



The Dandelion Initiative

IMPACT REPORT

2016-2023



**DANDELION
INITIATIVE**



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada



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BY SURVIVORS, FOR SURVIVORS

The Dandelion Initiative is a federally incorporated non-profit and a grassroots intersectional feminist organization by survivors, for survivors.

Founded in 2016 by our Executive Director and led by a diverse group of women and non-binary survivors, the Dandelion Initiative is a grassroots organization by survivors, for survivors.

We all fundamentally believe in the power of education, empowerment-based programming and survivor-centric practices as a form of resistance to gender-based violence and rape culture.

We also believe in the power of gender equity and community collaboration to prevent and respond to sexual harassment and gender-based violence in and out of our workplaces.

Our mission is to disseminate survivor-centred, gender-based violence education, training, and policy development to multiple sectors and communities across Turtle Island. The proceeds from this work ensures our trauma care and support services for survivors remain free or low cost at all times.

We prioritize the voices, expertise and needs of women, 2SLGBTQ+, Black, Indigenous and racialized survivors through our work. This priority reflects the board, staff and survivors we serve.

DANDELION INITIATIVE



As a small, grassroots non-profit we also prioritize using funds generated through capacity building grants and donations to hire and further center women, 2SLGBTQ+ and BIPOC survivors and their families.

It has not been an easy journey and this work has often felt impossible. Yet, like dandelions, through concrete we grow. We hope that the Dandelion Initiative's programs, services and supports reflect how possible sisterhood and siblinghood can be.



We built this organization because we believe that sexual violence and gender-based violence can be prevented.

We wanted to share education, to listen to survivors and to celebrate our resilience, stories and connection in sisterhood/siblinghood. We wanted to uplift our truths and our talents as well as our struggles.

Over the last six years we have managed to move with the currents, survive the harsh waves and rejoice in the communities we serve and work alongside.

Thank you to all the survivors, friends, partners and families. You have held us up through it all. Without you this work would not be possible.

Photo by [Niklas Hamann](#)



TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Calls to Action and Care

We carry out our work on the traditional and stolen lands of the Anishinaabe peoples. This land is the subject of the Lake Simcoe-Nottawasaga Treaty 18. This is the territory of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation. This includes the Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomi nations, collectively known as the Three Fires Confederacy.

We also work on the land known in Kanien'keha as Tkaronto. This land is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe which includes many nations, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat, and is now home to many First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

We name the historical and ongoing colonial and sexual violence on this land committed against Indigenous peoples by colonialism, racism, and misogyny and recognize that Indigenous peoples are disproportionately affected by this now and intergenerationally.

Sexual violence is a weapon of colonization, its impact lasting generations.

Our attempts at reconciliation need to be present, active and honour this truth through actions that place Indigenous voices in priority.

The Dandelion Initiative is currently staffed by immigrants and settlers. Our work to prevent and respond to gender-based violence must also unsettle and decolonize our approaches to healing and working amongst and with Indigenous peoples.

We are proud to serve Indigenous survivors and work alongside Indigenous women and two-spirit people. As a small grassroots organization we ensure that we can provide resources and monetary support to Indigenous-led organizations and movements. Our survivor services, workshops and trainings are free for Indigenous peoples and communities.

Since our organization works on stolen land we choose not to celebrate Canada Day. Our staff and board have all signed contracts to ensure we maintain this value. Our office will remain open and our staff engaged in work that prioritizes Indigenous communities, grief, power and voices.



Painting by [Angela Sterritt](#)

RESOURCES

It is important to remember that land acknowledgements may not be a practice in some Indigenous communities and nations. Learning by listening to Indigenous peoples and protocols is vital if you are providing a territory or land acknowledgement or engaging in work with these communities.

Land acknowledgement resources from Indigenous voices:

[Debbie Reese for American Indians in Children's Literature](#)

['I regret it': Hayden King on writing Ryerson University's territorial acknowledgement Unreserved, CBC Radio](#)

[Territory Acknowledgement Panel Talk Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology, University of British Columbia](#)

[Making Coast Salish Territorial Acknowledgements Matter Coast Salish Cultural Network](#)

[Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements, Chelsea Vowel aka âpihtawikosisân](#)

[What is the significance of acknowledging the Indigenous land we stand on?, Ramna Shahzad, CBC](#)

[Know the Land: Territories Campaign Laurier Students' Public Interest Research Group \(LSPiRG\)](#)

Here are books and other learnings that we treasure:

The Break, Katherena Vermette

Highway of Tears, Jessica McDiarmid

Decolonizing Trauma Work, Renee Linklater

Unsettling Spirit: A Journey into Decolonization, Denise M. Nadeau

Forever Loved: Exposing the Hidden Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada, Ed. D. Memee Lavell-Harvard and Jennifer Brant.

