



# stepping up



developing promising practices in art-based programming to address issues of violence and community safety for trans, lesbian and bisexual newcomer, immigrant and refugee women

tool kit



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## tool kit

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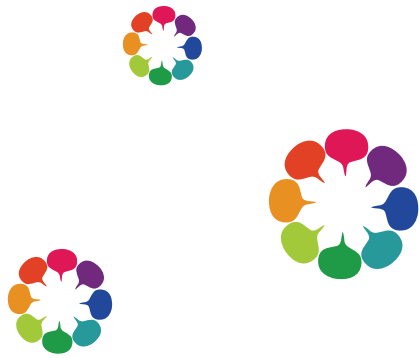
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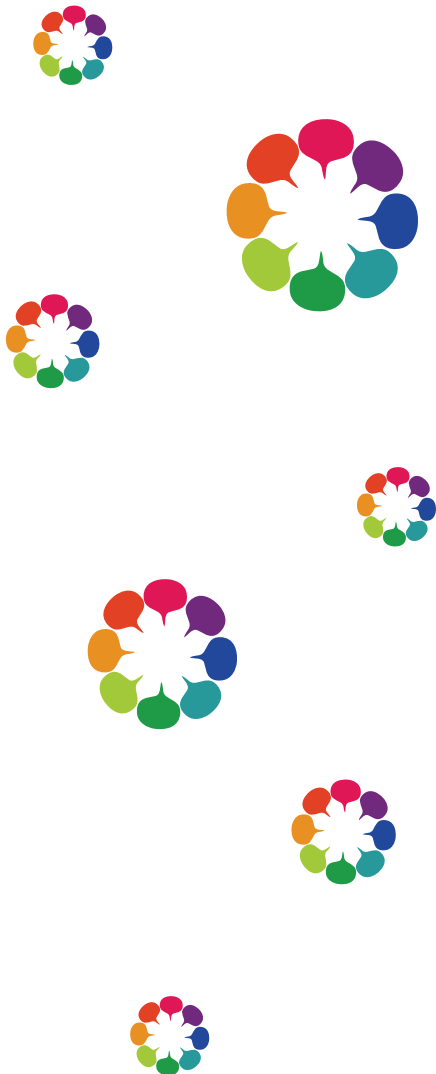
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# Terminology

*There are some terms that will be useful to read this document. They have been taken from the Trans Pulse survey Definitions sheet, used by Interpreters. Please contact the Trans Pulse Project directly for permission to reprint: [cet@transpulse.ca](mailto:cet@transpulse.ca)*

## **Gender Trans Terminology**

*Transgender* - an umbrella term for people who do not conform to typical definitions of male or female

*Trans Woman* - male to female trans person

*Transsexual* - someone who has changed or wants to change their body to be more in line with how they identify

*Two-spirit* - an Aboriginal term for individuals who fulfill one of many mixed gender roles, usually implies a masculine spirit and a feminine spirit

*Intersex* - a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male

*Cisgender / Non-trans* - a person who is not trans; someone who identifies as the same social gender as their biological sex

## **Sexuality Related Terminology**

*Bisexual* - someone who is attracted to both males and females

*Gay* - someone who is attracted to or loves people of the same sex

*Lesbian* - a woman who is attracted to or loves other women

*Queer* - refers to a sexual orientation or gender identity which does not conform to society's heterosexual expectations, some may consider this term to be offensive while others embrace it

# Project Background

Drawing from an extensive literature review, as well as from focus groups and interviews with community members and service providers, the *Stepping Up to the Plate* project (hereafter referred to as the *Stepping Up* project) developed, implemented, and evaluated two pilot expressive arts groups: one group for trans-identified newcomer women of any sexual identity, and another group for cis-gender-identified newcomer women who also identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, or questioning (LGBQ). The promising practices developed out of this process are intended to guide organizations and service providers as they implement expressive arts groups which contribute to violence prevention/safety promotion programming with trans and LGBQ newcomer women.

## Terms Used in This Document

We are faced with a challenge when writing a document like this. We want to be sure that the document is easy to read, but also that no one feels left out, or that we aren't dismissive of the diversity of expression of gender and sexuality. This is especially true because, unsurprisingly, this diversity was represented by participants engaging in the project.

### **A Note About Gender (and related terms used in the Tool Kit)**

The focus of this project is newcomer immigrant and refugee *women*. Within this gender category, the *Stepping Up* project was designed to identify the *specific* needs of *women with trans experience and transwomen*—of any sexual orientation—while also focusing on the needs of *lesbian, bisexual, queer, questioning* newcomer women who are cis-gendered. In other words, the needs of straight or heterosexual cis-gendered newcomer immigrant and refugee women were not explicitly addressed in this project, though many of the promising practices will be of value to those doing groups that are inclusive of these women as well.

For the purposes of this tool kit though, we have decided to use the terms trans and women with trans experience. These terms will be used with the understanding that they are used to refer to women who identify as women with trans experience, as “trans” “transgender” “transsexual” “MTF” “gender-non-conforming” or “gender queer”.

### **A Note About Sexual Orientation**

In the initial description (and title) of the project, only the terms lesbian and bisexual were used. However prior to initiating phase 1, this was expanded to include queer and questioning. For the outreach of the pilot group, the term gay was included as some

participants indicated that they identified as gay women. The outreach material for the focus and pilot groups attempted to make clear who the group was for, by including the term “WSW: women who have sex with women/ women who have intimate relationships with women”. As with the dilemma above, this expansion of terms was done in an effort to acknowledge the diversity of terms women use to identify their sexual orientation. One suggestion we came across in the course of our project was the term “LGBTQ2SI Spectrum”. In this document we have used “LGBQ”-- lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer/ questioning--women.

Occasionally, we have combined both gender and sexuality acronyms to form (LGBTQ). When referring to the broader community we have used the more inclusive community acronym of LGBTQ2SI, referring to lesbian gay, trans, queer, two-spirited, and intersex.

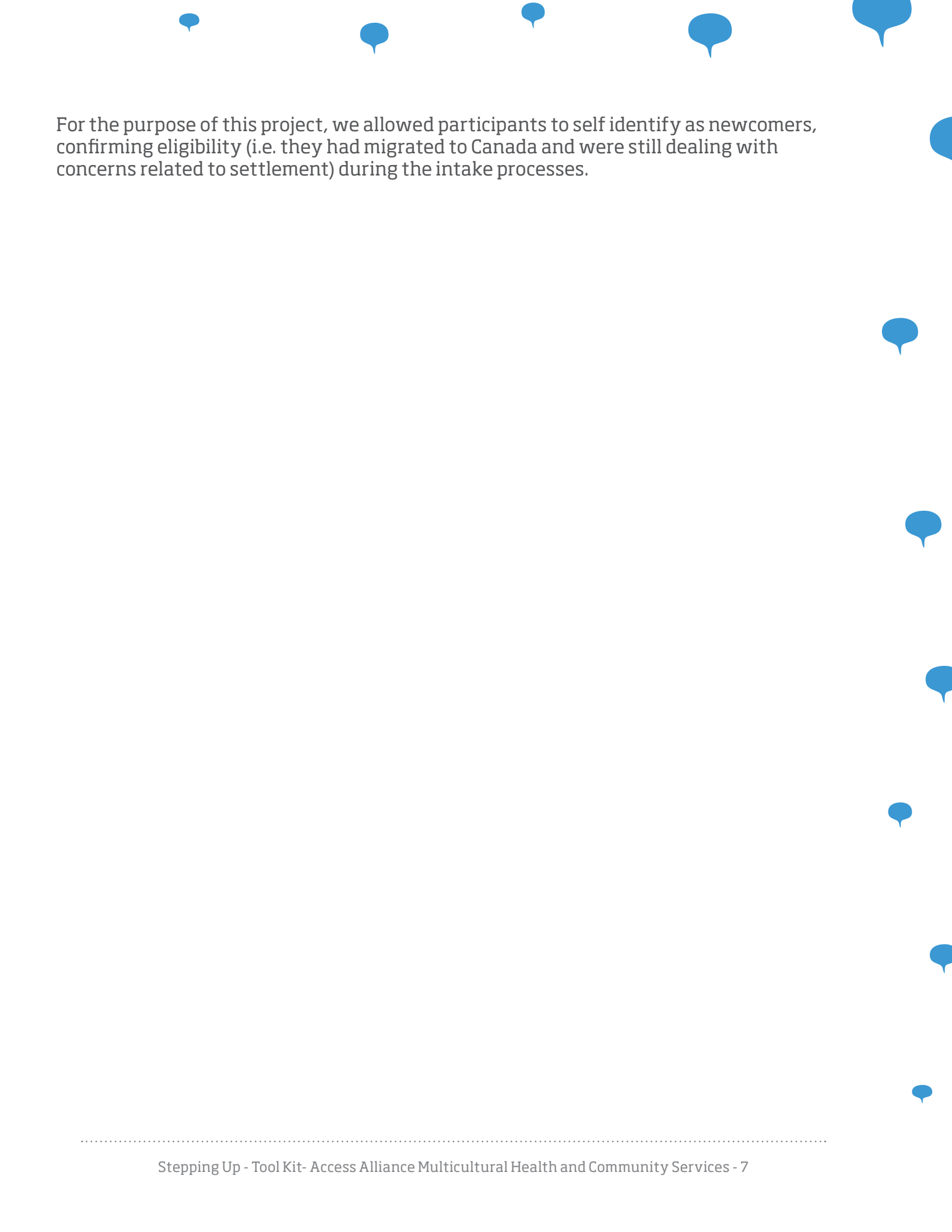
### **A Note About the Term “Newcomer”**

For the purpose of this project, the term “newcomer” is used to refer to individuals who are immigrants, refugees or may have no status, and is inclusive of those who have migrated to Canada within the past 10 years, and are still experiencing challenges related to settlement.

For the settlement sector in Canada, particularly service providers who are working with Provincial or Federal funding, the term “newcomer” has come to mean that someone has either been in Canada for up to 3 years or up to 5 years. However for service providers and program coordinators unfamiliar with this designation—because they are working in other sectors or primarily with non-“newcomer” designated or more established individuals— the term is used much more flexibly. So someone might still be identified as needing settlement related resources, eight years after initially arriving in Canada. There are many reasons why this is relevant. This reflects a reality that the settlement process can take a long time and may even be stalled for some—depending on status or language ability, for example. In literature review for this project it is observed that many disagree with the restrictions placed on funding and services due to this narrow interpretation of the settlement period.

For individuals who are newcomers and identify as LGBTQ2SI, the settlement process may be delayed due to the above, *as well as* difficulty finding appropriate resources, or increased barriers to basic needs and rights. This may include safe housing, adequate employment, and LGBTQ2SI-safe/positive ESL classes.

Though no research has been found by the author to either verify or discount this particular impact on LGBTQ2SI newcomers (and encourages anyone who is interested, to pursue this question), certainly those who are marginalized from mainstream services will have a more challenging time addressing issues of settlement. This is exacerbated if these individuals fear disclosing needs and concerns with service providers. In light of this, service providers in the focus group agreed that where possible, discretion should be used when offering services for LGBTQ2SI “newcomers”.



For the purpose of this project, we allowed participants to self identify as newcomers, confirming eligibility (i.e. they had migrated to Canada and were still dealing with concerns related to settlement) during the intake processes.

# Putting the Promising Practices in Context

## This Tool Kit

...will be useful as a resource for planning and implementing groups or writing funding applications. It will also be an excellent tool when promoting the program to partners and community members. It will also be useful to support individual and organizational capacity in order to support LGBTQ newcomer women.

## When Implementing These Promising Practices

We are excited for the promising practices to inspire more expressive arts groups for newcomer women with trans experience as well as LGBTQ newcomer women. However we realized, when developing the Tool Kit, that this very powerful resource must be offered with the understanding that the groups often have a therapeutic impact. This is expected. It is important for program coordinators and those promoting the program (if this is not the facilitator) to recognize that these groups are not arts and craft groups, though the arts play a significant role. Most simply put, a skilled facilitator supports the group to engage and explore artistic modalities, themes and emotions that may emerge during the group.

As a result, the groups themselves should be facilitated and designed by an expressive arts therapist, or equivalently skilled facilitator. For more details about this please see the section entitled "Facilitation".


## History of the Expressive Arts Therapy and Expressive Arts Programming at Access Alliance

The Promising Practices Tool Kit is modeled after Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services' original expressive arts group model. Below is a brief summary of the program.

Expressive Art Therapy<sup>1</sup> is a client-centered, art-based, community-oriented approach

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<sup>1</sup> For further resources related to expressive arts therapy, please refer to the Promising Practices and Appendix



to therapy. Some of the goals of the expressive art process include stress reduction, relaxation, empowerment, and rediscovery of joy, well-being and the building of social community. The art-making process becomes a safe container in which to explore emotions, thoughts, conflict, transitions and life choices. The expressive arts allows trauma to be communicated in alternative formats. It is also of benefit to facilitators and participants as the art-based approach assists in transcending language barriers and increasing understanding/empathy for the participant. In addition, the building of social support systems and relating to others is cultivated from the group art-making process.

In 2004, following the successful close of the first expressive arts therapy practice at Access Alliance, the organization the organization decided to initiate a six month expressive arts project aimed at supporting newcomer men and women. It was successful and so it was implemented for a year in 2005-2006. In May 2006, an internal impact evaluation of this expressive arts therapy program was conducted to capture the impact of the program on the participants, as well as to identify if the program was in line with Access Alliance's strategic priorities. This evaluation found that both participants and staff felt that the program had a significant impact on the well being of those who attended the groups citing that, "The interview and focus group responses indicate that many participants benefited therapeutically from the program. It assisted with feelings of depression, self-esteem, social isolation, and various experiences of trauma."<sup>2</sup>

In keeping with this success, and Access Alliance's own 'Access Model,' the program has continued to run in partnership with neighbourhood agencies throughout the city literally "meeting clients where they're at." The focus since 2006 has been on newcomer women explicitly. The continuation of the program has been possible because of the support of various funders, as well as dedicated funding by Access Alliance itself where possible. The *Stepping Up* project is the most recent addition to this program.

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2 Angelow, 2006.

# Introduction

Over the course of the Stepping Up Project, we have engaged in extensive knowledge gathering and analysis. This has enabled us to identify and also understand how best to implement the promising practices that emerged for the Tool Kit. Below is a summary of the themes and issues that were raised during the course of the project, and which inform the Tool Kit's content. While the promising practices were explicitly focused around expressive arts program delivery and the promotion of violence prevention and community safety, it is clear that such a program's success is tied to the availability and accessibility of informed settlement and social support resources for Trans- and LGBTQ-newcomer women. This is explored in more detail below.

