradition in this new way, redesigned to be more educational and inclusive.

Because that project went so well, Maggie said, **"Do you want to work for me?"** So I became a sexual violence prevention strategist with what is now called Sexual Violence New Brunswick.

We worked on campaigns, including one called “**What Were You Wearing?**” which featured mannequins wearing items of clothing survivors were wearing at the time of their assaults.

“We really wanted to show how sexual violence can happen to you when you’re wearing PJs or a parka — it doesn’t happen because of how you dressed.”

We created anti-slut-shaming campaigns and ones about redefining rape culture. We reinvented our bystander training to make it less fear-based and more relevant to students in our province. I also volunteered as a crisis support worker on the New Brunswick crisis line for

sexual violence and gender-based violence. At the time, I was still working with the student council on creating a gender-neutral policy for the university and co-founded the Gender & Sexuality Centre at UNB. I’ve lost track of the number of presentations I’ve done for orientation leaders and different equity groups on campus on queer and sexual-violence based issues.

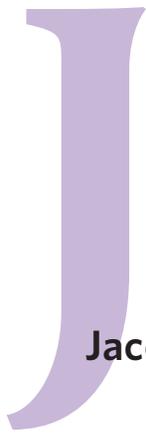
Doing all of this work definitely gives you a tough skin. I’m not scared of presenting anymore. It’s given me a new drive to help give other folks the same power to use their voice. Over my journey so far, my advocacy has transitioned from queer rights to sexual violence advocacy to the area of research that I’m in right now, which is kinesiology and ergonomics. It’s about creating safe tools and environments for workers, so I’m advocating on their behalf.

After my undergrad, I took a step back to allow for a “**PASSING OF THE TORCH**” on campus. Like so many advocates and people in this work, we end up running on fumes and not taking a second for ourselves. It’s important to enjoy ourselves but also be prepared to let others continue where we leave off, to allow for the work to grow.



Jacob DesRochers

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY



Jacob DesRochers

I grew up in a Christian family outside of Kingston, Ont. and attended church as a kid. Then in high school, I went to a Baptist church where my friends attended youth group. In a certain way, it informed my interest in the sociology of religion — I've always been a critical thinker, wanting to know why people believe what they believe.

I did a double major in English and religion at Carleton University, where I did my fourth-year honours thesis on biblical concepts of sexuality. A lot of my questions came down to the ways in which religion engages with sexuality. After my BA, I moved to Kingston to do a one-year masters' in religious studies. I had initially planned to pursue a PhD in the same field, but as I neared the end of my MA in religious studies, I decided I wanted to pursue a second graduate degree in education. I wanted to engage in research that reflected lived experience. I decided to apply to the Faculty of Education days before the application was due. That year, I became the first grad student of Dr. Lee Airton, a

Canadian leader in the field of gender and sexuality studies in K-12 and teacher education. My life completely changed focus. It's been one of the most rewarding experiences I've ever had.

The social justice work I've been doing came from connections I formed in the Faculty of Education, which helped me become a person who could use the platform I've been given as a white cisgender male to facilitate conversations. But it's also been based on my own sexual trauma.

I had experienced trauma as an adolescent, which is something I never engaged with until adulthood. But I knew it was something that impacted my relationships and mental health. Then I had two encounters during my graduate studies at Queen's: The first involved a mentor who used his position of influence in a toxic way. I remember hearing people talk about him and wondering why no one ever challenged his behaviour. Then I was put in a position where I felt quite vulnerable and didn't know who to turn to. I felt challenged

by the culture at the university, particularly one that perpetuated a certain kind of masculinity and silence around these issues. Later that school year, I experienced an act of violence while I was in a campus bathroom. I was in the middle of finishing my MA in religion at the time and was at a complete loss of what to do. I felt shut in with my emotions and anxiety around producing work and talking about what I was exploring in my research. I didn't want to go to campus. I began avoiding my supervisor. As time raced closer to my thesis deadline, I had to have a really frank conversation with my thesis supervisor about whether I could finish. I thought the lack of awareness on both of our parts on how to proceed when somebody has made a disclosure was troubling.

I reached a point where I felt alone. Oftentimes it's female-identified folks sharing their stories, and that's what the stats focus on. While it is valid and important to have this data, I didn't see myself reflected there. I found the sexual violence nurse was unable to support me — she had shared that she typically supported children and female-identified survivors. The healthcare officials I interacted with appeared put off by the fact that a male was sitting

in front of them saying, **"this just happened."**

In an attempt to regain control, I raced to finish my MA thesis. The circumstances in which I was writing were wildly unhealthy, but I refused to let the events that happened shape my academic outcomes. All the while, I was thinking **"Do I want to be in higher ed anymore?"** I found confidence in knowing I was entering a new field.

I leaned into social justice work and got passionate about gender-inclusive washrooms partly because I no longer felt safe using the men's washroom. It felt like a really urgent need to do something, and so I channelled a lot of my energies towards action. That got me connected with the human rights office which eventually led me to Barb Lotan, the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Coordinator. We got talking about a resource guide that Barb was developing — a student disclosure guide. I said, **"I want on the project. I want to be able to help you in any way I can."** I worked with her quite closely on developing that, and we ended up with what we call the purple folder, a guide to help folks navigate that process if a student had disclosed to you that either they themselves or someone they know had experienced sexual violence or were survivors

of sexual violence. Barb taught me a lot in that period about what it meant to be a survivor, what survivorship looked like, how to navigate trauma, and what the relationship between a survivor and somebody who was supporting them should look like. The purple folder was the first of its kind at our university and was circulated across campus. We printed over 3000 copies. While the document provides guidelines for how to support a survivor, it also requires the faculty member or administrator or teaching assistant to want to take up action and be a positive agent of change for a student who felt safe enough to disclose to them. It gave me, perhaps selfishly, a sense of comfort knowing that this resource now exists.

From there, I began facilitating bystander prevention training, which was student-run on a peer mentorship model where students in the university would all be trained and go facilitate workshops to incoming students. We ran these sessions during frosh for the residence advisors who'd be working with the first years who are quite vulnerable. I disclosed publicly for the first time at one of those sessions. I remember standing in front of a group that was just teeming with toxic masculinity — you could really

feel it in the room. I could see some students weren't engaged. And then I shared my experience.

I remember saying,

“You might not perceive this as something that’s important, or as something that can happen to you, but it can and it does.”

I could sense a shuffle in the room, but nothing more. I think they became attentive to somebody standing in front of them being vulnerable. I disclosed to them because I had never seen other men in a similar position talking about this happening to them. I've come to see my own experience with survivorship as something that can be educative.

When COVID moved the university completely online, it felt weird to not be standing in front of hundreds of new students and RAs doing sexual violence training. As I reflected on these feelings, I tweeted about my relationship to survivorship. The tweet got quite a bit of response

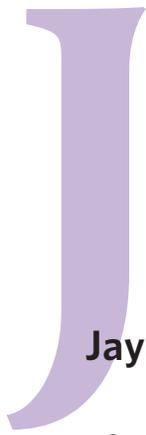
— folks sent affirming messages, including private disclosures from colleagues and friends. It affirmed the work that I wanted to be doing, and solidified what it meant to be somebody who does social justice work, somebody who's a survivor but also a scholar, a child, a partner, a spouse, a person in this space.

I find that men often really struggle with taking ownership to challenge harassment or gender-based violence when they see it in their peer groups, or to talk about it themselves when they've experienced trauma and to know they're not alone if they've experienced trauma themselves. They need to know that supports exist. There's definitely a need for more work in that area — more men not only doing this work, but also feeling supported within the communities that are doing this work.



Jaye Garcia

MACEWAN UNIVERSITY



Jaye Garcia

After coming to Canada as refugees from El Salvador, my grandparents mostly raised me in what I call the inner-city of Edmonton. I remember being pretty angry during my years in Catholic high school, which was populated by a lot of immigrant kids like me. I wasn't exactly "woke" at the time, but a lot of the roots of empathy and compassion for people and for community care were planted for me back then. I found some community in youth choir at church and in underground queer relationships, but I struggled to be authentically real with my family. I came out when I was 18, in the spring of my graduating year.

I would never do extra-curriculars in high school but when I got to MacEwan, I was like, "Ok, I've got to join the gay club. I need to find other people like me." University became my outlet of growth and self-acceptance. In my second year, I became one of the executives of our club and we started running the show. At the time, there was this call to action from a group that wanted to target hate through community care on campus, so our group took part

in what ended up being a pretty intersectional exercise. Then we did a #breakingstereotypes campaign that I was part of and it kind of exploded. My activism snowballed. By third year, I was volunteering for everything, working part-time for the student association and getting kind of burned out. This was the first year of the #noplacehere campaign to end sexual violence on the MacEwan campus, and so began my commitment to tackling gender-based violence.

The fall of 2015-2016 was really my gender-based violence activist awakening. In my courses, I was writing papers on it all the time. I started to feel that activist rage. I was upset that the university wasn't responding well enough to this issue. I then also started my therapy journey, which helped me acknowledge that I was a victim of violence within my own immediate family and experienced other related traumas in my life. More recently, I started working on coming to terms with the fact that I am a child resulting from a sexual assault — an incredibly unique and isolating experience I could

only imagine how devastating that must have been for my mother at the time, especially to occur within the same year after she and my grandparents immigrated to Canada — yet is still a very large source of internalized shame and self-erasure compacted by my own victimizations of rape in both February and September of 2018.

In my final year of school, I formally entered student politics as the vice president of student life. In that role, I advocated for — and secured — sustained funding for the Sexual Violence Prevention and Education Coordinator role at the university. I also pushed for the creation of a Human Rights Office, to be led by a person of colour — that happened while I was there. I made sure the Students' Association of MacEwan University (SAMU) became more accountable to survivors by creating more transparent support for them, and ensured there was consistent advocacy carried out in solidarity. I was insistent that students have more of a say in gender-based violence policies and procedures, and that they had some agency in senior-level administration's attempts to own gender-based violence as a campus issue.

It was nice to trail-blaze, but it was also isolating and lonely. I was

tokenized for basically everything, expected to explain why the livelihoods of marginalized students mattered when that shouldn't even be a debate. There were times when I felt my voice, aka **"the students' voice,"** wasn't even being heard. And there were issues I wanted to fight for, like improving campus' response to the calls to action of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report and on queer issues, that I did not get traction on.

It was like,

“Where are the other voices?”

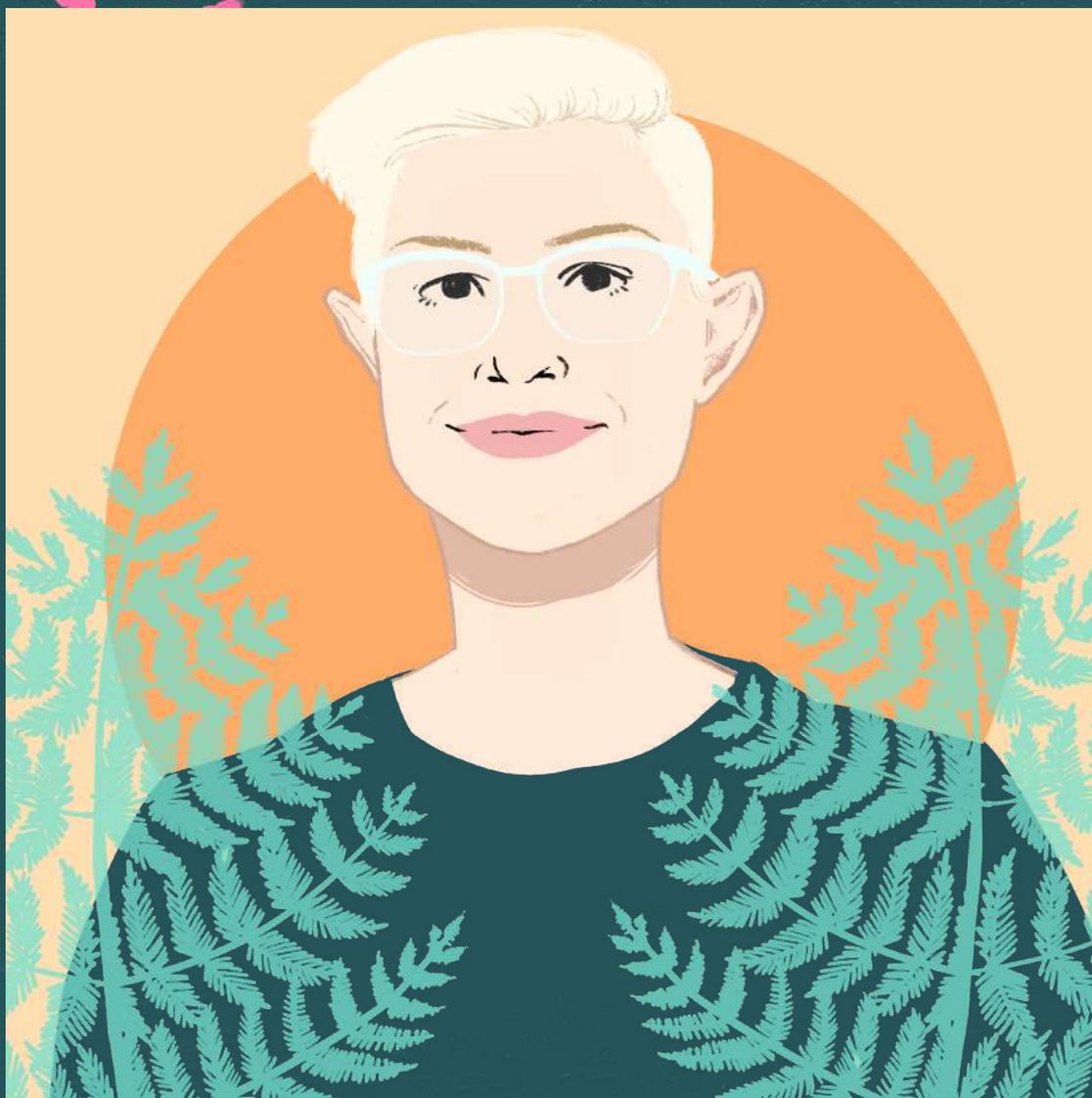
Why aren't they here?”

How can we get them in here and how can we make sure that they're not exploited?”

You need sustainable, structural student voices to be in the room advocating with you.

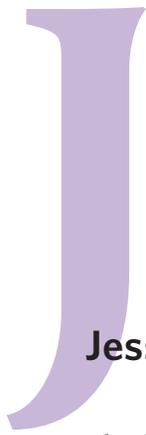


And we all need to pass the microphone along. Pass the fucking microphone. We get so isolated in the work and in the harm that we lose sight of our own wellbeing and care as well as how to make it sustainable both for the purpose of being able to continue the work by passing the mic. Passing it gave me so much community. I feel like I grew the most in student politics, and outside of it, when I felt seen, heart and supported, when folks invested in me. I know we can do that for each other.



Jessica Wright

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



Jessica Wright

I had feminist consciousness from a young age. I remember being 15 and hanging out with my first boyfriend in the basement watching *"The Man Show"* on TV. The opening scene was women in bikinis jumping up and down on trampolines. And I just remember crying. There was just something so innately upsetting about the power differential I was seeing. I realized that in a culture that sees women as objects, having a healthy equal dynamic with a male partner just doesn't seem possible.

I went to a Catholic high school in Aurora, a community just north of Toronto, where we didn't get much sex education at all, which I consider essential to preventing gender-based violence. The gap in sex education made it more difficult to challenge violence that was happening as part of a sexist, homophobic status quo. In Grade 9, I heard that another girl in my year had been raped. I'd hear about teachers being inappropriate with students, but there was no formal discussion of gender-based violence as part of young people's lives. I knew I was queer from a young age, but there

was no visibility of queerness at all at my high school. I gathered very early on in life that there was this normal person in society that we should all strive to be. People who weren't considered normal were being *"othered,"* as I understand it now. They were to be discriminated against. That was reinforced as I was growing up.

Luckily, I found Women & Gender Studies and Political Science when I was in my undergrad at York University. I was drawn to feminist organizing in general — I worked with my department's student association and formed a bi-weekly discussion forum where we talked about stuff like feminist porn, toxic masculinity and consent. Then I noticed a lot of notices going out to students about sexual assaults happening on and around campus. So often they would make reference to the nearby Jane and Finch community, which is predominantly radicalized and impoverished — they seemed to suggest that gender-based violence on campus was an individual issue of someone acting violent rather than the product of a culture of misogyny and racism and ableism.

I thought,

“Why is it so easy for the university to try to absolve themselves from responsibility by placing it on marginalized people?”

So with the feminist student organization on campus, we released poster campaigns and set up small art installations around campus to create consciousness about gender-based violence as a systemic issue, one that requires a more inter-sectional framework to address. I also worked with the Canadian Federation of Students to organize a rally, silent march, and vigil to raise awareness about sexual violence.

I became fascinated by the topic of sexual agency — namely, what are the possibilities for people who have been historically marginalized to have more agency in our culture? I pursued this question in my PhD at the University of Toronto. When I arrived on campus, I started hearing from and about students who had a bad experience with a

teaching assistant or a prof or an employee and, of course, stories of peers hurting peers. I was also hearing about survivors being re-traumatized when they sought support. I wanted to do something about it. So I tried to look for some activist groups on campus that I could maybe contribute to and I found Silence Is Violence.

I went to their next meeting, held at the Centre for Women and Trans People on campus, and I was so moved by how passionate this group was about demanding justice. So, I thought, **“What can I offer this group and how can I make the most significant impact I can?”** We wanted to get the attention of administration in a meaningful way. I thought, **“Maybe they couldn’t ignore a report with data?”**

So I convened a research team and together, over the course of three years, we produced a 60-page report on the experiences and understanding of gender-based violence on UofT’s three campuses. We found that sexual violence is an epidemic — it’s happening a lot, at the hands of professors, deans, students, teaching assistants all across campus. We also noted the university’s vested interest in playing down the prevalence of sexual violence.

We strategically released the report to the news media and raised awareness through social media, student clubs, community groups and student unions asking them to disseminate the report. We didn't go to the university first because they have data and they haven't acted meaningfully on it. We needed to rally cultural pressure.

And it worked: The news coverage and discussion on campus required the university to read and consider our recommendations. We heard from a lot of students who thanked us for releasing the report — they told us it helped

them process their experiences of assault or harassment on campus. A criminology and sociology course actually assigned the report as reading for their class.

I can't point to a policy shift that was made as a specific result of this report, but it shifted the culture. It exists as an important piece of history, a document that will give survivors a sense of legitimacy in their feelings about how much or how little the university is supporting them, or in their feelings about needing to take recourse and organize to make change.

One of the biggest challenges of doing this advocacy is the emotional work of it. You need to find people who are like-minded that you can organize with because there's power in numbers. And there is vicarious trauma that came from reading hundreds of stories of assault and harassment from the report.

There's a real need to take care of yourself when you're doing this kind of work, to remember why you're doing it and stay focused on the end goal. In the end, this report only happened because of the passion and dedication of the people involved.



Kainat Javed

MOUNT ROYAL UNIVERSITY, CALGARY

K

Kainat Javed

I grew up really wanting to help other people. I just had a passion for it. I'm first-generation Pakistani and was raised in the Northeast of Calgary, which has a lot of multiculturalism. My family was not, I guess, the "perfect" immigrant family — there was violence, though we never really talked about it. I think that's where my compassion comes from: I know that being in a violent, toxic household has a big impact on children, and I saw the impact it had on my mom. I remember having conversations with a friend of mine in Grade 5 or 6 about this. She wanted to be a lawyer and help women experiencing domestic violence. I also wanted to become a lawyer and help people.

We bonded over those experiences in our homes and said,

“One day, we're going to help people because we don't want anyone else to go through what we did.”

I started volunteering when I got to university working as a peer educator in a mental health program. That became a passion of mine. I volunteered as well for the student's association and ran unopposed to become Vice President of Student Affairs. My platform was focused on mental health, and I remember my predecessor telling me, **“You know you need to talk about dating and sexual violence — this is a part of your job.”**

I read like 60 articles, our previous sexual violence policy. I thought, **“There's something missing here”** in the steps our university is taking towards prevention, education and intervention on dating, domestic and sexual violence.

