

Year IV: MILESTONE REPORT

Knowledge Mobilization & Capacity Building

Knowledge Mobilization & Continued Engagement

In Year IV, the HEAL Project is primarily focused on knowledge mobilization, dissemination of findings, and strengthening cross-sector partnerships to extend the reach and impact of arts-based approaches for newcomer family wellbeing. Building on the successful implementation and analysis, HEAL activities emphasized sharing learnings with practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and community members at local, national, and international levels.



Photo: HEAL Project researchers discuss findings with participants, centering their experiences and perspectives.

Collaborative Data Collection

The project used a mixed-methods approach led by trained peer researchers and research fellows, grounded in community-based participatory research principles and designed to be trauma- and violence-informed as well as culturally responsive. Data sources included focus groups, facilitator reflections, partner feedback, and follow-up discussions across pre-, in-, and post-program stages. These methods centered participants' lived experiences, capturing insights on healing, self-expression, connection, and program delivery, while documenting changes in group dynamics and organizational conditions to ensure findings reflected diverse perspectives across all participant groups.

What is the data saying?

Data Analysis and Community Validation

Mixed methods data were analyzed using trauma- and violence-informed principles, identifying patterns and themes related to emotional well-being, self-expression, coping strategies, confidence, and empowerment. Findings were interpreted through a culturally responsive lens, integrating perspectives from participants, facilitators, and partners to situate individual experiences within broader organizational and community contexts. This approach generated actionable insights to support the adaptation, scaling, and implementation of culturally safe expressive arts interventions. 12 theme emerged:

Short Term Themes:

- Effective and empowering Program Experience for self-determination
- Expressive Art Activities Improve Mental Health
- Knowledge Gained as Domestic Violence Survivors
- Personal Growth
- Program Participant Retention

Medium & Long Term Themes:

- Sense of Belonging and Community Engagement
- Access to Interdisciplinary Art Programming
- Continued Empowerment to Invest in Self
- Expressive Arts as a Tool for Personal Growth
- Broadening Trusted Support Systems
- Implementation of Knowledge Gained
- Peer-Engaged Co-Design Approach

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Healing Arts for Newcomer Family Wellbeing Event

On November 12, 2025, the Healing Arts for Newcomer Family Wellbeing event was hosted at the Toronto Reference Library. The evening brought together program participants, partner organizations, practitioners from the settlement, healthcare, and arts sectors, Access Alliance staff and board members, and representatives from the Public Health Agency of Canada. The event featured a gallery of twelve collective paintings created through the programs, interactive community art-making, and knowledge exchange activities. These activities provided a welcoming and engaging space for reflection, dialogue, and advocacy. The event aligned with the #16DaysOfActivism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign.



Photo: (top) Attendees observing collective paintings. (bottom) Panelists speak about expressive arts and newcomer wellbeing at the HEAL Project event.



Photo: Attendees conversing at the Healing Arts for Newcomer Family Wellbeing event.

A central feature of the event was a panel discussion. Panelists emphasized that expressive arts are an effective and viable approach to newcomer mental health and wellbeing. They described how arts-based practices help individuals navigate barriers and provide accessible avenues for healing, connection, and self-expression. Panelists also highlighted the importance of including artists and arts-based practitioners on interdisciplinary teams.

Arts-based practice supports sustainable approaches to mental health, fosters creativity and resilience, and strengthens collaboration across healthcare, settlement, and community services. The discussion highlighted emerging practices such as social prescribing, where creative and cultural resources are used for newcomer wellbeing.

The panel concluded by reflecting on the lasting value of arts-based approaches for newcomer communities. Panelists emphasized that arts foster empowerment, connection, and personal growth, and that collaboration across sectors is essential to sustain culturally responsive and accessible mental health supports for newcomer communities.

"Art becomes sustainable when it is supported and recognized. When a community is nourished, people gain the strength to connect, grow, and support one another, creating deeper roots that make everyone healthier." - Roxanna Vahed

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Digital Resource Hub Access Alliance Arts for Family Health



In January 2026, the Access Alliance Arts for Family Health website was officially launched. The digital platform provides tools, resources, and insights drawn from the programs. It is designed to support practitioners, managers, researchers, and community members in integrating arts-based approaches into their practice and organizational frameworks.

Find out more about tools, resources, inspirations for delivering inclusive, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed programming makes a difference. The platform ensures knowledge and insights generated from expressive art programs continue to reach and benefit communities and service providers.

- Official Launch: January 20, 2026
- Knowledge Hub Webinar: January 21, 2026

Explore for yourself, check Access Alliance Arts for Family Health: artsforfamilyhealth.accessalliance.ca

Discover something new!

More information, contact research@accessalliance.ca

Sharing Learnings on Arts-Based Approaches to Newcomer Wellbeing

On October 1-2, 2025, the HEAL Project presented three sessions at the National Knowledge Hub Conference, Innovations in Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Trauma- and Violence-Informed Health Promotion, held in Toronto. Attended by over 200 participants from across Canada, these sessions increased the visibility of the project and highlighted the role of expressive arts in supporting newcomer survivors of gender-based domestic violence.

Participants explored visual artworks, storytelling, and interactive activities that reflected the diverse lived experiences and cultural contexts of participants.



Photo: Attendees at the Knowledge Hub Conference participate in an interactive HEAL research activity.

Overall, in Year IV, we express gratitude to all partners, participants, and community members who contributed to this year's activities. Knowledge mobilization, public engagement, and program impact have been significant. We are eager to build on these insights to further integrate arts within healthcare, settlement, and mental health initiatives in the years ahead!