

NETWORKS FOR CHANGE & WELL-BEING

# CIRCLE BACK



STORIES OF REFLECTION,  
CONNECTION AND TRANSFORMATION

HANNAH BATTISTE · ANDRAYA DANIELS · BONGIWE MAOME





HANNAH BATTISTE · ANDRAYA DANIELS · BONGIWE MAOME





Networks for Change and Well-being: Girl-led 'From the Ground Up' Policy-making to Address Sexual Violence in Canada and South Africa is a transnational project with field sites in South Africa and Canada. The project is coordinated jointly by teams at McGill University and the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, with a network of co-investigators, collaborators, partner organizations, research students and youth from the field sites.

Networks for Change and Well-being is supported through the The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) project number 865-2013-3007 & The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) project number 107777-001.

*More Than Words: Studying the impact of arts-based survivor engagement on families and communities*, continues to build on the work of Networks for Change, with the support of Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE). *Pathways2Equity: Youth-Led, Indigenous-Focussed, Gender-Transformative, Arts-Based Approaches to Challenging Gender Norms in Addressing Gender-Based Violence*, also supported by WAGE, widens the circle further still.

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Women and Gender  
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité  
des genres Canada



IDRC · CRDI

International Development Research Centre  
Centre de recherches pour le développement international



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
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Canada

Canada



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

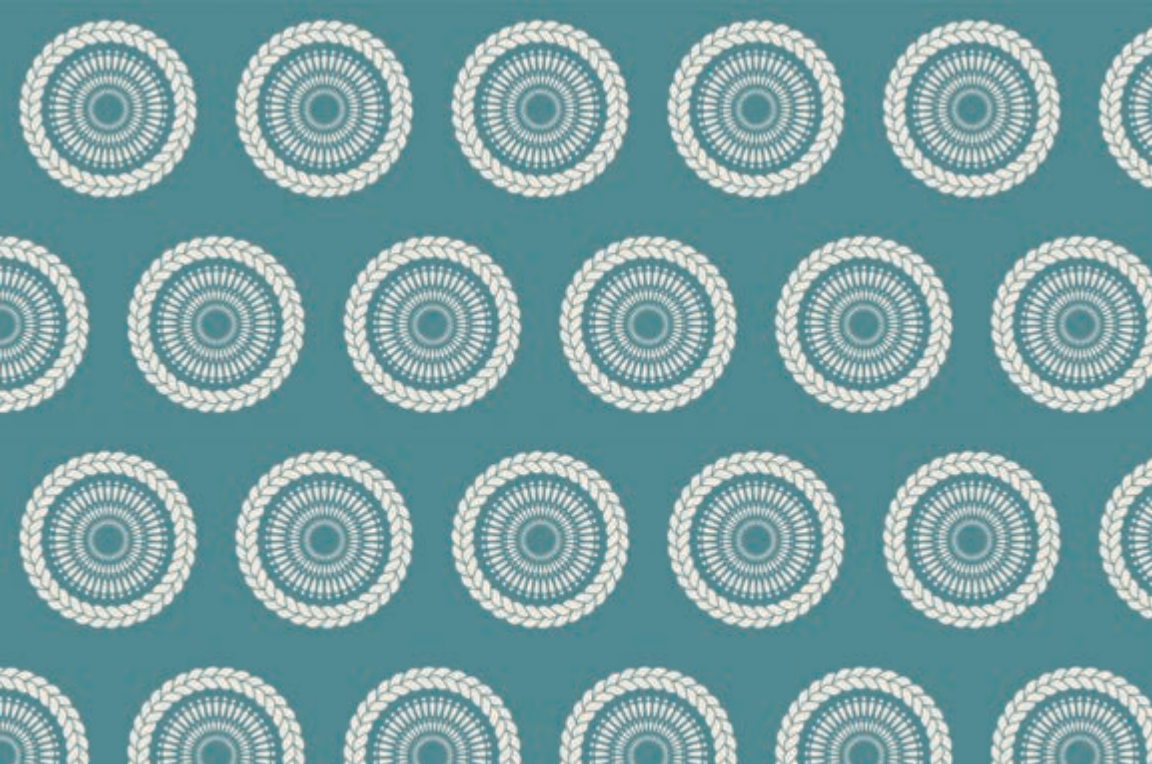
**We** are so grateful to the many folks involved in the Networks4Change movement and its components including fieldwork, advocacy, academia, administration, partnerships, knowledge mobilisation and publications.