## Addressing Issues of Violence and Community Safety with Trans and LGBTQ Newcomer Women

*"This is my drawing...it appears to be a tree on its own with a free space. I've drawn it because I see myself in the tree. [...] It's a tree that can give a lot. It can give fruit and flowers. But has grown up alone. [...] But the best thing is, that [while] a lot has happened to that tree: it has gotten through rain, it has gotten through thunder, it has gotten through hail...but even [after] everything it has been through, there it stands. It's [still] there."*

-Focus Group Participant

Marginalization based on race, gender, sexuality or citizenship status (among others) results in a broad range of experiences that must be included in our understanding of violence when working with members of marginalized communities. This has been confirmed in each phase of the project by LGBTQ newcomers themselves, service providers and the documents referenced in the literature review.

Within the focus groups, Trans and LGBTQ newcomer women reflected that they have experienced and continue to experience a broad range of violence that includes: harassment, abuse, trauma; political or government related violence and persecution; isolation from family and community; transphobia and homophobia; racism and discrimination, particularly related to language skills and accent; exclusion from, or difficulty finding, employment; denial of basic needs including basic health care, medications or surgery; a lack of income security; internalized fear and anger related to gender identity and sexuality.

In addition to the stressors that result from migration and language barriers, newcomer

women who are trans and/or those who are LGBTQ are hyper-aware of the need to protect themselves from potential harm directed towards them due to racism, trans- and homo-phobia. Some impacts that this vigilance can have include exhaustion, increased isolation, hopelessness, depression and unwillingness or fear of accessing support services. The expectation and/or previous experience of discrimination and physical harm or harassment, as a consequences for being openly LGBTQ, can result in self-imposed limits as well as self-harm or suicide. This might look like not holding hands with a partner or lover in public or limiting connection to resources (including employment) in one's cultural community. In one instance, a participant shared the painful impact of stigma and her struggle with gender identity:

*"I didn't enjoy my life, and I wanted to finish [my] life at that time. I didn't want to live....I didn't like and I didn't love my life, and the way that I was living, and the [way] people they were treating me."*

Language barriers combined with economic insecurity and poverty mean that some resources are simply not accessible, even if they are available. Suggestions for making groups accessible to participants are outlined in the 'Outreach' and 'Logistics' sections of this *Promising Practices Tool Kit*.

In facing these experiences, the women who contributed to this project have also shared the resources that sustain them. These include: friends, partners, family; connecting with community; maintaining boundaries/privacy; focusing on the present; sharing experience and wisdom with others; connecting with cultural identity through art and community events; going to school; taking English classes; being active in advocacy or activist groups; making art, cooking, singing dancing, esthetics and fashion; and the drive to build a safe future for their children.

In addition, the LGBTQ newcomer women who participated in the focus groups, interviews and pilot groups felt that the very stressors that result in responses such as vigilance can be channeled into actions that are empowering. This includes participating in projects, advisory boards, advocacy and activist groups that are concerned with issues of violence, developing clear expectations for safe spaces and advocating for these conditions. It also includes seeking out relevant support groups, such as the expressive arts pilot groups that contributed to this Tool Kit or other self care activities, including LGBTQ-positive self-defense courses.

The experience of exploring and creating through the expressive arts modalities (sound, movement, drawing/images/ painting, role play, sculpture etc.) can offer relief and a safe method for processing difficult experiences in a supportive environment.

During the first phase of the project, participants identified creative expression as being valuable to them because it increases enjoyment, offers a way to communicate life stories and significant events, and can help contain or process painful experiences. Overall the expressive arts modalities were identified as useful outlets for self expression and

engaging with emotions. The evaluation comments of pilot group participants echo these sentiments. One participant described,

*“At the time of the group, I was going through very stressful personal experiences. But, every Friday, I was able to feel relaxed and the experience helped me through this stressful time. I have a very strong friendship with other participants. During hard times the expression of art and the space was very beneficial.”*

Both sets of pilot group participants indicated that they associated their experience in the expressive arts group with a sense of recovery and with a deeper connection to the physical body, “soul,” and self in general. For example, one participant in the group for women with trans experience reported that the group, “Helped my spiritual health and gave peace, a lot,” and that it, “Helped my feelings a lot and helped me to have more self confidence.” Participants in the LGBTQ-specific group identified that the experience also resulted in a sense of increased confidence, as well as an increased ability to assert themselves and to take risks with language as well as in the arts.

This transfer between skills developed in the expressive arts sessions and daily life is an expected part of the expressive arts process, though it may look different for each participant. The structure of a session includes a period in which participants are invited to reflect on the process of creating the art, as well as the art work itself, and are encouraged to assess whether anything occurred that may be useful in daily life such as an insight, or a way of approaching a challenge. Sometimes the outcomes are more subtle but may, for example, come in the form of an increased willingness to try new activities or increased comfort and confidence in asserting desires and boundaries. This may mean a participant finds they more readily communicate and assert limits in personal relationships or may experience greater confidence in order to advocate for their needs with service providers.

The positive impact experienced during the group appears to have some longer term effect on participants. Comments captured during the post-group evaluation, held 2 months after the close of the LGBTQ-specific group offer some examples<sup>3</sup> :

- *This group gave me the idea that I have a place to fit in and I am able to be more optimistic about my life in Canada. The timing of the program was great because I was having a hard time making friends and the group allowed me to open up and it has been a great six months. The group has really helped me feel good about myself and my new life in Canada. In the beginning, I was really shy and at first I was very hesitant to do any activities but now I am usually the first one ready to start making art.*
- *It changed my life quite a lot because I used to be very depressed. But this group allowed me to get connected with counselors and with other community programs where I have*

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<sup>3</sup> Due to slow registration for the groups, the group for women who identify as LGBTQ (inclusive of women with trans experience) was held first, and for 10 weeks. As a result we were able to also hold a post group evaluation in the late winter. The second pilot group, held exclusively for women with trans experience ran for a shorter period because it began closer to the end of this project. As a result no post group evaluations were captured.

*volunteered. I feel more confident with my English skills now and am able to get up in front of groups of people and discuss. I am quite happy.*

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The feedback throughout the pilot groups affirmed that the expressive arts program model outlined in this *Promising Practices Tool Kit* provides a space for participants to explore the impact of their experiences, discover creative coping mechanisms, and experience relief from the stressors in daily life. It also allows participants to safely practice and develop confidence with new skills, and draw on these skills to make changes in their lives.

## Safe Spaces

The environments created in each of these groups offer newcomer women who are trans and/or LGBTQ the opportunity to connect with others while addressing the impact of trauma and violence in their lives. Participants reported feeling that they are not alone in their experiences, and are able to explore emotions and take risks in a supported and creative way. These processes enable participants to identify new perspectives and coping tools which support them in navigating daily stressors, while also forming genuine connections with others through art making and discussion. As discussed above, these experiences can then be used in various ways to make changes or cope with every day life.

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*"I feel more confident and be more active, happy! Before I joined the group, I was pretty isolated and stressed sometimes."*

*"It was a safe space here, I just felt good. Very supportive. It helped a lot with my struggle with depression and [the facilitator] put me in touch with other resources that are changing my life."*

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Throughout the project we were told by Trans and LGBTQ newcomer women that they want programs that meet their specific intersecting needs. This was expressed in the evaluations with requests such as "Please continue to have this group" and to "Increase the time of the group, meaning give more weeks to the group."<sup>4</sup> In the final evaluation for the LGBTQ-specific group, another participant put it this way,

*"Please, please, please keep the group like this because there is no group focusing on queer women and newcomer (also not only for youth!). And, doing art is the best way to express*

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4 Final evaluation, Group for women with trans experience. This group only ran 5 weeks due to timing constraints and earlier challenges with registration. This is the equivalent point when the Mid Point evaluation is conducted in the longer groups.

*deeper and connect to different level for all of us I believe.”*

Both service providers and LGBTQ newcomer women identified that in Toronto, which is often perceived as overflowing with LGBTQ positive services, the distribution and availability of programs and services for LGBTQ newcomers is limited, while programming for LGBTQ newcomer women is almost nonexistent. As one service provider observed, this is true for the trans community regardless of whether people were born in or migrated to Canada. The programs that do exist, while excellent resources and resources and staffed by dedicated service providers, are generally under resourced and don't have the capacity to provide the intensive resources or support needed by LGBTQ newcomers. This is especially the case for newcomers with limited English conversation skills due to the cost of providing skilled interpreters.

## Capacity Building

Social service, settlement and community health organizations have a responsibility to support LGBTQ newcomer women, (as well as the broader Trans and LGBTQ2SI spectrum communities). In recognition of this, most social service sectors (i.e. community health, settlement) and organizations are encouraging LGBTQ and/or newcomer-related networks, trainings and professional development opportunities. However, these new programs and their staff are precarious due the varying annual funding priorities determined by granting bodies.

In addition, at the level of professional and organizational development, the reality is that one-time basic knowledge-building workshops and sensitivity trainings are not enough, though they are a great start. To sustain the responsibility we have to LGBTQ newcomer women, we need to increase organizational capacity to ensure a broad base of institutional knowledge. This includes developing organizational policies that reflect an understanding of settlement and migration experiences of Trans and LGBQ newcomers. One of the ways to develop this broad base of knowledge to support programs like the one promoted in this Tool Kit, is to work directly with Trans and LGBQ newcomer women to inform policy and programming. Another avenue is to work in partnership with other groups or organizations to share knowledge and develop infrastructure and employee capacity to design, implement, and evaluate programs with this group of women.

The Expressive Arts programming approach outlined in this Tool Kit is intended to meet the needs of LGBTQ newcomer women by encouraging partnerships between committed organizations and service providers. LGBTQ newcomer women should have access to safe and comprehensive services anywhere. A partnership approach provides a way for organizations to support each other by *“Stepping Up to the Plate”* to meet this responsibility together.

# Into the Future

It is important to create opportunities for Trans and LGBTQ women to be included in the shaping of programs that impact them. This should be a priority when we develop new programs. As consultants, newcomers can provide input into program development, assist with facilitation of the groups and organization of art exhibits, and identify gaps in programming. Ultimately, however, LGBTQ newcomer women should have access to training, leadership and employment opportunities to allow for more meaningful engagement with program development.. In the case of the expressive arts programs, this could include opportunities to access professional development and training in expressive arts therapy and group facilitation.

Service providers identified that the lack of guaranteed long term funding for most LGBTQ settlement and related support services means that if funding priorities change, organizations may no longer have the capacity to adequately address the needs of LGBTQ newcomer women. In the case of expressive arts groups, when funding is consistently time limited it means that we cannot tell participants when to expect another group. This can affect adequate outreach, limit the capacity for interpretation or translation of documents, and generally may serve to undermine capacity building efforts in the long term.

This means that there continues to be a role for organizations working with LGBTQ newcomer women to advocate on behalf of newcomers accessing services, for core/stable annual funding for these services. This also may involve increased communication with funding bodies about how program success should be measured, and engaging LGBTQ newcomer women themselves in identifying these outcome measures, on which funding, and subsequently program design is often based.

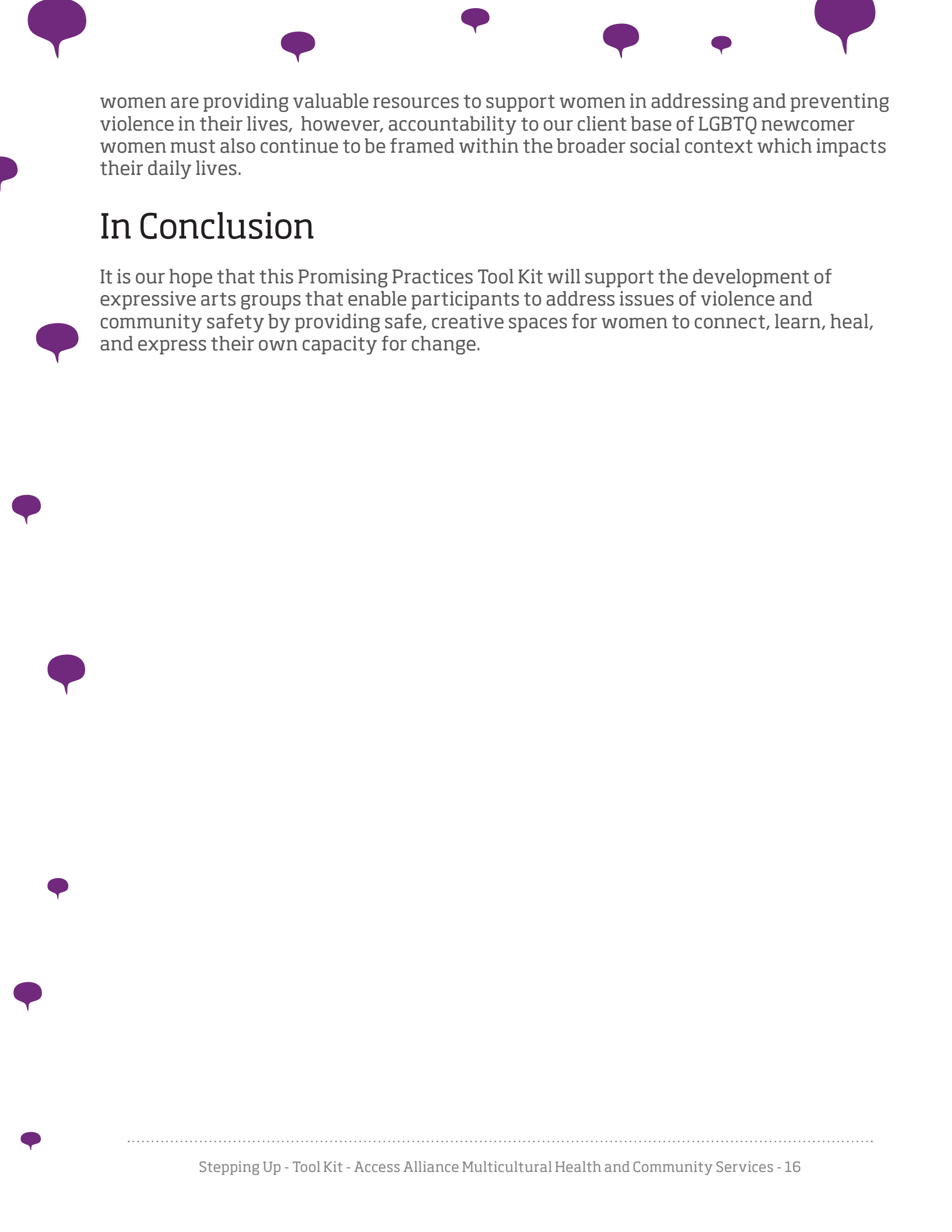
## Raising Our Voices

In the sections above we have outlined several opportunities for organization and sector wide change, in service of increased support of trans and LGBTQ newcomer women.