Around the same time, I happened to be sitting on the bus with a girl from one of my classes in my previous semester. Without knowing I was student VP, she told me she was assaulted by someone in her residence and the university dealt with it horribly. I said, **“I can actually help you.”** I started hearing more from survivors who had experienced hardships and had been wronged by the university's policies and

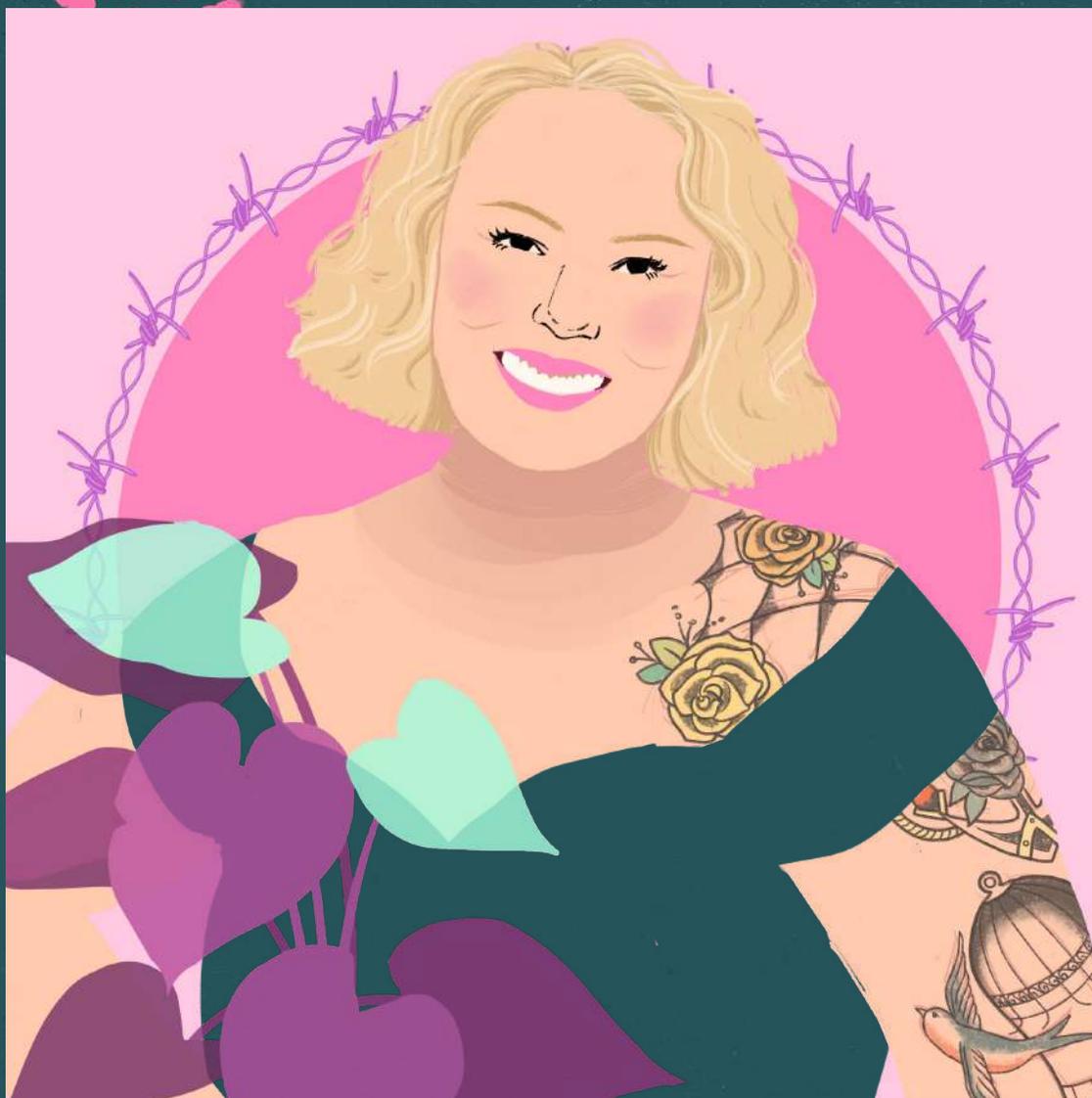
procedures around sexual violence. I felt that no one should have to experience this, especially on campus. I knew I was in a position where I could utilize my connections and resources to make change.

I realized mental health and gender-based violence are linked: You can't study or do anything, really, if an abusive person is controlling every aspect of your life. That's when I presented a case to the university about starting an interim housing program at their residence to help survivors of gender-based violence on campus who were also experiencing homelessness. I did tons of research and found 15 to 24-year-olds experience the highest rates of dating violence and that more than 70,000 post-secondary students experience homelessness in some capacity. When I presented to them, they were like, "**Oh this is awesome.**" It

was supposed to open in fall 2020, but COVID moved it to winter 2021. I also worked on calls to action with multiple stakeholders across campus where we made recommendations for how the university can do a better job of intervening and preventing sexual violence as well as educating students. We prepared a report that will be released by my successor as VP Student Life.

I did experience a bit of pushback and reluctance in trying to make change on campus. When you're working with upper administration, there are a lot of hoops to jump through before you finally get someone to take you seriously. My university figured, "**We have a policy, why do we need to do education and intervention?**" But we need to keep moving it forward. Students are going to have different perspectives. Because I had a lot of support on campus, I was able to achieve my goals.

I learned to not be afraid of being persistent. Even if you have to be a bit annoying, it works. If you want to make an impact, you also really have to think outside the box and do your research. You have to continuously make sure you have that ambition. This work involves a lot of emotional labour — it's not just reading statistics and reports; it's survivors disclosing to you. I try to practice self-care by doing something as small as taking a bath or watching my favourite movie. But even just trying to meet my goals and expectations for the rest of the year helps me take care of myself and hold myself accountable. My passion keeps me going. I have one life — why not help people while I can?



Mandi Gray

YORK UNIVERSITY

M

Mandi Gray

When I was growing up in Winnipeg, I really liked writing stories. I would do all kinds of character development, make people up. By 11, I was documenting everything probably due to a lack of people to actually talk to. Even then, I was writing about how homophobic the sex-ed curriculum was — that was me, a kid in conservative Manitoba. I was listening to punk music on the Internet at the time, especially Riot Grrl bands. By the time I was 13 or 14, like most kids my age I was out there partying. In high school, I gravitated to the bad kids who were always getting in trouble.

My activism really started as an undergrad criminology student when I called up the Elizabeth Fry Society of Manitoba one day to see if they needed volunteers. To my surprise, they said, **"Come on down."** They asked me to set up and run a literacy program for imprisoned women — women who were on remand, so who had been charged but not actually found guilty of any crimes. That's where I learned a lot of my skills as an advocate. During the writing exercises with them, I learned a lot about these

women's lives: The majority of them had experienced various forms of violence, including a lot of sexual abuse. And they were in jail because they'd shoplifted from the Safeway. I think my whiteness was the only thing that separated me from them.

I decided **"I'm going to change this, I'm going to go to grad school."** I did my honours thesis at York University on risk assessment tools used in women's prisons. I needed to understand why pregnant women were having their babies in shackles. My advocacy then was mostly connected to prison abolition. I did a little bit of event planning for my department. I thought it would be a good way to meet some people and give me something to do.

Once I realized I was incapable of changing the carceral system, I focused on getting my PhD. I liked writing. I liked researching. My intention was to continue studying the impacts of imprisonment on women. But then the course of my life changed in the first year, in January 2015, when I was sexually assaulted. I reported it to the

university almost immediately. At the time, Mattress Girl was in the news and so were the Dalhousie dental school scandals and the rape chants at the University of British Columbia. I went in with this naive assumption the university would care.

I ended up retaining a civil lawyer and on June 30th, 2015 we filed a human rights complaint against the university on the grounds of systemic gender discrimination. I knew taking legal action wasn't necessarily going to fix anything, but it kept them in the media. And it led a bunch of other survivors to file similar suits against their post-secondary institutions. We settled the claim on November 9th, 2016 — the day we learned Donald Trump had won the United States election. The settlement is private, but one thing I can say is that York agreed to partner with the Barbra Schlifer Clinic, which helps women who've experienced abuse, to provide counselling services to students who've experienced sexual violence — it took me four months to get counselling after my assault. When they didn't live up to that agreement, I filed a breach of contract — they claim there was no breach because they didn't have staff to facilitate the counseling.

A lot of folks who experience sexual violence and talk about

to share my dilemma: We try the official channels and are repeatedly turned down. Then we go to social media as a last resort, and we're told we're doing it wrong. We're being victims the wrong way. We're being too disruptive. It highlighted just how little the public understands the system and what it's like to go through all of this. So in late 2015, I started working with a filmmaker on a documentary following my experience through the court system. As much as it was my story, we also wanted it to be instructional, so it could be used as an educational tool to expose the contradictions and gaps in the legal system.

Now I'm writing two books about my experiences — the first is more academic, and about the prevalence of defamation lawsuits filed against survivors who speak out. I've also started a legal defence fund for women who are being sued by their professors. The second book is a memoir I call "**Liar.**" I feel like that word sums up how people who experience sexual violence are treated.

When people hear my story, they're like,

“Wow, you're so brave.” And I say, “No, it's because I had a lifetime of experiences that pushed me to act.”

Since I reported my assault, the landscape of campus sexual assault has changed drastically. There are a lot more policies, though many still need to be properly put into practice. I did have a male student reach out recently who

said he disclosed to the university, shared some of the documents I had written, and they changed their policy as a result. He came away from that experience feeling validated. That administrators were actually willing to take feedback and make changes is unheard of to me. But it makes me hopeful.

Activism has given me a space of validation to find my voice, and my people. I don't think I would have survived what I went through without activism, and more specifically without feminism. I've had moments in therapy, like **“WHY ME?”** But the political framework gave me what I needed to understand sexual violence is not about me at all.



Nell Perry

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

N

Nell Perry

I have a photo of me from when I was three years old that ran on the front page of the Winnipeg Free Press. I'm standing in a crowd at an anti-war protest, sporting a bowl cut and a little white hat, holding a sign that says **"Stop fighting."** I can see some of my parents' friends in the background; my parents were always going to protests. As I got older, I stopped tagging along with them and started doing my own thing. In high school, I was part of putting together an annual Holiday event where elementary school students came to our school for breakfast and a morning hanging out with us older kids. That was my first experience with organizing, and I loved it — planning, recruiting, researching, trying to get donations. It definitely shaped me: I used to say, **"I want to do the holiday breakfast but in a real job."**

My path to activism — and gender-based violence work, in particular — really started when I began working at Ending Violence Across Manitoba, a provincial organization that fosters the coordination and collaboration of programs, organizations and

governments on the issue of domestic violence in Manitoba. It was my first real summer job, as a programs assistant, doing lots of summer student stuff, like researching and going to training sessions on responses to gender-based violence. It made me realize the pervasive nature of gender-based violence and gave me the motivation and skills to make change on my university campus. I returned the next summer and got to follow up on recommendations that came from an inquiry that came after a domestic homicide that happened in the 1990s — did anything change? How did it change? Now Manitoba has a domestic violence awareness month, but especially as a university student, it was a hard realization for me that people have been making these recommendations for decades and they haven't been followed up on.

That fall, I joined the university's policy committee to revise and create recommendations for Concordia's sexual violence and misconduct policy.

During the interview for that position I said,

“I don’t know a ton about post-secondary policy, but I know a lot about gender-based violence and what it means to be survivor-centered.”

We made lots of recommendations including one to create a stand-alone policy for sexual violence at our school — we did get an immunity clause added. That was huge. In the existing policy, students who come forward about sexual violence could still get in trouble if they were drinking on campus or consuming illegal drugs. So we wanted to make sure students coming forward couldn’t get in trouble — they shouldn’t need to fear reporting sexual violence because of that.

But it was disappointing to find a lot of our recommendations did not get passed. We wrote a letter of dissent to the Board of Governors and it just got pushed to the side and we had to fight to get it brought to the meeting. When it was finally

brought, we got an email saying that there was little discussion, thanks for sending it, talk to you next year. I think that’s a big challenge in doing this work on campus — students get pushed to the side a lot. It can be draining and frustrating to work through bureaucratic processes and systems when trying to make change that better prevents and responds to sexual violence.

I spent the summer working in Manitoba on the pilot project for REES, which stands for Respect, Educate, Empower Survivors. It’s an online reporting platform for sexual violence on post-secondary campuses. I’ve been connecting with lots of great students to create a Youth Advisory Board for REES which will continue to ensure the platform is grounded in student and youth experience. I’m also helping them do marketing and communications work. I know from my advocacy experience that so often university and college reporting options take choice and power away from survivors, so I’m happy that REES will soon give survivors more options, and be collecting valuable data too.

It's been really rewarding work — organizing, making an impact on a macro level, in a way that's influencing people's lives. I think I would tell that little girl version of myself to keep holding up that sign. I would even just tell the 17-year-old version of myself, too, that it's possible to create change. Sometimes it can be scary to put your hand up and sign up for that policy committee, but it's worth it, putting yourself out there to try and make a difference.



Radhika Gupta

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, SCARBOROUGH

R

Radhika Gupta

I was raised in California's Bay Area, in Silicon Valley. It's always talked about as a very liberal place, and I don't think that's untrue — but we don't always have those difficult conversations. My birthday was supposed to be 9/11, but I was born a week past my due date. People used to call me the N-word in school — a slur used against most of the racialized kids at our school, many of whom weren't even Black. I'm 100% ethnic Indian, but my mother grew up in Dubai. Every time we would speak about 9/11 on the anniversary in school, I would still have people just look at me or be, like, **"Oh, don't your grandparents live in Dubai?"**

I think 9/11 really sparked my activism — it was usually the source of racism against me and other brown kids. I remember one day in sixth-grade world religions class, my teacher was asking us to raise our hands if we were part of the faiths she mentioned. My classmate, who is Muslim, asked, **"What if you're not any of those?"** She realized her omission and added Islam to the list, but said, **"But we don't have any Muslims in our class."** My crush at the time

snickered and said, **"Thank god."** I remember feeling my blood boiling. I stood up and told him off. I was already so sick of the stereotype that all Muslim countries are backward, or that they are somehow less.

In eighth grade, I took a social justice and equity course that really opened my eyes to activism. I realized that social justice came down to whether or not you felt you had a voice. I wanted to create more space for people to discuss things. So I started my own magazine for the South Asian diaspora and ran it throughout high school. It started out casual, but I learned so much from it — I remember one Trinidadian girl applied to be part of our staff and said, **"I'm Indo-Caribbean; I think I can bring this perspective."**

I was, like, **"I don't know anything about what it means to be Indo-Caribbean."** It was a community. And one thing I really learned from the magazine is that one of the most powerful tools for activism is just listening.

In my senior year of high school, I saw the documentary *The Hunting*

Ground, which is about sexual assault at American universities. It was very eye-opening and kind of intimidating — I remember two of the survivors from the doc talking about the activism they did after what they went through with the schools. It alerted me to how much of a problem this might be on university campuses. When it was time for me to university, I came to Canada because it was cheaper than a lot of my local options. I got to Toronto August 27th 2016, moved into residence September 1st, was sexually assaulted on October 5th and then physically assaulted by the same person on October 28th. I did everything **“right”** — I didn’t drink, I wasn’t at a party, I was assaulted by someone who had come over to borrow my notes. I reported it to the residence, which just took my statement and that was it. After winter break, a girl I knew from school told me she had been raped. I was the first person she disclosed that to.

I felt like something needed to change, but I didn’t exactly know what. At the end of my first year, I ran for the Director for the Centre of Critical Development Studies, which is the student union for my program. I was really excited to join the board, thinking I was going to make so much change. And I did make some

— I advocated for the creation of directors for international students, and succeeded. But when I got into a lot of the meetings with administrators to discuss the sexual violence issues, they were like, **“We can’t really do much.”** I think they felt that I was being discriminatory against people that may have been accused of sexual violence, even though they do have a separate process. They can hire a private investigator to look at cases within the school itself, but they really don’t seem to like publicizing that.

That year, 2017, the school opened a Sexual Violence Prevention and Support Centre, but because I reported my assault the year before, they never followed up with me. I realized, in 2018, that I could request access to my report I made to the residence. I assumed this meant I had reported to the university because it happened on university grounds. I literally saw them get it out of the file cabinet, make the photocopy, put it in an envelope and be like, here you go.

And I thought,

“Oh my god, even after two years, nothing has happened with this complaint. They did nothing.”

That really made it sink in: Students did not know about the Sexual Violence centre or anything about how the process worked. I strongly suggested they get a social media presence, just so people would know they exist. Our dean was like, **“Let’s do a working group on this.”** But not much happened. I’ve had further discussions with them, but it’s been a struggle: When campus administrators and supports don’t highlight the existence of our Centre, it makes sense that students would also be unaware of it or uncomfortable going there.

I currently sit on the Board of Directors for the Womens & Trans Centre for my school and I’ve highlighted the need for us to better publicize our resources. We’ve started including links to some resources in our email signatures, but I know we can do more. I’ve learned that you do

need to have someone pushing a little, otherwise the school will be very willing to do the bare minimum and just leave it at that.

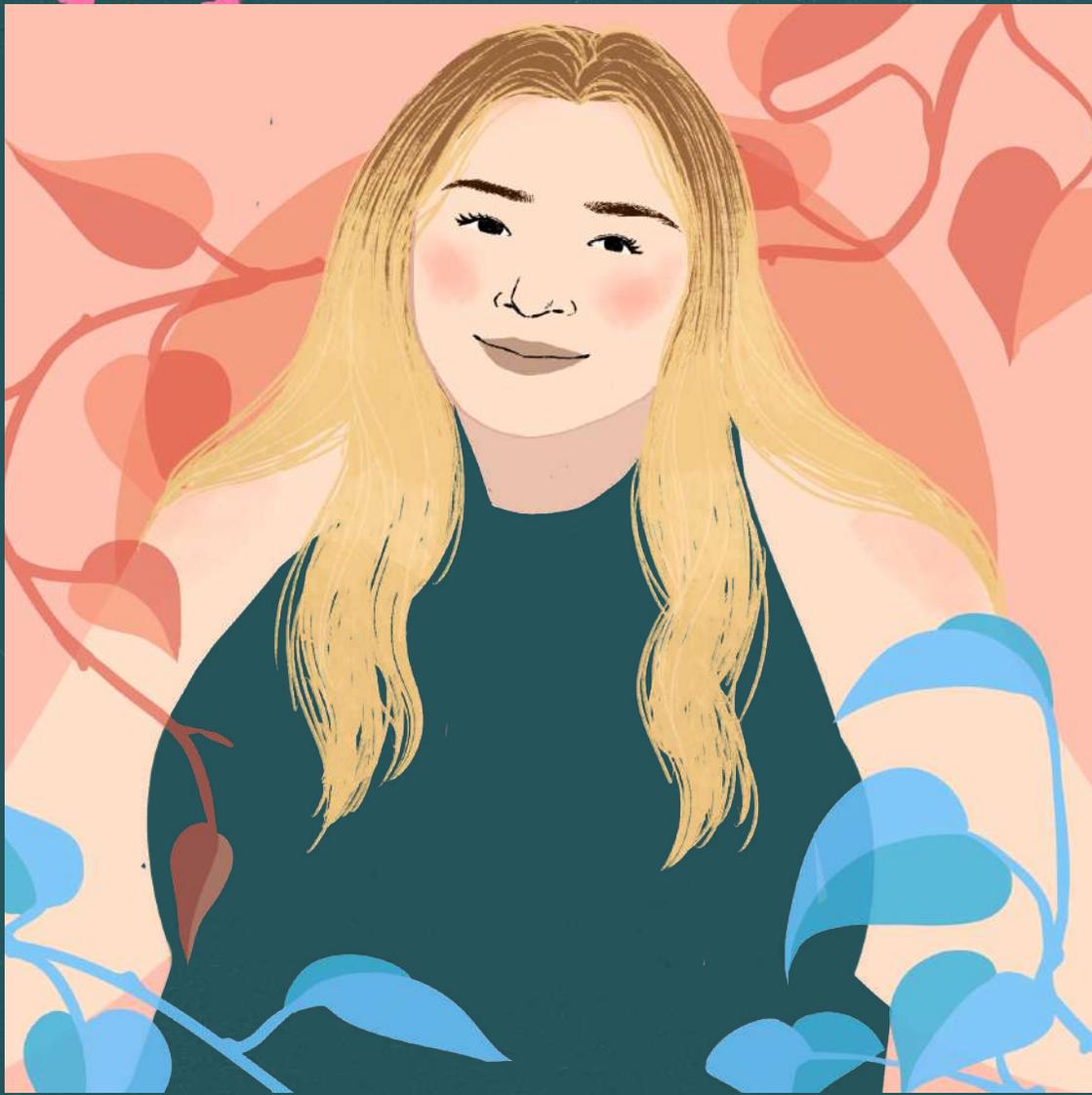
I ended up taking some time off school, and when I came back, I was summoned to be a witness in the pretrial hearing for the girl I knew who was raped. She ended up reporting it to the police. It was a draining process and it solidified in my mind that I never wanted to report with the legal system. But I did decide to formally report what happened to the university, which would lead to an investigation by way of the student code of conduct. After a lot of back and forth with the sexual violence centre, the investigation happened and last August, I was informed by the school that they believed me, that I was telling the truth.