A Mind Spread Out On the Ground, Alicia Elliott

I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism, Lee Maracle

If I Go Missing, Brianna Jonnie with Nahanni Shingoose





LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER

I always dreamed of creating a space where survivors' voices and needs were prioritized. A place where we could come together over a hot meal to challenge the systems and practices that silence us. A space where our individual strengths and offerings are valued as much as our collective is. An opportunity to resist alongside others instead of alone. There is so much to value and learn from in our experiences, survivorhood, artistry, motherhood/parenthood, resilience, our collective and vastly different truths.

Since 2016 I have had the honour to work alongside survivors and allies across Turtle Island. Creating programs and policies that prioritize eliminating gender-based violence and inequity within our communities and workplaces has been groundbreaking for me and for the thousands of participants I have had the honour to teach and learn from. There have been too many stories, disclosures and events to write down and know that I take all of your stories, truths and memories with me always. It is a grace and honour to do this work even through the horrors and hardships. I'm not sure if I can truly sum up in words what the Dandelion Initiative has meant to me, taken from me or given to me but I am endlessly grateful for this opportunity and community.

The dandelion is a symbol, no matter what shape or form it takes. It shows us that we are never alone. Like survivors, the dandelion grows through concrete against all odds and so will we. I am proud of the work we have been able to do and I am so honoured to have the privilege to do this work, whether through the Dandelion Initiative or in whatever other forms may come.

Thank you to everyone who has supported this organization and this work. Thank you for teaching me and believing in me. The board, the staff, the survivors, thank you. To my wife and the greatest teacher and inspiration I'll ever have, thank you, without you none of this would have happened. I hope to see so many survivor centric spaces, practices and groups in the future with you all sharing and leading in those spaces!



Viktoria Belle (*she/her*)

Executive Director and Founder
The Dandelion Initiative





LETTER FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The role of board members is to govern and support their staff, community, and vision. Since we incorporated in 2018, our board has held many different voices, perspectives, successes, and challenges. We are a group of survivors and professionals working to end gender-based violence through grassroots organizing. In this past year the non-profit sector has seen significant devastation and burnout. A specific burden has fallen to feminized sectors and front-line workers to meet the rising needs of survivors and their families with little stability, sustainability, or capacity. Although this is a truth we all navigate, we as the Dandelion Initiative Board are deeply proud of the work our Executive Director, Program Manager and support staff have been able to accomplish.

2022 is a big year for our small staff and board. Our goals are to disseminate prevention tools to the public on gender-based violence prevention and response in the form of online campaigns and toolkits. We will also be launching our Safer Spaces portal, an accumulation of the Now Serving: Safer Bars & Spaces and Safer Artistic Spaces programming. Finally, our staff will be working with workers in nursing, VAW and education to provide trauma care through cohort programs.

We are committed to continue supporting our staff and community the best we can. We would like to thank all our families, friends, and each other. We look forward to our final year with our funder, Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE), and thank them endlessly for their funding and unwavering support over the last three years of working together. We know the coming year will be filled with challenges and moments of joy and we are grateful to meet these head on as a team and community.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors




Chantelle Gabino (*she/her*)

Executive Board Chair
The Dandelion Initiative



Larissa Donovan (*she/her*)

Executive Board Co-Chair
The Dandelion Initiative



OUR TEAM

Viktorija Belle (she/her)

Executive Director, Founder, Feminist Traumatologist, Educator and Program Developer

Viktorija has worked in gender-based violence and education for over 10 years. She has a deep devotion to intersectional feminist and arts-based recovery interventions and practices for survivors. Viktorija has developed and delivered programs like Safer Bars & Spaces, Safer Artistic Spaces, Trauma Care for Survivors, MOTHS, Portraits of Child Care and more. She is a teacher, survivor, an immigrant, an LGBTQ+ community member and a passionate advocate for women and children's rights.

Andrea Oswald (she/her)

Communications Coordinator, Safer Bars & Spaces Facilitator, MOTHS Project Lead

Andrea joined the Dandelion Initiative as a board member in 2019 and later moved into a staff role in 2021. Andrea has dedicated her time to advocating for the creation of spaces that are inclusive, survivor and feminist-centric. She believes that these practices will change the way in which we heal and care for others.

Laur Kelly (they/them)

Counselor, Educator, Facilitator, Program Developer and Trauma Care Specialist

Laur has been a part of the Dandelion Initiative since 2017, where they support community members and staff with peer support. They also facilitate workshops on fostering resiliency through care, and survivor-centric principles for peer support. The trauma care they offer rests on the belief that recovery is a journey of redefining safety, and reclaiming agency and self-worth. They are deeply invested in making mindfulness accessible by going slow, listening to survivors, and using trauma-informed practices.



Custom skateboard by [Jokesmith](#), lovingly commissioned and donated by Mo

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Larissa Donovan *(she/her)*

Executive Board Co-Chair

Larissa is a community advocate and service industry veteran who has volunteered with Dandelion Initiative since 2016. She is passionate about creating healthy workplaces and community healing. Larissa works as a conflict resolution specialist and workplace investigator. She received her law degree in 2021 and is committed to continue supporting both service workers and precarious workers in her practice.