However, we realize that for LGBTQ newcomer women themselves change may feel out of reach. One participant's comment effectively identifies these challenges and serves as a clarion call for service providers and organizations:

*"We do have the right to live like other people and we do have the right to have a safe and healthy life. We cannot have contact with the government. You are like our voice to the government to have a very safe and healthy life. [...] We are the same as other people, and we want to not be considered as transsexual but as a human being."*

Social service providers and organizations working with trans and LGBTQ newcomer



women are providing valuable resources to support women in addressing and preventing violence in their lives, however, accountability to our client base of LGBTQ newcomer women must also continue to be framed within the broader social context which impacts their daily lives.

## In Conclusion

It is our hope that this Promising Practices Tool Kit will support the development of expressive arts groups that enable participants to address issues of violence and community safety by providing safe, creative spaces for women to connect, learn, heal, and express their own capacity for change.



# Promising Practices Tool Kit

...for the delivery of expressive arts programs  
which address issues of violence and community  
safety with women who have trans experience  
and/or are LGBTQ



# Staffing

*Two staff support the group directly:*

- Primary Facilitator (an Expressive Arts Therapist)
- Expressive-Arts Program support staff (i.e. a Community Health Worker/Peer Outreach Worker)

One staff is a trained Expressive Arts Therapist (see facilitation for related promising practices). The second program staff is primarily responsible for arranging and conducting Outreach and Intake & Registration, as well as assisting with the weekly groups.

It is important for a program staff to conduct the intake process, if not the registration and outreach. This initial contact with participants gives program staff a sense of who will be attending the groups. This helps in planning and preparing and can make it easier for participants when they first join the group.

The group assistant supports the facilitator to prepare and support the group including purchasing and transporting material, track administrative details (TTC tokens, attendance) and assisting participants to access resources. This role can also be done by a co-facilitator, (see 'Variations' below). Both staff members are responsible for completing a weekly reflection/de-briefing. At the end of the group cycle, these are compiled into a larger program evaluation and help improve the program. (See the Appendix for a Sample Debrief document)

*Other Staff Involved:*

When planning to coordinate an expressive arts program with newcomer women who are trans/have trans experience, and/or are LGBTQ the following staff are important to have connected to the project:

- Peer Outreach Workers
- Interpreters
- Partnership staff
- Trans, LGBTQ2SI knowledgeable: social workers, settlement workers, counselors
- Professional supervision for facilitator(s)
- A full-time staff person dedicated to coordinating and supporting the project and staff (Program Coordinator).

All staff engaged in the project must have training regarding Trans- and LGBTQ needs, myths and etiquette, as well as be knowledgeable about appropriate resources related to gender, sexuality and settlement. This may require partnering with organizations that already have capacity in these areas. (See Training).

*Variations:*

- The support role may be structured as a training process for co-facilitation in the expressive arts. Plan for support and supervision.
- A skilled peer assistant may be invited to train as a co-facilitator. This is an opportunity to build the capacity within communities being served. Budget for planning time and honoraria to support this training process.
- Establish a bursary in collaboration with local training & educational institutions, so community members can become primary facilitators.
- The facilitator could also be the Program Coordinator, if this person is full-time staff, however additional support staff will be required to ensure adequate time for preparation, facilitation, outreach, supervision, referrals, grant writing, evaluations, and professional development.

# Training

Trainings for staff should include: Trans 101, Racism & Privilege- analysis, anti-oppression & service provision -including harm reduction, rights and resources for sex workers and non status LGBTQ newcomers; knowledge regarding LGBTQ2SI + migration/immigration experience; Specific needs and etiquette when working with trans clients & when dealing with LGBTQ clients, Expressive Arts Therapy, use of expressive arts and violence/trauma

## *Organizations :*

- Primary Organization / Agency is committed to Training and Capacity building and develops an agency-wide commitment to (and knowledge of) Trans- and LGBTQ2SI community, as well as newcomers and newcomer women in particular.
- Direct service staff (settlement, counseling, social work, etc) in the organization have extensive experience working with groups, particularly with marginalized communities- including newcomer women and Trans and LGBTQ women
- Trainings are paid and required for all staff who have direct contact with clients/ participants including front desk or referral staff.
- Introductory training is a starting point. Ongoing training, particularly where service providers are building knowledge and understanding, and to prevent out of date practices, is necessary.
- Training for interpreters is imperative, and ideal for those translating documentation as well.

## *Facilitator:*

- Facilitator will have appropriate training and educational background (see Facilitation)
- Is knowledgeable about needs of newcomer women particularly those who have trans experience, and/or identify LGBTQ.
- Must have training/long -time experience in the way in which group art-making processes can impact a group psychologically and emotionally particularly when engaging with the themes of violence, discrimination and (even indirectly) trauma. This includes being aware of the limits of a particular group, as well as being able to support participants to identify, engage or cope with their emotions and feelings within the context and of the group.

Because the host agency is a representative of its organization and services, these services must be able to meet the expectations of participants who are referred from a trusted facilitator. This is the same for a perceived host (i.e. where the group is being held). If participants feel they experience negative and discriminatory behaviours this will reduce the trust in the program, associated organizations and the effectiveness in the long term.





# Outreach

*Several outreach tactics should be used simultaneously:*

- Run groups regularly and consistently in the same locations or at least know where the next group will be before the end of the group. Often people find out about a group because it is already running. Once it is on people's minds, they will tell friends, service providers will keep it as a referral option, and half the work is done. This also means maintaining a consistent communication pathway so people can call or walk into familiar places all year and get on a waiting list for the next group.
- Outreach is most effective when done in person, repetitively and consistently, particularly where the staff doing outreach are making new relationships with a community, group or organization. This serves both to build trust as well as provide a few opportunities for people to test out an arts session and get a feel for the staff.
- Partner with local agencies to promote and assist with registration particularly ethno-culturally specific LGBTQ2SI positive agencies, where they exist. If you are an LGBTQ2SI serving agency, connect with an agency doing work in settlement and vice-versa.
- Front-line staff who know the clients or participants well and are a great resource for outreach support and accessibility for their community. Also, consider connecting with front line staff that are LGBTQ2SI positive and work in settlement agencies or shelters that are not quite yet LGBTQ2SI positive spaces. These staff are also great resources (and they do exist!). Find them via professional networks (such as Rainbow Health Ontario, the LGBTQ settlement network, network at conferences)

*Distribution of material:*

In Print:

- Community newspapers
- Organization newsletters
- Post cards
- LGBTQ2SI, neighborhood, cultural and language-specific newspapers and newsletters

Other media:

- Bulletin boards, (real-world, and online)
- Online-networks/list-serves
- Program web page
- Radio advertisements
- Pod Casts or youtube videos with visual and verbal maps, as well as past participant commentary (link to other media)
- Social media

*Translate Outreach Documents:*

- Translation can be costly both for outreach and evaluations and running the group (see Interpretation & Translation). Make sure this is in your budget.

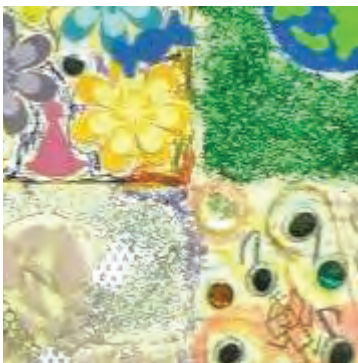
*Communicating who the group is for on the outreach material:*

- Are there symbols that will indicate who it is for? (Rainbow flag, Pink or rainbow triangle)
- Trans symbol? Acronyms: "LGBT" "LGBTQ2SI?" "MTF"
- Are these symbols culturally specific or more widely recognized?
- Do you need to include the location of the group? Or is confidentiality or community safety a concern?
- How much information/how obvious you are about group participants, location etc., will
- depend on the way outreach materials will be used, and who will see them—pamphlet vs. community paper advertisement, paper flyer vs. radio announcement.
- Consider listing only a phone number or agency name and number on flyers in some instances.

**Translation:**

On a limited budget? Identify some key languages and try to design flyers so that you can add a sticker to change the date or intake location. This way you can use it for several groups and translation resources can be used towards developing outreach material in more than one language over time.

Remember! Let your own staff (direct-service and otherwise) know about your current outreach initiative. Be sure to provide clear information to administrative staff and ensure they are prepared to either answer questions or know where to refer people. Also: Take some time to present your upcoming program, or past program successes to your own agency staff, Board members and partners (even partners on other projects).





# Logistics

## *General:*

- Ideal Number of participants: 4-10
- Length of group: 2-3 hours; 12 - 15 weeks (participants indicated wanting longer groups; consider extending to 20 weeks or offering consecutive groups where new participants can join, and the session cycle begins again)
- Staff: 2 frontline staff on site (one being the expressive arts facilitator)

## *Supporting Participants to Get There:*

- TTC (transportation) tokens should be provided at the groups as well as at intake, registration and the exhibit (2 tokens per person, including children).
- Include resources that are available on Outreach material and when setting up or at an intake & registration meeting.
- Provide TTC tokens without waiting for participants to ask for it.
- Remind participants once the group is running.
- Interpretation and Child Care should be offered for Intake & Registration as well as the group. Remember to include these in the budget.
- Location should be familiar and easy to get to. If it is not, plan for accompaniment or other preparation/support for participants (see Location).
- Keep in mind that many LGBTQ participants travel long distances to attend groups that feel safe

## *Best time of day to run groups:*

- This will vary for different communities and group composition.

Take into consideration the kind of work (day time, evening or shift work and unemployment). If many participants do the same kind of work they may identify a time that is more convenient. Also consider family or household obligations (meals, homework, young children help etc.) and holidays. For example, holding sessions over Ramadan may not be a good option for an expressive arts group with many Muslim participants.

- If you have the flexibility, ask participants what time works for them.
- Evening and weekend groups allow day-time workers or those in ESL classes to attend with out missing work or class.

## *Referrals and Support Staff:*

- Ensure Support Staff and Referral Procedures are in Place Before the Group Starts
- Support Staff include Social worker, Settlement worker, Peer/Outreach worker (See: Training; Staffing)
- Arrange for participants to have priority access to counseling and social workers during the period which the group is running (for example, ensure that one support staff has dedicated time worked into a work plan or schedule. It may help, when possible, for this time to be offered immediately following the group each week, to limit traveling back and forth unnecessarily.

Access to mental health or counseling resources throughout the week are important considering the theme of the groups (violence, community safety) and the range of intersecting stressors participants may be experiencing. Ideally support or resource Staff are available at the agency/organization hosting the group, this way the facilitator or translator can walk right over and help the participant make an appointment with the appropriate person. If the referral is offsite from the group and is new or unfamiliar, accompaniment should be arranged.

*The following should be provided and budgeted for:*

- Translation
- Art Supplies
- Food
- Public Transport Tokens/tickets (TTC)
- Child care (plan to have child care last at least 15-20 minutes longer than each group. This time ensures that participants who need child care are also able to access facilitators after a group if they need support after a group, for example.
- Time for group staff to conduct referrals before or after groups
- Art Exhibit (food, location, etc.)

*Notes and Variations:*

- Childcare may also be a space for children to engage in an expressive arts group with trained Expressive Arts Therapy facilitators or other skilled practitioners. They must also be Trans-and LGBTQ2SI positive
- Food is very important and should be culturally appropriate, or an opportunity for participants to try different kinds of food. It must absolutely be nutritious (with some fun snack exceptions!). Most of the participants in these Expressive Arts Groups are on limited incomes, or may be coming from work. Be sure when choosing food to remember dietary restrictions.
- Budget. (Be sure to include enough \$\$ for child care, interpretation and food.)
- All information and consent documents are Trans-and LGBTQ2SI-positive, knowledgeable of newcomer needs, will offer knowledgeable support for referrals and will provide direct counseling or settlement support (as needed).





# Language

Language is a matter of Accessibility. It allows information and concepts to be engaged with and accessed by participants. It is also the filter through which concepts pass. Interpreting or translating into many languages is always a serious challenge. This is because of subtleties of meanings and concepts that just do not translate.

It is also worth noting that language barriers are sources of intense pain and potential embarrassment. The same goes for general literacy. Just because a document is available in translation does not mean the women are able to read it. Dealing with issues around language sensitively is very important.

## *Language in general:*

- When using terms specific to sexual orientation or gender identity, keep the options as broad as possible. Even when translation is available, include the English terms “LGBTQ” or “LGBTQ2SI” or even name each identity category: “lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans...” Many newcomers are familiar with the acronyms or words, even if they aren’t exactly sure which applies to them specifically.

*Translation: ( In the case of sexual orientation and gender identity terminology, the translated/ interpreted terms may actually be offensive, despite being accurate)*

- Any written materials should be translated to the language(s) of participants. This includes intake & registration, consent forms and evaluations. Also, request that the translator include the English acronyms (i.e. “LGBTQ”) in the translation.

Test translated material with a peer group member who is LGBTQ2SI positive. This is to ensure documents are not unintentionally offensive. Language that uses slang or even direct translations for LGBTQ2SI related terminology can actually be quite offensive, as with English.

## *Interpretation:*

- Interpreters should be given information and material about the group before it starts. This includes information about themes (sexuality, gender identity, violence) and resources to support them, including the Trans Pulse Project terms of reference for Interpreters document, and further reading. Follow up after groups is recommended, as is a paid hour of reading or meeting prior to the group. It is very important not to use an interpreter who is opposed to homosexuality or is transphobic. The interpreter must be able to contribute to a welcoming and safe environment where participants feel they can share personal information.
- In women-only groups (as our pilot groups have been), interpreters should be women.
- Interpreters should receive training along with staff (see Training).
- If your organization does not have staff interpreters or translators to train, invite a partner organization’s interpreters to participate in the training. Individuals with training should be given priority where possible.
- Interpreters become part of the group dynamic. In the case where facilitators are not from the same cultural or linguistic community, the interpreter may have the role of cultural representative, initially. If the participants’ experience of persecution related to sexuality or gender identity was in their country of origin, or if they have had painful interactions with this community in Toronto, they may be looking for signs that the interpreter does not accept them. This is a delicate situation where interpreters, who are often cultural peers, are navigating a tricky social/professional situation.

