

OCASI
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants



..... INITIATIVE TO END
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Transforming GBV Support: Creative Approaches to Peer Leadership and Holistic Program Development

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Peer Champions

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CONTENT WARNING



We are going to be speaking about gender-based violence. This may be upsetting to hear. Please feel free to take breaks whenever you need to.



We will also be here to speak with you after the presentation and offer support if you need someone to talk to.



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Key Objectives for Today!

- Understand the role of peer champions who are NSRI women GBV survivors in shaping effective and respectful GBV service provision.
- Explore creative approaches to fostering healing and support for GBV survivors through community engagement.

Building Leadership Capacity to Address Gender-Based Violence (GBV) against Non-status, Refugee and Immigrant (NSRI) Women across Canada

Background ⇒ multi-year, for non-status, racialized, and immigrant (NSRI) survivors as leaders and decision-makers for awareness raising, inform practices/policies, develop solutions.

Why NSRI women? ⇒ NSRI women face additional barriers/distinct forms of violence, based on factors, i.e., immigration status, race, language capabilities etc.

Goal ⇒ build leadership capacity of NSRI women to shape/inform GBV policies and services, using the Peer Champion Program and Community Advocacy Network as promising practices.

Who we are?



ISLAMIC FAMILY
& SOCIAL SERVICES
ASSOCIATION



Barbra Schlifer
Commemorative Clinic
Freedom From Violence.



Promising practices – Our approaches

1) Peer Champions Program ⇒ uses popular education to build leadership capacity, foster connections and create *survivor-led* spaces.

2) Community Advocacy Network ⇒ – grassroots networks, with NSRI survivors, service providers and other civil society leaders to *build community capacity* to address GBV.

Where did the idea of Creative Workshops come from?

The Creative Workshop Approach

Purpose: To empower NSRI women to share their experiences through art and learn ways to express your thoughts and feelings

Process: 20-week sessions fostering trust and artistic development.

Outcome: Create a performance piece, e.g., a scene, poem, song, story for raising awareness.





- ✓ This is a 20-week program, with one 1.5-hour session per week.
- ✓ Where they learned different creative ways to tell a story:
 - acting
 - writing
 - music
- ✓ Then they created a performance presentation.

Developing the Story Collectively

- What do you want the public and service providers to know?
- Discussions – issues and what would help?
- Script development
- Rehearsals using acting, and movement techniques

Video of the play

The Warriors

Lessons Learned

- Women may not automatically seek to join the group; it's essential to actively recruit them and clearly explain the benefits they may gain from participation.
- Women dealing with trauma, low income, single parenting, or navigating life as immigrants often have busy and uncertain lives. Programs must be flexible and incorporate time for open discussion.
- The individual who convenes and facilitates the group is crucial for building trust. It should be someone the participants can relate to.

Themes

- What Service Providers Need to Know
- Effective & Respectful Practice
- Program Improvements

What Service Providers Need to Know

- No healing without justice
- Understand our context
- What is happening in their original countries is important

Effective & Respectful Practice

- Do not ask survivors to repeatedly recount their GBV experience
- Be transparent about expectations
- Understand the individual's current situation and provide appropriate support
- Avoid discrimination and be mindful of language
- Be sensitive to intersectionality and consider the whole person beyond their GBV experience
- Be flexible and compassionate

Program Improvements

- Streamline services
- Need holistic supports
- Programs for men
- Need programs that give voice to survivors of GBV

Guiding Questions

1. How can creative expressions, such as performance art, serve as powerful tools for amplifying the voices and stories of NSRI women and gender-diverse people in the fight against gender-based violence?
2. What insights can we gain from integrating artistic approaches into advocacy and education to foster deeper understanding and systemic change in addressing GBV?
3. How can creative workshops and artistic expressions contribute to the healing process for NSRI women and gender-diverse people, while also empowering them to share their stories and advocate for systemic change?

Thank you!

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