I want the process to be streamlined for people in the future — there should not be so much confusion and back and forth. Unfortunately, sexual violence happens, and I think the best way to properly deal with it is to take away the shame, let people be able to come forward, make sure they know that there are places and people that they can go to, and make sure they feel comfortable accessing those resources and spaces. For me, especially, being an international

student, all alone here, it was very difficult figuring out what to do and who to talk to. The lack of social media and community around this made things a little harder. I'd like to petition the school to hire more coordinators and expand the reach of the centre, because right now, like, they're so understaffed, the centre is barely open.

A few years ago, I turned my attention to advocating for mental health over social media. Every week, I would post about mental health on Mondays, just to educate and help people feel less alone, using the hashtag #MHMWithRads.

A huge part of why I started my Mental Health Mondays was to help destigmatize these conversations for everyone but especially for folks of South Asian descent like myself as Mental Health often gets brushed off as unimportant or imagined in our communities. I feel fortunate that I have been able to be even a small part of that conversation and effort and it makes me want to do the same for other communities. I'm not an expert. This is just my attempt to hopefully destigmatize these conversations and bring them more to the forefront. It's what I'd like to eventually do with sexual violence too.



Taylor Glaspey

NEADS AND SURREY WOMEN'S CENTRE
KWANTLEN POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

T

Taylor Glaspey

I've always had a lot of empathy for other people. My mom raised me to be empathetic — I was always asking questions, like **“Why is that person sleeping under a tree? Let's give them food.”** When I was 10, my family moved from Calgary, Alberta, to Surrey, British Columbia. It was hard — I was bullied so I spent a lot of recesses indoors. I remember noticing some of the students with disabilities were also staying inside even though it was sunny. So you get to talking one day and then the next, you're throwing a soccer ball back and forth. By Grade 7, I started hanging out with other students with disabilities. I prided myself on being an extrovert and having loads of acquaintances.

In high school, I volunteered as a peer tutor for the Building Academic Social and Employment Skills program for special needs students. I loved it. The bullying didn't continue in high school — they just didn't think of me, and that was okay. So I stayed in at lunchtime there too, and got involved with the Rotary Club and WE/Free the Children. I loved the community — here I was

eating lunch with like 20 other people from all walks of life. I then became director of our Me to WE club and was director of the school store — I was ruling the school, but from the sidelines. I flourished.

When I was in Grade 11, my dad was coaching the community hockey team and I did the team photography and scouting package. One player **“expressed”** interest in me, sending me texts and photos. I totally developed a crush. But it was all a joke. He was sexually harassing me. I did not see it until the police got involved. It was horrible, but it sparked my advocacy work against fighting injustice, blending with my passion for helping people with disabilities. In January of my Grade 12 year, I got an ADHD diagnosis and realized that with my disability, I can pass as non-disabled. It kind of lit a fire inside, because I wanted to help those who don't pass. And also, what is this passing? What does it even mean? Why do we even have to pass? I started the Special Education Teachers Assistant program (SETA) at Kwantlen University, graduated and became the BC director

and treasurer for the National Education Association of Disabled Students (NEADS). It felt really complete. I felt more confident so I started dating and I was sexually assaulted. The whole Brock Turner case happened just before my assault. I thought that sexual assaults were freak attacks — like, you jump at a girl out of the bushes. So I was struggling to define what happened to me.

About six months after the assault, I went to Ottawa to represent NEADS at their Department of Women and Gender Equality stakeholders' meeting where we talked about supporting survivors through a survey tool. I learned, in that meeting, just how intersectional this work is and needs to be. I also was amazed to see how much support and community there was for survivors. I got a little emotional there and thought of my own experience with sexual violence. But I didn't fully realize I had been assaulted until I was working with NEADS on a consent campaign for the west coast chapter of the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund.

That's how I finally got help, from the Surrey Women's Centre. They helped me with my third party police report, and helped me get counselling services — it was so

humbling, to be able to give my problems to someone else and have them fix them for me.

In September 2019, I had to do a practicum placement for school, so I started volunteering for SMART — the Surrey Mobile Assault Response Team.

“SMART is an outreach and 24-hour mobile crisis response for survivors of a physical or sexual assault.”

I am now working for the SMART program and enjoying being able to provide assistance to survivors. I learned a lot doing this work and I recognize the importance of systems that respond to gender-based violence need to be trauma-informed to minimize re-traumatizing the survivor.

At my university, I think a lot about how student survivors should have a place to go — a centre devoted to this issue where people feel safe. My institution does not have a sexual assault

centre, and while we do have peer support through our student union, it isn't enough. Ideally, we should have a trauma-informed counsellor or someone with immediate support or referrals to the community who can also help students get a Crime Victims Assistance Package or even help with university accommodations.

As a person with a learning disability, I know that getting accommodations is extremely tough, and it's tough when you've been sexually assaulted too. A year after my assault, I wanted a compassionate withdrawal and had to fight for that alone. I never went to counselling at school, but there are challenges for obtaining that — waitlists, accessibility issues. I saw all these frustrations, especially working with NEADS. We deal a lot with inaccessibility and administrators not giving students correct accommodations or denying them their rights. This is really frustrating and I do not want other students to have such

barriers, especially when trying to access support after a traumatic event.

Students who go to our school don't even know we have a sexual violence policy, let alone have read it. I've read it, and it's not at all in plain language. It's not easy for people to understand. Why do we have to say "**refer to subsection C**" when you could just refer them to the part about education? It's not accessible for students like me with learning challenges, or anyone who's just been through something and is in shock. I'm reviewing and editing the student union's sexual assault policy to create one that's more inclusive. I am also talking with administration and the student union about creating a sexual assault centre on campus, because there isn't one.

Advocating as a person with a disability is very overwhelming and slow. I feel like it's an uphill battle and I'm going against it alone. There are so many issues with gender-based violence but my focus is on safety planning and accessibility — things the majority of advocates aren't really thinking about. It's hard to advocate for a marginalized group of disabilities. It doesn't get seen as beneficial for everyone, even though it very much is.



Tia Wong

STUDENTS FOR CONSENT CULTURE

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

CARLETON UNIVERSITY

T

Tia Wong

I grew up an only child but with some much older half-siblings who had already moved out when I was young. I was pretty much raised by the Internet. My first brush with activism came in Grade 7 when I found a TED Talk by then 15-year-old Tavi Gevinson, the founder of RookieMag.com, an online magazine for teen girls. She called herself a feminist, and I identified as one too. In Grade 9 I was like, **"I need to know more about this feminism thing."** I remember going to the library, Googling a list of feminist books you need to read and just taking out a stack. I ripped through them. The next year, I skipped class with some friends to go see a photographer from Rookie Mag speak at an event. Eventually that group of us started our own feminist zine called Bonerkill, which was actually co-signed by one of our teachers. Towards the end of Grade 11, I started volunteering with Planned Parenthood, which was another education in reproductive justice. I learned about the bathhouse raids and Africville — all this stuff they never taught us in high school.

I went to Carleton University

for a program they'd just created. That was my first experience with university bureaucracy, because it was clear we were just guinea pigs — they didn't know what they were doing with it. I found Carleton's Women's Centre in my first year and did a lot of my homework there. I would overhear conversations about all this drama that was happening at Carleton in the student association. I remember at the start of one of my classes a student union member pitching student buy-in of a \$10million building on campus. I got up afterwards and was like, **"There are things they're not telling us. You should do your own research and not just vote yes, because the cool guy who said he'll give you free pizza is going to."** I just speak my mind and I'm not afraid to embarrass myself.

I ended up working for the student union for three years after that, and was there when the Ontario government mandated every post-secondary institution create a sexual violence policy. Carleton's first draft wasn't good enough — students needed a lot more protections. We got many

student groups to sign onto an open letter about our concerns and protested outside the Board of Governors meeting where the policy was being voted on and they still passed it. But we kept the pressure on: Over the summer, the grassroots student organization Our Turn was created, and I joined its taskforce demanding the university change its sexual violence policy.

MeToo was unfolding around the same time, and I thought,

“I’m not going to sit back as this is happening —

I’m going to get right into it.”

It was a perfect opportunity to actually make a change in something that I’ve only really read about in books before.

We trained the frats and sororities and sports teams on sexual violence, to really try to get them engaged on the issue. And we helped guide the sexual violence policy review — some of our demands were included in the second draft. We had to fight for them to get and listen to

student feedback. During my time there, I also sat on the Carleton University Equity Services Sexual Violence Prevention and Education Committee, which held consultations about the prevention and education plan the administration was creating — I was the student voice, although sadly I graduated before I could see the results. I was on the taskforce’s national committee, through which we eventually founded Students for Consent Culture, an organization dedicated to supporting intersexual and grassroots anti-sexual violence advocacy and activism on campuses across the country.



The biggest challenge in doing this work was administration — they act like they care when they talk to the media, but behind closed doors they have no respect for students. It's exhausting. Their actions and values don't always align. I've learned about how important community and relationship building is in this work. Because on other campuses where people are trying to make a difference and it's just like one or two people who are trying to do things, they really struggle. It has to be built from the ground up, because you can't really expect the administration and your local provincial government to do things in students' favour. But if you had told me four years ago when I started at Carleton all that would've happened in my time there, I would've been so proud. I was out there doing the work.



Vatineh Magaji

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

V

Vatineh Magaji

I was born in Thompson, Manitoba, but my parents came from Nigeria. My dad worked in the mine and my mom worked in the hospital in town. It was a small community, where everyone was totally aware of everyone else's lives. My family had to navigate very white and Indigenous spaces — there's a point where, obviously, you really stand out. My parents were always very adamant that we stick up for ourselves and our siblings. And I was the eldest, so it all culminated in me being acutely aware of advocating for others who are in the same position or who are similarly marginalized.

I played bass clarinet and sax for a jazz band in high school and became president of my Music Students' Association. I pretty vividly remember my first experience with activism while there: It was a meeting of the Grand Council of student leaders in the principal's office where he would hold other meetings. We advocated for things we wanted done at the school, and he listened. It felt very serious and empowering — sitting in those armchairs, we, the young people, making up the

majority.

When I got to university, I became a residence advisor, which led me to step into a leadership role of sorts. One of the residence advisors I worked with was part of Justice for Women Manitoba, the first of its kind feminist student women's organization on campus. Their president was leaving, so I weaselled my way in and got the job! I'd considered myself a feminist for a long time, but I wasn't outspoken about it until I got to university. I liked that Justice for Women emphasized education — about half the work we did was consent culture workshops. I was really passionate about getting people conscious of the state of affairs at our school. I helped to create an environment that allowed student leaders on campus to access a two-hour consent workshop to help inform how they carried out their roles and planned events on campus.

The spring I became president, one of the major sexual violence scandals hit, in which an assistant professor and dean at the university's medical school

lost his license after pursuing inappropriate relationships with two students. Later that summer came allegations against a jazz professor, who was eventually charged with sexually assaulting a student. That was surreal because that professor had come to do workshops with my jazz band when I was in high school. It was kind of a trial by fire into the presidency, being looked to by the media, students and administration to have an opinion and a response to this — you're the face of the movement to a lot of people. But it really motivated me to lean into this work and showed that so many things still need to change. That summer, we renewed our call for mandatory consent training on campus and really tried to keep attention on this issue, despite resistance from administrators.

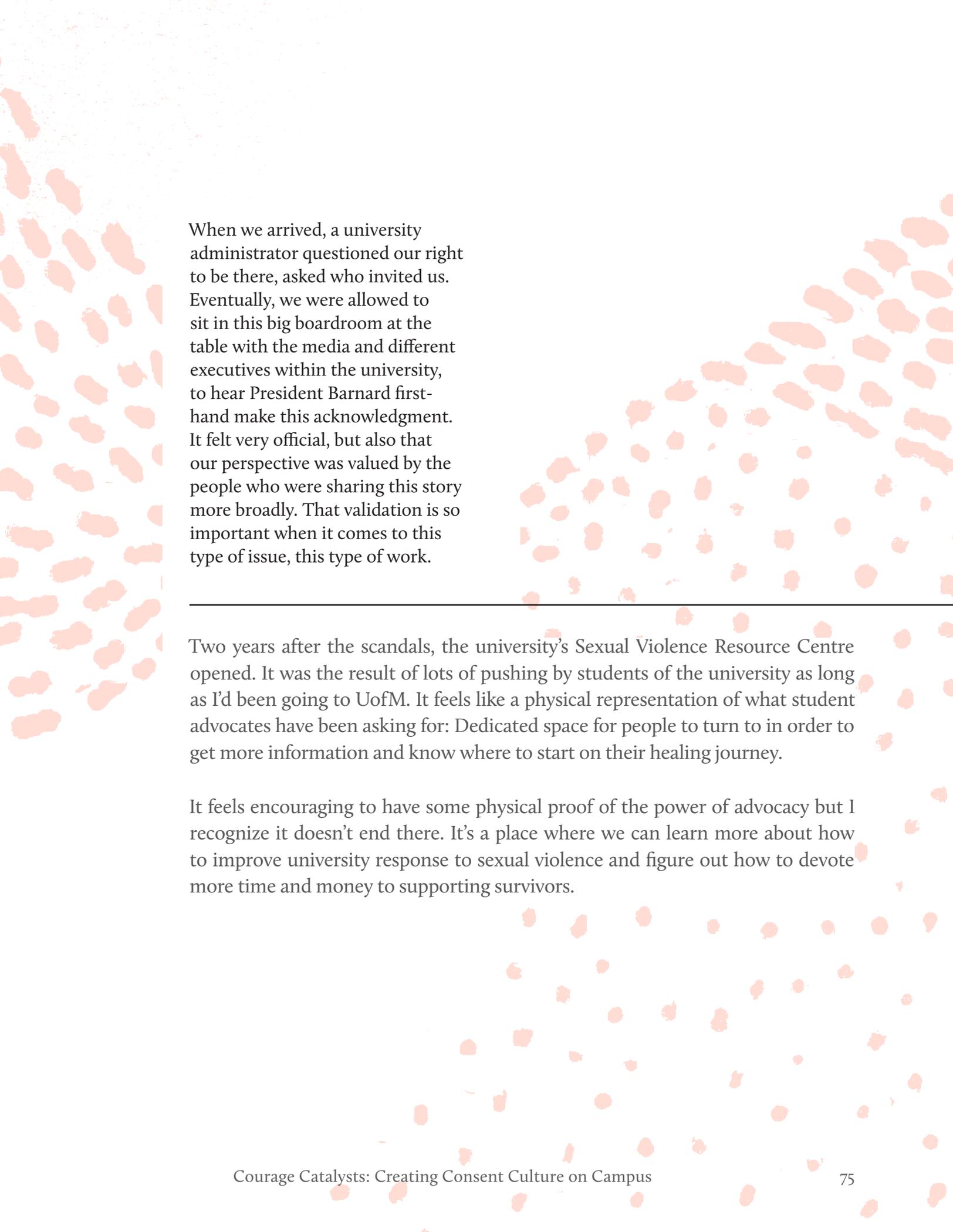
Part of the struggle throughout my two-year term with Justice for Women was feeling a lack of acknowledgment from the university. It was difficult to get our foot in the door because we weren't an official part of the student union. So any time there was even the slightest chance to share our message and make our message known, that fueled us for a little while longer. What's so draining about this work is that

you're either not being listened to, your ideas are not being attributed back to you or they're just being co-opted entirely. It's about taking the good with the bad, and really holding onto those wins. Justice for Women was a big part of the push to get the university to commit to the creation of a sexual violence support centre on campus. I feel very proud of the growth the group had, both in membership and in expanding the base of knowledge and awareness of consent culture.

During those scandals,

“It became clear to me that our voice was needed at the table advocating for students.”

I remember being asked by a member of the media if Justice for Women would attend a briefing university president David Barnard was putting on — the first public acknowledgment of the string of sexual misconduct on the part of faculty — and provide comment after.



When we arrived, a university administrator questioned our right to be there, asked who invited us. Eventually, we were allowed to sit in this big boardroom at the table with the media and different executives within the university, to hear President Barnard first-hand make this acknowledgment. It felt very official, but also that our perspective was valued by the people who were sharing this story more broadly. That validation is so important when it comes to this type of issue, this type of work.

Two years after the scandals, the university's Sexual Violence Resource Centre opened. It was the result of lots of pushing by students of the university as long as I'd been going to UofM. It feels like a physical representation of what student advocates have been asking for: Dedicated space for people to turn to in order to get more information and know where to start on their healing journey.

It feels encouraging to have some physical proof of the power of advocacy but I recognize it doesn't end there. It's a place where we can learn more about how to improve university response to sexual violence and figure out how to devote more time and money to supporting survivors.



Zoe King

FLEMING COLLEGE

Z

Zoe King

When I was a young teen, I made an agreement with my parents: I could have a horse and ride if I cleaned the stall out every day. I got an older horse named Linus and started taking lessons. I became a really competitive rider, really driven. It shaped my personality, to be motivated, focused and work hard. But then, like a lot of high school kids, I started riding less and less — I got more interested in hanging out with my friends.

I came out to my mom just minutes after we put Linus down. We were standing there in the arena at our farm, looking at him and crying. I had already been trying to find the time to tell her I was gay — a time when it wouldn't be weird or awkward. His death was my first experience of loss and in that moment, I felt like I had to be honest and vulnerable. She just hugged me and told me that she loved me. But I remember that she was worried about me facing discrimination.

I haven't, because I have a lot of love and support in my life, but I thought,

“I want everyone's experience to be like this.”

It kind of sparked that activism in me — I realized I wanted to advocate on someone else's behalf.

I went to George Brown College for business administration and tried volunteering in Toronto, but it was hard to get in anywhere. When I transferred to Fleming in Peterborough, it was the polar opposite — everyone needed volunteers, and I was the only one that said, **“Oh, I'll help here, here, here. I'll do everything.”** I spread myself so thin volunteering, joining the basketball team and being a student full-time. I got hired at the Humane Society as an animal control officer and then as a director in the students' council.

I learned so much about advocacy being a director. I thought it was all about planning parties, but when I got involved, it was mind blowing seeing all the work they do. We went to College Student Alliance conferences and I realized how many issues we need to advocate for better conditions on — mental health on campus, international students' tuitions and gender-based violence. We got gender-based violence training from our student rights and responsibilities officer and it was so informative and useful — it covered violence prevention, facts and myths, consent and explanation of terms and what to do if a student discloses to you and needs your help. When I eventually became president of the students' council, I thought so many more people could benefit from the training — how could we expand its reach? It's hard getting students involved and wanting to participate in these conversations. I really want to see gender-

based violence training become mandatory across the college experience. In the meantime, I've been really involved in facilitating positive space training. I see a lot of similarities between this work and GBV training: They're both about awareness, about educating people with the facts, cutting through myths. Most of all, both trainings are about giving people on campus the knowledge and tools to be able to help if someone discloses or comes forward to them about some discrimination they're facing. They can open up a lot of tough, uncomfortable conversations — but they're conversations that need to happen.