Narmeen Hasan *(she/her)*

Board Scribe

Narmeen is a Pakistani-Canadian community leader who is committed to an intersectional approach while leveraging her privileges to create lasting social change. She is an avid volunteer and has participated in 2SLGBTQ+ community panels, facilitated workshops, and currently serves as the Director of Operations at Feminuity, a diversity, equity and inclusion consulting firm.



Chantelle Gabino *(she/her)*

Executive Board Chair

Chantelle is a Canadian-Filipino hospitality professional with over 12 years of industry experience. She is an award-winning bartender, beverage and brand consultant, events and program manager. Chantelle has shifted her expertise and focus towards celebrating a new age of imbibing, conscientious consumption, and community.

Sharon Naipaul, J.D. *(she/her)*

Sharon has been involved with Dandelion Initiative since 2019. She is a lawyer with over 10 years of experience in labour and employment law. Sharon currently works as a mediator, workplace restoration specialist, workplace assessor, facilitator and speaker. She is deeply committed to justice, particularly where gender-based violence intersects with other identities such as race. She is honoured to support survivors in the recovery process.

Alina Southwell *(she/her)*

Executive Treasurer

Alina is an experienced property accountant with a passion for helping others. She gives back to her home twin-island state of Antigua and Barbuda by donating clothes and toys to the Bolans community. Alina earned her Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting from Ontario Tech University. She has been providing professional bookkeeping services to small businesses since 2018.

OUR VALUES

The pillars and values that drive our governance, services and education are:

1

Intersectional Feminist Theory/
Story

6

Peer-Based Roles & Supports
(in mutuality and informed choice)

2

Survivor Centric Practices and
Policies *(survivor-centric practices
are inherently trauma informed)*

7

Socio-Ecological Prevention
Framework Model for GBV
prevention and response

3

Harm Reduction Principles

8

Cultural Care and Ongoing
Engagement in Decolonizing
Herstory

4

Grassroots Feminist Organizing
and Governance

9

Anti-Racism and Decolonizing
Organizing and Healing Practices

5

Equity and Evidence Based Practices
*(evidence is stories and theories as
well as researched evidence)*

10

Emergent and Trauma Informed
Pedagogy

We recognize these pillars operate within a patriarchal capitalist system.

Therefore we encourage ongoing development of these practices with emergent processes. We believe in challenging the patriarchal spaces and processes that control not-for-profit governance, as well as putting more feminist and queer survivors at the decision-making tables. We want to democratise policy-making as well as diffuse ownership of and power over women and feminized people and their stories in global and local networks.

To audit our practices, we developed a tool that required:

- A shared understanding of feminism, practices and resolutions
- A collective goal to prioritize board training and anti-racism/decolonized practices led by the BIPOC/2SLGBTQ+ leadership at the Dandelion Initiative
- A benchmark document to measure these practices and behaviours and recommit financial and trauma care supports to our community members locally and globally

HERSTORY - OUR MILESTONES

2016-2017

- The Dandelion Initiative, formally known as the Sexual Assault Action Coalition, begins organizing on the steps of Toronto City Hall. We initiate the College Street Bar Shutdown campaign with the support of an incredibly brave survivor and her family.
- We create the [Now Serving: Safer Bars & Spaces](#) training program to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in the hospitality and nightlife industries.
- We engage in discussion with the City of Toronto and other Ontario municipalities, providing policy recommendations and trauma-informed, survivor-centric advocacy.
- We have the honour of collaborating with organizations and leaders such as: Stacey Forrester of Good Night Out Vancouver, Yamikani Msosa, Jungle Flower of Reclaim Your Voice, Veronica Lawrence, Deb Singh, Mike Layton, Music Gallery and many more.
- We plan for our incorporation as a non-profit and apply for grants to sustain these services and programs.
- We provide free, ongoing trauma care and community accountability support with help from our partners.
- We make the collective decision to refocus our work on education and direct services more than indirect and advocacy initiatives.
- We receive donations from so many incredible people and communities, which allows us to continue this work.

2018-2019

- We formally incorporate as a non-profit and receive a capacity building grant from Women and Gender Equality Canada, which sustains us and our work to this day.
- Our team and board grows and changes. We are grateful for every single person who has worked alongside us.
- We formally launch our [monthly newsletter](#), highlighting our work and that of our community members.
- We train 22 bars and restaurants in Toronto, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Ottawa, Kingston, Montreal, Vancouver and more.
- We hold over 10 free public workshops in gender-based violence prevention and response as well as 8 panels and keynotes.
- In collaboration with graduate students at the University of Toronto we create a logic model and evaluation methods for the Safer Bars & Spaces program
- We begin a year-long partnership with Music Gallery building policies, practices and training that are survivor-centric and safer. Kayla Mcgee and David Dacks are such important and supportive partners, and the community relationship is still strong and ongoing.
- With the support of our board and legal experts, Viktoria creates policy recommendations to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence for hospitality workplaces across Turtle Island.