Throughout this project we have worked with sensitive and dedicated interpreters-- they’re out there!



# Intake and Registration

Connecting with participants prior to the start of a group is important. This provides an opportunity to review the group and the fact that the arts are used but it is also a place to engage and explore emotions and experiences that are challenging, including violence and safety. This ensures that participants do not feel confused when the group turns out to be more than an arts and craft group.

Registration can happen at the same time as intake, or prior to the group, through other service providers or signing up (by calling or walking in).

Prepare front line staff for this registration process, so that participants do not receive blank looks when they explain why they are there, and possibly get turned away. This is particularly the case where registration is happening through a partner organization, who may never have hosted a group before.

It may be helpful to have a series of open sessions where participants can drop in, use art material and meet facilitators and set a time for an intake meeting, if not complete it with one of the two facilitators, in a confidential room, during that first session.

Set a week or two to complete intake sessions, but not much more or people will feel that they are waiting for a long time for the group. If possible set the intake at the same time/day the group will run, as well in the evening and/or on a weekend.

## *Intake sessions :*

- Can take up to 45 minutes to an hour, particularly with an interpreter.
- Leave enough time so participants do not feel rushed.
- The sessions ensure participants understand what the group is about, and assesses their 'readiness' to participate. This includes identifying the resource the participant has and what experiences they may (or may not) want to explore in the group or through referral for individual counseling support.
- Participants are also introduced to a range of programs and services that may support them during the course of the groups, and beyond. This can include setting an appointment with the LGBTQ specific settlement worker. This settlement worker will support the participant with other needs beyond the scope of the group, including employment, immigration, referrals to social workers, doctors, etc.

*"It is important to have the community support which we received here because it let us become connected to society and this was really important"*

--Pilot Group Participant

The intake is also the time to assess and if necessary educate participants about trans-inclusivity in the program, in the case of the LGBTQ groups. This provides an opportunity to answer questions, establish ground rules, and help prepare an environment that is inclusive of women with trans experience who also are LGBTQ. (See the Appendix for a sample Intake and Readiness form.)

Tell participants where their information is going, how it will be stored (in a locked filing cabinet) and who will see it, and how they can access it if they wish (consult or create your organization's policy).



# Facilitation

## *Who should facilitate the expressive arts group?*

The Primary Facilitator is a trained Expressive Arts Therapist or has related training, skills and experience.

## *Responsibilities:*

- Creates a supportive, non-judgmental, environment for women to express themselves through creative expression particularly around issues that are of concern to them,, including issues of violence and community safety, settlement and sexuality or gender identity.
- Creates a safe, accessible, creative space where women are comfortable, feel relaxed, have fun and connect with other women.
- Establishes group guidelines: including outlining what 'confidentiality' means for participants in the group and the elements of a non-judgmental atmosphere in relation to discussions and art making.
- Facilitates participants' connection to resources that are safe (i.e. knowledgeable, anti-racist, LGBTQ2SI positive) and appropriate to the participants needs.

## *Related Experience /Shared identity experience:*

- Focus group and interview respondents overall reflected that the ideal group is one in which the facilitator shares an identity aspect—if not all—with the participants of the group. For example: if the group is composed of women who have trans experience and are Latina, then the facilitator would also be a member of this cultural and gender-specific group.
- If the facilitator for some reason does not share cultural and/or sexual orientation and/or gender identity, the Facilitator should have a deep sensitivity and understanding of the impact migration, citizenship status (or lack of), sexuality and gender identity may impact participant in the group.
- Also the facilitator must be aware of her own privilege or perceived privilege within the group. She should be able and prepared to address this in the context of ensuring an open, generative and creative group experience. In mixed groups, where it is impossible to have a 'shared identity' this also provides a chance for the facilitator(s) to model being open and explicitly discussing and engaging with difference.

If there are two facilitators, the interaction between them will be models for the group. Attention to privilege dynamics between co-facilitators and other staff must also be addressed amongst them (outside the group). Emerging issues which may affect the facilitators dynamic, and the group, should be identified and addressed in the debrief sessions and in professional supervision.

## *Population Specific Knowledge:*

The facilitator is...

- Knowledgeable about the stressors of migration and settlement including feelings of loss, culture shock, issues and discrimination related to living in a second language, race, economic insecurity, gender identity and sexual orientation.
- Familiar with the impact of trauma and violence and the impact expressive arts has on participants when engaging with these experiences. The facilitator should also be aware of the impact of exploring difficult experiences in a group setting (i.e. the impact on the group, the individual sharing, the facilitator and other support staff)
- Develops appropriate activities for the group and keeps in mind that the group is short term and not a trauma specific group or prepares activities that are appropriate to the number of groups left. For example, the facilitator may prepare more 'closing' oriented activities as the groups near their final

date.

- Familiar with, or develops knowledge of, participant's community and cultural history, countries of origin and cultures.
- Is knowledgeable of issues that impact newcomer, Transgender, Transexual, Gender non-conforming women, and lesbian, bisexual, Queer, Questioning, women. (For example is trained or a trainer for Trans 101, LGBTQ2SI 101, engaged in personal study, and has professional contacts to support her work).
- Is aware of resources appropriate to participants, including ethno-culturally specific services/groups, settlement services and health services which are LGBTQ2SI positive
- In addition to training/certification in Expressive Arts Therapy or equivalent training and skills noted above, below are some key skills which an arts-based facilitator facilitating these groups will have.

#### *Expressive Arts Program, Group Facilitator's Skills:*

- Has experience facilitating safe group processes;
- Understands how expressive arts processes work including: guiding participants from the day to day social world into the creative space, and then out again (grounding); assessing group comfort levels, dynamics and needs;
- Has experience supporting nervous or reluctant participants (without coercion or enforced participation);
- Have professional supervision resources in place, equivalent to the requirement of professional best practices for Expressive Arts Therapists;
- Is experienced in the use of expressive arts to facilitate women's engagement with emotions and concerns that result from their lives specifically issues of safety and violence;
- Is knowledgeable of the framework that must be in place in order to prepare participants to share art and stories safely including time, parameters for others' responses. The facilitator must also be able to support participants to cope and use grounding mechanisms if they are triggered or otherwise impacted by sharing a story or art/image, or hearing or seeing/experiencing others' art work;
- Is skilled in using different artistic modalities and able to draw participants from one activity to another;
- Is flexible and responsive to participants needs while still maintaining the flow of the session.

These guidelines are not an exhaustive list but do give someone setting up such a program a clear sense of the facilitation skills needed.

Groups can be (and are) also fun, silly, engaging and inspiring. However, these experiences can bring many things out for participants particularly where a participant has experienced violence and trauma. Supporting participants to explore and share such experiences requires adequate preparation for participants and highly developed skills on the part of the facilitator(s).

Plan to support facilitation staff through funding for supervision, provided by an experienced expressive arts therapist who is familiar with working with marginalized communities.

#### *Variations:*

There is no question that an experienced expressive arts therapist or arts-based group facilitator is the ideal background for facilitating these groups. However, an alternative may be an experienced group facilitator or therapist, who is curious but not yet experienced in the use of arts in this setting, yet has expertise with the community that will be participating in the group.

If the facilitator has little experience using the arts, be sure to set time aside for training to prepare and learn about the use and psychological/therapeutic impact of expressive arts. Co-facilitation or a facilitator / peer facilitator training model may be an option to develop skills for potential community facilitators who have themselves been newcomers and have trans experience and/or are LGBTQ.



# Violence and Community Safety Workshop

## *Objectives:*

- Provide the opportunity for participants to identify and explore experiences and impact of violence in their lives as well as explore other issues of importance.
- Identify useful strategies and coping mechanisms already present in the participant's lives.
- Introduce new resources (from other participants, facilitators and guests) to enable participants to address, cope with/heal from the violence or stressors they experience
- Build capacity to for participants to address/reduce/prevent violence and increase individual and community safety.

## *Methodology:*

- Arts-based method works very well (see the Appendix for examples).
- Small group discussion allows intimate discussion that is less threatening than a large group
- In past groups a guest facilitator has been invited. If a guest-facilitator is invited, expectations/ planning for sharing of personal stories should be kept at a minimum.
- Capture feedback through an evaluation at the close of the session, and through a reflective discussion the following week.

## *Language:*

- If paper materials will be used, they should be translated. An ESL & clear language approach should be used in explaining ideas, including paper resources given to the group.
- Diagrams and non verbal ways of engaging or communicating are also useful if the group is composed of women speaking multiple languages. If the group participants share a single language, this same-language facilitator or an interpreter o(who is trans and LGBTQ positive) is ideal.

## *Approach:*

- The facilitator is familiar with the group participants already (i.e. is a co facilitator or a peer support worker/community health worker, or trained program volunteer/student placement).
- Alternatively, the facilitator is a long time service provider who is familiar with the community, and ideally is someone who is available as a resource for the participants following the workshop.
- When introducing an explicitly educational format, to discuss violence and community safety, into an expressive arts therapy oriented group be attentive to the interruption that it will cause in the group dynamic.

The workshop facilitator/designer and the primary facilitator should meet to plan the workshop in advance, discuss issues that have come up in the group already and which the participants have indicated they want to explore in the workshop. The facilitator can also suggest ways to engage with the group, and provide support in designing the workshop so it fits with the culture of the group that has been developed, including the integration of the arts. This includes the level of English proficiency, the availability of interpreters, what has and has not worked in the past.

Participants are informed from the beginning of the EXA group that the workshop will be happening, theme, and who will be facilitating it.

Customize the workshop: Ask participants at the beginning what issues or questions they are bringing to the group. Invite the participants to choose the format for the workshop and what topics they would like to explore. Provide participants with accessible resources in the community. \*\*

*Oppression, Marginalization and Violence:*

When working with groups or individuals in a group who are marginalized by citizenship status, race, economic status, ability, gender, sexual orientation, and more specifically women with trans experience and LGBQ women, it is important to also explicitly include the opportunity to discuss forms, threat or fear, of violence based on discrimination such as racism, transphobia and homophobia.

\*\*Be honest and realistic. When providing resources to trans, gender queer and gender-non conforming newcomer women, and/or lesbian, bisexual, queer or questioning women, it is important to indicate what resources are LGBTQ2SI positive and which you are not sure about. This is part of our accountability to the participants and promotes trust in the resources we offer and supports a sense of community safety.

*Variation:*

A popular education approach including role plays, visual narratives using digital cameras or physical exploration of the themes would also be an excellent way to engage participants and potentially maintain the flow of the group.

Also consider inviting a community member who an artist or creative arts facilitator to lead a guest workshop. This supports community members may also broaden participants knowledge of the LGBTQ community while challenging trans and homophobia by actively celebrating these community members.

*During the pilot groups held for this project, we did a theme-focused session with the group, which may be also be an alternative to inviting in a guest. Participants were asked if there were issues related to violence, discrimination or other challenges they have that they had not yet had a chance to explore in the group but would like to. From this discussion, we moved into an activity centered around clay. In the close of the activity we returned to the topics we had begun the session with.*

*We worked on the clay pieces over two sessions. The discussions, facilitated through the clay pieces that emerged, were open, emotional and offered new insights to the women. See the appendix for an outline of the structure of this session. During intake and through out the group, the facilitators had regular individual contact with participants, in this way any safety related needs that may not have been addressed during the course of a session, could be attended to.*

*Directing the theme-specific session around the issues that the women had identified themselves including options introduced by facilitators<sup>1</sup> proved to be an empowering and powerful experience for the participants. This approach may also offer participants control over how far to go in exploring issues of violence, since both the arts and the session structure offer a measure of safety, given that the participants were familiar with the structure, their right to pass or take a break, or change activities, if they needed. The arts also were a resource they could take with them when they left the group.*

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<sup>1</sup> The facilitators felt it was important to introduce options, to model openness in discussing potentially sensitive topics. It also allowed facilitators to suggest topics, but allow the participants to ultimately choose the theme.



# Partnerships

Partnerships are valuable ways to share resources. They are an excellent way for smaller organizations or groups that want to run an expressive arts group, but don't have the staff capacity and/or financial resources to do so<sup>1</sup>.

It is important to remember that each group or organization has its own set of policies, expectations and organizational culture. This can be a challenge when beginning a new relationship, particularly when organizational cultures clash. For example some may require a formal agreement that is reviewed by a Board of Directors, others may not.

For an outline of potential partnership structures, please see the Appendix.

## *Prior to the group:*

- Be clear about why each organization or group wants to host or support an expressive arts program, and how they want to contribute to it.
- Power dynamics that go unaddressed and break down in communication can impact service delivery. Address misunderstandings in the development phase. Openly discuss limits to capacity and what each organization's role will be in supporting the other.
- Consult front line staff when making decisions about implementation, planning for participant support, or identifying and writing proposals for grants or funding.
- Partners should be prepared to identify their strengths and areas for growth when serving LGBTQ newcomers. A timeline should be established to ensure these pieces can be imbedded into organizational planning and individual work plans.
- An evaluation process should be developed to capture partners' experience during each phase of the process, and recommendations for future collaboration identified.
- Clearly outline human resource and budget management responsibilities.
- Create a contract that outlines agreements clearly (including staff trainings or preparation commitments, and other details relevant to the program).
- Identify how participant numbers or information to be shared (i.e. for reports, or client databases). Funders or agency policies may conflict, so it is important to address this in the planning phase.
- Ensure staff working with in the group are knowledgeable about the partnership, as they are a primary resource for information for participants.
- Invite partnership staff for orientations of each agency, to strengthen relationships and augment staff knowledge of the location and services offered. This is also a great way to promote the program to each organization's staff.

## *Communicating with Participants:*

- Let participants know about the partnership and explain what the partners do, what services they offer to newcomer women with trans experience and/or who are LGBTQ.
- Identify how/ who will collect and store participant information. Inform participants of how their information will be used and which organization will keep it on file.
- If possible, invite participants for an orientation of the partnership organization. This helps familiarize participants with new resources.

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<sup>1</sup> "Resources" for the purpose of this document refers to logistical things needed to run a program, Capacity/Capacity Building = knowledge, policy and infrastructural capacity/capacity that is needed to implement a program in line with promising practices.

### *Planning for the Future:*

- One of the original Access Alliance groups continued meeting after the expressive arts group was officially finished. This was possible because of a strong community of women, as well as the availability of space at the partners organization, where the group was held, and access to art materials.
- Partners might consider hosting an open arts 'studio' space that is organized by participants, in the weeks following the end of a group. Encouraging participants to shape this space, and supporting them to find resources, get in kind donations of art materials may develop into a new community-run program.