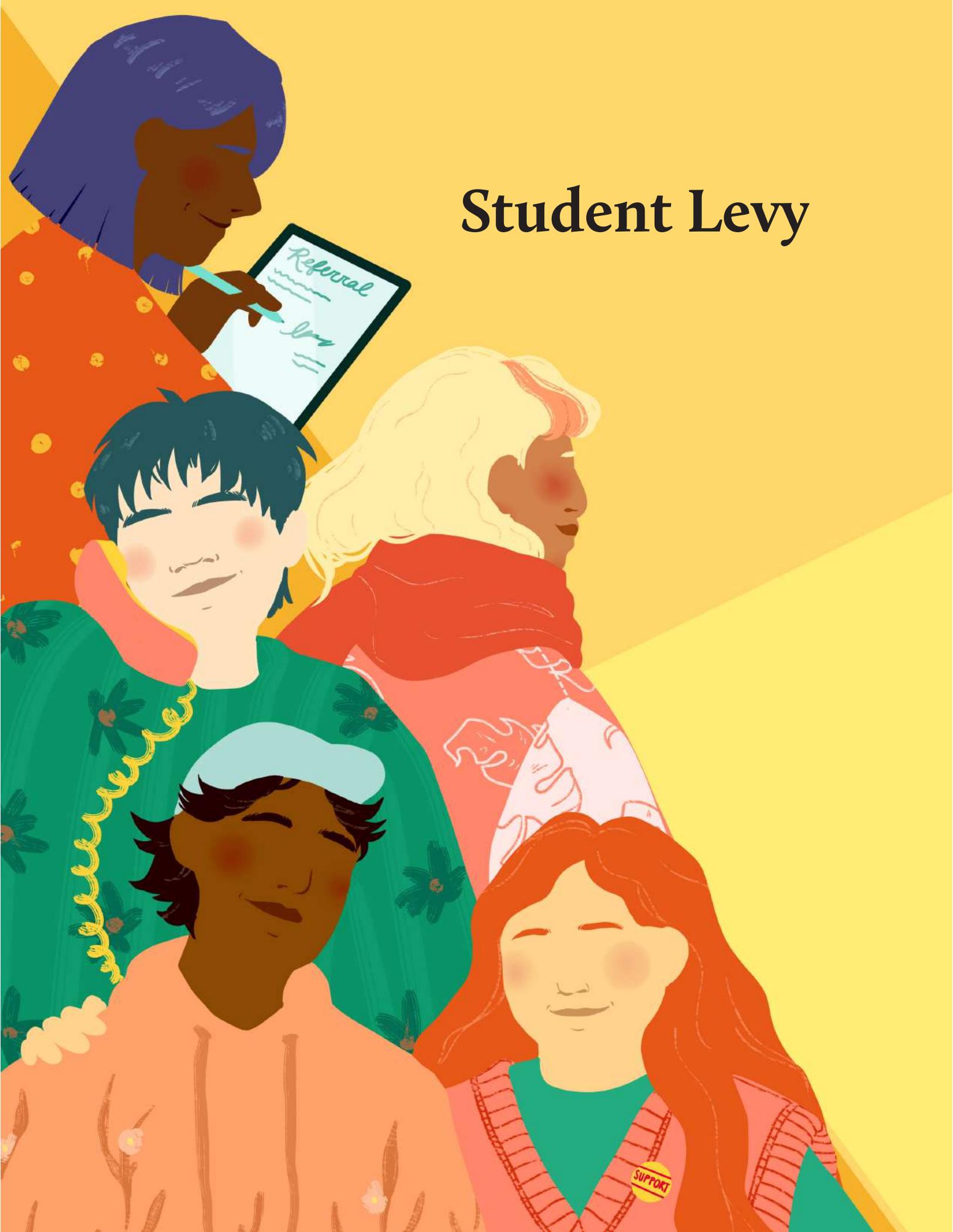
Fleming has graciously let me take a course in politics while I lead the student council full time. I'm also a vice president for the College Student Alliance doing advocacy on issues of mental health, gender-based violence, tuition fees and the impact of COVID-19 on a provincial level.

Looking back, I realize I did a 180 from high school to college — from not doing well in school or having any priorities other than hanging out with my friends to moving from a small town and getting really involved in my community. I want to help people, I want to do this. I have so many goals now, whereas before, I didn't have any goals at all. I want to help someone make that transition like I did.

Student Advocacy Tools



Student Levy



The Dalhousie Sexual Assault and Harassment Phone Line was created in 2015 to increase survivor support services on campus in response to the Misogyny, Sexism and Homophobia in Dalhousie University Faculty of Dentistry Report. Despite best efforts by DSU Executives, DSU Staff and many volunteers, the phone line was unable to obtain consistent funding to sustain year-round service. In March 2017, the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) ran a referendum, asking students to vote for a levy to create a full-time Survivor Support Centre. Full-time students were asked to pay \$2.50 per term and part-time students \$1.50 per term. The passing of the student levy allowed the DSU to hire a full-time manager to run the Survivor Support Centre and Sexual Assault and Harassment Phone Line year-round in September 2017.

The student levy allows the DSU to run a low-barrier access Survivor Support Centre (SSC) that is separate from Dalhousie University so survivors of sexualized and gender-based violence have options to access support on and off campus. Survivors may call or text the phone line from 12pm-12am, 7 days a week, year-round and throughout the holidays or drop in for support from 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday. The SSC Manager manages and trains a team of trauma-informed, peer support, phone line volunteers, offers sexual violence and consent training to students, staff, and university groups, and has led the way in bringing the EAAA program to Nova Scotia universities, implementing Womxn's and Queer, Trans, Non-Binary self-defence classes, and offering weekly survivor-centred wellness workshops with Jungle Flower, founder of Reclaim Your Voice, Toronto, so survivors may have the opportunity to heal in community.

If you want to implement this on your campus, a tip about the referendum process is that it is important to provide students with information and justification as to why the service is needed, and how it will complement, rather than compete, with existing sexual violence services at a particular university and in the broader community.

The MSU Women and Gender Equity Network (WGEN) is a peer-support driven service funded through a student fee collected by the McMaster Student Union (MSU) that offers a safe(r) space for womxn, folks who identify as trans or outside the gender binary, and survivors of all genders at McMaster University. WGEN began in response to calls to better McMaster supports for women and trans students, as well as to provide better prevention and response regarding sexual violence. With a pilot phase in 2014, WGEN has been fully operational since 2015, and is one of two dozen services offered and funded through the McMaster Students Union's annual budget. MSU charges a single organizational fee paid by undergraduate students. Elected student leaders approve annual expenditures and service funding levels.

WGEN's mandate is continuously changing towards more inclusive practices in addressing gender-based and sexual violence. From hiring practices that prioritize applicants from marginalized communities, to a more diverse supply of gender-affirming resources, WGEN recognizes that supporting survivors means operating from a decolonial, anti-racist, anti-oppressive framework, and embracing the interdependent nature of liberatory movements. On-campus, this has translated to WGEN being a source of important educational content with intersectional focuses around a wide range of topics. Many students also see WGEN as a place to build relationships and find community. Especially since academic institutions are inherently oppressive structures, WGEN is a space for survivors and folks from marginalized communities to find accountability through community-based means and work towards justice.

For those seeking to create a similar service to WGEN, the first step is starting conversations with student leaders, governing bodies, and campus administrators. It is also important to identify an accessible location to house the service that contains both a front-facing community space and a private area for peer support. Most importantly, the process needs to be led by students within the communities that the service is intended to serve.

QUEEN'S AMS, STUDENT LEVY

Student Levy, SAC

The Queen's Alma Mater Society has had a positive partnership with the local, off-campus Sexual Assault Centre (SAC) of Kingston. The SAC has received a student levy fee from Queen's students since 1990, and was most recently audited in 2013. The SAC was able to apply for a mandatory student activity levy of \$1.00, which was voted on by all undergraduate students in the tri-annual fee referendum in 2017, as well as a \$1.25 per student from Graduate and Professional Students. These fees are reviewed every three years and must be voted on and passed by the majority of the student voters.

These student levies help fund the operations and programming offered by the Kingston SAC, which provide free, confidential support for survivors of sexual violence. Their services include crisis support, counselling, information, referral, and advocacy services. Students often do not have access to adequate resources, intersectional support, or safe spaces on campus. This fee is important in order to continue the work done by SAC in our community for our students.

If someone was interested in implementing a partnership with their local community sexual assault centre, they should first contact the centre to discuss the type of support and funding they would require. Afterwards, they should reach out to their campus Student Union and/or University Registrar's office to learn more about the student levy process – specifically how to apply for a student levy and how to ensure it is included on the fee slate. At Queen's, there is an application process that includes providing financial information and a description of ways in which the funding would contribute to initiatives and opportunities that will benefit students. This process will vary at each institution based on structures and policies but reaching out to your Student Union representatives is a great place to start!

Since opening in 2002, the Alma Mater Society (AMS) of the University of British Columbia (UBC) Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC) has been committed to the education, support, and empowerment of people of all genders who are survivors of gender-based violence, as well as their friends and family. We are a feminist, anti-oppressive, anti-colonial organization serving UBC students, staff, faculty, and community members.

The SASC is primarily funded by a Sexual Assault Support Service Fee of \$9.50 per student, administered by the AMS Council. With this funding, we provide several programs and services on campus, including support & advocacy services for survivors of sexual and/or intimate partner violence, violence prevention outreach and education programming, a healthier masculinities program, and a volunteer program for students to engage in creating a culture of consent on campus. Our support services for survivors are not clinical counselling services, but include crisis and short-term emotional support; support groups; police, medical and campus-related advocacy & accompaniment; and hospital accompaniments for sexual assault examinations. These programs are run by 4 full-time staff members, 5 part-time Support Workers, 3 part-time student Outreach Workers, and 35 student volunteers.

While \$9.50 is a small amount per student, it enables the SASC to have a large impact on campus. In 2019, the SASC had over 1200 service contacts with our support & advocacy team and our outreach team interacted with over 2000 students at events, booths and violence prevention workshops across campus. For anyone looking to implement a campus gender-based violence program, we recommend first connecting and collaborating with local community organizations and grassroots student groups to meet the needs of your community and to acknowledge and lift up their ongoing work. The SASC is, at its core, a community for and by survivors and our work wouldn't be possible without community support!

TALKING WITH ADMINISTRATION

By: Julia Burnham

Whether you're a seasoned student politician or a grassroots organizer, confronting administrators can be a daunting task - especially if you're a survivor. Meeting with the administration could be under a number of different situations, from sexual violence policy work, bringing demands as a student activist or advocating for yourself as a survivor. These are tips that I picked up as I learned to make space for myself at the boardroom table in the year I served as the Vice-President Academic and University Affairs of the AMS (University of British Columbia's student union), as well as the student representative on the UBC sexual misconduct policy review. Imposter syndrome might be rampant, but these small things can make a world of a difference in helping you feel more confident in institutional spaces. Be sure to check out the "Providing feedback and challenging poor service from university or college" tool as well for more tips!



1. Come Prepared

Ahead of every one-on-one meeting, I always write down my own agenda items and the points I wanted to raise. If you're in a committee meeting with an agenda, take time to go through the materials and highlight anything you want to talk about.

If you're in a digital meeting, it's even easier to pull up items on the side of your screen to reference. Having a physical reminder of what you came to do and say is so helpful if you freeze or start disassociating.

It's also important to set goals - what is it that you're hoping to get out of this meeting? If you're going into the meeting with other student organizers or a support person, make sure to chat beforehand and figure out who's saying what and what type of tone you want to set. I love to walk with people to meetings and use the time to run over things and ensure we're on the same page.

2. Take Notes

Taking detailed notes of your meeting, even if official minutes are being taken, is the best way to protect yourself from gaslighting. Being able to recall what was said and promised behind closed doors, without having to second-guess yourself, is such a powerful tool in these high-stress encounters.

This is especially important if administrators are saying different things to the public. It can also be an excellent way to take control of your next steps and level out the power dynamics at play.

After the meeting, write an email thanking them for the meeting and send them the minutes of the meeting, commitments made and next steps.

3. Bring the Facts

Administrators love data and benchmarking. In quickfire debate spaces like a policy review committee, being able to provide evidence that the changes you are advocating for are necessary is a huge advantage.

Connect with your student union to see if they run a student experience survey or have access to any data for your campus on perceptions of safety or experiences with sexual violence support units.

Use tools like Students For Consent Culture's report card to show administrators where your campus is lagging behind. Academic institutions are constantly benchmarking against their peer institutions, and pointing out their deficiencies compared to a competitor school is a way to get admin attention.

4. Do your Research

I probably read 600 pages of background material before entering the policy review process because I was terrified of being caught off guard or dismissed by committee members because I didn't understand the contexts or history.

For gender-based violence advocacy, the Courage to Act report is a good place to start!

For local contexts, search through your student newspaper and the meeting archives of your institution's policy-approving body (usually the Board of Governors). Equipping myself with an information overload might not have been time-efficient, but it did seriously boost my confidence going into meetings.



NEXT STEPS:

One of the biggest dilemmas in student organizing is the fragility of our movements and memory. This is also one of the biggest advantages for administrators - if they wait a few years, the advocacy will die down, and everyone involved will have graduated.

We must learn how to protect ourselves and our progress against this. The big learning curves and quick turnover of student leaders make it difficult to build upon existing advocacy and honour the contexts behind them.

Throughout all of the advocacy we do, it's so important to ensure you are bringing emerging leaders into your work, sharing what you have learned and providing them with the contexts to succeed as you leave post-secondary. If we all can mentor, nurture and care for emerging leaders around us, we can sustain and succeed with our movements!

CAMPAIGNS

By: Jackie Toner

Campaigns are an organized and active way towards sharing, as well as a sustained effort to educate individuals and boost public awareness about a cause or issue. This template will help give you the steps you need for planning a successful campaign revolving around issues pertaining to gender-based violence.



1. Select your Audience

Everyone on your campus has a role to play in ending gender-based violence, but by narrowing your audience and tailoring your message to a specific topic, you will increase the efficacy of your campaign.

For example, you may want to consider groups that are:

- **AT A HIGH RISK** for certain types of gender-based violence such as Black, Indigenous, and people of colour, gender and sexual minorities.
- **COMMON PERPETRATORS** of gender-based violence in your community such as those in positions of power and/or with greater privilege.
- **BYSTANDERS** who have the potential to gain skills to prevent gender-based violence

When selecting your audience it is also important to consider if you will collaborate with another group, service, business, etc. By cultivating relationships with additional contributors to the campaign can allow for a more diverse and informed campaign, while also expanding your campaigns reach.

**Don't forget to check out the tool about partnerships to learn more about cultivating a meaningful relationship with those you are working with!*

2. Determine the Objective

When planning a campaign, it is critical to clearly articulate your goal. It is often helpful to outline the objectives for your campaign which detail the specific impact you want to have. This might look like increasing knowledge or creating attitudinal change in your targeted audience.

If you have not yet come up with an idea, check out the following options:

OBJECTIVE	GENERAL DESCRIPTION
Awareness	Campaigns designed to share information about gender-based violence, promoting resources, and debunking myths.
Healing	Campaigns designed to support survivors in speaking out, sharing their stories, and connecting with other survivors or support networks.
Community Engagement	Campaigns used to increase community members' abilities to collectively change policies, systems, and social norms.
Public Policy	Campaigns that educate and help mobilize support for policy change related to gender-based violence.
Prevention	Campaigns focused on eradicating gender-based violence through challenging societal norms and building awareness of the ways gender-based violence occurs in our communities. Changing individual attitudes and awareness can lead to communal growth.

3. Build your Plan

<p>Who is going to be involved?</p> <p>Will you team up with the student union/student services/ off-campus centers?</p>	
<p>What is it going to look like?</p> <p>Will it include a video, poster, or other materials/ media, virtual/in-person?</p>	
<p>Where is it going to be seen?</p> <p>Will it be located somewhere for a period of time, during an event, or online?</p>	
<p>Who is going to be your target audience?</p> <p>Athletes/survivors/administrators/ residence community/first year students.</p>	
<p>When is it going to take place?</p> <p>Will this take place over a timeline such as a week, month, semester?</p>	
<p>Why are you doing this particular campaign?</p> <p>It is important to remember why you are doing this work in order to stay motivated.</p>	
<p>Key Messages to remember:</p> <p>What key points will be helpful to remember when asked about the campaign or when doing promotion?</p>	

4. Devise Strategies

Once you have outlined your objective, you must determine the strategies you plan to use in this campaign to accomplish your goals.

Examples of strategies include:

- Creating a poster campaign
- Making brochures
- Creating public service announcements to show on the campus radio and TV stations
- Distributing campaign messages via campus listeners to students, faculty, and staff
- Creating an art installation on campus (Ex. What Were You Wearing Campaign)
- Creating a video campaign based on your objective

EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGNS:

- Draw the Line: <http://www.draw-the-line.ca/>
- Consent Matters: <http://www.sfu.ca/sexual-violence/education-prevention/what-is-consent.html> (Simon Fraser University, n.d.)
- WWYW: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/sexual-assault-clothing-myth-1.4535737> (Fowler, 2018)
- Take Care: <https://scienceplus.rssonline.ca/takecarestem/> (Science+ – Promoting inclusivity & intersectionality in science, n.d.)

References:

Fowler, S. (2018, February 14). *'Creepy' and 'terrifying' describe this exhibit of everyday, common clothes*. CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/sexual-assault-clothing-myth-1.4535737>

Science+ – Promoting inclusivity & intersectionality in science. (n.d.). *Take care campaign*. <https://scienceplus.rssonline.ca/takecarestem/>

Simon Fraser University. (n.d.). *Consent matters - Sexual violence support & prevention office - Simon Fraser University*. <https://www.sfu.ca/sexual-violence/education-prevention/what-is-consent.html>

How do you build community care when doing GBV advocacy on campus?



Jackie Toner

- Teaming up with various groups on campus aligned with your vision and purpose so that you can 1) share the load but also 2) Increase the reach of your advocacy based projects and ideas.
- Create something that ensures people who are learning about GBV for the first time, have the opportunity to evolve their perspective judgment-free.
- Maximize your visibility on campus through all avenues (online, paper, campus radio, social media, newsletters, etc).

Aubrianna Snow

- Establish baseline agreements with people you work closely with (ex. meet folks where they're at, call-in instead of call-out). These can really contribute to a safer and more accountable space for everyone.

Tia Wong

- Build community care into your institutional policies and practices. Don't just react to triggers or current events - ensure that your community members, staff, team, employees, volunteers, etc. are taken care of on a daily basis.
- Take care of essential needs of the community. Providing food, transportation, a place to rest, child care, and mental health supports are just some ways spaces can ensure the community has their most basic needs fulfilled before engaging in emotional labour related to gender-based violence.

Cat Dunne

- Ensure that students are compensated for their work - be it advocacy, education or consultation.
- Institutionalize that support, and a variety of supports (counsellors, peer support, safer spaces) that are available and accessible during education sessions, while doing the work, and on a regular basis

Taylor Irvine

- Create a balance between broad and targeted messaging. Broader messaging is digestible for the general student population and is useful for getting more students informed and involved. However it is also beneficial to create targeted messaging for students who may be reluctant to become involved in conversations around GBV and would respond better to outreach that is more customized for their specific needs.

Vatineh Magaji

- Building community care means sharing the weight of the task of ending GVB with others who care. We can do this through making connections within and outside of the campus community via online workshops, engaging on social media with local and nationwide initiatives, and reaching out to groups you admire for ways to contribute to their mission.

Jessica Wright

- When I think about how to create community care while organizing to end GBV on campus, I'm inspired by disability justice advocacy and the idea that putting the slowest person at the front of the march is critical to moving us all forward together. Community care means reflecting on our own privilege and making sure that the needs of those who are most vulnerable to injustice are centred in our movements. The experiences of students who are survivors of complex trauma, disabled, BIPOC, queer, trans, poor or working class, and who are international students all have to be factored in to create a truly caring campus community.

Emma Kuzmyk

- I think it's crucial to not only understand, but account for the fact that there are survivors in nearly every room that you're in, and at all levels of organizing. All conversations regarding gender-based violence, whether they are taking place in public spaces or not, must be trauma-informed and include the space/time/resources to debrief or step away when necessary, not only for participants, but also for organizers. Community care includes caring for yourself.

Levi Clarkson

- Community care looks like putting as much of your time and energy into supporting folks doing the work as you do the work itself. For instance, if you and a group of people you work with are prepping for a meeting with administration, make sure that you first do a check-in about how folks are feeling. Maybe someone needs to take a backseat and listen - and you could suggest they take notes, while someone else can take on talking points. Make sure you prepare folks for what might come up emotionally during that meeting, and ask how they would like to be checked in with if they need to leave that space. Make sure to schedule time after the meeting to debrief with each other! Intentionally asking about people's needs and creating time for people to name how they're feeling contributes to creating a culture of community care. Sometimes, especially as survivors, it is difficult to speak up and voice our needs. Remind yourself to not assume someone feels safe enough to speak up, and reach out and offer care! For example, if someone has taken on a lot of tasks but seems to be overwhelmed, maybe reach out and ask if you can take something off their plate. If someone is having trouble finding time and energy to cook for themselves, offer to drop off a home-cooked meal for them. Show up for people in meaningful ways that allow them to fully participate in this work without burning out.

Julia Burnham

- Remember to treat yourself with the same care and compassion that you extend to others. It's so easy to neglect and hide our own needs when we put the work first. Be mutually accountable with someone you trust and check in on each other to make sure you're remembering to care for yourself, too.

Nell Perry

- Though it may seem obvious, an important way to create community care is by treating those who you work with as a part of a community. This includes doing check-ins before meetings, debriefs and reminding each other that doing this work is really difficult and to regularly integrate self-care practices. This also includes creating accessible ways for new folks to become involved with your community.

Chenthoori Malankov

- Community care centres the voices of BIPOC, queer, trans, disabled, poor, working class communities and creating space for them in the movement in ending gender-based violence on our university campus. In doing this work community care looks at also taking care of yourself in the ways you take care of others. Self-care is an act of resistance, one that is ongoing and specific to the individual.