2018-2019 *continued...*

- We collaborate alongside Indigenous communities and organizations like Toronto Urban Native Ministry, OSHKI and Feeding Canada. We provide ongoing free trauma care, restitution and donations to these organizations and Indigenous survivors.
- We organize the #NowWhat panel, engaging diverse survivors and communities in collective discussions about what we hope to experience together after #MeToo.
- We organize the Community Cares Market at the Tranzac Club, featuring over 15 Black, Indigenous and racialized community vendors sharing art, jewelry, natural care, poetry, traditional belly dance and more. We highlight survivors, our stories, our skills, our celebration and our collective joy. Vending is free and the event is PWYC to attend.
- For International Women's Day (IWD) 2019, with the support and direction of our Board Chair Chantelle Gabino, we are able to hold a celebration of sisterhood in the hospitality industry while sharing the news with our community that we had received funding to sustain the work.
- The City of Toronto funds our [Heal & Thrive](#) workshop series. Over 200 survivors receive community care from community leaders. The Toronto Rape Crisis Centre / Multicultural Women Against Rape (TRCC/ MWAR) team and staff works with us to prioritize survivors on waitlists. Thank you to our former project lead Micah RR, you were the heartbeat of these sessions.
- Peer support is held on and off location and provides free trauma care sessions (1-10 sessions max) for over 50 individual survivors. Thank you Laur and Viktoria.

2020-2021

- For IWD 2020 we host Turning Tables at Ballroom Supernova with over 75 women and non-binary people in attendance. We have a powerful panel discussion, calls to care and Indigenous priority, gifts, food, vendors and great conversations. Leading up to this event, we collaborate with community partners to provide over 150 survivors with free and/or low cost spaces to experience rage, release, connection, conversation, siblinghood and sharing as well as skill building and art making.
- By 2020 we have trained 1500+ people and over 65 spaces in our Safer Bars & Spaces and Safer Artistic Spaces programs.
- We have provided 80+ free consultations and workplace violence support sessions to organizations, businesses and partners across Turtle Island.
- We adapt the final portion of our Heal & Thrive series with additional support to survivors during the first three months of the COVID-19 pandemic, securing a Red Cross Emergency Grant to sustain our free trauma care and peer support. We are honoured to work alongside new workers, Nicole D'Souza and Yamikani Msosa. Through this grant we are able to provide 25 survivors with free support.
- We conduct community consultations, focus groups and surveys to provide statistics, theory and impacts directly from survivors in nightlife, hospitality and the arts.
- We provide consultation, expertise and community feedback to the City of Toronto's Nightlife Safety & Economy Committee and provide written recommendations to amend alcohol and workplace policy reviews.

2020-2021 *continued...*

- We create the [Don't Rebuild On Our Backs](#) report, which highlights our impact and provides survivor-centric policy recommendations. This report is created in response to the alarming rise in gender-based violence before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We strengthen connections with Indigenous survivors and communities in Northern Ontario through our offerings, donations and learnings. We adapt our Territorial Acknowledgements and Calls to Action, recognizing our responsibilities as settlers doing this work on stolen lands.
- We facilitate 11 free public workshops on survivor-centric peer support and trauma care for community members and survivors
- With funding from the Red Cross we are able to provide over 250 survivors with PRESTO cards, care kits, harm reduction tools and gift certificates. With support from our friends at Toronto Indigenous Harm Reduction (TIHR) we provide these offerings to houseless Indigenous women and Two-Spirit people. We also distribute these supports to the Barrie Women and Children's Shelter, Redwood Shelter and to 50 individual VAW frontline workers.
- We create [MOTHS](#), a new program for women and non-binary people who are essential workers and most impacted by COVID-19 and the shadow pandemic. A special thank you to our Program Supervisor and Registered Psychotherapist.
- Our staff researches and releases our [Resources for Survivors](#) guide, a collection of over 200 survivor-centric supports and services. This guide will be updated annually on our website.
- We release [research](#) on domestic violence in the workplace and employers' responsibilities within Occupational Health and Safety Standards in Ontario.
- With COVID-19's serious impact on the arts and hospitality industries we adapt our Safer Bars and Spaces programs into a online blended learning model. Our fees remain the same, low cost and free for all Indigenous peoples and communities.
- We prepare to release all our teachings and tools through an Online Learning Portal that will launch December 2021.
- For IWD 2021 we celebrate our sister organizations like Redwood Shelter in Toronto, E-Romnja in Romania and Gantala Press in the Philippines. We donate \$500 to each organization and highlight the people keeping this work alive. We also platform survivor stories from our board and staff, sharing these with our community.
- With support from WAGE and a new partnership with SurfShark and Michelle Cortese we provide 25 free 1-year VPN subscriptions to survivors accompanied by a how-to guide for access and information in multiple languages.
- We provide ongoing free support to organizations, community members and stakeholders through proposals, committee engagement and consultations.
- We collaborate and develop policies, training and supports alongside Post-Secondary Students and Student Unions. We would like to acknowledge the critical impact of leaders at U of T, those involved with PEARS and the Scarborough Campus Student Union and Members.

