

# HEAL Program: 12 – Session Overview

The HEAL Project—Hubs of Expressive Arts for Life, funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), is an innovative initiative implemented from April 2022 to March 2026. The project aims to evaluate the effectiveness of an expressive arts–based intervention designed to improve the mental health and overall wellness of newcomer women survivors of domestic violence. The HEAL Program Overview below outlines the objectives for each session. Recognizing the diversity of implementation groups, the program will be adapted to meet the specific needs of each group. These adaptations will be made collaboratively with participants, facilitators, and partner organizations to ensure cultural responsiveness and to address the unique factors affecting newcomer survivors of gender-based domestic violence.

Welcome & Orientation	Part I: Safety and Stabilization	Part II: Identity, Culture, & Community	Part III: Towards Resilience, Hope, & Future	Ending & Culminating Celebration
<p><b>Session 1 Welcome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Orient participants to the program by conducting consent, confidentiality, and project scope.</li> <li>Facilitators engage cohort in an artful activity to establish group guidelines.</li> <li>Complete baseline survey, qualitative and quantitative.</li> <li>Establish initial trust and expectations between facilitator team and participants.</li> <li>Document accessibility and accommodation needs of participants.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Session 2: Mind and Body Connection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Pre-Program Survey &amp; confirm committed participants</b></li> <li>Introduction to psychoeducation: mental health and mind/body connection, and grounding techniques.</li> </ul> <p><b>Session 3: Self Regulation and Trauma in the Mind &amp; Body</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage in somatic resourcing, dance ribbons and cultural music, to practice self-regulation techniques</li> <li>Gain knowledge on identifying triggers and impact on overall health</li> <li>Learn about emotional management.</li> </ul> <p><b>Session 4 : Co-Regulation and Community of Support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage in co-regulation activities using movement and plasticene.</li> <li>Visually map community of support.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Session 5: Remembrance and Identity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Conduct In-program survey</b></li> <li>Explore culture and identity using clay sculpting.</li> <li>Practice of self- and co-regulation techniques during storytelling discussions and sharing.</li> <li>Focus on personal strengths and cultural identity</li> </ul> <p><b>Session 6: Reconnection and Reintegration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage in strength based work by painting the sculptures from the week prior.</li> <li>Practice self and co-regulation techniques during storytelling discussions and sharing.</li> </ul> <p><b>Session 7: Re-Invention of Self and Identity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>5 principles of Empowerment Self Defense Guest Speaker (half session)</b></li> <li>Continue to engage in self and co-regulation techniques</li> <li>Engage in reconnecting with the self by making meaning from their experiences through visual art</li> <li>Prepare for collective painting in upcoming sessions.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Session 8: Resilience and Hope</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Conduct in-person feedback</b></li> <li><b>Health Relationships Guest Speaker (half session)</b></li> <li>Begin blueprint of two collective paintings drawing from group journey. Each painting a theme identified by group.</li> <li>Materials used: makers, pencil, oil pastels.</li> </ul> <p><b>Session 9: Future Envisioning and Nature</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Human Rights Guest Speaker (half session)</b></li> <li>Collective painting continue. Acrylic paint used to deepen the blueprint sketch from prior session focusing on stories, symbols, and images.</li> </ul> <p><b>Session 10: Dreaming and Imagining</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue collective painting, acrylic paint and collage items are introduced. Participants are led in debrief discussion during art-making</li> <li>Self and co-regulation integrated within session to recap the learnings from “Part I”</li> <li>Questions or comments from guest speaking sessions are shared among group.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Session 11: Collective Reflection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Conduct post-program feedback</b></li> <li>Prepare for endings by discussing goodbyes, reviewing program learnings, and planning next steps.</li> <li>Final collective painting layer, quotes using acrylic markers or oil pastels.</li> <li>Prepare for celebratory event</li> </ul> <p><b>Session 12: Community Celebration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants invite 1 - 2 friends to celebration with food and music.</li> <li>Engage in certificate ceremony with facilitator team acknowledging participants and sharing gratitude.</li> <li>Group photo take away gift.</li> <li>Participants present image meanings in collective painting (record with consent)</li> <li>Share opportunities for continued engagement (e.g., art socials, feedback follow-ups, validation etc.)</li> </ul>

- The program is designed as a 12- Session (12 weeks or 6 weeks) , 2 hours/session, closed-group approach for 6 - 12 participants.
- Facilitator team includes Expressive Art Therapist, preferably speaking the language of the participants, co-facilitated by a peer researcher and additional support mental health counsellors, social workers, trained volunteers and/or students.
- All sessions will integrate a “Break” to receive culturally appropriate refreshments and provide a pause between activities to ensure safety and security throughout the program.
- Participants receive “art supply kit” (e.g. sketch book, oil pastels, water colour, pencil crayons etc.)