First and foremost, we thank the youth leaders of Networks for Change and Well-being: Girl-led 'From the Ground Up' Policy-making to Address Sexual Violence in Canada and South Africa, whose wisdom, leadership and activism are at the heart of this work. The challenges of Covid-19 and the ongoing effects of colonialism meant that not all youth had the opportunity to contribute to this publication. We recognize the incredible work of all the youth attached to Networks4Change: the girls and young women, boys and young men, 2spirit and youth in all their beautiful diversity, across Canada and South Africa.

Special thanks to the youth editors; Bongiwe Maome, Andie Daniels and Hannah Battiste for their impressive work on the publication, all the more remarkable in the face of personal losses, national tragedies and an international pandemic.

We acknowledge the dedication and support of the many adults, community scholars, Elders, Aunties, community leaders and mentors that work with Networks' youth on a day-to-day basis, helping to amplify voices and create safe spaces for youth to realise their potential and explore their culture and passions.

Finally we are also thankful to Gabrielle Giroux, proud Déné woman from Hatchet Lake First Nation and founder of Encore Graphics for her beautiful and thoughtful design work in this and so many other project publications.



# FIELD SITES

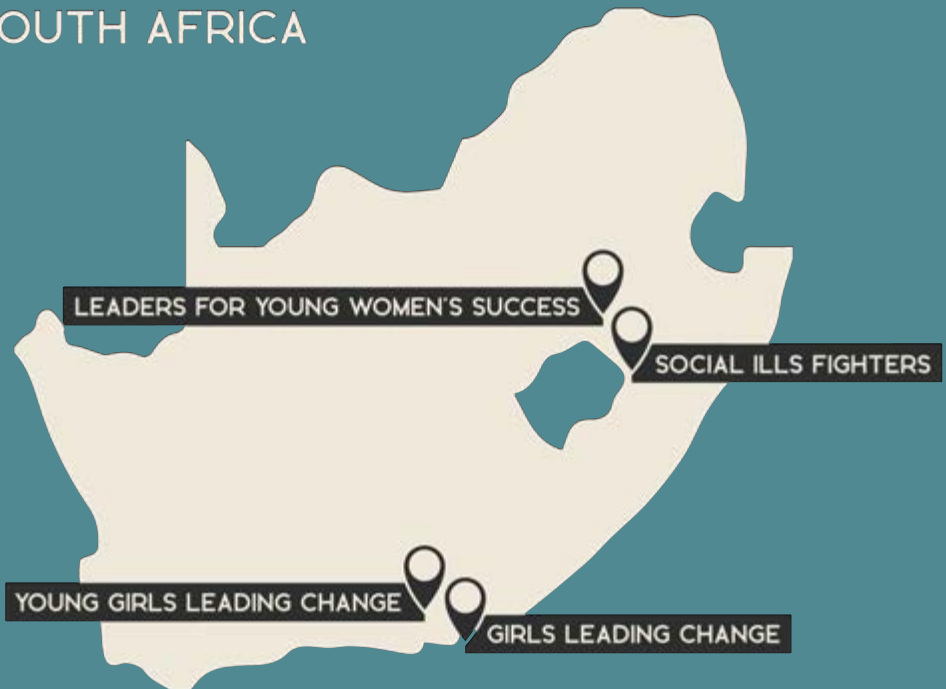




# CANADA



# SOUTH AFRICA



# BREAK THE SILENCE: BE THE CHANGE



ESKASONI,  
NOVA SCOTIA,  
CANADA

Located on Cape Breton Island, within the Unama'gi district of Mi'kmaq territory, Eskasoni is the largest Aboriginal community in Atlantic Canada. Break the Silence: Be the Change is a community-based project aimed at changing dialogue and awareness around sexual violence. Youth aged 16-22 have conducted research and initiated conversations focusing on relationships, community, and violence as it relates to sex and sexuality. Work takes place against the historical backdrop of colonial violence, intergenerational trauma, and continuing legacies of socioeconomic marginalization.

