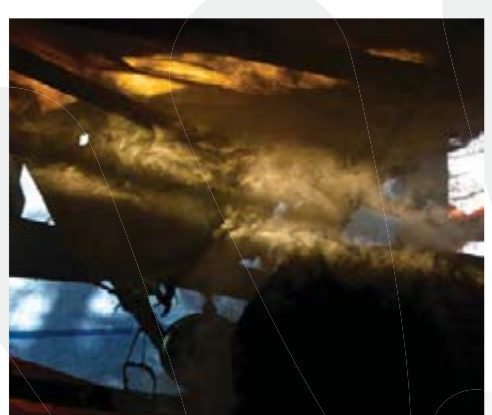


Sisters Rising

British Columbia, Canada



Sisters Rising is an Indigenous-led research project based in British Columbia, part of the Networks4Change project. Sisters Rising works with communities and organizations to conduct art- and land-based workshops with Indigenous girls, young women, and youth of all genders, including 2spirit and LGBTQ youth, using a trans-generational framework. Research on sexualized violence in our communities tends to focus on the impact of risk and trauma, and on the legal, social and psychological costs of interventions. Our project uses art and land-based materials and teachings as a form of restorying and rebodging colonial violence. Activities have included circles with Elders, walks on the land, art and collage-making, tanning hides, working with wool, stone, hide and cedar, digital storytelling, painting, image collages, mask-making, spoken word and traditional felt and beading work.



"We raise our hands in deep gratitude and acknowledgment for all of those who have experienced gender and sexualized violence, to those we have lost to violence, to those who have shared and walked with us in this project, and who resist, protect, survive, love and imagine other ways of being with each other and with all our relations."

vital breath
love flows
we walk with friends,
mentors,
family,
kin
young and old
across generations
into relationship
touching our kinship
communities of care
blanket us with love



Sisters
Rising



"my dream is that First Nations girls can walk home alone without fear"

"we Native girls are beautiful and strong we are the best life has to offer!!!"



"it starts with, bring back our strong cultures, put girls back in the middle. Treat them with dignity. Believe them. Don't say you care if you're not going to do anything"



Sisters Rising

British Columbia, Canada

Respect and Consent

"My Naanii Lavina White always told me that there were two Haida laws that we were always meant to follow and they are respect and consent. No matter what area of life you're looking at . . . it should apply to all aspects of your life and to each other"
(Lisa, Sisters Rising Participant)



"One thing I'm happy to see is when all the young women are out berry picking because I know it's not going to die . . . 'cause it's going to go on forever like hundreds of years ago . . . our grandmothers, and great grandmothers and generations back all picked the berries and cared for the land"
(Alice, Sisters Rising Participant)

Destruction

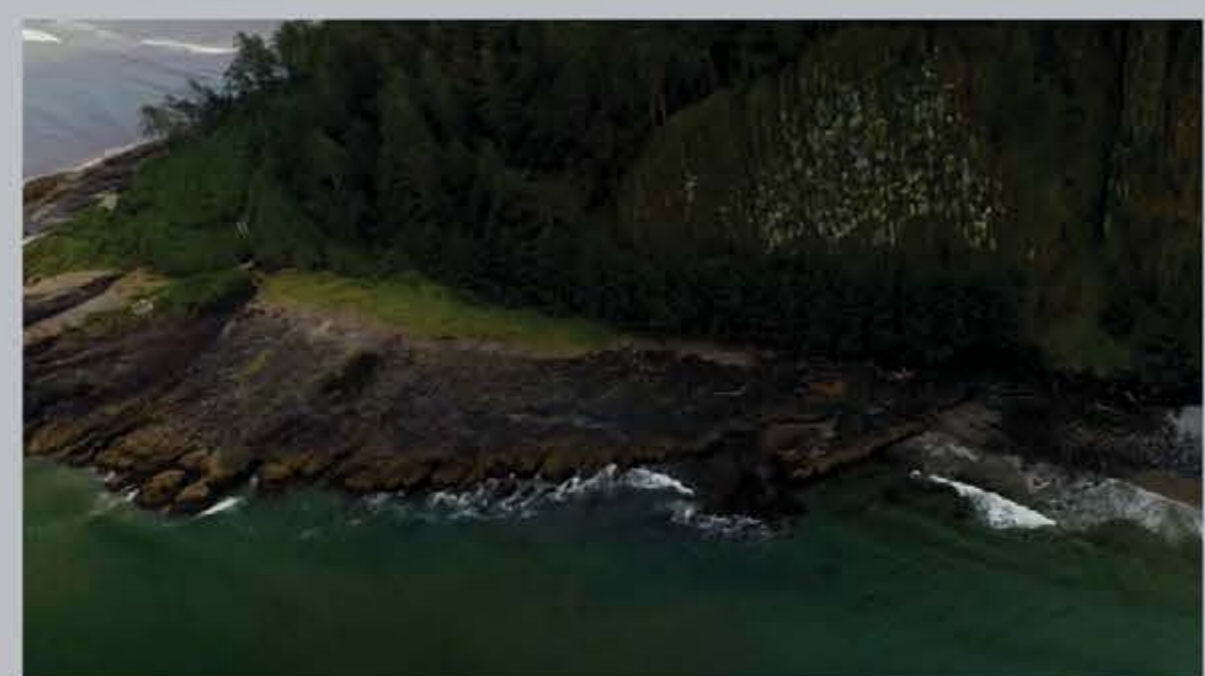
"We've never treated with the . . . colonial government, these are unceded, unceded lands, these are Haida lands. What they're doing here is not respectful and it's not consensual"
(Lisa, Sisters Rising Participant)



I see how the land can be held as sacred,
yet I also see how the land can be treated as an object to be violated.
I see how Indigenous bodies can be treated in these same ways.
Land sovereignty is body sovereignty.
We are all connected.