MAKING HERSTORY - 2022-2023

In 2022 we enter our final year of funding from Women and Gender Equality Canada. We would like to thank the Honourable Maryam Monsef and the incredible and kind funding officers who have worked alongside us, adapting and encouraging us over the last four years of this grant to build our capacity and ensure survivors get the services they need. Merci, thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

Here is what you can expect from us:

- We will release three, short animated videos on gender-based violence prevention and response for the general public in collaboration with our multi-sector partners.
- Our learning portal will disseminate over six years of research, learning, tools and practices to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.
- Our team will provide free consultations and supports for spaces to adapt our practices and policies until 2023.
- A newly updated Resources for Survivors guide will be published on our website and social media. Since the double pandemic we have been working to update this necessary offering.
- Holiday Survivor Care Kits will be created and distributed in Barrie and Thunder Bay this year.
- We will continue to offer free survivor supports and trauma care sessions through our small team.
- We will continue to offer free public workshops for allies on gender-based violence prevention and response
- We will offer cohort training for cisgender men who are interested in empowered bystander intervention
- We will continue working with partners in Toronto, Northern Ontario, the east & west coast and more.
- MOTHS cohorts will reach 100 survivors before the end of 2023.
- We will host a retreat for Dandelion Initiative staff, board and partners! We have been waiting a long time to connect with our community in a celebratory and reflective way. There will be art, feminism, good snacks and circles for reflection and action building.
- Other exciting offerings and opportunities to engage!



2023 and Beyond

Whatever form the Dandelion Initiative's work takes, it is built by **all** survivors across diverse communities, working to end gender-based violence in different and unique ways. There is so much power in our uniting and in our sisterhood and siblinghood.

We hope to leave a lasting legacy of survivor-centric tools, knowledge, resources and support. We are excited to see survivors take this knowledge and tools into the future to claim their space in the world and to heal in their own ways.

Everything changes and grows in the ways it needs to and we hope that the memories and work have their place in the world and in your hearts.

“That internal critique is essential to any politics of transformation. Just as our lives are not fixed or static but always changing, our theory must remain fluid, open, responsive to new information.”

– bell hooks



OUR WORKSHOPS

Since 2017 we have provided many different workshops to the public, to organizations and workplaces. Thank you to every single person who has attended these sessions.

Each workshop's approach and content changes with new research, lived experiences and feedback from our participants and focus group discussions. We also tailor the content and needs of individual communities when we can. All participants are provided with informed choice, written and digital workbooks as well as resources pre and post sessions.

Creating a network of knowledge exchange and ongoing opportunities to destigmatize conversations around sexual violence provides us with safer communities for all people.

Our team worked hard during the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic to adapt our content and deliver these workshops online. Using an online digital survivor-centric safety protocol, survivors and allies both have opportunities to participate in safer ways.

Thank you to all the survivors who have created workshops like ours for your communities, it's inspiring to see you lead through education!



Here is an archive of our workshops:

- Empowered Bystander Intervention
- Consent: What We Were Never Taught
- Trans Care for Resiliency (*thanks Laur K!*)
- Healing Through Monsters
- Community Accountability & Safety
- Anti-Harassment Lead Training
- Artist Safety Rider Workshops
- Survivor-Centric Peer Support
- Survivors Thrive (Recovery & Healing)
- My Body, My Choice: Feminism & Consent for Girls Under 18
- Safety Planning with Survivors 101

SURVIVOR-CENTRIC PEER SUPPORT

Since 2017 we have provided hundreds of survivors free individual and group trauma care through our Peer Support Program. An opportunity to provide survivors with free trauma care and peer support delivered by peers and professionals alike.

From coffee shops and parks to our homes, survivors have connected and cared for one another.

Through our generous funders we were able to sustain this service throughout the herstory of the Dandelion Initiative. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic we adapted our services by using Zoom as our platform to engage with survivors of sexual/gender-based violence and continue to hold this very vital space.

Being witness to so many survivors' stories, resilience and journeys is the deepest privilege. This work also requires peers and service providers to invest into themselves, their care and safety.