# GIRLS EXPRESSING THEMSELVES THROUGH ART



RANKLIN INLET,  
NUNAVUT,  
CANADA

Located on the west coast of the Hudson Bay in Nunavut, the GET ART program was launched in recognition of the need to create a space within the community where local Inuit girls could come together and express themselves. Engaging with participatory visual methods, the girls have produced music videos and cellphilms addressing bullying, gender-based violence, food insecurity and much more.

# SISTERS RISING



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA,  
CANADA

Sisters Rising, located on ɫəkʷəŋən and WSÁNEĆ homelands, in what is colonially known as British Columbia, Canada, brings together Indigenous youth of all genders as well as community members, knowledge keepers and Elders in Indigenous communities on B.C.'s west coast. Sisters Rising creates Indigenous-led responses to gendered and sexualized violence by challenging the victim-blaming climate of violence, and linking issues of body sovereignty to decolonization and land sovereignty. Our project engages land and water-based workshops, art making, multimedia storytelling and collective action to re-center Indigenous concepts of gender and sexual health, wellbeing, and resurgence.

# YOUNG INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S UTOPIA



SASKATOON,  
SASKATCHEWAN,  
CANADA

Located in Treaty 6 & the Traditional Homeland of the Métis (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada), YIWU is made up of a group of girls and young women exploring and navigating the colonial and gendered violent contexts that they survive and exist within. Empowered by each other and their Nehiwayan and Michif ways, these young women explore self-love as a first form of resistance. They were awarded the 2020 national Indspire 'Guiding the Journey' award, that recognizes contributions to community-based education honouring the principles of Indigenous knowledge.

# GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

GQEBERHA,  
EASTERN CAPE,  
SOUTH AFRICA



GLC started as a group of 14 education students at Nelson Mandela University in 2013, working together to address GBV in their university and their community. Through photovoice, cellphilm, writing retreats, and music elicitation, girls revisited their own experiences of GBV and emerged more powerful. These young women, now teachers in different communities, are agents of change inciting their students to be more conscious of GBV.

# LEADERS FOR YOUNG WOMEN'S SUCCESS

KHETANI,  
KWAZULU-NATAL,  
SOUTH AFRICA



Through the creation of visual artefacts, L4YWS aim to provide girl-led evidence on how poverty, gender norms and hegemonic masculinity make girls and young women vulnerable to GBV. Their artefacts reveal the extremely harsh consequences of GBV in their community, which include pregnancy, HIV, and death from suicide and femicide. Importantly, their images also show that the L4YWS hope to create change in their community through collective action.

# SOCIAL ILLS FIGHTERS

LOSKOP,  
KWAZULU-NATAL,  
SOUTH AFRICA



SIFs is made up of a group of girls and young women contributing to create change in their community. They use art to show how cultural practices and traditional gender norms, including forced and early marriage (FEM), are experienced by girls and young women as violence. Their efforts ignited dialogue with traditional leadership, schools and other stakeholders to create change in their community. Their creative work led to the adoption of the “Reporting and Response Protocol on forced and early marriage in eMangweni” in March 2020, by which eMangweni authorities committed to address FEM and support the victims.



# YOUNG GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

PATERSON,  
EASTERN CAPE,  
SOUTH AFRICA



YGLC is made up of a group of 7 girls at a secondary school who came together in 2015 to address the problem of GBV in their school and their community. Mentored by Girls Leading Change, they use cellphilms, policy posters, and action briefs to lead a community dialogue, giving their perspective on how this problem should be addressed.