*We need a free, safe art space for newcomers, especially; this place allowed it to feel like "mine"*  
--Pilot Group Participant

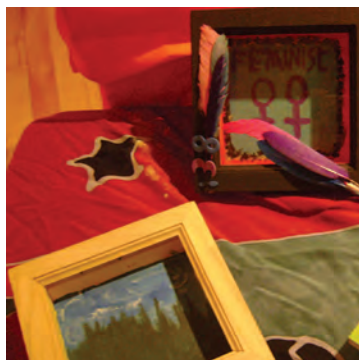
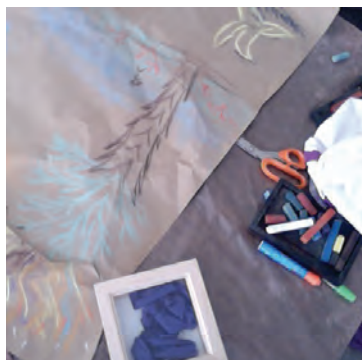
- Following the pilot groups, some participants indicated though they enjoy art classes or community lead groups, they valued, and wanted to continue to have access to an expressive arts therapy group.

*"I would want more groups like these to continue. It is important to have a stable setting with a facilitator instead of having to do it on our own. The facilitators make the space feel more safe and they provide a controlled environment with structure in the group to deal with various situations particularly violence"* --Pilot Group Participant

- If community members strongly urge for a group to be continued, identify funding and partnership options that may make this possible. Where continuing a group is not possible, encourage participants to join or begin their own group, and offer support with this. Be prepared to refer participants to similar groups or connect with other programs that may be able to offer related programming that is LGBTQ2SI positive.

*"It is hard to find workshops/groups like these for lesbian or bisexual women to attend and [get to] understand each other so I would definitely come back for another group."*  
--Pilot Group Participant

- The challenge currently is that for newcomer women who are LGBTQ and/or have trans experience, there are few groups that currently address these intersections of identity explicitly.





# Working with the Arts

The Expressive Arts groups at Access Alliance, have been facilitated almost exclusively by an Intermodal Expressive Arts Therapist. As a result the expressive arts groups proposed in tool kit apply intermodal expressive arts therapy principals when shaping the session and engaging participants with the arts/creative expression.

## *This approach is:*

- client-centered
- resource/strength - focused
- works within the realm of creativity, imagination and play
- accessible to participants regardless of previous experience or skill in creative arts

## *The role of the arts:*

- All forms of art or creative expression are engaged, often more than one throughout a session.
- art work/creative expression have a central role, this means they are taken as the site of work/engagement, and not as only an accompaniment to the work of a session. The arts and the process of creating and exploring are considered the work of the session.
- The centrality of the arts does not mean, however, that there is no meaning-making through discussion, verbal exchange or analysis.
- The art work/images that emerge are not used as a site of analysis by the therapist-facilitator to decode and translate back to the client, but rather a shared site of experience (both can engage with the image in the "real world") which can be explored\* by the individual, the facilitator and the other members of the group.
- The process of creating is itself important. During the session there is time to reflected on the experience of art making, as a site of reflection and an opportunity to gain insight or to identify resources that were applied or discovered in the process, which may also be useful in everyday life.
- In expressive arts therapy, the role of the "image" (including characters, paintings, collages, clay figures/objects, songs, poems, etc..) that emerge during a session are treated as entities in their own right.
- The arts can be a 'container' for difficult experiences of emotions, and are part of the 'frame' that supports the participant.
- The artistic process provides a way for participant literally see, hear, and other wise experience a sign of their active presence in the world. For individuals who feel silenced, or rendered invisible by experiences of oppression and marginalization, this opportunity to see oneself reflected, and also witnessed by the group, can have a powerful impact.

Engagement with the arts, and the emotions or experiences that arise in the process are facilitated and supported by a trained therapist / facilitator. This is approached with care, sensitivity and playfulness.

The images/artistic creations are part of a very personal, and potentially transformative experience. As a result the the work belongs to the creator, and should be treated with respect and care. This includes safe storage for the work during the course of the groups, as well as the right to choose, how or if images will be used.

Even though participants may sign waivers to permit photographs of themselves, or their art work, it should be clear that at any point this permission can be revoked by the creator of the art work, with out repercussion.

This also means that images and art work should only be kept by the organization if the creator has signed and not revoked the permission to use the work. In the case where options are provided for how work can be used, ensure a database of images and permissions is created.

### *Expressive Art Exhibit:*

- The exhibit is an opportunity to invite witnesses to engage with the art work, and can be an effective outlet for participants to put a message into the public sphere.
- Due to the significance of the art/art making process, shaping the exhibit is an important process, and participants should be invited to make choices about how the work is exhibited, and who is invited.
- Resources required include space, ways to display the work safely (easels, window ledges, boxes, tables), and some snacks and drinks, and potentially decorations.

During one of the pilot groups, we held a small exhibit. The group decided together to make the event open to family and friends only. This allowed the participants to shape a safe environment in which to experience exhibiting their work and celebrating the group and their work. The experience was intimate and joyful. The exhibit welcomed guests to a room with art work displayed, and included stations where paper, clay and instruments were set out to be used by those who came if they wished. As a result of this careful and personalized shaping, the exhibit felt like a very meaningful experience, and a wonderful way to end the group.

See the appendix for examples on working with a specific topic--such a safety or experiences of violence. See also sample Session and Group Cycle Structures.





- I. RESOURCES (REFERRALS AND TRAINING)
- II. EXPRESSIVE ARTS EVALUATION PROCESS INTRODUCTION
- III. INTAKE EVALUATION & READINESS QUESTIONS
- IV. SESSION DEBRIEFING TEMPLATE
- V. GROUP MID- POINT EVALUATION GUIDE
- VI. FINAL GROUP SESSION EVALUATION TEMPLATE
- VII. POST GROUP EVALUATION GUIDE
- VIII. EXPRESSIVE ART GROUPS SESSION STRUCTURE
- IX. COMPARISON OF PROGRAM MODELS
- X. BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS
- XI. LITERATURE REVIEW

FOR FURTHER PROMISING PRACTICE RESOURCES OR INFORMATION ABOUT THE STEPPING UP PROJECT,  
VISIT THE STEPPING UP PROJECT PAGE AT [WWW.ACCESSALLIANCE.CA](http://WWW.ACCESSALLIANCE.CA)

# LGBTQ+ Resources for Referral, Training and Capacity Building

*Most Resources are oriented towards service provision in Toronto, Canada, as this is where we are located.*

Type of Service	Name	Description	Contact Information	Website	Other Information
<b>Counseling Services</b>	The 519 Church Street Community Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short-term counseling</li> </ul>	519 Church St. 416-392-6874	<a href="http://www.the519.org">www.the519.org</a>	Provide 6 counseling sessions and then referrals for follow-up
	David Kelley LGBTQ Counseling Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Counseling for Individuals, Couples and Families</li> </ul>	355 Church St. 416-595-9618	<a href="http://www.familyserVICEToronto.org">www.familyserVICEToronto.org</a>	Short-term counseling
	Women's Counselling Referral and Education Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Counseling for low-income women</li> <li>Free referrals variety of resources</li> </ul>	489 College St., Suite 303B 416-534-7501	<a href="http://www.wcrec.org/welcome/home.htm">www.wcrec.org/welcome/home.htm</a>	Short-term counseling (16 weeks max)
<b>Health and Counseling Services</b>	Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary health care services</li> <li>Mental health and social work services</li> <li>Individual counseling</li> <li>Settlement services (LGBTQ Settlement Counselor)</li> <li>Community health programs for LGBTQ newcomers and refugees.</li> </ul>	Downtown Office 340 College St. 416-324-8677	<a href="http://www.accessalliance.ca">www.accessalliance.ca</a>	East Office 3040 Danforth Ave., Unit 6 416-693-8677  West Office 761 Jane St., Suite 200B, 760-8677
	Hassle Free Clinic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary health care service</li> <li>Counseling services</li> </ul>	66 Gerrard St. E., 2nd floor Women's Clinic: 416-922-0566 Men's Clinic: 416-922-0566	<a href="http://www.hasslefreeclinic.org">www.hasslefreeclinic.org</a>	Transgender and transsexual clients are welcome at both the women's and the men's clinic.
	Sherbourne Health Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary health care services</li> <li>Mental health counseling</li> <li>Support Groups for LGBTQ people</li> <li>LGBTQ services and programs for youth, parents and families</li> </ul>	333 Sherbourne St. Health Services: 416-324-4180 LGBTQ Services: 416-324-4103	<a href="http://www.sherbourne.on.ca/">www.sherbourne.on.ca/</a>	Gender Supportive workshops and groups for LGBTQ people (Ex. Gender Journeys and The B-Side: Exploring Sexuality)

Type of Service	Name	Description	Contact Information	Website	Other Information
	Women's Health in Women's Hands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary health care services, counseling and programs for Black Women and Women of Colour from the Caribbean, African, Latin American and South Asian communities</li> </ul>	2 Carlton St, Suite 500 General Inquiries: 416-593-7655 Clinical Services: 416-593-7655, x 7 info@whihw.com	www.whihw.com	
<b>LGBTQ+ Programs</b>	The 519 Church Street Community Centre*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wide variety of programs for youth, parents and families, trans men and women</li> </ul>	519 Church St. 416-392-6874	www.the519.org	Offer Trans-specific programs
	Fred Victor Centre*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment and Training Programs*</li> </ul>	248 Queen St. E. 416-364-8986	www.fredvictor.org/	Thrive! (trans-specific employment and training program) & trans-only time, contact organization for times
<b>Settlement Services and Newcomer Programs</b>	CultureLink	T-Girls Support Group *	67 Adelaide St. E. 416-392-9292	www.fredvictor.org/womens_services	Fred Victor centre offers many programs (see website for details)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Settlement Services</li> <li>LGBTQ Newcomer Youth Program</li> </ul>	2340 Dundas St. W., Suite 301 416-588-6288	www.culturelink.net/	
<b>Specific Resources for Different Ethno-cultural Groups</b>	HOLA! Grupo Gay Latino	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting group that provides support, education, activism and cultural events for LGBTQ+ community members of Latin American Heritage</li> </ul>	416-925-5529 info@grupohola.ca		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting group at the 519 Church Street Community Centre</li> </ul>
	Iranian Queer Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support of Iranian queer refugees</li> <li>Advocacy and human rights action</li> </ul>	135 Tyndall Ave., #503 416-407-5451 board@irgo.org	www.irgo.org/index.html	

Type of Service	Name	Description	Contact Information	Website	Other Information
	<b>Iranian Railroad for Queer Refugees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support Iranian gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered refugees all over the world.</li> </ul>	477 Sherbourne St. Suite 312 416-548-4171 info@irqr.net	www.irqr.net/	
	<b>Mujeres Al Frente</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support group for LGBTIQ Women and Transwomen of Latin America</li> </ul>	mujeresalfrente_@yahoo.ca	www.mujeresalfrente-to.blogspot.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blog is written in Spanish</li> </ul>
	<b>Salaam Queer Muslim Community - Toronto</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organization dedicated to the LGBTQ Muslim community.</li> <li>Offer support groups</li> </ul>	416-925-XTRA, x.2209 salaam@salaamcanada.com	www.salaamcanada.com	
<b>Training and Capacity - Building Programs</b>	<b>The 519 Church Street Community Centre *</b>	<p>Training Program: "Trans Access"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trans awareness workshops for range of service providers</li> </ul>	519 Church St. 416-392-6874	www.the519.org/programs/services/transprograms/transaccess	
	<b>Positive Space Initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training supports agencies in creating positive spaces</li> </ul>		www.positivespaces.ca/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Starter Kit', resources and trainings on website</li> </ul>
	<b>Public Health Alliance for LGBTTTIQQA Equity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer "Positive Space" training to a variety of organizations</li> </ul>		www.opha.on.ca/our_voice/workgroups/pha.shtml	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Positive Space" manual available on website</li> </ul>
	<b>Rainbow Health Ontario</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide different training and education programs to improve the accessibility and quality of health care services for LGBT community members</li> </ul>	333 Sherbourne St., 2nd Floor 416.324.4100	www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/training/RHOtraining.cfm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resources available on website</li> </ul>
	<b>Sherbourne Health Centre</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides informational resources, training programs and community outreach activities for a variety of organizations working with LGBTQ+ people</li> </ul>	333 Sherbourne St. info@sherbourne.on.ca	www.sherbourne.on.ca/programs/hlthpromoactivities.html	

Type of Service	Name	Description	Contact Information	Website	Other Information
Women's Shelter	Fred Victor Centre Women's Hostel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emergency shelter</li> <li>Informal Counseling</li> <li>Case management and referral</li> </ul>	86 Lombard St. 416-368-2642	www.fredvictor.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcoming to Trans Women</li> </ul>

\* Trans-specific program

### Links to LGBTQ+ Resources

Type of Resource	Name	Affiliated Organization	Website	Other Information
Training Toolkits/ Manuals	LGBT Toolkit – For Creating Culturally Competent Care for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Persons	City of Toronto: Long Term Care Homes and Services	<a href="http://www.toronto.ca/ltc/lgbt_toolkit.htm">http://www.toronto.ca/ltc/lgbt_toolkit.htm</a>	Refer to Appendix K (on page 96 of tool kit) for 'Training Resources- Educational LGBT Videos'
	Rainbow Health Educational Toolkit	Rainbow Health Network	<a href="http://www.rainbowhealthnetwork.ca/">http://www.rainbowhealthnetwork.ca/</a>	
LGBTQ+ Campaigns	Variety of Resources on 'Educational Resources'	Canadian Rainbow Health Coalition (CRHC)	<b>Main Website:</b> <a href="http://www.rainbowhealth.ca/english/index.html">http://www.rainbowhealth.ca/english/index.html</a> <b>'Educational Resources' Website:</b> <a href="http://www.toronto.ca/ltc/lgbt_toolkit.htm">http://www.toronto.ca/ltc/lgbt_toolkit.htm</a>	
	Outlive Homophobia Campaign	Canadian Rainbow Health Coalition (CRHC)	<a href="http://rainbowhealth.ca/outlive/">http://rainbowhealth.ca/outlive/</a>	

# Expressive Arts Evaluation Process

## Introduction

Several methods of evaluation are employed to help inform the process of implementing an Expressive Arts Therapy Program, as well as to identify the program's impact on participants. *Template Documents are provided following this section.*

### Methods of Evaluation

#### 1. *Intake Interviews*

Before the group begins, participants have a one-on-one meeting about 'Intake and Readiness' with the group facilitator. As part of the intake interview, each woman is asked about her interest and hopes for the group, any concerns they felt about participating in the group, and specific issues or concerns for which they might want support. The Intake provides a baseline of responses for the evaluation process, and is also a tool to gauge participant's needs and suitability for group expressive arts (at that point in time).