Kainat Javed

- Community care should focus around the needs of others that you are working with. Often working towards ending GBV at institutions can be a lot of work, most of which is done by people who deeply care about the matter. So, it's very important to acknowledge the work that they're doing and making sure that they aren't feeling too burnt out. This can be done by constantly checking in with each other, establishing boundaries and asking when someone is at capacity so you can cater to their needs.

Alannah McKay

- Building community care means ensuring that there are safe(r) spaces for individuals and communities to intentionally gather to support, heal and care for ourselves and each other as we do the hard work of addressing GBV and other forms of injustice, on and off campus.

Tayler Glaspey

- Ensure that supports and policies are accessible and in plain language so that they can universally be understood on campus. Allowing team members to create tools in mediums that they are comfortable with. Adopt a universal design strategy for creating resources that address GBV and campus safety. Use supports and debrief when needed it's really important to take care of your own wellbeing in order to be capable of taking care of other people.
- Use resources that are fun and make the connection as interactive as possible (photo booth, hashtag, stickers etc.). Just create a fun interactive environment to contrast the topic of GBV.

HOW TO CONSULT WITH STAKEHOLDERS AT YOUR POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTION WHILE DISCUSSING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.

By: Kainat Javed



In this tool you will be learning all about how to consult with multiple stakeholders across campus as a way to create projects that are community-centred about gender-based violence (GBV). Our communities hold rich expert knowledge about the gaps in services, programming needs and educational demands for the campus. When we consult with stakeholders we can have a better understanding of how to create programs that meet the needs of our communities.

GBV is multi-faceted. There's much work that can be done in terms of intervention, prevention and education strategies. This could include: calling to amend your institution's current Sexual Violence policy or working towards creating a program that would help students who have or who are being affected by GBV. When discussing GBV on campus, it is important to assess and acknowledge that this topic may be sensitive for people, so be respectful of their boundaries. Consulting with stakeholders will help you identify what are the key issues on campus and ideas that the community has to address them.

TYPES OF CONSULTATION :

There are many ways one can consult with stakeholders at your university including but not limited to:

1. Surveys
 2. Focus Groups
 3. Town Halls
 4. 1:1 meetings
-

Engaging Stakeholders

Map out who the stakeholders you want to reach. Don't be shy about picking people that work all over campus as well as specific student groups. Be mindful of whose voices get included and whose do not; these include students, staff, professors and administrators.

Map Your Questions

Once you have written down a list of stakeholders that you can contact, brainstorm questions that might help your consultation process. Asking questions is really important because it helps you expand your scope and it can help you with the issues that you want to tackle. The most important questions you might want to write down before the meetings, and during the discussion you can ask other questions as you go.

Examining Expertise

Once you've figured out what exactly you will be discussing/advocating for in relation to GBV at our institution, you need to follow these steps:

I. Figure out who your stakeholders are and who will help you with your advocacy.

At post-secondary institutions you will encounter staff, students and faculty, all of whom have different experiences with understanding GBV. Some may be experts while others may be unfamiliar with what GBV is and how it affects post-secondary students.

Once you have completed this step, try finding the individuals who are willing to support your work. You would need to identify some individuals across campus who would be willing to become your "champions". These people could be those who are well versed in matters regarding GBV. It is important to set up meetings with them and utilize your connections. Find a foundation for what you're doing. This might consist of you creating a clear purpose/goal around what you are wanting to accomplish by advocacy.

2. *When you've determined this, collect as much information/data as possible around the issue that you will be addressing.*

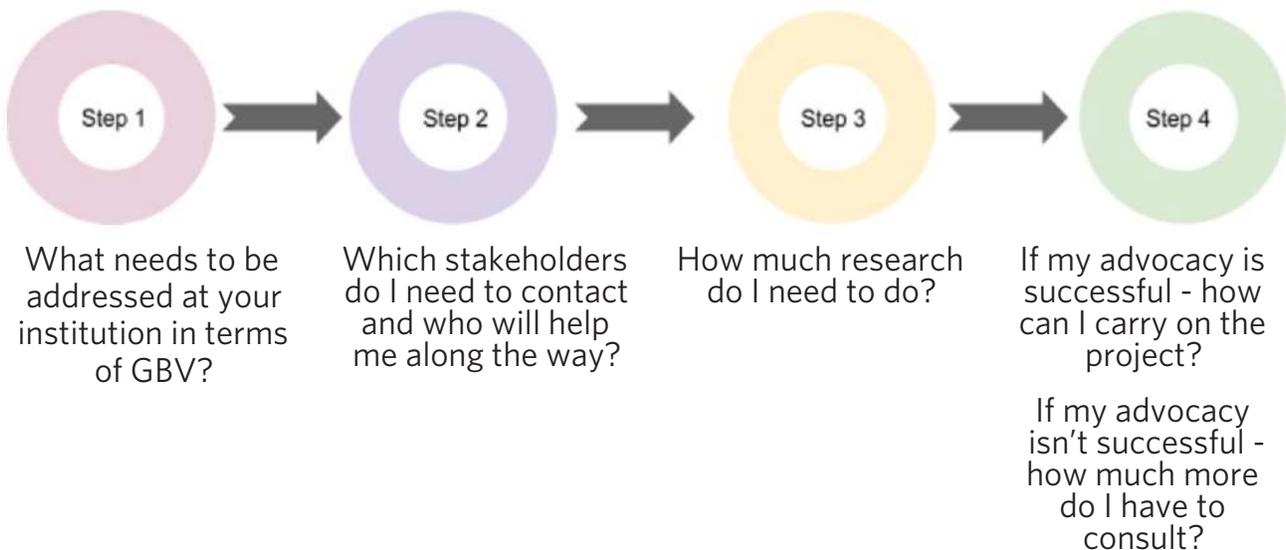
For example, if you'd like the university to work more towards increasing prevention and education strategies then you'd want to collect as much data on what GBV is, why it occurs and how you can prevent it from occurring. Use your university's online library to find journal articles that are relevant to the issue that you are trying to tackle. Also, try looking at other post-secondary institutions to see what they have done in terms of addressing GBV at their institution. This will help you and might give you ideas or suggestions about what route you should take.

Present Your Research

By presenting your information to various stakeholders across campus, you will be "pitching" your idea and convincing university administrators, students, staff, faculty etc. why they should:

1. Utilize your idea;
2. Work with you to create a solution to the issue you are addressing; and
3. Commit to finding or creating a solution.

FOR EACH STEP ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS:





APPLYING WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED:

In many ways, consultation can be a tricky thing to do. There's a lot of ways that you can do it and there's really no wrong answer. However, to illustrate what I've written let me give you an example based on my personal experience consulting on campus. As a former student executive at my institution, GBV was and still is a very important issue that needs to be addressed.

Step 1 - What needs to be addressed at your institution in terms of GBV?

As a newly elected executive for my students' association, I first gathered lots of information and research articles around what GBV was, and what it meant in the context of post-secondary students. After this, I looked into contacting the Sexual Violence coordinator to discuss how prevalent this issue was at my campus. After looking at statistics and research from some of the programming we had on campus, my goals for the year were addressing GBV on my campus and advocating for a Residence Emergency Housing policy. Once I learned that 70,000 post-secondary students had experienced homelessness, I contacted different stakeholders to see if there was a correlation between that and students who were experiencing GBV.

Step 2- Which Stakeholders do I need to contact and who will help me along the way?

I first contacted various different staff that worked towards housing issues around campus. I had asked them if they had found any students that were experiencing homelessness, and I found out that a few students had been looking for housing and that their home situation was not good. I then contacted different institutions that had housing programs, such as the University of Alberta and the University of Toronto, and I was able to speak with the directors of different programs.

I asked them questions such as;

1. How did you find that this was an issue?
2. How long has your program been in operation?
3. Was it difficult for students to ask for help?
4. How was this project funded?

After asking such questions, I understood that the University of Toronto had Interim Housing options for students who were escaping violent and abusive situations. That's when I decided to model that housing program at my institution. After this I contacted the staff that were working at my university's Residence to flag this issue, and I decided to do more research around the issue.

Step 3- How much research do I need to do?

The amount of research I was going to do really mattered in convincing people how important this issue was. To do so, I launched a campaign around campus called “Reduce The Stigma” I wanted to figure out how many students experienced homelessness around campus. I attached an anonymous google survey to the posters that I had put up around campus. I used the students’ responses as anecdotal evidence. I then set up a meeting with a group of students who were survivors of GBV and who had also faced housing issues. I surveyed them on what response they’d like to see from the university and let them know what my plan was to decrease GBV at the institution and to help students who were also experiencing homelessness. I then put together a presentation for administrators and staff at my university to convince them to put together an Interim Safe Room.

Step 4- Continuing your work

Consulting with individuals across campus can take a lot of time. From figuring out what advocacy you will be doing, to gathering research and then finally presenting it. Your idea may be overlooked, undermined or downright ignored but that doesn’t mean that you and your allies “cheerleaders” should stop trying. The bottom line is to be persistent, challenge other people’s reluctant nature and keep “pushing” until you have your goals met. GBV occurs at an alarming rate across all post-secondary institutions and as passionate individuals, we have to continuously build momentum and change how universities react to addressing GBV and what steps they take.

CREATING SUPPORT THROUGH SELF CARE AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

By: Jessica Wright

After surviving gender-based violence (GBV) on campus, it can feel like you're totally on your own, but there are ways to foster support and healing. When I was looking to reach out on campus, I realized that there weren't many institutional supports either available or that I felt comfortable accessing. Sometimes we have to create our own supports (with self-care and by engaging in community organizing) because the structures aren't in place at our post-secondary institution to adequately help us navigate life post-assault.

The following tool will discuss how to create three different kinds of support when surviving GBV on campus and advocating for yourself and others: self-care, community support, and institutional support. Each is important to create a holistic sense of support.



Self-care

Activism that challenges the way that post-secondary institutions address GBV on campus can be emotionally tiring work. In order to help support your own resilience, being tender with yourself is really crucial. It's especially important to care for yourself if you're shoring up emotional resources to offer peer support to other survivors. Check out social media accounts that share nurturing, pro-survivor messages of solidarity. Search online for organizations or blogs that offer tips for caring for yourself after an assault or while doing anti-GBV advocacy work. Recommendations can be fairly commonsensical (i.e. drink water, go outside for fresh air, hang out with your pet), but a little self-care can go a long way!

Engaging in activism that recognizes that trauma is pervasive can be distressing. As part of tending to self-care you may want to talk to friends, other trusted confidants (like a relative, or therapist), or a phone helpline where someone can lend an ear. Self-care can also look like honouring your limits and saying "No" to commitments that feel overwhelming (see Chenthoori Malankov's tool on 'Self Care.'). Try doing things that soothe you and remember that you're allowed to not feel soothed. Channelling feelings of injustice into activism can also be an empowering way of engaging in self-care.

Community Support

Sometimes creating support for yourself can look like advocating for political change, which also positively impacts other students on campus. I found that I really wanted to change the culture that created the possibility of being assaulted, and getting involved in campus organizing was a big part of healing and creating support for myself.

There are people doing great work on GBV prevention and response in many communities—reach out, attend a group meeting, and if there aren't people doing work to end GBV on your campus, consider starting your own group. Being in a community with peers who want to end GBV is a great reminder that there are people who empathize with your struggles.

I joined a student-and-survivor led anti-sexual violence collective on campus, and being around a group of like-minded people who were passionate about ending GBV was a balm. I also found it meaningful to volunteer off-campus at a safe haven for women and children fleeing abuse. By contributing to political organizing and community work you can simultaneously validate your own struggles while helping make sure other people don't have to face similar trauma.

Institutional Support

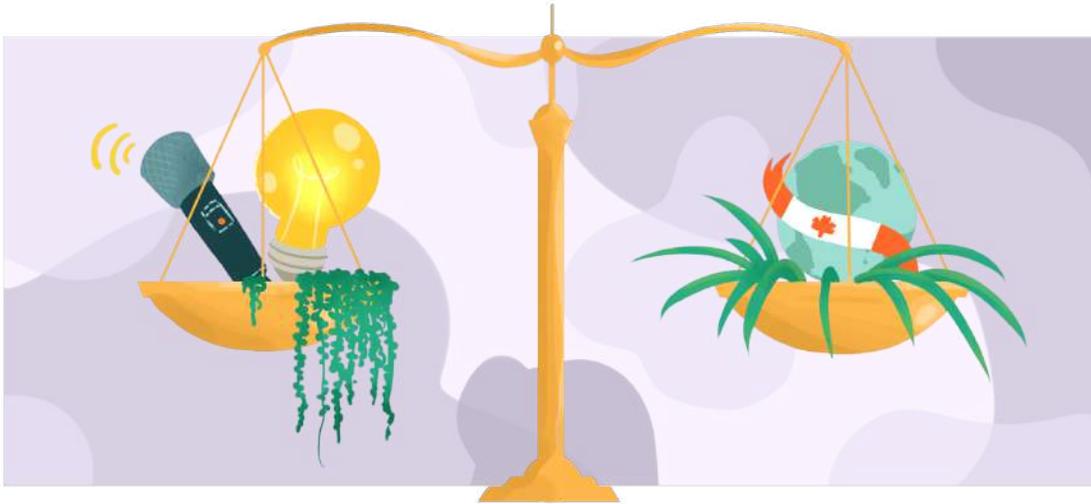
What support looks like at each PSI will differ, yet students often have access to health services on campus that are covered by their tuition fees and that can help support wellness. Find out what services you already have at your disposal and make good use of them. With that said, some students may not be comfortable using existing institutional resources because of the potential consequences attached (i.e. risk of a disclosure being taken as a report, or negative professional outcomes). You can help create institutional support by campaigning your PSI to implement the kinds of supports that you or your peers need. Building a network across different student clubs, unions, and resource centers on campus can help increase the visibility of an issue you are trying to have addressed at your PSI, as well as provide leverage.

Also, if possible, schedule regular meetings with critical stakeholders at the institution, such as representatives from your campus' GBV prevention and response centre or the health and wellness center. PSIs have a vested interest in students being well (enough to study). Establish common ground with the institution and find mutual priorities to move forward with the changes that are needed at your PSI.

As an advocate for survivors on campus you can build support for yourself and others as well as positively shift campus culture through self-care, community involvement, and fostering institutional support.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS PRACTICES

By: Cat Dunne



Government relations is the practice of advocating at any level of government for change. In 2019-2020, I had the opportunity to lobby many elected officials through my role as President of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA). By using many of the strategies presented in this tool, we advocated for many different policy recommendations to improve gender-based violence prevention and response at post-secondary institutions.

First, I want to recognize that government relations are not accessible for many individuals. Often, it is a select few student organizers, often elected representatives in student associations, that will have access to the decision-makers in government. Just as women and marginalized communities are under-represented in politics, they often are in student politics as well. Because these political spaces are built upon colonial hetero-patriarchy, these spaces can feel and be unsafe. If you do choose to engage, know your voice and presence are needed and please do what you can to stay safe and take care of yourself.

Second, difficulties with government relations can be compounded when advocating to a government that may not share your priorities or values. Some strategies I used to ensure our lobbying efforts were effective were framing our priorities with respect to concerns outlined by the government in power. For instance, I was advocating to a Conservative government, so I often discussed gender-based violence in terms of “safety” and changing policies or standards with respect to using funds the most effectively and that post-secondary institutions were accountable to taking measures to reduce gender-based violence.

Personally, this also required self-care for myself -- being able to rant in feminist circles was critical, and recognition of why I was engaged in this work were necessary grounding techniques.

In this tool, I will first offer advice on successful government relations practices for student organizers who may be occupying these spaces. Then, I will discuss ways students on the ground can influence government relations.

Government Relations Practices for Student Organizers

1. Determine the specific and concrete policy recommendations you want to enact (see the tool “writing policy recommendations” for more support on this).
2. Determine the decision-maker(s) of the file you are trying to influence.
 - Throughout my time as a student organizer, this mostly involved advocating to the Ministry of Colleges and Universities.
 - What if you don’t have access to the government, a certain Ministry, or don’t know where to start?

ONE STRATEGY I USED WAS TO MEET WITH ALUMNI FROM MY STUDENT ORGANIZATION. Many student politicians go on to become political staffers and politicians across all party lines, and these individuals can be incredible allies to introduce you to the appropriate decision-maker.

3. Build a relationship with the decision-maker.
 - Once you’ve established a connection with a decision-maker, communicate regularly on your advocacy issues, but also other things you are working on, like events or campaigns. Having a relationship ensures the decision-maker not only listens to you, but also comes to you with ideas and plans, invites you to speak in front of committees, and responds to your asks seriously. This is important because it allows you to offer strong feedback behind the scenes, and will allow you to build better policy for students over time.
4. Advocate to others with influence.
 - Any member can bring forward a Private Member Bill on your issue.
 - Any member can help build public support for your issue. They can ask a question in Question Period, sponsor a government petition, and if they sit on a committee, they could sponsor you to present to the committee on relevant issues.
 - Members in Cabinet or members of the governing party’s caucus can speak in favour of your issue, which can help elevate an issue within the party.
 - Your local representative is a great person to advocate for constituency-specific funding or programs.
5. Decide on your strategies.
 - The strategies you use will depend on the timing in the government budget cycle, whether the government is a majority or a minority, and where we are in an election cycle.

Here are some tactics you might utilize:

- [Government or Budget Submissions](#) (Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, 2020)
- [Public Policy Papers or White Papers](#) (Dunne et al., 2020)
- [Working with an elected official on a private-member bill](#) (Ontario NDP, 2017)
- Advocating to the Ministry for policy directives and regulatory changes
- [Publishing a public letter to government](#) (Dunne & Hewitt Vasil, 2020)
- [Call on political parties to commit to your asks in their election platforms](#) (Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights, 2019)
- Publish a “100 first days in office” call to action after elections
- Get media coverage on your advocacy (this includes writing a letter to the editor, to print or live media)

6. Build public support for your cause or policy recommendation

- Governments will implement policies and programs that will help them get elected, so it is important that your cause has public support. You can build public support through many of the tools included in this toolkit, like campaigns or letter-writing!
- Grassroots students can be key activists in building public support through petitions, protests and writing letters to their MPPs that can have a more antagonistic voice, while student organizations can be better positioned to publish letters, submissions and policy papers, and meet with government officials. Coordination between these groups will include public pressure and government relations are maximized!
- Positive changes should also be celebrated - this gives the government incentive to continue making positive changes for your group. Responding appropriately ensures our voice is perceived as an effective voice to influence public perception.
- When you have a relationship with a decision-maker, it is critical you offer constructive feedback behind the scenes, are clear about your intentions, and offer the opportunity to respond and make changes before criticizing them negatively.

How can students on the ground get involved?

1. Ask your student association what advocacy they do and how you can help! If there are gaps, advocate to your student association to prioritize gender-based violence prevention and response advocacy.
2. Use the other tools in this toolkit to amplify public support for an issue your student association is advocating for — especially letter-writing, petitions, and campaigns. These add pressure to government and are essential to successful government relations.
3. Hold your student representatives accountable. Ask what they're doing to advocate for gender-based violence prevention and response, and ask for updates on meetings or submissions. Ask candidates what their plans are for government advocacy.
4. Get involved in your student association to get directly involved in government relations by volunteering, working part-time or running to be on the executive.
5. Get loud about voting! There continues to be a perception that students do not vote. The louder you are about voting and the issues that determine your vote, the more politicians will listen to student organizations.

**Some students may prefer not to get involved directly with student associations, and that's okay! There are many community or grassroots organizations that work on gender-based violence in the community. Reach out and see how you can help - often sharing campaigns publicly, making noise, and promoting "Get Out The Vote" campaigns are some of the most effective strategies individuals can take on!*

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HOSTING AN EVENT ON CAMPUS INCLUDING A HEALING SPACE

By: Alannah McKay



Being an Indigenous woman or a racialized student navigating post-secondary institutions (PSIs) can be lonely at first because we're still finding communities and spaces where we feel safe. I gathered with a group of resilient Indigenous women on my campus to create a space where we can come together to heal, learn, and laugh because we know that when women gather, amazing things happen. Also, laughter is medicine and helps us make our own safe spaces.

When planning and organizing on campuses, a safe space for dialogue is essential. This is especially important when having conversations on our identities. The purpose of this tool is to share ideas on how to host an event on campus that includes a healing space from an anti-racist, anti-colonial, holistic and trauma-informed perspective.