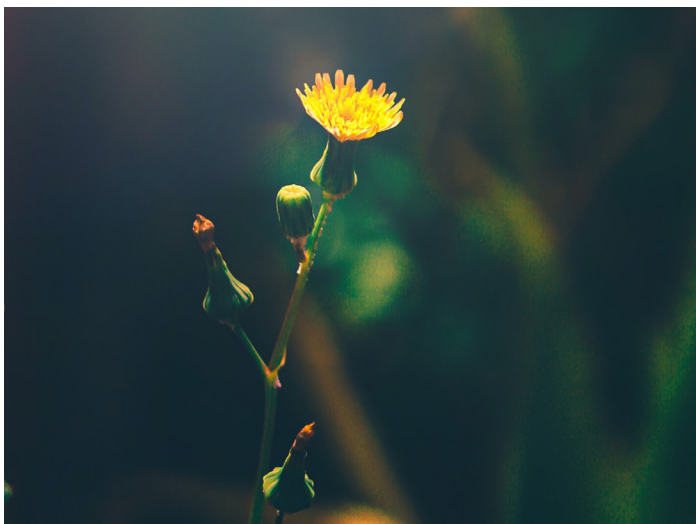


Photo by [Satyajit Bhowmik](#)

In 2020 we received emergency funding from the Canadian Red Cross Society to continue our peer support services and expand our small team for 6 months. With this funding, in addition to support from WAGE, we were able to hire 2 additional community peer support workers.

Thank you to the 50+ survivors that we were able to serve through the program. We hope to see more peer-based and survivor-centred programming funded and prioritized for survivors in the future.

Our team researches and updates the following survivor resources:

- Resources for Survivors Guide
- Safety Planning Toolkit
- Survivor-Centric Digital Best Practices Guide
- Monthly Newsletter
- Social Media Shares - focusing on offerings and research for survivors

This way we can ensure there are vetted resources accessible for survivor healing, safety and care. These resources are always available through our website.



The Now Serving: Safer Bars & Spaces training program was created in response to the normalized patterns of sexism, harassment, and gender-based violence against women and feminized people in Canada's hospitality industry.



Safer Spaces for the Arts was later developed to address these issues within the arts. This content was created by industry professionals, gender-based violence prevention experts and survivors, together.

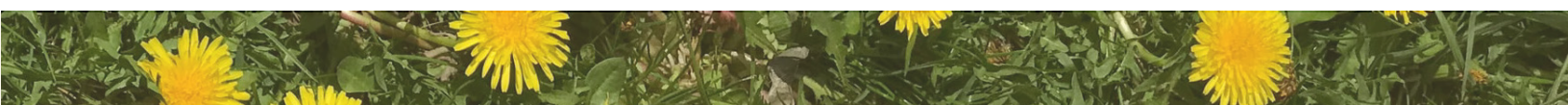
Our program uses a socio-ecological model that focuses on connecting primary (policies), secondary (training), and tertiary (direct support) practices to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. We use this model to reinforce the reality that individuals alone, cannot be responsible for culture change.

The skills and value-building we foster with teams needs to be reinforced through policy, culture, systems, employers and community. This is what makes our program unique and why the impacts are overwhelmingly positive.

Our survivor-centric, industry-specific tools and knowledge have been delivered to over 80 organizations, businesses and spaces to date. That is over 1500 industry professionals across Turtle Island. We could not be more proud of the groundbreaking and challenging work we were able to do with so many dedicated industry professionals and survivors.

We are filled with thanks and gratitude to have worked with so many hospitality and arts organizations and spaces.

Sadly, The hospitality and nightlife industry has faced devastation alongside small non-profits like ours. The collective and the gendered impacts of COVID-19 on our workforce and patronage cannot be ignored. Now, more than ever, we must prioritize prevention instead of reaction.



SAFER BARS & SPACES

In 2019 we surveyed women who work in the hospitality industry, out of 150 participants we found that:

77%

had left a hospitality job at one point due to a poisoned or toxic work environment where there were rigid gender norms, sexism and sexual harassment.

84%

had witnessed or experienced sexual harassment or assault at work or within working hours

67%

intentionally avoid going to bars, restaurants and spaces that have been reported for harmful and/or toxic environments

80+

organizations,
businesses and
spaces

48%

confidence increase
in bystander
intervention

1500+

people trained
since 2018

72%

had never received
training like this

The next chapter

In 2022 the Dandelion Initiative team will be closing this chapter of the Now Serving: Safer Bars & Spaces Program. Moving forward, we will be offering our research, activities, resources and teachings through an online e-learning portal. We will be using a combination of templates, evidence-based research, perspective and knowledge from predominantly women and women of colour. The online learning portal will act as a living document that our staff and volunteers update regularly.

Starting in winter 2022 we will be training a group of 5-10 women and non-binary folks in hospitality and the arts industries who are interested in developing skills and knowledge in gender-based violence prevention and response.

These individuals will go on to facilitate our Safer Spaces content and create their own workshops and trainings.



SURVIVORS HEAL + THRIVE

Our 2019-2020 Heal + Thrive Series was funded by the City of Toronto and Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE). With their support we developed and implemented community events that served survivors of gender-based violence in Toronto.

We were able to expand these services to survivors across Canada and additionally provide 1:1 survivor peer counselling. The staff and volunteers at the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre/Multicultural Women Against Rape (TRCC/MWAR) provided us with the external support to receive this grant, and their collaboration ensured that survivors could access these services.