#### 2. *Debriefing Notes*

Ongoing: A standard debriefing form is completed at the end of each session. Facilitators comment on activities completed by the group.

#### 3. *Mid-Point Evaluation*

This can be held on the 7<sup>th</sup> session, through a group discussion with all participants. Questions related to whether the group is meeting the participants' expectations, and for suggestions of content for the remaining sessions.

#### 4. *Final Evaluation*

In the final session, the participants fill out a written evaluation questionnaire, which includes open-ended questions and 20 Likert items (statements for which respondents indicated their degree of agreement/disagreement on a 5-point scale). In the open-ended questions, participants are asked to comment on: the parts of the group that were helpful to them, how the group could be improved, and the group facilitators. Participants are asked how participation in the group affected their health and well-being, and to identify the issues addressed in the group that were most important to them. The Likert items elicited participants' opinions and feelings about different aspects of the group, including: the location and environment; the relationships formed; the effects of the group on participants' well-being; the facilitators; and the learning opportunities provided.

#### 5. *Post-Group Evaluation*

Approximately one month after the group sessions have ended, participants are invited to return to participate in a final evaluation about their experiences in the group. Focus group questions focus on participants' first impressions of the group; the most memorable part of the program; suggestions for improving the group; and the impact the program had on participants' lives.

## **Intake Evaluation and Readiness Questions**

*These are some questions that may be useful in doing the Intake for the expressive arts program, as well as prepare participants for the group.*

### **Section 1: Introductory Questions**

1. Why are you interested in participating in the LGBTQ Expressive Arts group?
  - a) Are you looking forward to anything in particular with regard to participating in this group?
    - i. is there anything you're hoping to for--or is there a specific issue you want to address through participating in this group?
  - b) Do you have any concerns or questions about participating in this group?

### **Section 2: Preparation/Readiness to share and explore in a group setting**

1. What do you think about the idea of sharing personal stories or creative work in a group?
  - i. have you done this before?
  - ii. How do you feel about this?
  - iii. Do you have any questions or concerns about doing art or sharing stories in groups?
  - iv. Do you share personal stories or experiences about sexuality, gender, things that make you feel safe or unsafe with other people in your life? (reflect back the language used by participants earlier in question 1.1)
  - v. Who are you able to talk with about these things? (offer suggestions: i.e. friends, doctors, people at work?)
2. Are there any particular experiences of violence or discrimination that you have experienced that you think you'd like to explore in the group,
3. Is there anything you want me /the facilitator to be aware of, so that we can better support you during the group?

*Intake staff may want to make note and/or discuss potential referrals or support options here.*

### **Section 4: Questions about Personal Safety and Well-being**

1. What are some of the ways that you take care of yourself?
  - a. What helps you to feel good? (This can be people, activities you do, things...)
  - b. What kinds of things or activities help you feel safe (or comfortable)?

*This is also a good time to talk openly about the fact that participating in the group can sometimes bring up strong emotions. Discuss options for support.*

### **Section 5: Questions about Participants' Needs and Resources**

1. Are there specific issues or concerns that you have right now that you might want some more support with? (Settlement, health, employment, emotions, general health?)
2. Do you have a settlement worker that is LGBTQ positive?
  - b) Are you interested in knowing about more resources that are LGBTQ positive?

*Identify and provide appropriate referrals, or make appointments on site where possible.*

### **Section 6: Other**

1. Do you have any other questions?

### **LGBTQ2SI Inclusivity:**

*It is important to have a discussion about this with any group that is LGBTQ2SI positive. This is an opportunity to identify or address internalized as well as general homophobia or transphobia.*

If the participant is not trans-identified, or not exploring gender identity, this is a good time to explain use of pronouns, and limits on personal questions. Be clear that it is not the responsibility of women with trans experience to teach everyone around them or share personal details to satisfy curiosity. This is an invasion of privacy and may create an unsafe environment for the other participant. Ensure that participants know that they can discuss questions with facilitators Outline the process and consequences of harassing or discriminatory behaviour (i.e. removal from the group).

Sample Intake Questions

This group is open to women of any sexual orientation. This means there will be women who are lesbian, bisexual, queer, or questioning their sexuality in this group.

How do you feel about that?

This group is open to all women. This means that there will be women who have trans-experience, or have experience of living as a man or boy, as well as living as a girl or woman. This includes some women who identify as transexual, trans gender, or gender-non-conforming.

How do you feel about that?

Is this something that you'd like to explore yourself?

# Expressive Arts Group: Session Debriefing Document

<b>Program:</b> Expressive Arts Therapy	<b>Date of Session:</b>  Session # ___ of ____.
<b>Location:</b>	<b>Number of Participants:</b>
<b>Staff, Students and Volunteers:</b>	

**Briefly describe the activities that took place in this session. Was there a specific theme that was explored today?**

*+ if relevant: note any variations to session plan (where relevant please explain the reason, outcome and suggestions for the future)*

**Key themes that emerged & key moments and/or comments by participants:**

*(especially note participants own reflections on dynamics, changes in patterns or life-world outside the group; other significant comments for the record)*

**What parts of the session worked especially well? What factors contributed to their success?**

**Observations regarding group dynamic/process: what is emerging, changing, or remains the same? If relevant, note actions to take in future sessions of this group.**

+ **(equity focus:** Are you observing any specific power/relationship dynamics in the group? (i.e: between participants, between facilitators/facilitators and participants, etc...)

+ **(analysis:** Why do you feel these dynamics are happening?)

+ **(action:** If necessary, what will you continue to attend to/monitor or how will the facilitator(s) address this in future sessions)

**Referrals/ Resources for future session or specific participant(s)?**  
*(indicate if urgent action is required)*

+ *(In this section also indicate potential referrals or resources to prepare, based on themes or tone emerging from group )*

**Other notes-- including facilitators own sense of the group, questions pending, and planning for next group (brainstorm or formalized)**

**Materials and prep required for next group:**  
*Material/supply                      Who is responsible                      Notes (Logistics etc)*

# Mid-point Check-In/ Evaluation Question Guide

**Method of Evaluation: Group Discussion**

*Topics and questions to guide the group discussion for the Mid-Point evaluation. Staff roles include: Evaluation Facilitator, Note taker.*

Questions/Topics:

## 1. Reflection of Goals

- Are you getting from the group sessions what you wanted/expected?
- What are you getting from the group sessions?
- Is there something specific that you need that you are not getting?

## 2. Input around Planning the Upcoming Sessions

- Suggestions for the next couple of weeks

*Note: Keep discussion topics #1 and #2 simple*

*i.e. "Name one or two things you are getting, one or 2 things you still want"*

## 3. Violence, Discrimination and Community Safety

- Suggested approach: Be direct with questions and why these questions are being asked
  - Ex. "The group was advertised as a space to address issues of safety and violence. Are there specific topics or themes regarding violence, discrimination, or safety that have come up (or haven't come up) that

## 4. Do you have any questions for us, the group facilitators?

# Expressive Arts Group - Final Group Session Participant Evaluation

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Thank you for taking part in the expressive arts group.






Access Alliance would like to know about your experience in the group. The information you give to us will help us know what to keep, change or add to groups in future, to make them better.

Please take a few minutes to answer the questions below. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. **Please do not write your name on this form.** Your answers will remain private and confidential. Any information that you share with us will not affect the services you receive from our organization.

## 1. Questions about your experience in the expressive arts group:






Please check one box  for each question.

	😊😊 Yes, a lot	😊 Yes, mostly	😐 Not Sure	😞 Not so much	😞😞 No, not at all
1. I enjoyed participating in this group.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The location was easy for me to get to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The environment of the meeting room was comfortable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I learned new things from the other women participating in the group.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I enjoyed sharing experiences with women from different cultural backgrounds.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I developed new friendships within the group.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. The group helped me to understand myself and my feelings better.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Now, I am more aware of ways that I can cope with stress in my life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Now, I am more aware of ways that I can deal with feelings of sadness and loneliness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I feel my self confidence has increased through participating in this program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I learned about community programs or resources that I can use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I would recommend this group to other women that I know.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	 Yes, a lot	 Yes, mostly	 Not Sure	 Not so much	 No, not at all
13. I feel like I am better able to address issues of violence (including discrimination) and safety in my life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14 Being part of this group has connected me to other useful community resources or programs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I learned about people and places I can go to for help.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. **a) Questions about the group facilitators (\_\_\_\_\_):**

Please check one box  for each question.

	 Yes, a lot!	 Yes, mostly	 Not Sure	 Not so much	 No, not at all
1. The facilitators were friendly and made me feel welcome.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The facilitators treated me with courtesy and respect.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The facilitators explained things in a way that I could understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The facilitators gave everyone the chance to participate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Overall, I am satisfied with the group facilitators.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**b) Please tell us any other comments you have about the group facilitators:**

3. **Additional Questions about the expressive arts group:**

- a) What parts of the expressive arts group were **helpful** for you?
- b) How could we **improve** the group to make it more helpful for participants?
- c) How has participating in this group affected your **health and well-being**?
- d) What issues or themes were addressed that were **most important to you**?
- e) Is there **anything else** that you would like to tell Access Alliance?

# Expressive Arts - Post-Group Evaluation Question Guide

**Method of Evaluation: Group Discussion; Facilitated by staff or consultants external to group, in order to create (as much as is possible) a neutral evaluation environment.**

Bellow are the questions that guide the group discussion for the purpose of the Post-Group evaluation. The purpose is to evaluate impact, as identified by participants 1 to 2 months following the group.

## ***To consider when planning the Final Evaluation:***

- Participants are invited to arrive early and do art, reconnect with each other, and see the facilitators.
- The facilitator reminds the group about the process and purpose of the evaluation. Introduces the guest evaluators, and leaves the room once it is time for the evaluators to begin.
- Consider encouraging participants to continue with art projects throughout the focus group.

## Questions/Topics:

1. What was your first impression of the group? Was it what you expected?
2. What parts of the program were most memorable for you?
3. If you had a chance to do a group like this again, would you?  
If yes: Why?  
If no: Why not?
4. How could we improve the group (for future participants)?
5. How did taking part in 'Stepping Up' make a difference to you/in your life?
6. Probe if needed: What changed or is different for you since you took part in the program? (e.g., feelings, attitudes, things you do differently)
7. What did you learn from the group that you've been able to apply/use in your life?
8. Probe about specific 'ideas', skills, etc.
9. Are there any comments about the group or Access Alliance that we didn't cover today? This is the time for you to share any of your own reflections that weren't covered in the other questions.

## Expressive Arts - Session Structure

Activity	Objective
Set up	To prepare the space, set up art materials and food.
Arrival of participants	n/a
Check-in	To connect with one's self, the space and others in the space.
Warm up	A transition activity that is meant to prepare the participants to get into the creative/ arts portion of the session. The warm up is generally short. May be verbal or non verbal. The aim is to assist participants to become connected to the body, develop an awareness of the breath, and feel present.
Preparing for the art activity / bridging into the creative world	This may include physical set up of specific materials and deciding which to use. The preparation also includes brainstorming or discussing a particular topic or theme with the group. This theme may become the focus of the creative-space /art-making time.
Art making	<p>To do the activity decided on; to explore a theme, feeling or challenge using the art materials and having fun.</p> <p>This time is open-space, where participants can talk with each other, and explore the materials as they wish.</p> <p>During this time the facilitator and the group assistant's roles are to support people in feeling comfortable, safe and supported. This may include engaging through a creative modality (sing or make music to accompany the art making, paint along side participants, etc.) as well.</p>
Art sharing	<p>Participants are encouraged to reflect on the process of creating the art work, and their responses to the image.</p> <p>This phase is not about critiquing or judging the images/ creative expression that have been worked on.</p> <p>Others in the group, including facilitators, can reflect on the image. They will share what resonates with them in the image, or what strikes them, what it evokes for them, what they notice, etc.,</p> <p>Participants and facilitators can also respond through the arts. This can be done by creating/sharing a poem, a song, a movement that the image inspires.</p> <p>The responses ones may happen through out a session expanding into other art forms-- for example the response could be shaped so that each person shares a word that the piece makes them think of, and this could be expanded into a poem, or a painting, or a movement piece)</p>

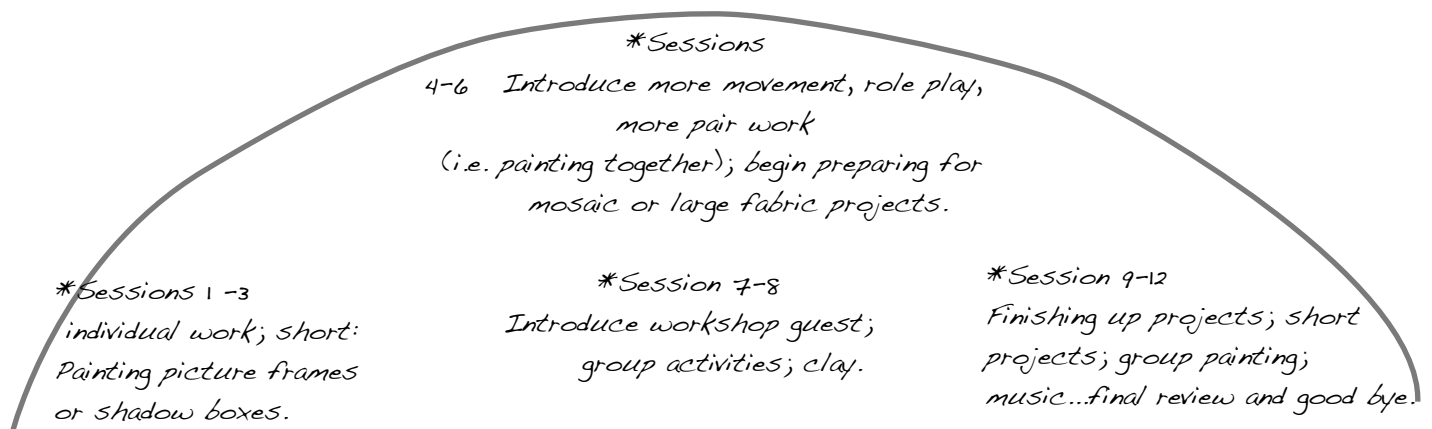
Activity	Objective
Closing	To “ground” participants back in the real world. This involves closing the art/ imaginary world of the session and ensuring that the participants are grounded and able to walk out of the group safely (in terms of emotions, etc).  This is a time to reflect on the wisdom, insight or surprises that came from the work, and which can be applied to every day issues/ the issues that were brought up in the session.
Clean up	Participants can help with this -- this can be part of a closing ritual, and this care of the materials/space also supports ownership of the group by participants.
Debriefing & Planning	Facilitator(s) and assistants debrief the session - capturing the key themes that emerged, the dynamics of the group, relationships, the facilitators themselves. This is also a time to identify if there are resources or materials to prepare for the coming week based on what is emerging or requests that have been made. These debriefing notes should be kept confidential. If the group is not a clinical group, the notes should be destroyed following the close of the group or the completion of a debrief and group summary report.