# FOREWORD

We are delighted to write the Foreword for *Circle Back: Stories of Reflection, Connection and Transformation*, for this exciting transnational youth-led book initiative as part of the 'Networks for Change and Well-being: Girl-led 'from the ground up' policy-making to address sexual violence in Canada and South Africa'. Over the seven years of Networks for Change there have been many face-to-face and virtual gatherings, a travelling exhibition, and several youth-led publications coming out of one country or the other. *Circle Back* not only combines the voices of girls and young women in the two countries but comes out of the dedication of the three co-editors, Bongive Maome from Girls Leading Change, Eastern Cape, South Africa; Andie Daniels from Young Indigenous Women's Utopia, Treaty 6 and Homeland of the Métis (Saskatoon), Canada; and Hannah Battiste, from *Break the Silence: Be the Change*, Eskasoni. For a project that started in 2014 with a focus on what it would mean to study issues of sexual violence from the perspectives of girls and young women as knowers and actors, it is most fitting that we come to the final phase of the project with girls and young women taking the lead as knowers and as actors in reflecting on lessons and actions from the project.

One thing we have appreciated throughout the project is the fact that we can never take ease of communication for granted, even if it is the age of social media. *Circle Back* has been no exception. First it was necessary to find out who in the two countries would have time and easy internet or WhatsApp access to be able to participate as a co-editor. This was of course exacerbated

by Covid-19. Then, how would the editorial team actually get together, how often, and within what time frame working across so many time zones and circumstances? Many of the submissions came from a Networks for Change newsletter earlier in 2021, but new submissions came out of a special ‘call’ designed by Bonggi, Andie and Hannah, and circulated through their various communities. What would the collection be called? How would it be organized? And who would be able to bring together this collection into the form of book you now see? In the end and over the months of May and June, 2021, the co-editors, Andie, Hannah and Bonggi, along with the designer Gabrielle Giroux from Treaty 6 and Homeland of the Metis (Saskatoon), Canada have produced this remarkable transnational collection.

As the co-Principal Investigators of Networks for Change, we congratulate the editors and designer for their creativity, dedication and vision, all the contributors, as well as Catherine Dillman and Sumaya Soufi as youth interns supporting the book project.

*Claudia Mitchell, McGill University*

*Relebohile Moletsane, University of KwaZulu-Natal*



# **EDITORS' INTRODUCTIONS**

# BONGIWE MAOME


## GIRLS LEADING CHANGE



CAPE TOWN • SOUTH AFRICA



My introduction to the Networks for Change (N4C) is a story of me stumbling upon my own courage at a time when I had least expected it. And in many ways, it marked the beginning of my journey to becoming who and what I am today. My very first ‘encounter’ with the N4C was in 2013; I was in the first year of my undergraduate Education degree at the then Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (now Nelson Mandela University). I was fresh out of the small rural town of Matatiele, in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, where the general pace of progress was particularly slow. This was contrary to the fast



pace at which the list of challenges that came with the town's rurality would continue to expand. Be that as it may, this community forms the backdrop of my upbringing as a young teenage girl.

In addition to the challenges that came with growing up in a rural community, I had my share of challenges in the most personal areas of my life, which contributed to me harbouring a lot of anger and frustration at the world and at myself. I was angry because I wanted things to change, I wanted things to get better, I wanted out of the frustration, and I wanted all of it to happen fast. However, it was becoming increasingly frustrating for me to come to terms with the fact that nothing was going to change- at least not at the pace that I wanted- and not until something within me had changed first.

It was through engaging with the N4C and through the relationships that we formed as Girls Leading Change that my perspective began to change. Being a part of the Networks for Change encouraged me to view my intra- and interpersonal goals through a fresh lens - one that was not muddled by anger, frustration and in some ways, self-loathing. I needed to learn to hear and see myself first- by confronting my own negativity, my own silence, biases, misconceptions, and personal convictions. Through the sessions that we would have, the projects that we would undertake and our engagements

in general - I learned to find and recognize myself as an individual. And most remarkably, I also learned to exist and participate as a part of something that is so much more than just myself. I learned how to be a part of a community in a positive way, and instead of allowing myself to be restricted and frustrated by the variety of personal, social, and political difficulties that form our lived experiences. I learned how to activate and channel my agency with the intent of challenging the status quo. Ultimately, I began to recognize and appreciate that I, too, have a social duty to be an active part of the reimagining of a type of rurality that is conducive to the individual and collective progress of its people.