We had the honour to serve over 200 survivors through 15 community-based and survivor-centred workshops, both in person and online. Workshops were 2-3 hours and held 10-15 people. These workshops were for survivors of all genders, prioritizing women and transgender people. Each facilitator was paid an honorarium for their knowledge, time, and labour to ensure that they, as individuals, had opportunities for economic empowerment.

At the end of our series, community knowledge was translated into:

- Our [Resources for Survivors](#) package, which is a curated guide offering diverse supports, resources, and services for all survivors of gender-based and sexual violence. This is a living document that we maintain with community input.
- The [Heal + Thrive booklet](#), a curated combination of art, affirmations, and facilitator knowledge for survivors. This offering allows facilitators to share their knowledge and the Dandelion Initiative is able to amplify their skills beyond the people who attended each workshop.

Illustration by Roza Nozari aka [Yallaroza](#)

WE DO NOT HEAL
AS COMPETITORS
WE HEAL AS A
COMMUNITY



I DESERVE COMMUNITY
CARE WHERE I AM SEEN
AND HEARD



150+

survivors attended
Heal + Thrive
workshops

25

1:1 peer support
sessions provided

8

community leaders
and educators hired

Don't Rebuild On Our Backs

Don't Rebuild On Our Backs is more than just a report on gender-based violence before, during, and after COVID-19. It is a call-to-action for policy change, equity and safety for survivors, as well as the organizations and programs that serve them.

During COVID-19, we have seen further devastation caused by gender-based violence and a lack of funded resources.

We see a collective opportunity to create a prevention-focused, solution-based future where we stop accepting femicide and gender-based violence as the norm.

[Don't Rebuild On Our Backs](#) builds bridges between the Dandelion Initiative's work and the work of our multi-sectoral partners and allies. In this report we provide policy recommendations at the provincial and municipal levels.

This report highlights the reality and lived experience of survivors while also honouring that we cannot capture all lived experiences. Data on the impacts of gender-based violence on Black women and trans folks is not accessible in Canada (read more [here](#)).

Don't Rebuild on Our Backs is part of the solution. It has to be done with us, not without us. Together, not on our backs.





Managing our Trauma, Healing and Safety (MOTHS) is a survivor-centric and feminist trauma care program for women and non-binary people who work in essential and front-line services across Canada.

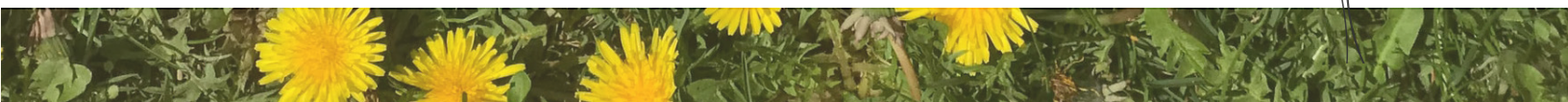
Long before COVID-19, essential workers and gender-based violence professionals already experienced profound workplace stressors, limited resources and increasing rates of mental health challenges and vicarious trauma. With the added increase of situational and lateral violence during the pandemic, many professionals are in need of intersectional feminist trauma care to manage their safety and healing.

MOTHS uses a blend of culturally attuned, holistic and psychoeducational tools to foster and re-build inherent resiliency, collective support, individual safety nets and trauma recovery.

The MOTHS program is delivered virtually, and runs for 8 weeks. Each group session is 2-hours in length, and facilitated by a Dandelion Initiative team member.

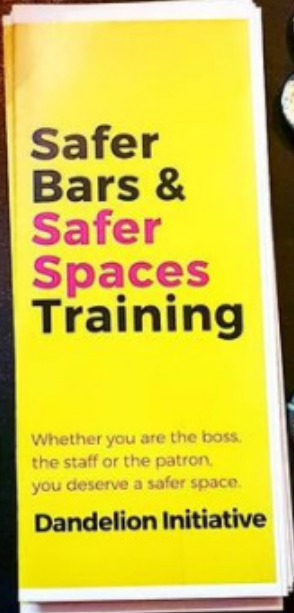
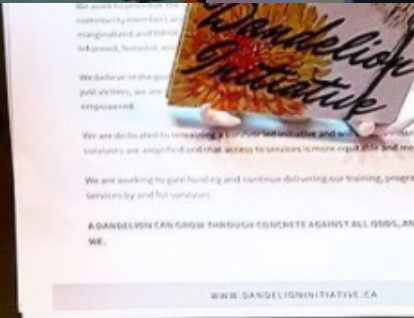
Confidential intake surveys will be sent to all participants, along with a short welcome video from Viktoria, Dandelion Initiative founder and program director. Survey results will be stored in a way that maintains confidentiality and will only be used internally to ensure the program meets the needs of the participants. We will be encouraging follow-ups at 1 month, 3 month, 6 month and 12 month intervals with a member of the Dandelion Initiative team or representative.