Healing

"Our younger ones need to take the power back and be taught positive things and I think that will be a good start"
(Terri, Sisters Rising Participant)



"I think you have to let go, you have to learn to let go. If something really bothers you, you do a ceremony, say I can't carry this anymore and actually do a physical thing where you get rid of all the hurts . . . get together with your friends and do it . . . say 'I don't want to carry this anymore, it's not mine to carry and I don't want it anymore and I want to get rid of this hurt'
(Alice, Sisters Rising Participant)

Vision for Girls and Community

"I think we've already gone beyond, beyond the tipping point, but I think that there's always hope. As long as there's life there's hope and that we can turn things around if everybody could get together and agree that we can do this better and that we can be respectful and we can ask for consent"
(Lisa, Sisters Rising Participant)



"The women, of all the clans to step up and take our power back in a positive way, I'm hoping that's what will happen in the very near future, is for our women to step up and to deal with our concerns and just the role we used to have years ago. It would balance everything out, whereas now there's no balance whatsoever, it's more on the male side"
(Terri, Sisters Rising Participant)

I asked the question:
In your own words, what type of violence have you experienced?



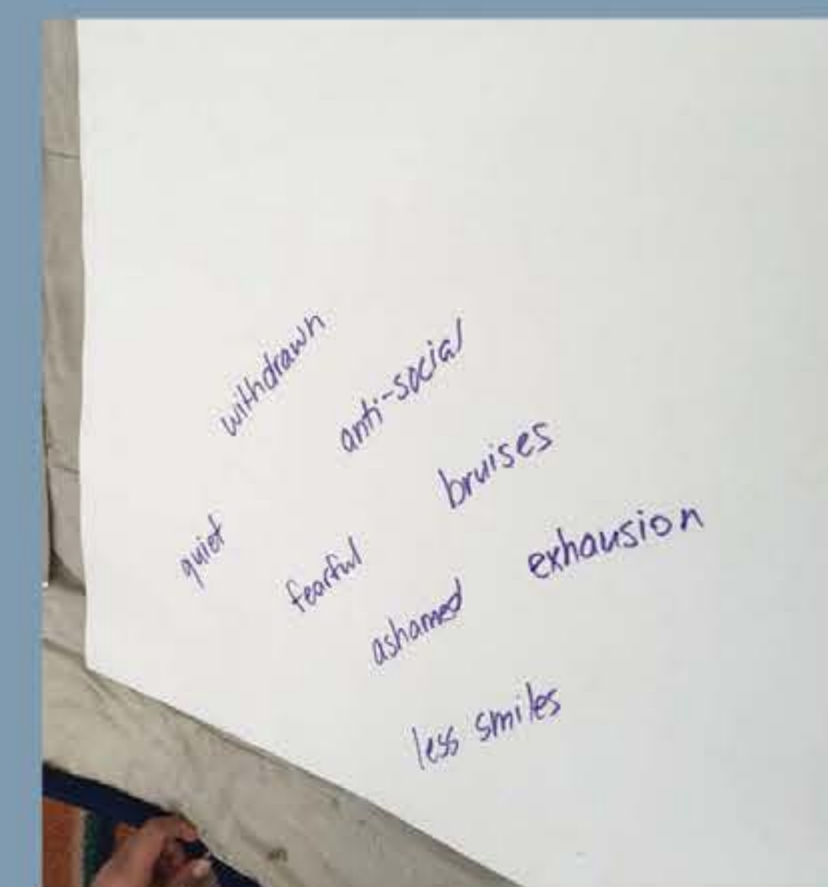
Results

After completing multiple workshops, and one on one interviews with participants, it is concluded Indigenous females are still in dire need of (but not limited to):

- better health care access
- healthy food
- access to licensed practical nurses, & counsellors
- cultural connections
- appreciation and validation
- increased support groups: girls group, womens group, & youth group
- access to diverse therapists
- more helpers within community

After group sessions and one on one interview with participants, it is concluded that participants who have experienced lateral violence, had varied conclusions (but not limited to):

- isolation & heart break
- she felt anxious and lifeless
- she felt angry, sad, lost
- it effected their sleep, eating habits and lifestyle
- she experienced living in pain, and sadness
- she physically had bruises and bumps
- she pushed people away
- she felt ugly, didn't love herself



The results varied from, bullying, peer pressure, racism, cyber bullying, sexual assault, domestic violence, physical violence, rape, and mental and emotional abuse.

Conclusion

Although each participant has faced violence, each Indigenous female shared a positive reclaim (but not limited to): reclaiming her strength, happiness, kindness, connections to culture and family, wants to be unstoppable, wants to become a leader, and will continue to carry the scars but will have a sense of humour.



"I've felt empty and heart break"
(Natasha, Sisters Rising Participant, 21)



"I just want to be able to see a nurse for my safety"
(Jane, Sisters Rising Participant, 24)

"We raise our hands in deep gratitude and acknowledgment for all of those who have experienced gender and sexualized violence, to those we have lost to violence, to those who have shared and walked with us in this project, and who resist, protect, survive, love and imagine other ways of being with each other and with all our relations."