Essentially, the most remarkable take-away from being a part of this community is the gift of being able to first look inwards for positive change before expecting it to manifest outwardly. Because it is not until we hold ourselves accountable to the collective realization of positive social transformation, that we can begin to see the meaningful and sustained manifestation of social change in the world around us. Finally, we all occupy varying spaces in which we can inspire and affect meaningful and lasting change - for me, that space is in the classrooms that I teach- in the hearts of every child whose life I am privileged to share the gifts that the Networks for Change community has so generously shared with me.

# HANNAH BATTISTE

BREAK THE SILENCE: BE THE CHANGE



ESKASONI • CANADA

My name is Hannah Battiste, I am a young Mi'kmaq woman from Eskasoni, First Nation. I was first introduced to Networks for Change back in 2014. I was a client in mental health services, and my worker at the time asked me if I would like to join. [I liked the sound of it so I signed up].

*Ni'n na Hannah Battiste, ni'n na Essisoqnikewi'skwe'j. Amskwes welteskaqipnik "Networks for Change"-aq na 2014-ek. Mu weleyuap tujiw, aqq apoqnmuiipnik "Mental Health Services"-aq. Ntlukewinuem pipanimip ktu'- ika'lsin nekmowk. Welsutimap, aqq nasui'kusiap.*

I got to know a lot of the youth in the program and developed good friendships. Our focus was the community, what we would want to see in the community and what we can do to change our community. We did many things and experiments, we came up with a youth building, youth programs, we learned more about safe places within our community, and so much more.

*Pikwelkik maljewe'jk welteskaqipnik ta'n mawilukutiekkipnik, aqq pikwelkik nitapik pile'k kisi'kik. Ankite'tmekip ta'n koquey kitu'-nmituek*





*wutaniminaq aqq ta'n koquey kitu' sa'siewa'tuek. Pikwela'taqatiekip aqq pikwelk koquey wetnu'kwatmekip. Kisa'mua'tiekip litasin pilikan wjit maljewe'jk, aqq maw kisite'tmekepnn kina'matinewe'l wjit maljewe'jk. Kekina'muksiekip wjit ta'n tami wutaniminaq kis-lietow wen ta'n tujiw nsanoqniktuk eyk.*

The first time I had ever showed anyone my poetry was when I was in the program. I was not confident in my writing, but I found people who were. These amazing people published me and made me feel important; whatever I said mattered, and I finally had a voice. I was more open to writing and public speaking. I did many performances, and I was published numerous times after the first publication, it changed my life forever.