Chart developed in collaboration with L. Swartz, 2010

For more information: ISIS- Canada Intermodal Expressive Arts Therapy Training Institute (ISIS-Canada.org)

See Also: *Principles of Expressive Arts Therapy*, Knill, Levine and Levine, (2005); *Foundations of Expressive Arts Therapy*, Levine and Levine, (1999)

## Arc or Cycle of a Group:



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
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- Sessions 1-3: Drop-in session, new participants can join. Focus on short, easily completed individual projects.
- Sessions 4-6: Group is closed, no new participants. Period of trust building with group and creative art process; period of opening up, new discoveries, emotional openness may increase.
- Sessions 7-9: Deepening of relationship; group is more self directing- making choices about themes, art; may be a time of increased or heightened emotional awareness.
- Sessions 10-12: Preparation for leaving/good bye; addressing the responses leaving brings; time of group or individual projects. Final group may be a community meal and time to display all the work that has come from the sessions.

If there will be a guest or an educational workshop, increase the sessions if possible, to allow participants more time to re-form as a group prior to the end. If funding is available, try lengths of 15 -20 sessions.

# Comparative Chart of Two Expressive Arts Models

These models are taken from two expressive arts programs which are long running (about 6 years) and have received successful participant feed back. One model is an LGBTQ women focused expressive arts program, and model of a newcomer women focused program.

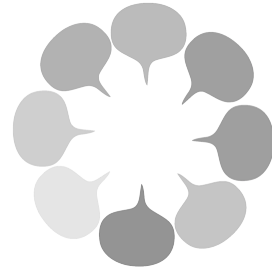
	<b>Sherbourne Health Centre- <i>Outside the Lines Group</i></b>	<b>Access Alliance (original program)</b>
<b>Target Participant Group</b>	Isolated lesbian, bi and trans women	Priority is given to marginalized immigrant and refugee groups, particularly emerging newcomer groups and racialized communities living underserved low income neighbourhoods.
<b>Type of Space or program (clinical, community etc)</b>	Program is held with in a Health Centre/Clinic context; It is facilitated by a full time, permanent, clinical counseling staff position. The program is part of the LGBTQ-specialized services offered at the health clinic.	Program is held through out the city, but is linked to a Community Health Centre dedicated to providing care to . The program is part of Health Promotions, and is facilitated by an Expressive arts therapist who is a consultant.
<b>Goals of the Group</b>	Therapeutic group to facilitate healing from effects of trauma. Main goals include enabling participants to reduce isolation; to familiarize themselves with community resources; to access creativity in fun, non-threatening way; to develop new ways to deal with triggers; and to increase self-esteem	Expressive Arts Group; not explicitly therapeutic, but facilitated by an expressive arts therapist. Initially began as groups supporting survivors of trauma, and later as part of the Access Model of care, the groups were held out of down town, visiting in different communities each time.
<b>Outreach/ Recruitment</b>	Referrals from providers within the organization seeking support for their most isolated clients	Referrals by medical providers or settlement workers within the organization; further outreach is done both by the agency and by partnering agency staff through flyers, posters, word of mouth.
<b>Staff Roles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-time Sherbourne Health counselor/ therapist from LGBTT program</li> <li>• Contract Expressive Arts Therapist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full time Project Coordinator of Women's Programing coordinates this program (logistics, staff supervision)</li> <li>• Consultant: Expressive Arts Therapist, primary facilitator of the program</li> <li>• Support Staff: Peer Outreach Worker or Community Health Worker (sometimes a student or volunteer) –Assist with outreach and during group.</li> <li>• (external staff provide interpretation and child care)</li> </ul>
<b>Number of Sessions</b>	12 sessions: once a week for 12 weeks	12 sessions: once a week for 12 weeks
<b>Program Structure</b>	Closed group (participants are registered in advance, no new participants join until the next cycle of 12 weeks).	Open group for first 3 sessions. As of the 4th session the group is closed to new participants. Next group is not always confirmed at this time.

<b>Themes/Topics Explored in Group</b>	In the first session, the group brainstorms together to create a list of themes or topics on which they wish to focus on each week	Themes may be planned, but often come up in response to what emerges organically from the group
<b>Opening session</b>	Includes brainstorm to create list of topics or themes to focus on in art-making for each week; development of guidelines for the group; discussion of ways to deal with triggers in group; defining of group member and facilitator roles	Introductions; discussion of resources available to participants (TTC/childcare); development of guidelines for the group; discussion of confidentiality; establishment of framework for creating and responding to art work; and a short arts-based activity
<b>Agenda of Typical Session</b>	Warm Up, Check-in Unfinished business and sharing of art Bridging exercise Art-making Presentation of art Breath practice Check-out Choice of topic for next week	Warm - up Check-in Warm up/Bridging into the Art *Art-making *Sharing/presenting art Closing of art making *Planning for next week  <i>*some of these phases will occur multiple times or in less linear way, depending the group.</i>
<b>Workshops</b>	No workshops outside the regular structure of the group occur.	Recent groups have had a guest facilitator for a educational workshop which focuses on around violence, abuse and resources available. Session 5-7.
<b>Closing Session</b>	Participants decide on activities for closing session in the week before. These may include: displaying art, sharing of meaningful objects or writing, special food, traditions brought by the facilitators.	The last session, community meal/potluck organized by group, activity and manner of closing chosen by group. Discussion begins two weeks before.
<b>External expressive arts supervision</b>	External expressive arts supervision is provided twice: at the midway point and following closure of the group.	External supervision is provided on going as part of the expressive arts therapists own practice. Group assistants generally do not receive external supervision.
<b>Evaluation methods</b>	Short evaluation midway through group and at closure.	Written evaluation at closure. Responses are translated if necessary. Interpreters are available.
<b>Participant access to Individual support</b>	Participants are able to access limited individual support before, during and at the end of the group from all facilitators and support between group meetings from the full-time support (mainly on the phone). Participants have access to the general services of the Health Centre.	Facilitator and support staff assess needs emerging from group throughout the sessions and offer resources as necessary. though little individual support is provided from group staff, except immediately before or after a group. Staff will direct participants to appropriate resources at the location where the group is being held.

# Expressive Arts Program - Budget Considerations

Each group or organization will have varying resources (staff, materials, space, etc.). Below are budget lines to consider when planning your program.

category	detail	Variables to consider for Expenses
Staff - 2-3 Program Staff	Staff planning and implementing the program: Program coordinator; Facilitator & Assistant/ Outreach staff.	Wage for each staff; Hours as appropriate to role.
Consultants (accessibility)	Accessibility: child minders; interpreters* (*See below)	Facilitator/assistants should be paid for 2 hours of group plus 1 hour of prep & 1 hour of planning & referrals.
External Professional Supervision; Consultant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional Supervision</li> <li>Consultant: for capacity building or training for staff.</li> </ul>	Supervision generally costs 100\$/h. During a 12 week group, it would be appropriate to have a minimum of 3 visits; Consultant's cost will vary.
Non-staff assistants	Training, and weekly honoraria	Training costs depend on experience and type of training provided (external PD, internal/ onsite training); Honoraria will vary.
Infrastructure and material resources	Organization provides space on site for group, art materials and storage.	cost of space; art materials; storage infrastructure (bins, shelves...)
Space for group; Art Exhibit	Cost can be eliminated through partnership/ Sharing of space; Exhibit can be presented in Libraries, or Organization space	Variable
Art materials	Large mural paper, paper or canvas, paint, markers, pastels, decorations, yarn, fabric, magazines, glue, scissors, digital software, etc.,	Variable: Estimate approximately \$10/ participant x session. Varies depending on activity and number of participants.
Food	Healthy snacks, or a meal where possible; Juice; cutlery, plates, cups.	Aprox. 15\$ / session minimum (snacks only) for a group of 4-6. calculate accordingly.
Translation / Interpretation	translating outreach; consent documents, resources; evaluations.	Budget min. \$60.00/ language for translation; \$35.00/hour x interpreter
Participant and staff transportation	transportation 2 ways for each participant and child attending; transportation costs for staff if traveling.	3.00 x participant (cheaper if purchased in bulk); cost of gas/mileage or TTC for Staff
Exhibit/Event	event costs: location; food; transportation for group participants; materials; publicity (if necessary)	Calculate accordingly



# The Stepping Up Project Literature Review\*

## Introduction

Expressive arts therapy has increasingly been recognized as an effective tool in confronting past trauma. Drama, music and visual art may be used to represent past experiences and unresolved feelings from a different perspective than would be accessed in traditional oral therapy, increasing potential sites of understanding and resolution for both the client and the therapist. As such, expressive arts therapy may serve as an effective tool in meeting the needs of women who have experienced trauma or violence as a result of their immigration experiences, sexual orientation, gender identity, or the intersections of these realms.

## Experiences of Violence

The prevalence of violence in the lives of lesbians and bisexual women has been documented both qualitatively and quantitatively. In 2008, Statistics Canada released data showing that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered individuals are at a higher risk of experiencing violence than their heterosexual counterparts (Statistics Canada). This finding was followed by a community-based report exploring the prevalence and types of violence experienced by the women and transgendered people in this cohort (Cameron, 2009). Data in the report was gathered from 145 responses to an online survey, completed by women and transgendered people who identified within the acronym of “LGBTTIQ2S”<sup>1</sup> (Cameron, 2009). Of the respondents, close to half reported having been a victim of harassment or discrimination in the year prior to the survey and 46.9% of respondents reported feeling unsafe in public spaces within the city. For many, these experiences resulted in coping strategies such as monitoring physical representations of gender identity or sexual orientation, or avoiding going out into particular spaces or at particular times (Cameron, 2009).

A 2001 Amnesty International report documented the global prevalence of violence and torture based on the sexual orientation of the victims, with violence perpetrated by both community and institutional forces. The report provides specific examples from Afghanistan, Argentina, Brazil, the Caribbean, Ecuador, France, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Uganda, the United States and

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<sup>1</sup> The acronym “LGBTTIQ2S” represents lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, transsexual, intersex, queer, questioning and two-spirited people.

Zimbabwe (Amnesty International, 2001). In addressing the relevance of gender to these experiences, the report states, “prevalence in society at large of sexism and homophobia creates a climate where lesbians are at grave risk of abuse in the community and home” (24). The specific reference to lesbians in this instance highlights the ways in which violence is shaped and directed differently against women than it is against men. In studying the refugee claims based in sexual orientation made in Australia and Canada, Millbank (2002) identified 32 percent of lesbian women’s claims as including sexual violence, compared to only 16 percent of the accounts made by men. Rape and forced pregnancy are described as some the gender-specific attacks lesbian women may experience (Amnesty International, 2001).

Kidd and Witten note the similarities in the violence experienced by lesbian, gay and bisexual people with that experienced by trans<sup>2</sup> people, rooting both in societal responses to the transgression of gendered expectations (38). This assessment is supported by Ortiz’s (2008) observation that many female refugees have been attacked and sexually assaulted with the stated goal of teaching them “to become real women” (223). A majority of writings on gender-based violence have conceptualized it exclusively as the violence against cisgendered women, excluding the gender-based violence experienced by those who identify as transgendered (Kidd & Witten, 2008; Laviolette, 2007; Mizock & Lewis, 2008).

Yet, in the literature that does exist, the prevalence of violence based on gender identity is abundantly clear. In the TranScience Longitudinal Aging Research Study, reported on by Kidd and Witten, over 91% of respondents reported that they had experienced “perceived and actual violence and abuse” (38), with violence perpetrated by family members and intimate partners as well as strangers. A majority (77%) of those who had experienced violence had not formally reported it (Kidd & Witten, 2008). In a report largely focused on sexual orientation, Amnesty International (2001) commented on the experiences of trans people: “In many countries, transgender people face extremely high levels of discrimination and abuse. They are often treated as the ultimate “gender outlaws”, punished not only for transgressing the socially constructed barriers of gender but, in some cases, for changing their biologically determined sex. For many, the “penalty” is violence, including torture (16). Individual examples of transphobic violence serve to highlight its global prevalence and impact (Kidd & Witten, 2008; Mizock & Lewis, 2008); many of these examples are documented on the website ‘Remembering Our Dead’, though the website has not been updated since 2006: (<http://www.gender.org/remember>).

Lesbian, bisexual and transgendered refugees may have experienced violence not only related to sexual orientation or gender identity, but also based in other identities or experiences. Violence may occur within families, community settings, institutions such as law enforcement or healthcare or be perpetrated by a country’s government (Amnesty International, 2001).

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<sup>2</sup> In this context the term “trans” is used as an umbrella term to describe all individuals who cross the social expectations of the sex they were assigned at birth. This includes both transgendered and transsexual people.

## Continued Trauma

While the data above is necessary in understanding the scope of violence experienced, it does not adequately describe this broader impact of violent events. The trauma faced by individuals who have experienced violence may last well after the violence itself has ended. In the case of refugee claimants, the act of migration is structured to create distance from the violence, persecution and trauma experienced. An assumption that migration will protect refugees from harm fails to take into account the potential for further trauma.

In addition to the violence experienced by refugees prior to migration, continued violence and trauma may be experienced both during and after initial settlement in Canada. In describing the experiences of the refugee women who visit a mental health clinic in Toronto, Ortiz (2008) identifies three levels of trauma: the trauma of migration itself, which may involve both exploitation and separation from family; the trauma of applying for refugee status and settling in a new country; and the trauma that precipitated the women leaving their countries of origin and filing for refugee status (224). Of these sites of trauma, Ortiz (2008) describes the first two as the most “immediate and pressing levels” (224).