EXAMPLE: WOMXN COUNCIL CIRCLE

The University of Manitoba Indigenous Students Association Womxn's Council was created in Fall 2018. We had a community of strong Indigenous women, and we hosted events that included an Indigenous women speaker series, ribbon skirt making sessions and beading circle events. We wanted womxn and two-spirit students to have a safe space to gather, heal, learn and teach one another. For example, each person who attended the beading circle shared different kinds of knowledge and passed that knowledge on, so the relationships within these beading circles were always reciprocal. They offered a sense of community, and by extension, healing. These events are an act of resistance and resilience, and prove that reclaiming spaces in institutional spaces can happen.

1. Why We Need Events That Include a Healing Space

Students face pushback for simply being women, trans, two-spirit and non-binary. Our identities are overlooked and even viewed as less than, when in reality women, trans, two-spirit and non-binary are some of the strongest, toughest people on this earth.

Colonial institutions were not made for our presence as women, two-spirit, non-binary and trans folks. Institutions are a place where hetero cis white men dominate decisions and positions of leadership. Even different intersectional committees are populated with privileged non-racialized women who cannot speak to difference and different realities.

We must protect Black students, Indigenous students, and students of colour, and create spaces that are inclusive; while these spaces cause harm, they are what students consider a second home. Protecting students from GBV must come from a holistic perspective, but keeping in mind that we must strive for what was denied to us in these institutions because of our very identities.

2. Principles for Creating Safe Spaces and Equitable Inclusive Environments

It is our collective responsibility to create inclusive spaces for discussion and dialogue.

When planning an event that is a safe space, we must:

- Be trauma-informed to avoid triggering or further harming others. We can organize from a place of care.
- Create space specifically for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour and other marginalized communities as the BIPOC community and marginalized face different and increased forms of gender-based violence.
- Offer group spaces where participants can talk with facilitated discussions based on their specific issues or contexts within anti-racism and anti-colonialism organizing.
- Have designated spaces for participants to gather with identity groups to reflect on experiences as organizers, advocates against racism and colonialism on campus and encourage holistic community healing.
- Create environments that are safe from harassment and discrimination. All forms of discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated, nor will hate speech rooted in, but not limited to, anti-Muslim, anti-Arab, anti-Semitic, sexist, racist, classist, ableist, homophobic or transphobic sentiments and/or remarks.

Space for Racialized folks from marginalized communities:

- Space for women, trans, non-conforming, queer, non-binary
- Students with disability



TIP:

Events can vary based on the needs of the community members. First and foremost, making a safe space is about setting boundaries on who can enter spaces to ensure safety of the community is always a priority.

3. Resources and Support to Consider

- Anti-Harassment officers
- Anxiety and stress supports
- Elders and Knowledge keepers
- Anti-Oppression terms/Index
 - Terms must include warnings letting folks know of sensitive material
 - General terms
 - Race and cultural terms
 - Sexuality and identity-related terms
 - Other “Ism”
- Resource list that includes:
 - Local supports services
 - Local services
 - Contacts of organizers

As students we often face different barriers on our educational journeys. As a community we must acknowledge our intersecting identities, and work together to break down barriers and ensure all accommodations can be met.

This can look like:

- ▶ Childcare
- ▶ Dietary restrictions and needs
- ▶ Reimbursements and funding for travel
- ▶ Accessibility
- ▶ Ceremonial needs

Creating spaces on campuses is important because institutional spaces are places where people with different backgrounds, different experiences come to attain their education. Where racialized students on campus feel safe and are able to speak on their experiences and not fearing for their lives. Fostering communities that have the community’s best interest and want to see the growth of the community is healing.

HOW TO WRITE A PETITION

By: Levi Clarkson & Nell Perry



There are a lot of reasons why you may choose to write a petition. You may be taking aim at your local government, or aiming to create vital services on your campus through your students' union. Regardless of who your petition is aimed at, and what resources you have at your disposal, these tips and tricks should help guide you along the way!

Keep in mind that petitions can be particularly effective tools for creating change related to gender-based violence (GBV) at post-secondary institutions. We all know it can be difficult to create change around GBV prevention, response and support on campus. Especially since many administrations are focused on many other issues, petitions can be an essential tool to demonstrate the support from your post-secondary community at large and can bring GBV related issues to the forefront.

Determining Your Audience And Setting Yourself Up For Success

There are 3 different levels of authority that petitions are often written for at the post-secondary level:

1. The government,
2. The institution's administration
3. The students' union.

Find the most efficient level to create your petition for by determining your goal. For example, if the goal of the petition is to have your University issue a statement or respond to a campus-related situation, the petition should be targeted at the administration. However, if your goal is a long-term project that is something that you and your team are best suited to work on, it may be most efficient to mandate your students' union to support your work through monetary and direct support. To determine your audience, ask yourself who is best suited or has the authority to fulfill your demands?

Some levels will have different regulations about creating a petition. For example, in creating a referendum question during a students' union election you might have to collect a specific amount of student signatures to demonstrate support from the student body. It is important to reach out to the appropriate folks for clarification around regulations before starting your petition, so that it will be successful. This may be your local MP's office for a petition to the federal government, or your students' union representative for a petition to your students' union.

Forming Your Demands

When creating your petition it is important to make sure that your demands are actionable, clear and specific. When demands aren't specific it can be easy for the governing body that you are petitioning to say that they have already met your demands, or your demands may not be understood clearly.

For example, a petition demanding that the University release a public statement about drink tampering at the campus bar is much more clear and actionable than a petition that demands the University acknowledge drink tampering, because the second option leaves room for the University to not directly name where drink tampering happens on campus. Be as specific as possible about what tangible actions need to be taken from your institution to address your concerns fully.

The Importance Of Outreach

Once you have created a petition with clear demands, the most crucial work begins, and that is making people aware of your demands, educating them on why your demands are important, and getting their support.

This can look like:

- Finding a spot on campus to set up a table and talk to students about your issue! Have a laptop available so that folks can sign your petition online right away, or have a physical copy available.
- Posting your petition on social media, creating a video, or otherwise informing students about the issue.

Meet students wherever they are at, and make sure you make a wide variety of students aware of your petition — not just the students in your circle of friends! In order to get support you need to educate folks on the “why” of your petition. Therefore, the story around your demands is just as important as the demands themselves! Everyone you talk to should understand why you are making these demands, so they feel compelled to fully support your petition and encourage others to sign it. Making a list of stakeholders who are relevant to the subject of petition is an important step in outreach.

At this point, you will be in an optimal position to reach out and collaborate with other organizations on your campus, your list of relevant stakeholders will work as a map to guide your outreach efforts. Reaching out to other stakeholders will help build community support around your cause, and will increase the success of your petition.

Delivering Your Petition

How you deliver the petition once you’ve finished collecting signatures is also important. Keep in mind that there are a variety of ways to present your petition, such as a creative way like a student dance party where a group of students dance into an important board meeting — creative presentations are a great way for everyone involved to have more fun, and to attract even more attention to your petition.

Be sure to schedule a follow-up meeting to talk about your demands, with whoever your petition is aimed towards. This will help them understand why your demands are important, and you can also speak to them about student experiences you might have heard when you were collecting signatures.

It’s important, most of all, that even if they do not meet your demands, that whoever is in receipt of your petition knows that these conversations will continue. And even if your administration or government is not willing to meet your specific demands, a conversation allows room for you to suggest another action that might be a step in the right direction.

Petitions are one of many tools that can be used to create change on your campus, and they are most often effective when combined with other tools from this toolkit. For example, you can create an email template and have students email blast your administration or government in addition to signing a petition.

Ultimately, petitions are a great tool to use when you are trying to raise awareness about a specific issue and want to demonstrate that you have widespread support behind how you believe that issue should be addressed. Even if you do not get your demands met right away, the work you put into any petition has the potential to start conversations and advance work on your given issue — just maybe not in ways you initially thought! Keep at it, and change will come.

PARTNERSHIPS

By: Carina Gabriele



Our work on campus is made possible through the collective efforts, work, time, and energy of our communities. We cannot do this work alone. This is especially true for gender-based violence advocacy. Campus gender-based violence advocacy is built on a legacy of incredible student activism. The foundation of partnerships — the process of engaging in work/practice/care with another on-or-off-campus group, peer, community expert, student council, stakeholder, individual, club, organization, etc. — is recognizing and appreciating the need to work collectively to advance progress on our campuses.

Why Partnerships?

When doing gender-based violence work on campus, partnerships are crucial for the long-term success and sustainability of your efforts. Why?

- **PARTNERSHIPS ELEVATE YOUR WORK**, and ensure you reach more people.
- **PARTNERSHIPS ALLOW FOR THE SHARING** of resources and expertise.
- **PARTNERSHIPS PROMOTE** organizations, clubs, community experts and advocates, etc. who are already doing excellent work.
- **PARTNERSHIPS ALLOW FOR RELATIONSHIP BUILDING**, and they create bridges and networks where ones did not previously exist.
- **PARTNERSHIPS ALLOW FOR MORE DIVERSE** experiences, perspectives, and lived experiences to be centred in this work.
- **PARTNERSHIPS RECOGNIZE THAT THIS WORK CANNOT BE DONE ALONE.** Many students who engage in gender-based violence advocacy do so from a place of passion, which means this work can often be tiring. You deserve rest and care (check out the “Self-Care” tool to learn more). Partnerships allow for the work to be shared, and thus more sustainable.

What are Partnerships?

Before discussing how to engage in partnerships, let's first explore what partnerships mean in the context of your advocacy on campus. Partnerships do not have to be formal arrangements. So long as all parties consent to partner on an initiative, then the partnership is valid. When you take time and care to build a strong partnership, the result is stronger advocacy!

When I was a student union executive on Western's University Students' Council (USC), I participated in a partnership with our local sexual assault centre, Anova, to bring their work on a city-wide initiative to Western's campus. Anova had received funding to participate in the United Nations' Safe Cities initiative, a five-year research and action project to make the City of London a place where women, girls, nonbinary and trans individuals, and survivors can access public spaces and participate in public life without fear or experience of sexual violence. As a student union executive, I created a formal partnership between our student union and Anova in order to make the work of Safe Cities better known to our student population. Through this partnership, we conducted and promoted research from Safe Cities; I participated on a Community Advisory Board as a representative of our student union; we promoted the work of Safe Cities to our students; and we brought the findings of Safe Cities to campus administration in order to inform our gender-based violence advocacy priorities.

Creating a partnership with Anova was crucial for advancing gender-based violence advocacy on our campus and beyond.

Through this partnership, we were able to:

- Create a relationship with an off-campus stakeholder. Now that our student union and Anova have established a partnership, there are opportunities to continue working together in the future.
- Use our platform to elevate Anova's work and bring it to campus (which is crucial! Sexual assault centres support students, and student volunteers support sexual assault centres. Spreading awareness is huge).
- Bring legitimacy to the campus advocacy being done. Having the backing of experts and partners helps when advocating to campus administration (for more on this, see the "Talking with Administration" tool).
- Promote an amazing initiative being done by community experts. This is important! We didn't need to replicate or recreate work already being done in the community. We were able to share our existing platform of 30 000 students to support a community initiative.
- Bring community resources to campus. Partnering with an organization outside of your campus allows that work to be shared farther, and perhaps have a greater impact because folks off campus will be able to continue that work after you've graduated.

Partnership How-To's

Partnerships aren't easy- and that's ok. They should take work, care, honesty, and dedication. Before you start a partnership, here are some helpful tips and reflection questions.

Partnerships should be...

- Consensual
 - All parties should agree to partner for an initiative.
- Honest and open
- Encouraging and supportive
- Transparent
- Accepting and accessible

Partnerships should not be...

- Exploitative
- Patronizing
- Harmful
- About personal gain
- Taking credit for work already being done
- Especially not speaking up or over work being done by Black, Racialized, 2SLGBTQQIA, or Indigenous peers or organizations.

Reflection questions. Ask yourself:

1. What work are you doing? Is someone else already doing that work?
2. Will this partnership benefit my community, and advance gender-based violence advocacy on campus?
3. Is a partnership needed? A partnership shouldn't be something you do because you want to be involved in something new.
4. What space am I taking up in doing this work? What privilege do I have in this space?
5. Am I uplifting the work of the community by engaging in this partnership?
6. Am I speaking up or over the work of Black, Racialized, 2SLGBTQQIA, or Indigenous peers or organizations?
7. Where are moments I can bring in perspectives and experiences that are not already reflected in this work?

Now that you are equipped with this trusty tool on partnerships, you should have the know-how to engage in meaningful partnerships to continue our collective work to address and prevent gender-based violence on campus!

Interested in learning more? Check out Courage to Act's blog post about [Six Ways PSI's Can Collaborate with GBV Organizations](#). (Khan & Vivash, 2020).

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

By: Nell Perry



Why Write Policy Recommendations?

The idea of policy recommendations can sound complicated, though policy recommendations are really just identifying a problem and suggesting a solution. Policy recommendations are one of many levers of change that can be used on post-secondary campuses. This tool will suggest a few questions to keep in mind when writing policy recommendations.

It's important to acknowledge that policy often exists in spaces that mirror the unjust structures, many of which exist within institutions and within political spaces. As anti-violence advocates, it is essential to ensure that our organizing strategies are ultimately working to dismantle these unjust systems and that we recognize the elitist spaces that policy work often exists in. When doing policy work, an important way to work towards this is to rely on insight, lived experiences and knowledge from survivors themselves, as research often relies on colonial approaches to knowledge.

What Is Your Motivation?

First, it's important to know (or find!) your motivations for writing recommendations. What are the changes that you want to see in your student union, your institution or in your province/territory? In which areas have student needs been neglected and what gaps exist in gender-based violence (GBV) prevention, education and support? What regulations that currently exist have not been created through an intersectional, trauma-informed, survivor-centric lens?

There are so many policy changes that need to happen within many of our current contexts that it can be hard to know where to start. The Courage to Act report and other tools from the Communities of Practice offer numerous 'best practices' that could be a great starting point for thinking about actionable changes to include in your recommendations. The Courage to Act report and other tools from the Communities of Practice offer numerous 'best practices' that could be a great starting point for thinking about actionable changes to include in your recommendations (Dunne et al., 2020; Ending Violence Association of BC, 2016; Salvino et al., 2017).

Who Are The Recommendations For?

After finding your motivation(s) for writing recommendations, it is important to ensure that your recommendations are being written for the right authority level. Policy recommendations are often written for (though not limited to) student unions, administration within an institution, and governments (municipal, provincial, federal).

For example, if you want to see more consent culture awareness spread through a sexual violence awareness campaign, your policy recommendations can be written to your students' union. If your recommendations pertain to more than one institution in your province, they can be written to the provincial education minister (see Government Relations Tool for more).

Who Else Do You Need To Talk To?

Consultation with other students/student groups are important steps to ensure you are writing good policy recommendations (see the Consultation Tool for more). A few offices/groups to keep in mind are the Indigenous student association, Black student association and sexual violence office/staff person, if these exist on your campus. Consultation is important to ensure that the policy recommendations are rooted in your community's needs and reflect more than one group's needs.

Reaching out for more information to fully understand the policy that you are writing recommendations for is important to make sure that your recommendations are actionable suggestions that can be used to prompt and suggest change. Your institution may have a legal clinic, a student advocate office, or a student council member that is able to help you understand how the current policy works.

1 Other organizations that do GBV work on campus who have recommendations and best practices available:

- Students for Consent Culture, "A National Student-led Action Plan to End Campus Sexual Violence" <https://sfcccanada.org/action-plan>
- Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, "Policy Paper: Gender-based and Sexual Violence Prevention and Response" https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ousa/pages/89/attachments/original/1589900116/Gender-based_and_Sexual_Violence_Prevention_and_Response_document.pdf?1589900116
- EVA BC, "Campus Sexual Violence: Guidelines for a Comprehensive Response" https://endingviolence.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/EVABC_CampusSexualViolenceGuidelines_vF.pdf

How Should You Write The Recommendations?

When beginning to write policy recommendations it is important to think about strategies for conveying the recommendations in a concise and direct way. The recommendations should be actionable; meaning that you should be recommending a specific action that the authority can take. Rather than identifying pervasive cultural problems (ex: lack of consent culture on campus) it is better to identify concrete steps that will work to change the culture (ex: campaign about sexual violence on campus to raise awareness).

Policy recommendations are often formatted in 3 sections:

1. **PROBLEM:** Explanation of the problem/the reason why you want change.
2. **RECOMMENDATION:** Explanation of your actionable recommendation/explanation of what needs to happen for the problem to be improved/solved
3. **EXPLANATION:** Explain why the problem is a problem and why your recommendation will be able to change the problem.

Writing policy recommendations is only one of many tools that can be used to create change on your campus. It can be strategic to combine policy recommendations with other strategies that are listed in this toolkit, such as a protest or a campaign. This is likely to be most effective and garner the most support.

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POLICY REVIEW & FEEDBACK

By: Tia Wong



Following the #MeToo movement and student mobilization around campus sexual violence, provincial governments across Canada have passed laws mandating post-secondary institutions have sexual violence policies in place. Although these bills were a step in the right direction to curb sexualized violence on campuses, these policies are not always helpful, and can often actually cause harm, to survivors.

Students have largely taken matters into their own hands to ensure their institution's sexual violence policy works for survivors. This guide is a brief introduction to reviewing and providing feedback on sexual violence policies.

Reviewing a Sexual Violence Policy

1. Read through the entire policy and procedures (if separate)
2. Speak to diverse groups of students on your campus, including graduate and undergraduate students (ensuring you reach individuals of differing race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability representative of your campus). This is important for building a grassroots movement on campus and really understanding how the policy is received by the student body. For more information about consulting students, please see Consultation 101 by Kainat Javed (Javed, 2021).
3. Highlight any sections that stand out to you – language that is concerning, confusing, intriguing, or helpful.
4. Collaborate with fellow students on campus or at other institutions. We can advocate for the most effective and survivor-centric policies when we learn what to look for from our peers. Student unions, and student groups at the provincial or federal level may also have resources to support you in this process.
5. Use existing tools created by and for students, such as Students for Consent Culture [Canada's One Year Later Report Policy Scorecard](#) (Salvino & Spencer, 2019). Use resources that have been created within your campus community as well – students have been doing this work for generations, and you may be able to learn from the actions previous generations have undertaken.
6. Alongside your campus and community partners, make note of sections that should be removed, added, or updated.

Providing Feedback to the Institution

Most post-secondary institutions that enact a sexual violence policy will require a review every few years after the initial draft. The review often includes consultation with students, faculty, and staff. This is a great opportunity to provide feedback on the policy, so prepare your review in advance of these consultations. Student unions usually meet with administration on a regular basis – your student representatives can help you determine relevant timelines in order to communicate your concerns and organize more efficiently around the policy review. For more guidance on talking to administrators, please see Talking with Administration by Julia Burnham (Burnham, 2021).

Organize with groups and individuals on your campus who see the need for better policy – this might include activists, women's centres, clubs, safety groups, gender and sexuality resource centres, sexual assault support centres, undergraduate and graduate student unions, and student politicians. Write out your demands as a collective to amplify the message toward the administration.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSULTATION:

For real and lasting change, consultation and improvement of sexual violence policies and procedures need to be ongoing. Over the last few years, awareness of this issue has grown exponentially. However, most institutions are failing to respond to the shifting needs of our communities. Some institutions are basing their education responses, emotional supports, and prevention efforts on formal reporting – but if the #MeToo movement has taught us anything, it is that barriers to reporting are rampant in the criminal justice system as well as other institutional processes.

Conversations about sexual violence on campus should not be relegated to every three years when the sexual violence policy is up for review. These discussions should be embedded in campus life, allowing us to see what is truly going on at our schools. This also eliminates what we have often seen as rush jobs – consultations performed on a timeline that does not allow for students to prepare and properly engage with the consultation or for their contributions to be thoughtfully considered and incorporated.

Consultation can take many different forms. The administration could set up consultations that are run by their employees, who may set up focus groups or student town halls. The consultations may also be student-led, or student-led with admin support. It's important to question where the power lies in the consultation process. Student voices should not be an afterthought – they should be front and centre, embedded into the entire process.

It is also important that the institution pay students for the labour of consultation. Gender-based violence is a topic that requires a lot of emotional energy to address, and students should be compensated for their efforts and providing their expertise. This is an area that you may want to advocate for if the institution does not have a compensation plan in place.

STUDENT-RUN PROCESSES:

Your institution is not the only body with the power to hold consultations. Even if the institution implements a consultation process, students can take matters into their own hands by collecting stories and data from the campus community. Pre-existing procedures and structures exist within equity-seeking groups such as women's collectives, Indigenous peer groups, disability justice offices, and/or campus town halls.

Not only does a student-run process redistribute power back to the community, it also allows for groups to gather information in ways that are culturally located or appropriate to the needs of the community. Ensure you obtain consent from students and community members whose stories you collect and/or share through this process.