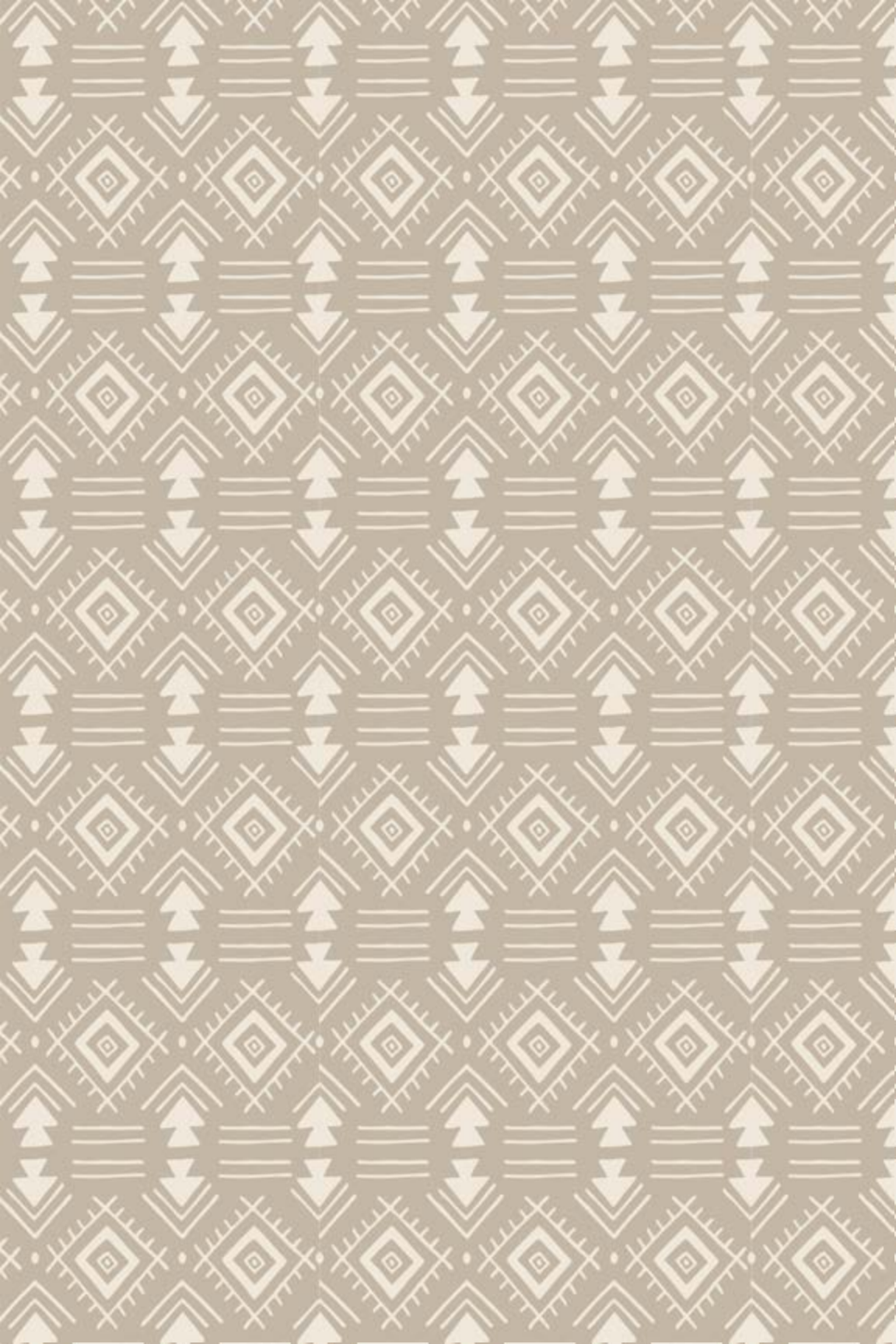
*Eymap u't "program" amskwes kekinua'taqek wen ta'n kis-amaliwi'km. Mekite'tmipnik toqo mu ni'n mekite'lsiwap. Apoqnmuiipnik wi'katiknikutk wiaqa'tasin ta'n kisi-wi'km, aqq kisa'lipnik poqji-mkite'lsi, poqji-jiksituksi, aqq klapis nsitun mesnik. Pemi-aji-ksatmap amali-wi'kikemk aqq kelusa'simk. Klapis kisaskimayanek, poqji-wikimuksiap wjit wsku'tmn ta'n tellukwey. Lpa sa'se'watuikek nmimajuaqnemek.*

Growing up the way that I had to grow up, left a huge scar inside. I did not understand why I would feel and think the way I did, until I discovered what a mental illness was. I was finally able to write about what went on in my head, and the traumas I went through growing up. I was finally able to use my voice, and what shocked me the most, is that people were listening.