Migration itself may be a physically, emotionally, psychologically or financially draining experience that places immigrants at risk of additional trauma. Based on her work with trauma survivors in exile, Meyer notes, “Exile is often reported as a more devastating experience than torture; it is a new trauma on top of the old” (165). Migration distances refugees from the situations in which they have experienced violence; it also distances them from the family, friends, community and culture left behind in the country of origin and contributes to personal and cultural isolation (Meyer, 2004; Baker, 2005; Ortiz, 2008). The physical process of migration may also not be a direct or easy one; refugees risk witnessing or experiencing additional violence and trauma during their journeys (Meyer, 2004; Stepakoff, 2007, Ortiz, 2008). Describing the migration process of female refugees, Ortiz (2008) notes, “During flight, they are often revictimized by pirates, border guards, army personnel, resistance members, male refugees and others. Unfortunately, violence against women and children may not abate upon reaching the supposed safety of an asylum country (212).

Violence based directly on perceptions of sexual orientation, gender identity or ethnicity exists within a Canadian context and may be experienced by lesbian, bisexual and transgendered refugees after migration (Cameron, 2009; Kidd & Witten, 2008). When compared to the number of violent incidents experienced, the number of cases in which violence is reported to police remains low (Amnesty International, 2001; Cameron, 2009, Kidd & Witten, 2008). Low reporting rates are sometimes based on fears of persecution or violence from authorities or the original perpetrators of the violence (Amnesty International, 2001; Kidd & Witten). The process of reporting is also viewed by some as being ineffective based on the pervasiveness of incidents or authorities’ lack of response to earlier incidents. For immigrants who do not have status in Canada, reporting violence may be seen as risking discovery and deportation (Bernhard et. al).

In discussing the settlement experiences of adolescent refugees in Canada, Rousseau and her colleagues note that migration may relegate immigrants to positions of social and financial disadvantage. They infer that this position of disadvantage may impact access to housing and increase immigrants' likelihood of residing in violent neighbourhoods after migration (2007, pg. 452).

### **Implications for Mental Health**

Meyer (2008) describes the minority stress model, so named to “distinguish the excess stress to which individuals from stigmatized social categories are exposed as a result of their social, often a minority, position” (675). While stressors are present in the lives of all people, originating from both individual and social sources, members of what Meyer (2003) describes as “minority communities” (675) are also subject to stress based on tensions and fissures between their identities and the identities, behaviours and beliefs held by the larger community. The social stressors caused by these tensions are additive to those experienced by all individuals, placing minority communities at increased risk of having mental health impacted by stress. While Meyer largely applies the minority stress model to lesbian, gay and bisexual communities it is equally applicable to others including transpeople, women and refugees. Stress may be rooted in general prejudice, or in specific incidents of violence or discrimination.

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans people may experience stress from the risks and realities of prejudice and violence in a violent world, but also from the life changes associated with coming out (Ellis, 2007), such as shifting relationships or loss of support from family or friends. In a meta-analysis of studies on the mental health of gay, lesbian and bisexual people, Meyer (2003) found that gay men and lesbians are approximately 2.5 times likelier than their heterosexual counterparts to have had a mental disorder at some point in their lifetime (684). The meta-analysis also suggested higher rates of suicide ideation and attempts among lesbian, gay and bisexual people (685). These findings are related to the stressors imposed on lesbian, gay, bisexual people and not inherently associated with the identities themselves (Meyer, 2003).

Literature on the experience of refugees has documented a number of mental health issues associated with fleeing one's country of origin or residence (Baker, 2005; Ganguly-Scrase & Vogl, 2008; Kalmanowitz & Lloyd, 2005; Meyer, 2004). Interestingly, these mental health issues are also experienced by some immigrants who are not classified as refugees, emphasizing the trauma of the migration process itself (Rousseau, 2007). Kalmanowitz and Lloyd (2005) identify the fear, anger and shame expressed by refugees as “normal responses to abnormal circumstances” (5) but also as responses that may lead to ongoing struggles in mental health, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Baker, 2005; Kalmanowitz & Lloyd, 2005) evidenced by symptoms such as depression, anxiety attacks, and memory loss (Baker, 2005). In facilitating expressive arts therapy with trauma survivors in exile, Meyer (2004) identified all of the following issues among the group's eight members: “withdrawal, isolation, emotional lability, paranoia, impulsiveness, depression, regression, poor concentration,

insomnia, suicidal ideation, short-term memory impairment, guilt, shame, apathy, low self-esteem, no hope for the future and depersonalization (exile from the body)” (164).

Examining the specific experiences of lesbian and female bisexual refugees who are clients of a Toronto mental health clinic, Ortiz (2008) notes high incidents of depression, post-traumatic stress, psychosis and suicidal thoughts: all based in past experiences of violence and trauma. If gendered experiences of violence such as rape are not systemically understood as violence or torture, the psychological after-effects experienced by women may not be legitimized or treated appropriately (Ganguly-Scrase & Vogl, 2008). Increased social isolation may be experienced by refugees who are also lesbians, bisexual women and trans people as a result of negative reactions from family, friends and community members based in the individual’s sexual orientation or gender identity (Ortiz, 2008). These documented mental health effects hinder refugees’ abilities to function and successfully settle in Canada, making further stress and trauma likely. Mental health concerns may be exacerbated by the stressors present in the host country, including a lack of access to social and medical supports.

Mental health may also be impacted by the stress of living in poverty, frequently experienced by refugee communities (Access Alliance, 2005). Ortiz (2008) notes that immigrants may not be referred to mental health services in their country of origin or upon first arrival in Canada as a result of stigma, unavailability of services, poverty, language barriers, lack of information, risk of deportation, distrust and social isolation (216). Even in situations where some social and medical supports are present and accessed by refugees, service providers may lack cultural competence and services may remain largely inaccessible and ineffective. Such factors may mean that the after-effects of trauma and violence go unaddressed for an extended period of time following the violence itself.

It could be assumed that these experiences leave people with a great deal to talk about in therapeutic interactions. Many limitations exist, however, when relying on talk therapy.

### **Benefits of Expressive Arts Therapy**

Meyer (2003) notes that “stress and resilience interact in predicting mental disorder” (677). Literature reveals that trauma and stress are experienced by lesbian, bisexual and trans refugees both prior to and following migration, associated with homophobia, transphobia and refugee status. There remains the capacity, however, to improve mental health outcomes by increasing individuals’ resilience to these stressful and traumatic experiences. Resilience can be developed through a number of supports, and there is general agreement that utilizing multiple tools is most effective when working with survivors of trauma (Ellis, 2007; Stepakoff, 2007; Stepakoff, 2008). One of the therapeutic tools of potential benefit to lesbian, bisexual and transgendered refugee women is expressive arts therapy.

Some experiences of violence may be too traumatic to verbalize comfortably or safely, and when expressing experiences of violence trauma survivors may be concerned with accurately and completely conveying the experience. For those receiving accounts of violence or trauma, there is an inability to completely understand the verbal account having not experienced it firsthand. Attempts to repeatedly absorb, understand and empathetically respond to the full experience of the trauma can lead to what Meyer (2004) calls “compassion fatigue” (166), negatively impacting the ability to provide ongoing and effective support. Witnesses may find their understanding of the trauma, and their ability to respond to this trauma, increased through experiencing its artistic representation, even if they have heard a verbal account before (Stepakoff, 2008). A refugee woman interviewed by Stepakoff (2008), who had worked with other refugees to create a play of their experiences, characterized this difference in verbal and arts-based accounts as the difference between “talking” and “showing” (23).

Expressive arts therapy may involve drama, dance and music, as well as visual art, in representing feelings and experiences (Stepakoff, 2007). Through the process of symbolization, in which traumatic experiences are represented in an alternate form (Kalmanowitz & Lloyd, 2005; Stepakoff, 2007), both the capacity to express and receive accounts of trauma may be improved. This benefit is particularly highlighted when the therapist and client do not speak the same first language; art can help express ideas and feelings that may not be easily or clearly interpreted between languages when conveyed verbally (Meyer, 2004; Rousseau, 2007). Meyer (2004) explains that in situations where language barriers may impact understanding, art provides people with “space and permission to use their imaginations” (167). Conflicts, whether internal or external, may be explored through art without fear of retribution, allowing individuals to consider possible solutions and achieve at least some degree of resolution (Addison, 2003; Baker, 2005; Rousseau, 2007). Physical representations of experience allow others to serve as witnesses to what has taken place. The documentation of violence, emotion or resilience may validate what has been experienced, restore agency to the person who has experienced it, and serve as a monument to those who have been lost through the experiences of trauma (Baker, 2005).

Cultural expressions of art such as traditional craft, storytelling, dance and music, may be disrupted by violence within the culture and the trauma of migration. Memory loss associated with post-traumatic stress might also impact the ability to engage with these traditional art forms, as skills are “forgotten” after experiencing trauma (Baker, 2005). Expressive arts therapy among refugees offers the benefit of restoring these forms of expression, recreating positive links to the culture of origin (Baker, 2005; Kalmanowitz & Lloyd, 2005). In addition to reconnecting participants to art forms, expressive arts therapy has the potential to positively reengage people with their senses, particularly in cases where people have disengaged in response to the negative sensory experiences of violence and trauma (Meyer, 2004).

Qualitative evaluation of one drama-based expressive art therapy program showed a decrease or stabilizing in negative mental health effects and increased academic performance among its’ youth participants (Rousseau, 2007). Qualitative evaluations

of other programs have also revealed benefits, including renewed interest in creative expression (Baker, 2005), increased self-confidence (Baker, 2005), positive coping techniques (Baker, 2005; Meyer, 2004) and increased perspective (Meyer, 2004). In order for these benefits to be achieved, art therapy must be practiced in way that is sensitive to both culture and identity (Baker, 2005; Ellis, 2007).

### **Practices in Expressive Arts**

Expressive arts have been utilized in a variety of forms, differing by program and purpose. The medium of art, the longevity of the program, and the number and demographics of those served are all variable factors. Despite these variables, several practices are repeated between expressive arts programs and are highlighted for their benefits to participants. One practice highlighted by multiple authors is the use of routine or ritual in expressive arts programming. Structured activities repeated between sessions (Baker, 2005; Rousseau, 2007), set routines to open or close a session (Meyer, 2004; Stepakoff, 2007) and the ritual use of song (Baker, 2005; Stepakoff 2008) are all utilized in developing a routine. Such structures serve to establish the stability and predictability that participants may lack in other aspects of their lives. Though structured differently between groups, the incorporation of both expressive arts and verbal processing is highlighted by many programs (Addison, 2003; Baker, 2005; Meyer, 2004; Stepakoff, 2008). This dual inclusion allows participants to verbally explore the emotions and experiences represented in their art (Baker, 2005; Meyer, 2004), to provide support and feedback on others' experiences and expressions (Meyer, 2004), and also to reflect on the art production process itself (Addison, 2003).

There is the risk that the inclusion of verbal expression in expressive arts programs will create barriers for those who are not fluent in the primary language used by facilitators and other group members; this is of particular concern when participants come from a variety of communities and do not have a shared first language (Meyer, 2004; Rousseau, 2007). Different practices have been used to negate this risk, including the use of a trained cultural interpreter (Baker, 2005) and informal interpretation by other members of an expressive arts group (Rousseau, 2007). Meyer (2004) notes that some trauma survivors may actually be more comfortable communicating their experiences in a second language, as it is not the language most closely associated with the experienced trauma. While practices vary greatly between expressive arts programs, the goal remains to produce a safe and productive environment for expression and healing for all participants.

Whether for lesbian, gay, bisexual communities (Meyer, 2003), transgendered communities (Mizock & Lewis, 2008) or cultural communities of refugees (Ortiz, 2008), building group belonging and solidarity can reduce the impact of mental health stressors associated with violence and trauma. While group involvement may be independently developed by some members of these communities, others may experience isolation. By facilitating expressive arts therapy in a group setting, community membership may be strengthened and community support may benefit the mental health of participants. As previously indicated, literature identifies the role of ritual and routine in expressive arts therapy programs (Rousseau, 2007; Stepakoff, 2007). By facilitating expressive

arts therapy in an ongoing group setting, facilitators and participants may develop associated ritual that contributes to a sense of safety and “becomes at once a form of knowledge, a method of learning, and a way of acquiring a sense of agency” (Rousseau, 2007). The presence of group rituals may be particularly important to those who have lost previous rituals and routines as a result of processes such as coming out or migration.

As identified earlier, lesbian, bisexual and trans refugees may experience isolation as a result of homophobia and migration. Working in a group with others who have shared similar experiences may serve to build a sense of cultural community and individual friendships that will last beyond the duration of the expressive arts therapy program itself (Baker, 2005)

## **Conclusions**

Art is widely recognized as a way of communicating emotions, experiences and histories. Music, dance, drama and visual art are all deeply involved in producing and representing cultural experiences, with particular forms and traditions utilized and valued within different communities. A majority of the literature included in this review highlights the benefits of utilizing art in a therapeutic context; this reflects the available literature on art programming with immigrant, lesbian, bisexual and trans communities, not an exclusive framework in which to involve expressive arts. When accessed outside of a therapeutic context, the emotional, cultural, and communicative benefits of art remain.

Stepakoff (2008) reports on the use of drama to convey the impact of war trauma, describing a theatrical piece that was conceived of and produced by a refugee woman and enacted by a group of refugees. The producer, Nancy, described the piece as a tool to help others understand the trauma experienced by the refugees involved: it was not explicitly developed or enacted for its therapeutic benefits. Despite this, the emotional benefits produced by this dramatic production are similar to those found in a therapeutic context and described earlier: Nancy reported relief and happiness at having developed an alternate tool through which to express and process her trauma (Stepakoff, 2008; 27).

Lesbian, bisexual and transgendered refugee women experience violence and trauma before, during and after migration; impacting mental health and wellbeing.

A multiplicity of tools may be used in addressing trauma and bringing about resolution; one of these tools is expressive arts. Expressive arts therapy does not evaluate or attempt to improve the artistic skills of the participant. Rather, art reengages the senses and can be used to symbolically represent experiences and feelings (Kalmanowitz & Lloyd, 2005; Meyer, 2004; Stepakoff, 2007). Utilizing expressive arts in a group setting may build a sense of community membership, reengage participants in a cultural community and allow participants to witness, validate and offer perspective on others experiences. For individuals who are struggling to cope with the mental health effects of trauma and violence, expressive arts may serve as one tool in gaining perspective, building resilience, and increasing positive mental health outcomes.

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