Demanding Change from the Institution

If the post-secondary institution does not require the policy to be reviewed and consulted on by students before it is ratified or is never reviewed after the initial draft, it is still important to make your voices heard. Students across the country have resorted to protests, open letters, newspaper editorials, and petitions against administrations to voice their demands. We have strength in numbers, so this step is a great opportunity to join forces with student unions and other groups.

Use social media and community spaces on campus to raise awareness on the importance of the sexual violence policy – then mobilize your group to get the attention of the administration. Through a mixture of online campaigning and in-person actions (like sit-ins, protests, walk-outs, and banner-drops), your group can bring attention to your demands. Be prepared to speak to the media, whether that's a campus blog or a national news outlet. For further guidance on media relations, please consult *Speaking with Media* by Aubrianna Snow (Snow, 2021).

Continuing the Work

Even after a big policy win, there is always more work to be done. By this point, you will have built connections, alliances, and maybe even an official coalition with other individuals and groups on campus. Maintain your momentum by continuing to work together – keep pushing the administration for more of your demands and making campus a safer place.

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PROVIDING FEEDBACK & CHALLENGING POOR SERVICE FROM A UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE

By: Taylor Irvine



When it comes to gender-based violence on campus, student groups often must keep institutions accountable and ensure that the voices of students are heard by providing feedback and challenging poor service. While the systems of higher education have historically been oppressive, it is an important part of the student experience to challenge these systems and advocate for those whose needs are unmet by the institution. The following are five steps you can use to hold your institution accountable and get your message across!

Step 1 - Identify the Type of Relationship you have with your Institution, and their Priorities

- **STUDENT GROUPS AT INSTITUTIONS WITH A MORE CLOSE-KNIT COMMUNITY** may have an easier time forming a relationship with their administration. With this type of relationship, it may be easier for you to schedule regular meetings and keep administration up to date on current issues affecting students. This is a great opportunity to bring your concerns to the table and prevent issues from escalating. However it is important to remember that institutions that appear to be really open and welcoming to student feedback don't always implement anything that students have brought to them. These administrations still need to be held accountable. Check out the "Talking with Administration" Tool for more information on how to have a meaningful conversation with your administration that leads to change. Check out the "Talking with Administration" Tool for more information on how to have a meaningful conversation with your administration that leads to change (Burnham, 2021).
- **STUDENT GROUPS THAT ARE NOT AS CLOSE WITH THEIR ADMINISTRATION**, or struggle because they are not invited to discussions affecting students, may be forced to take on more outward forms of advocacy that directly address the administration and include a call to action. This may include forms of protest or media attention to get your administration's attention. The "Protest" Tool, "Petition" Tool, or "Speaking with Media" Tool will have more information on these types of advocacy. The "Protest" Tool, "Petition" Tool, or "Speaking with Media" Tool will have more information on these types of advocacy (Levi, 2021; Levi & Perry, 2021; Snow, 2021).

Try your best to identify what kind of relationship you have with your administration, which may be affected by a range of factors. Is your student group incorporated? Incorporated student unions do not require permission in carrying out their advocacy, whereas unincorporated unions usually do. Has your student group met with your administration in the past? If so, what was the result? Has your institution followed up on your feedback in the past? Have they followed up on your requests for meetings? From your understanding, what are their priorities? These questions may help you determine what kind of relationship you have with your administration and where to start.

Step 2 - Create clearly Articulated Recommendations for your Institution that are informed by Student Experiences and Research

Once you have an idea of how you want to approach your institution, begin thinking about your main concerns and goals. Your administration is more likely to take your concerns seriously if you can show how and by how much students are impacted by poor service and how they could benefit from your recommendations. Do the research and collect student voices on how they have been impacted and use this to their benefit when advocating for gender-based violence prevention. Additionally, be mindful of whose voices you are including. Research shows that female-identifying BIPOC and 2SLGBTQ+ students experience GBV at higher rates (Boyce, 2016; Cotter & Savage, 2019). Student survivor-centric advocacy must ensure these voices are included and elevated. If possible, highlight how the changes you are advocating for would benefit not only the students but your institution as a whole. This may make your administration more receptive to these changes.

Step 3 - Consult Students and gather Student Voices

It is important to ensure your recommendations are supported by the student population. Involve as many students where you can and ensure that they are informed of the current situation so they can support you in your advocacy.

There is strength in numbers, so the more students you have to sign your petition, share your recommendations, or attend your demonstration will ultimately give your cause more weight and could make the administration more responsive. Including more student voices in the conversation may also bring up new ideas and perspectives that you haven't thought of before! Check out the "Consultation 101" Tool for more information on effective consultation with your student population (Javed, 2021)!

1 StatsCan. 2019. Gender-based violence and unwanted sexual behaviour in Canada, 2018: Initial findings from the Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces. Retrieved from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2019001/article/00017-eng.htm>.

11 StatsCan. 2014. Victimization of Aboriginal people in Canada, 2014. Retrieved from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2016001/article/14631-eng.htm>.

Step 4 - Make Contacts within your Institution's Faculty and Administration

This may include professors, TA's, instructors, or staff members who sympathize with your concerns and can help point you in the right direction for focusing your advocacy. Challenging the administration can be daunting, but having a faculty member on your side who can help you secure a meeting with the administration will help you get your foot in the door—which is half the battle!

If you are able to secure a meeting with administration, use this opportunity to set up future meetings or request to be involved in future discussions that affect students. Constructive dialogue may lead to better solutions than having to respond negatively to administrative decisions after the fact—take advantage if you have the opportunity!

Step 5 - Explore Other Avenues for your Advocacy

In cases where your institution is not being communicative or cooperative, you may have to direct your advocacy to other avenues. You can team up in solidarity with other like-minded student groups to increase the number of students behind your cause and gain more influence on your campus. See “Creating Support” Tool, (Wright, 2021). You can also seek media attention either within student-led media outlets or with local media to help get the word out about your concerns and how students are being affected. See “Speaking to Media” Tool, (Snow, 2021).

These steps can help get your institution's attention and take your concerns more seriously, since reputation is a significant priority for many institutions. Finally, if the change you want to see is not happening at an institutional level, perhaps the change that is needed is legislative. You can direct your advocacy towards the provincial government by contacting the MPP of your riding or by sending them a letter that includes your recommendations. See “Government Relations” Tool, (Dunne, 2021). It would also be a good idea to reach out to the Ministry for Women's Issues or Post-Secondary Education within your province, as they can bring your concerns back to the government of the day and advocate for change on your behalf.

Step 6 - Be Persistent and be Confident!

Challenging your institution may at times be a frustrating task if your calls go unanswered and your concerns unacknowledged. Take a look at the “Self Care” Tool for tips on how to take care of yourself while carrying out this challenging work (Malankov, 2021). You know exactly what kind of change students need—you have the authority to speak on these issues! Continue to speak up to make your voice heard. Challenging your institution may be a frustrating task but not a fruitless one. You will make an impact along the way if you are persistent and continue to mobilize students for your cause.

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SAMPLE LETTER TO THE GOVERNMENT

By: Cat Dunne



Letter writing can be an effective strategy to bring forward your concerns directly to an elected representative. When I was OUSA President, we organized a letter-writing campaign to call on the Provincial Government to reverse the OSAP cuts. Students across the province wrote over 1000 letters telling their stories about how the changes to OSAP would make it harder, or impossible, for them to continue their post-secondary education. Here are some lessons I learned from organizing this campaign on how to write letters in order to most effectively advance your cause.

First - You should decide who you are going to write to

Typically, this is either:

1. Your local representative (MP, MPP/MLA/MHA, ward councillor or mayor) OR;
2. The relevant ministers, critics, parliamentary assistants, or the premier's office

Your elected representatives have a duty to advocate on your behalf and represent their constituents' views, and most local representatives will reply directly to their constituents. However, ministries have more direct ability to change a policy. If you are trying to change a specific policy, it is your best to address the letter to the Minister, and cc' the opposition critics and your local representative to add pressure to your efforts.

Second - Get started on your letter

- **MAKE IT UNIQUE**
 - Representatives are more likely to read and respond to your letter if it is unique (not directly from a template)
- **ADD PERSONAL ANECDOTES**
 - Elected representatives are more likely to enact change if they hear about the concrete impacts a policy is having on their constituents.
- **INCLUDE FACTS AND EVIDENCE IF YOU HAVE THEM**
- **KEEP IT SIMPLE AND DIRECT**
 - Politicians receive hundreds of emails and letters every day. It is important to keep your letter within one page, and to explain who you are, why you are writing, and what you want the elected official to do clearly.
- **INCLUDE AN ASK**
 - Ensure you include a direct call to action. These asks might include:
 - Voting in favour or against a piece of legislation
 - Asking a question in the legislature
 - Proposing an amendment to a piece of legislation
 - Implementing a new policy (include a policy recommendation)
- **ASK FOR A RESPONSE FROM THE POLITICIAN**

- **USE PROPER STYLE AND FORM**

- Be respectful
- Address using the proper title (and always double-check spelling on names and titles)
 - If the person you are writing to is a current or former minister, ensure that you utilize “Honourable” in addressing them
 - If they are the mayor, “Your worship” is appropriate
- Use the proper mailing address
 - Most politicians will have several mailing addresses - one for their constituency office, one for their office in the legislature, and one for their ministry (if they are a minister)
 - If you are writing as a constituent, write to their constituency office.
 - For a ministry, use their ministry office. If you are writing to a politician as a member of caucus, member of the opposition, or a critic, use their legislature address.

- **PUBLICIZE YOUR LETTER TO ADD PUBLIC PRESSURE AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

- Usually, you should give the politician you’re writing to an opportunity to respond before publicizing (2-3 weeks)
- Most of the tips in this document are intended for an individual writing a letter. However, you also may be writing as a part of a letter-writing campaign and you can share that you’ve written a letter to encourage others to do the same! The more people asking = an increase in public support.
- If you want to elevate the status of your ask, you may want to publicize your letter in an “open letter” format and share it on social media or a news platform. This is most often done for asks that require an immediate response, where time may be lost through the normal channels.
- Inform the media about your letter-writing campaign (and see Aubrianna’s tool for more information on this)! Since letters are often private, they do not always hold politicians accountable. Informing media about the number of letters a group is writing as part of a campaign can add a layer of accountability.

Formula	Example
<p>Proper title and name</p>	<p>The Honourable _____</p>
<p>Address for the Ministry of Colleges and Universities</p>	<p>Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities 5th Floor, 438 University Ave Toronto, ON M7A 2A5</p>
<p>Explanation of who the writer is and why they are writing</p>	<p>I am writing to you today as an Ontarian, an alumna of Western University, and as the former President of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. I am also writing to you as a student, and a survivor of gender-based violence, who is deeply concerned with the discrepancies of gender-based violence resources and support services on our various post-secondary campuses throughout Ontario.</p>
<p>Use of facts and evidence</p>	<p>Gender-based violence is pervasive across North America, and is disproportionately felt by post-secondary students. In fact, almost 33% of students from Western University who completed the Student Voices on Sexual Violence survey reported they experienced sexual assault in the 2017-2018 academic semester.</p>
<p>Explanation of the problem</p>	<p>At Western University, there is currently only one position dedicated to supporting survivors of gender-based violence, and one dedicated to completing education work. This means that if all survivors from one year were to request support, only 1820 (of over 11,000) would be able to access support. While there are resources in the community, these are underfunded and are struggling now more than ever due to government cuts.</p>
<p>Addition of a personal anecdote</p>	<p>I am deeply concerned about this because in my second year, as a Residence Advisor, I witnessed a survivor of sexual assault fall through the cracks. She ended up dropping out of school because of the trauma she endured, and a gap in the resources available on campus to help support her. This is sadly, not an isolated incident.</p>

Formula	Example
<p>Presentation of solution</p>	<p>In order to prevent sexual violence, and ensure those that do experience violence have access to the resources they need to heal and continue their academic journeys, it is essential that campuses are appropriately staffed in proportion to their campus population. On many campuses, only one or two educators exist for the entire campus community, and in some cases, there are no dedicated positions at all. Urgent investment is needed to fill these gaps.</p>
<p>Direct ask to solve the problem</p>	<p>You can help us ensure survivors get the support they need. Please amend section 17 of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act to mandate universities employ a proportional number of dedicated gender-based violence positions for their campus community.</p>
<p>Use of facts and evidence</p>	<p>Gender-based violence is pervasive across North America, and is disproportionately felt by post-secondary students. In fact, almost 33% of students from Western University who completed the Student Voices on Sexual Violence survey reported they experienced sexual assault in the 2017-2018 academic semester.</p>
<p>Thank you and request for a response</p>	<p>Thank you for your dedication to students across Ontario, and I look forward to receiving a response from you soon.</p>
<p>Sign off</p>	<p>Sincerely, Name Address Contact Info</p>

An example of it all put together:

The Honourable _____
Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities
5th Floor, 438 University Ave
Toronto, ON M7A 2A5

Dear Minister _____,

I am writing to you today as an Ontarian, an alumna of Western University, and as the former President of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. I am also writing to you as a student, and a survivor of gender-based violence, who is deeply concerned with the discrepancies of gender-based violence resources and support services on our various post-secondary campuses throughout Ontario.

Gender-based violence is pervasive across North America, and is disproportionately felt by post-secondary students. In fact, almost 33% of students from Western University who completed the Student Voices on Sexual Violence survey reported they experienced sexual assault in the 2017-2018 academic semester.

At Western University, there is currently only one position dedicated to supporting survivors of gender-based violence, and one dedicated to completing education work. This means that if all survivors from one year were to request support, only 1820 (of over 11,000) would be able to access support. While there are resources in the community, these are underfunded and are struggling now more than ever due to government cuts.

I am deeply concerned about this because in my second year, as a Residence Advisor, I witnessed a survivor of sexual assault fall through the cracks. She ended up dropping out of school because of the trauma she endured, and a gap in the resources available on campus to help support her. This is sadly, not an isolated incident.

In order to prevent sexual violence, and ensure those that do experience violence have access to the resources they need to heal and continue their academic journeys, it is essential that campuses are appropriately staffed in proportion to their campus population. On many campuses, only one or two educators exist for the entire campus community, and in some cases, there are no dedicated positions at all. Urgent investment is needed to fill these gaps.

You can help us ensure survivors get the support they need. Please amend section 17 of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act to mandate universities employ a proportional number of dedicated gender-based violence positions for their campus community.

Thank you for your dedication to students across Ontario, and I look forward to receiving a response from you soon.

Sincerely,

Name

Address

Contact Info

SELF ADVOCATING WITHIN THE SYSTEM

By: Tayler Glaspey



As a shy, post-secondary student with little confidence and learning challenges, I had to learn to self-advocate to make sure I had my needs met. I learned really quickly because I knew if I didn't I would not survive the post-secondary system. When it came to accessing services, meeting deadlines, having my accommodations met, I had to advocate. As a survivor and someone with a disability, I didn't have a choice. It was sink or swim.

Ultimately, I learned that being able to self-advocate for yourself and to support others is a skill that is extremely useful. Asking for support is not something we are often directly taught and there is stigma or shame around asking for support. Rather it should be normalized, further advocating helps break the stigma around seeking support. Self-advocacy allows for you to find your voice and show others that you deserve respect and to be listened to. As a result, you will gain self-confidence and pride by understanding how to do self-advocacy effectively to achieve your personal goals. Self-advocacy can seem like a challenging task; but once you get the handle of it, it's not as difficult as one thinks. This tool is to help you think through how you can navigate a post-secondary institution and the various systems intertwined with it. I am going to share ways I supported myself and then eventually other students. A couple of things to know about self-advocacy.

We Are Not All the Same:

Each student on campus who is experiencing gender-based violence requires a variety of different needs and supports. For example, a student with a disability might require different support than a non-disabled student or an international student might require additional support than a domestic student. Support services need to recognize this and not prescribe a formula approach based on the medical model. With more student organizers advocating, we can hopefully create a more inclusive space for all students experiencing gender-based violence and make people aware of the many barriers students face.

Understand Barriers

With advocacy comes recognizing barriers in any system. Patriarchy is one such barrier that student organizers and survivors of gender-based violence will face and it is deeply embedded in most systems in Canada including in post-secondary institutions. Patriarchy refers to male dominance of women and girls and is found in personal relationships as well as wider societal institutions, ultimately affecting the policies and dictating the values and norms on campus. Key to accessing on-campus services is learning how to navigate through the medical model. The medical model requires a diagnosis and everything about the person is reduced to just a diagnosis. This model can be a huge barrier when trying to obtain course extensions, or counselling services as they look for an official diagnosis over the gravity of the situation. It can also be re-traumatizing.

Brainstorm What You Need and What Supports You can Access

The first thing to do when self-advocating and navigating through the system is to use existing supports. But it is important to find what works best for you. The technique of brainstorming ideas or goals in a mind map, a list, or paragraphs is extremely helpful. Brainstorming does not have to be formal and you can use any type of resource like sticky notes, a notebook or a laptop. You can write down the problem or the request, find some background information, and identify your goal. This resource that you've created will help you in phone calls, constructing letters, in meetings, and accessing support services. It enables you to stay on track, be concise, and also helps prepare for any meeting.

Talk to People You Trust

The next strategy that can be beneficial is to talk through your request with friends and build networking relationships with students and faculty to support your goal. This kind of networking helps you navigate through the systems and find the right people or departments to discuss your goal. It can provide validation where you as the student organizer can feel further supported when things become challenging. Self-advocacy and advocacy in general can be emotionally exhausting, which is why it is crucial to practice self-care techniques, participate in debriefings with others, and take breaks when needed.

Connect With Trusted Supports

Another strategy is to find support from people within the postsecondary institution (PSI) and even connect with people within the local community if possible. An example of an organization that can be beneficial to connect with is non-profits. Or consider using social media platforms to connect with other students from across the country. You can encourage them to write a letter of support for you and your goal. This is how you use your own experiences and knowledge to fuel your advocacy.

The departmental systems on campus include but are not limited to administration, counselling services, accessibility services, student unions, faculty departments, and etc. These systems can operate within the postsecondary institution (PSI) and have their own internal operations, or policies. It can be helpful to take notes of conversations you have with different departments and write down the name of the person you are speaking to for future reference. It is helpful to ask for responses in writing just so you can keep track of the progress and keep the departmental system accountable later in the process.

Trust Yourself

Advocating is a lot of work, and you know what is going on and what the end goal is. Remember, you are the expert and are involved in both the advocating and change process. You also understand your experience, your body, and your life and how they influence your work.

As you work within advocacy, it can be intimidating; you need to learn how to trust yourself. Express your feelings and opinions. Say them, and don't apologize for it. We know ourselves more than others, and we need to share our expertise. We also need to believe in ourselves and allow for breaks. Furthermore, when something feels off or does not feel right, recognize it and not be afraid to make a formal complaint. Suppose you feel uncomfortable; that alone is a valid reason to bring that forward.

When I started this work and I was a part of various advisory committees, I was uncomfortable. I struggled because I was not confident in allowing myself to contribute my thoughts and opinions in sessions full of experts. It got to the point that I would say my point and then follow it with a “sorry.” At some point during the meetings I was pulled aside by one of the event coordinators She told me to “stop apologizing, and that I was there for a reason and people want to hear what I have to say”; Her words have stuck with me ever since. I am still working towards fully, trusting myself as I value myself, my education and my experiences.

Self-Care

Allowing time for yourself to practice self-care is essential in repairing and restoring your body from exhaustion. Advocacy work can be a lot, emotionally. Sometimes it can feel like you are going through a tunnel and you can not see the light at the other end; even if you don't see the light, you are getting closer to your goal and systemic change. Therefore it is imperative to practice self-care and take care of yourself along the way.

There is no wrong way to practice self-care. Self-care is subjective to what you like and find comfort in doing. Take time for yourself to engage with yourself! Schedule a block of time each week or each day to have a check-in with yourself and do something that grounds yourself. For me, I sometimes take lunch to the beach and have a picnic with myself, where I can let go of the challenges from the week before. I allow myself to be in nature and have some alone time where I'm not on my phone, social media or emails. Having a set, undisturbed time to do my hobbies such as reading for fun or creating art is grounding. Whatever process works for you, trust yourself and allow yourself time to be re-energized so that you can continue doing this work.



KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK:

This work is exciting; you are contributing to real changes and conversations on campus. Once you figure out what practices and methods work best for you, it becomes easier. Allow yourself to delegate to team members and to practice self-care, and remember to advocate just as much for yourself as you do for others.