Our first cohort will be with Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) in Ontario starting in fall 2021.





COLLEGE ST. BAR SHUT DOWN





TESTIMONIALS

“This workshop was truly validating. As hard as it was, I did feel a better sense of agency, permission to not always be nice and a sense of relief to know that I don’t have to take responsibility for the oppression that I’m experiencing; I can delegate”

“I came into the workshop hoping to learn more about how to help others in my community and better support survivors (which I did!), but this workshop also really helped me get in touch with my own feelings and experiences.”

“One of the best, if not the best, Zoom meeting I have had! Facilitators managed to create a feeling of safety and unity in cyberspace.”

“The tailored approach taken by the Dandelion Initiative team is wonderfully emblematic of the training itself. It allowed me to approach safety from multiple positionalities and with flexibility, knowing that it is within our power to build our worlds into what we need.”

“Brilliant and insightful. As a guy listening to the experiences of women, it was heartbreaking to hear my peers’ stories of gendered violence, and it made me question whether I can do more.”

“I do hope workshops like these are not off the table indefinitely, as they have been so helpful and empowering.”

“I gained encouragement to not rush through healing, and give myself time to heal”





TESTIMONIALS CONTINUED...

“I didn’t know how easy intervention and de-escalation could be with the right skills. I loved this training.”

“There are complex cultures in kitchens and a lot of us want to be healthier and safer. This training really gave me a voice from back of house. More of this!”

“The facilitator did an amazing job of instilling the same spirit, empathy and safety in the online space as I imagine is built in person.”

“As a victim of workplace sexual harassment/assault, this workshop really helped me make peace with that assault as well as utilize today’s topics to help others.”

“Sometimes I lose touch with how I feel affected by being trans in the world as a survivor. It felt good to be around people sharing these ideas that I didn’t realize I needed to discuss.”

“I appreciate this organization so much. I cannot tell you how much my ability to survive, in so many ways, has been so supported by the peer support and workshops offered by Dandelion Initiative.”

“Dandelion Initiative has made a significant contribution towards processing my trauma so that I can get to a point where I’m no longer just surviving, but thriving. I am so incredibly grateful.”

OUR GRATITUDE

Thank you to the individuals and organizations who have worked alongside us and who we value so greatly. If we missed you on this gratitude list please email us at board@dandelioninitiative.ca so we can add your name and send you our gratitude.

Abigail Sampson

Amanda aka Salty Woman

Bittered Sling

Carmen Chan

Cheryl R.S, Indigenous Elder

Christina Viera

Deb Singh and the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre / Multicultural Women Against Rape (TRCC/MWAR)

Deena Ladd

E-Romnja

Emilia

Forever Softcore

Gantala Press

Glad Day Bookshop

Hana Shafi aka Frizz Kid

Jen McKerral

Jen Porter

Jessie's Centre

Dr. Jill Andrew, PhD

Jungle Flower and Reclaim Your Voice

Laurie and Cupid's Sting

Leigh Kern, Toronto Urban Native Ministry

Lori Houston

Mandi Howard

Marla Warner

Maya Nadeem

Micah Kalisch

Micah Ricardo Riedl

Mike Layton and Olivia Chow

Music Gallery

Nanook and Toronto Indigenous Harm Reduction (TIHR)

Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto (NWRCT)

Nicole Babin

Nicole D'Souza

OCADU students and leadership

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC) and all the early childhood educators who have offered their skills at our sessions

All the PEARS peers

GRATITUDE CONTINUED...

PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre
(PEIRSAC)

PLURI

Punk Sucks TO

Rashin Lamoushi

The Redwood

Rezin Babe

Rhiannon Downey

Rosina and Unit 2

Roza Nozari aka Yallaroza

Sarah Barrable-Tishauer aka DJ Me Time

Scarborough Campus Students' Union
(SCSU) and Rajpreet

SHARE Project

Stacey Forrester

Stacey McCool aka Really Man?

Suzanne Barr

Witch Prophet

Yamikani Msosa

Thank you to our funders

Women and Gender Equality Canada
(WAGE)

The Canadian Red Cross Society

City of Toronto

And all our amazing community donors

*To all the folks in hospitality who
have supported our work.*

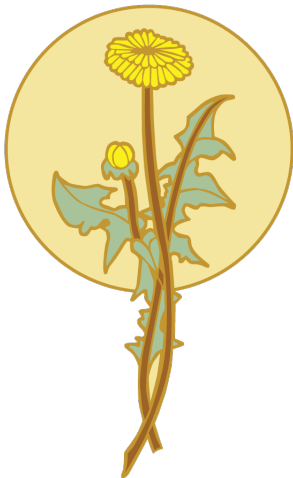
*To all the community members
who donate what they can.*

*To all our staff and board, past
and present, thank you.*





DANDELION INITIATIVE



CONTACT US

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