SELF-CARE

By: Chenthoori Malankov



Self-care takes many forms. There is no right or wrong way to practice self-care. It can be anything that supports your basic needs. Eating your favourite food, taking the time to read a book, or spending time with friends are small ways to take care of yourself. As community leaders and activists of ending sexual violence on your university campuses, you are busy and it's easy to put your needs on the back burner and this often leads to burnout. Many of you have been committed to this work either due to lived experiences, passion or being a support person to a friend or family member. When you are listening to other people's lived experiences and watching the news outlets on ongoing conversations of gender-based violence you are in a constant state of receiving secondary trauma.

There are some common responses to trauma. These are some of the ways that working with people affected by trauma can impact student organizers. A student organizer may experience any of these:

16 Themes of Common Vicarious Trauma Response

The concept of vicarious trauma was developed by studying therapists who worked with survivors of sexual violence. Researchers Pearlmann and Saakvitne (1995) believe that when we listen to the traumatic stories shared by clients, our view of ourselves and the world is permanently transformed.

How can you Recognize Vicarious Trauma?

1. Feeling hopeless and helpless
2. A sense that one can never do enough
3. Hypervigilance
4. Diminished creativity
5. Compromised ability to embrace complexity (black and white, right and wrong, “us” and “them” thinking)
6. Minimizing
7. Chronic exhaustion/physical ailments
8. Compromised ability to listen/deliberate avoidance
9. Dissociative moments
10. Sense of persecution
11. Guilt
12. Fear
13. Anger and cynicism (negative thinking)
14. Compromised ability to empathize
15. Sleeplessness
16. Contemplating rescue fantasies

Doing Self-Care

Since vicarious trauma impacts all aspects of our personal and professional selves, it is important to plan various aspects of self-care. Here is a list of examples that practice multiple 'self-care':

Here is a list of examples that practice multiple 'self-care':

1. PHYSICAL SELF-CARE

- Eat regularly (e.g., breakfast and lunch)
- Eat healthfully
- Exercise
- Get enough sleep
- Schedule and Practice regular physical activities and exercises (e.g., yoga)
- Get regular medical care for prevention
- Take time off when you're sick and when you need to re-energize your mind and body
- Get massages or other bodywork
- Get away from stressful technology such as cell phones and other electronics

2. EMOTIONAL SELF-CARE

- Spend time with others whose company you enjoy
- Stay in contact with important people in your life
- Treat yourself kindly (supportive inner dialogue or self-talk)
- Feel proud of yourself
- Reread favourite books, review favourite movies or music
- Identify and seek out comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, places
- Allow yourself to cry
- Find things that make you laugh
- Express your outrage or anger in a constructive way
- Play with families, friends, children and pets
- Taking time away from social media: Twitter, Instagram, Facebook

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL SELF-CARE

- Grounding exercise: *The significance of grounding in trauma work with a demonstration example* [1:40min] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5LO8JaRszg> (Mayo Clinic, 2020)
- Make time for reflection, meditation, prayer
- Spend time in nature
- Participate in a spiritual gathering, community or group
- Be open to inspiration
- Cherish your optimism and hope

- Be aware of nontangible (nonmaterial) aspects of life
- Be open to mystery, to not knowing
- Identify what is meaningful to you and notice its place in your life
- Singing or playing music
- Express gratitude
- Celebrate milestones with rituals that are meaningful to you
- Nurture others
- Have awe-full experiences
- Contribute to or participate in causes you believe in
- Read inspirational literature
- Listen to inspiring music

4. **WORKPLACE/ PROFESSIONAL SELF-CARE**

- Take time to eat lunch, do stretch, and take a short walk for fresh air
- Take time to chat with professors and peers
- Identify projects or tasks that are exciting, growth-promoting, and rewarding for you
- Take stock of what's on your plate
- Balance your workload as much as possible
- Arrange your workspace, so it is comfortable and comforting
- Get regular supervision or consultation
- Negotiate for your needs
- Attend workshops/professional training regularly
- Find time for yourself every day – Rebalance your workload
- Delegate – learn to ask for help
- Have a peer support group
- Have a transition from work to home

Mindfulness Apps

There are several Mindfulness Apps to Support Mindfulness Practices. Below are examples of apps that are helpful to find the moment of being mindful by just one clicking away whenever you feel stressed, pressured, and exhausted.

Please have fun exploring which one is appealing to you:

- ▶ The Mindfulness App by MindApps: <http://www.mindapps.se/?lang=en>
- ▶ Headspace: <https://www.headspace.com/covid-19> (Headspace, n.d.)
- ▶ Mindful Meditation by Mental Workout: <http://www.mentalworkout.com/store/programs/mindfulnessmeditation/> (Mental Workout, n.d.)

What's else?

Sometimes it's hard to identify what your needs are, especially in times we need self-care the most.

Check out these articles for more ideas:

- ▶ <https://www.colorbloq.org/>
- ▶ https://philome.la/jace_harr/you-feel-like-shit-an-interactive-self-care-guide/play/index.html

What's next?

You get back to work rejuvenated! Burnout is common, especially for activists. Practice integrating self-care in all areas of your life, one step at a time and please check out the creating support portion of this toolkit.

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Pearlman, L.A. & Saakvitne, K.W. (1995). *Trauma and the therapist: Countertransference and vicarious traumatization in psychotherapy with incest survivors*. New York: W.W. Norton.

SELF-SOOTHING WHEN TRIGGERED WHILE ORGANIZING AS A SURVIVOR

By: Emma Kuzmyk



It's no secret that many of the people who are organizing on campus and engaging in activism to address gender-based violence have been directly affected by the issues that they're fighting to prevent. For many, including myself, engaging in activism can be a coping mechanism, but there are times when you can become overwhelmed, burnt out, and ultimately triggered by the work that you are doing. When discussing triggers, it's important to recognize that being triggered is much more than things just rubbing you the wrong way; it's a psychological and physiological response to trauma. Often, a trigger will remind you of a past traumatic experience and cause you to feel like you're experiencing parts of the traumatic experience all over again. Being triggered is a very real and valid response to trauma, and can be difficult to deal with in the moment-- which is why it's so important to start strategizing before you enter a potentially triggering situation or space.

Especially in the beginning of my work, I have found that the spaces and resources that I was engaging with would cause me to realize things about my own experiences that I hadn't reflected on before, and these times would cause me to think deeply about my own assault which could then lead to flashbacks. It took me quite a while to identify these things about myself and even longer to effectively address them, so I hope that this tool might be able to support a smoother transition into this work, and provide tips for how to self-soothe when triggered while organizing as a survivor on your campus. I'll be breaking this tool into 3 sections: first to discuss some strategies that may help you before you become triggered, second to bring up some things you can do while triggered, and finally how you may be able to reflect and heal after you are triggered.

Before

DEVELOPING GROUNDING STRATEGIES:

While you are in a calm head space, before entering a potentially triggering situation/space, it is good to try and identify what types of strategies are effective for you. Grounding strategies come in many different forms, but their primary function is to refocus your attention when you may be experiencing flashbacks, unwanted thoughts, or challenging emotions. Many grounding techniques focus on controlled breathing, actively noticing your surroundings, and stimulating your senses, but these types of strategies don't necessarily work for everyone. For example, I have asthma, so taking slow deep breaths is a challenge for me and can sometimes make the situation worse. So, instead of trying to slow down my breathing, what is more effective for me is to get outside, if at all possible, and breathe in fresh air. When you're developing your own strategies, think about the needs of your body and draw on past feelings of safety as a starting block.

CHANNELLING FEELINGS OF SAFETY:

A simple strategy that has helped me in the past is reflecting on a time/space/situation where I've felt safe. If you can think of a time like that, it could be helpful to try and identify what about the situation made you feel safe, and how you can incorporate elements of that situation into your grounding strategy. Planning out your strategy prior to becoming triggered can help you to respond in the moment, so try to get as specific as possible. When you're identifying a situation that made you feel safe, think about what each of your senses were feeling during that moment and try to identify ways to replicate some of those feelings, thinking about the resources and environment you might need to do that.

PRACTICING ASSERTING YOUR NEEDS:

What has been perhaps most effective for me in identifying and tailoring effective grounding strategies has been having regular meetings with a therapist who I trust. Having this resource available, however, is certainly a privilege that I understand many do not have. If therapy is available to you, or if you already have a therapist that you feel comfortable with, discussing your situation with them may be the best way to identify your triggers and build effective strategies to address them. If this resource is not available to you or if you feel you're already sufficiently aware of your triggers and needs, it can be very helpful to practice asking for those needs before you're in a situation where you're triggered. In the moment, it can be very difficult to articulate what you're feeling or the ways that people around you can be of assistance, but repetition while you're in a calm space can make it a little bit easier. For example, I've practiced saying "talk to me about something else," so that I can assert my need to be distracted by the person/people with me in moments where I might otherwise find it difficult to talk.

During

REMOVING YOURSELF FROM THE SITUATION:

I think the most important thing to understand when you become triggered when organizing is that you do not have to carry on as if nothing is happening. You are allowed to step back and nobody will think any less of you if you do. Addressing your emotions when they arise may help to prevent more major breakdowns/burnout in the future, so though it may feel like stepping back is counter-productive, it actually allows you to continue to organize in a healthy way in the long term.

ASKING FOR HELP:

If you have already created a grounding strategy, then you can resort to this strategy while you are triggered. If you feel that you need to be in somebody's company and are in a group environment, let somebody know that you would like them with you. Asking for help is brave, not weak. If you are able to communicate what you need from a person, this can help them help you. For example when I am having a flashback what grounds me most is having somebody talk to me and ask me questions about anything other than what is making me upset, and so I'll use the phrase I've practiced repeating and say "talk to me about something else." That repetition I mentioned earlier helps me to verbalize that need when I'm in distress.

BEING PATIENT WITH YOURSELF:

Take as long as you need to feel okay. Nothing is more important than you feeling okay. You don't have to be back for the next session, or before the next break. If you do not feel as if you can return to an environment, you don't have to. Even if you are the person leading/in-charge of something, you are allowed to exit any environment you do not feel comfortable in. If somebody can take over for you that's great, and if not it is okay to cancel or postpone things. Oftentimes, the people around us are much more compassionate than our heads give them credit for, and it's only our own fear that's telling us to be embarrassed or ashamed.

After

UNDERSTANDING YOUR NEEDS:

Even when you are out of the triggering situation, anxiety can often linger or you may find yourself more prone to having flashbacks after you have been deeply triggered. At this time it is still important to actively pursue the feelings of safety. What times, what places, what people make you feel safe? It is good if you can come up with several things in case you're unable to do some of your strategies in your current environment.

RETURNING TO FEELINGS OF SAFETY:

The things that make you feel safe will be personal to you, but just as an example of what they may look like I will share mine:

- A bubble bath or a long shower
- Watching Bob Ross in bed
- Playing my favourite song on repeat
- Calling my mom
- Being with my partner
- Being in the presence of a friend
- Drinking hot chocolate
- Having tomato soup with toast

These things are personal to me, and some of them are only little but help me a lot because they bring me back to my feelings of safety and help me to avoid unhealthy coping mechanisms. Think of the things that do that for you.

I hope that some of these strategies are able to help you in your healing process, because being a survivor and an organizer is hard. But you are not alone, you are not weak, and prioritizing yourself and your healing is brave. You deserve to feel safe.

SPEAKING WITH MEDIA

By: Aubrianna Snow



Speaking to the media about gender-based violence (GBV) is an important undertaking. It can add to public discourse around gender-based violence and related issues, serve as a tool for sharing your story, or for holding institutions accountable. Speaking on the record can be an intimidating experience no matter the subject, and this can be especially true for survivors of and advocates against gender-based violence. Speaking about lived experiences can be re-traumatizing. For advocates who do not have lived experiences of gender-based violence, there may still be fears of judgment or misrepresentation.

There are also many options to consider when looking to speak with the media. Media sources range in scope from student journalism to national and international news. Often, you can find journalists who might be interested in your story by browsing the type of publication you would want your story to be in. There may be someone there who specializes in stories related to gender-based violence, or just someone whose tone you like. Social media is also a great way to attract media attention and get in touch with journalists. It's important for those partaking in GBV prevention and education work to know their rights when speaking to the media.

Saying no:

First and foremost, you always have the right to say no - to a question or an interview. You might say, "I'd prefer not to speak about that" or something similar to either request. It may seem rude in the kinds of interactions most people are used to, but journalists are generally very experienced with rejection.

When rejecting a question during an interview, you might consider avoiding any unnecessary awkwardness by quickly switching the subject to something you do wish to speak about.

Research:

A good journalist will conduct comprehensive research prior to an interview. The journalist should be invested in your comfort as an interview subject, as this will result in the best possible outcome for their story. Ask questions about the journalist's research, any of their previous work, or their stance on an issue.

Self care:

Ensuring your own well-being is of the utmost importance in doing this work. Often, as a survivor, there may be a sense of obligation to share your story and get involved as much as possible in prevention and education efforts. It's important to work against this notion - you don't owe anyone your story or your work in relation to this topic. Don't be afraid to ask for the questions ahead of the interview. This can go a long way in helping you to prepare and feel confident about the comments you give.

Review:

While some journalists aren't willing to share drafts of their work, it's well within your rights to ask to see the finished piece before publication. Particularly if a source has spoken about their personal experiences with sexual violence, the journalist should be accommodating in helping to ensure that the source said exactly what they meant to convey. Be your own advocate and don't be afraid to ask for changes to what they've quoted you on if you don't like it.

Always On the Record:

It can be an incredibly empowering feeling to give a good interview to a journalist and know that you spoke powerfully to something you care about. But, it's important to remember that anything you say to a journalist could potentially be out in the world forever. Recognize that when someone googles your name in future, they may find this link to your story and your work. Of course, if you are speaking about your experience of sexual violence, you may or may not be comfortable with potentially anyone knowing about your story. So always remember that you can say or share as much or as little as you'd like. Additionally, you can ask if you could be interviewed as an anonymous source or if your name could be changed.

Ultimately, use your intuition as your guide in choosing whether to speak with the media in your work as an advocate for the prevention of gender-based violence. Sharing your story can be empowering and healing for some, and traumatizing for others. All experiences will inevitably be different and every journalist will differ in their methods. Remember that you have rights as a source - know them and advocate for them.

WORKSHOPS

By: Vatineh Magaji



As a tool for communicating a message to large groups, workshops provide an environment where people can gain a new appreciation for the topic at hand in a comfortable and supportive space. You can synthesize the skills learned from other entries of this toolkit and present that information to a group of your peers who are eager to conquer patriarchal structures and address and prevent gender-based violence!

Why, then, does the idea of participating in a workshop sometimes cause both facilitators and audience members to shy away? While there is no clear-cut answer, this tool aims to empower facilitators with ways to find allies in the audience, handle tough questions, and avoid the type of presentation that causes audience members to pull out their laptops.

Before the Workshop Begins:

Being the person at the front of the room comes with a lot of power, especially if the audience is not as familiar with the subject matter as you are. This power allows the presenter to control the pacing and tone of each aspect of the workshop but there is also a responsibility to be mindful of the ways you frame the topics you bring up. Your position of knowledge will be influential in the perceptions people walk away with when all is said and done so it is essential to take stock of your biases and do your best to represent the material as accurately as possible.

Remember your “why” - what makes you do this work? Use those reasons to stay grounded in the material and think about your purpose in talking to this room of strangers. In considering the ultimate goal of your workshop, think about the style of presentation that will get you to that goal. There is so much value in maintaining a peer-to-peer dynamic when it comes to people’s openness to receiving new material so you may want to lean into that strength instead of keeping the presentation overly formal!

The Basics

The fundamental materials required for any workshop are as follows:

SPACE TO HOLD THE WORKSHOP - VIRTUAL OR IN-PERSON

If you’re in a space where you are at the front of the room and the presentation is projected to the wall behind you, try to position your body to face the group instead of turning to see the slides (having a screen or hard copy of the slides in front of you can help with this). If using an online video meeting hosting program, connect with your student union/administration to find connections to paid versions of the service.

PRESENTATION

Make use of PowerPoint or another slide-making program to create a visual/audio accompaniment, providing more ways for the message to be reinforced. This also creates a more inclusive environment for different learning styles and abilities.



TIP:

Be in contact with your school’s Student Accessibility Centre to make arrangements for assisting people with different accessibility needs.

PRESENTATION ACCOMPANIMENTS

Using a flip chart or anonymous written responses to document responses during interactive portions of the workshop is an engaging way to encourage participation both publicly and privately. Once the presentation is done, providing your sources and contacts to community organizations will give participants the chance to further their knowledge and get even more involved in the movement.

FLAIR

Leaning on your individual strengths (storytelling, humour, interesting visual cues) can give you confidence in the way you share your information and the audience will be able to sense that! This also keeps the presentation unique – no one else can do things quite like you can!

Setting the Tone & Creating Ground Rules

Once all tech/AV settings are prepped and you are comfortable with your presentation's talking points, a workshop can be boiled down to a structured conversation between you and the group. Beyond the bare bones of the pre-established structure, the magic and real potential of the presentation come from the opportunity to create a dialogue about a topic that the participants may not have delved into otherwise.

In order to do this, start by creating an open environment where people feel encouraged to make mistakes, ask difficult questions, and join in without fear of judgment. Additionally, the topics explored in your presentation may be triggering to some observers. Keeping survivors in mind is essential to furthering the goals of gender-based violence prevention so include content warnings to create space for education and healing. Establishing ground rules of respect, reserved judgment, and confidentiality can provide people space to share things they may not otherwise.

You can break the “asking audience questions” ice by asking if your group has additional suggestions for ground rules. This can get the group invested from moment one, but also allows you to gauge the vibe of the room (is there lots of eye contact? Are they talkative from the beginning?). Catering the language and examples used to your audience is another great way people can stay engaged and not overwhelmed by new terms and inaccessible word choice. It can be easy to slip into verbose explanations but it is important to return to your “why” and consider what messaging will be most effective in conveying your points and inspiring people to engage with your mission.

Dealing With the Unexpected

Sustaining the momentum that you've built can happen through keeping the pacing of your workshop up and thinking on your feet when an unexpected question comes. When it comes to the special person who may try to derail the workshop with questions of dubious intention, the best course of action is offering to continue the conversation after the presentation or deferring to external resources they could use to learn more (websites, written materials).

Questions you simply don't have the answer to can also be addressed in this same way. When other troubles come your way, be it tech issues, losing your point, or any other doomsday scenario you think up, the key to getting through it is simply to keep pushing! At the end of the day, if you can keep moving through the material with confidence (genuine or faked), people will stick with you.

Takeaways

When all is said and done and you're on the "References" page of the PowerPoint asking for final questions, there is a huge sense of accomplishment that comes with winding down. Including the information used to create the presentation is essential - not only for legal reasons but also to provide your audience with a clear-cut path to learn more.

A summary sheet of the works cited can be provided after the fact so people have the key points to look back on. Ideally this can be distributed in person or through email soon after the presentation so that the momentum you worked so hard to create can continue!

Additionally, this presents a great opportunity to receive feedback from your audience via anonymous surveys (you can use Google forms or online survey companies). Giving recipients of the workshop a chance to share feedback is a fantastic way to reinforce the mutual respect that was built during the course of your time together and can be a valuable teaching tool for facilitators to continue improving their presentation styles and materials.

You did it! Being in front of a group of people and talking about a topic you are passionate about can be vulnerable and uncomfortable but is also a beautiful gift that you've just shared with another set of people. In using and practicing the skills discussed above, you'll be able to join the ranks of activists dedicated to informing others about gender-based violence prevention and contribute to our overall goal of healing and prevention. Hopefully in following this guide, you'll feel excited and confident to do it again and again.

CONCLUSION

Creating meaningful and long-lasting change in the area of gender-based violence prevention and response can be an intimidating task. We hope that this toolkit has provided you with a foundation for the important work that you will be undertaking. We encourage you to use the experiences highlighted in this toolkit both for inspiration and for the groundwork on your journey as a student activist. You have taken a brave first step by reading this toolkit.

Remember that the work you are doing is important, the voice you bring to these discussions is valuable, and that you have the power to create meaningful change at your PSI and beyond. You should also remember that you are not alone in this movement; join forces with like-minded students and use these tools along with your voice to inspire and mobilize others. From all of the student organizers who contributed to this toolkit, we are rooting for you and the amazing work you will accomplish!

With care,

Nell Perry, Alannah McKay, Aubrianna Snow, Catherine Dunne, Carina Gabriele, Chenthoori Malankov, Emma Kuzmyk, Levi Clarkson, Jackie Toner, Jessica Wright, Julia Burnham, Kainat Javed, Vatineh Magaji, Tayler Glaspey, Taylor Irvine, Tia Wong, Zoe King, Mandi Gray, Francis Prévost, Jacob DesRochers, Radhika Gupta, and Jaye Garcia.