*Metue'k wejiey, meski'k wisaqn etek nkamulamunk. Mu nestimuap koquey wjit teli-ksnukwayap, mi'soqo kekinua'tuksianek ta'n koquey wula ksnukwaqn. Klapis poqji-wi'kmap ta'n telita'si aqq ta'n kis-tlitpiey wejkwikweyanek. Klapis kisi-kinua'tekey, aqq mawi-pa'qaleywikip kejituanek jiksituksi.*

Networks for Change was not just changing our views and community, it was changing ourselves, it was changing our outlook on life, and it was making us feel like we were important. I have spent the last few years as an advocate for mental health. I have educated many people about mental illness and change within our community. To this day, I am just as passionate about writing and mental health. I have always wanted to experience what it felt like to be a youth worker and a crisis worker because many times they were the people who helped me, and I have always wanted to give back to my community by being that resource, I am proud to say I have experienced both.

Mental health and writing are going to be a part of my life forever-- it is something that has saved my life. My top goal in life, was to write my own poetry book, to share my story and to inspire. I am finally living that reality; my inspiration is Rita Joe. I aspire to be as big as her one day. She inspires me to keep going, and to never lose my voice - I lost my voice before, and I will never lose it again.



# ANDIE DANIELS

YOUNG INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S UTOPIA



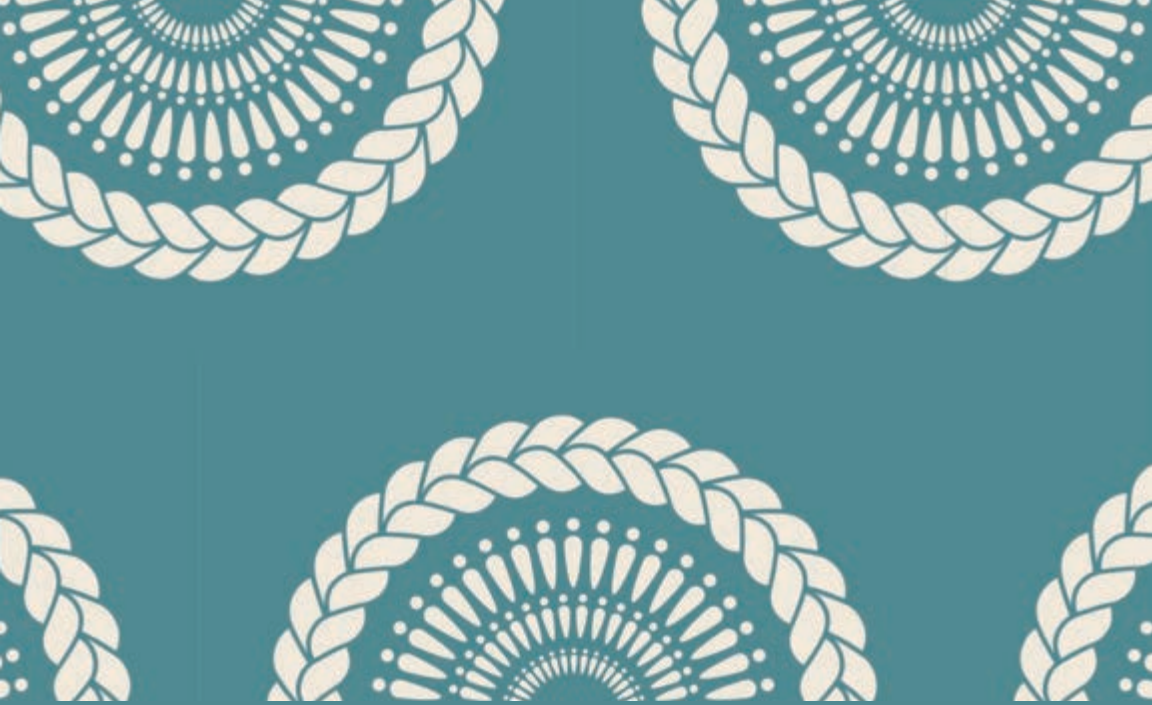
SASKATOON • CANADA  
TREATY SIX AND THE TRADITIONAL HOMELAND OF THE METIS

My name is Andraya Daniels and I am a Cree indigenous woman from Saskatoon Saskatchewan in treaty six. I am 16 years of age and I was first introduced with Networks for Change back in 2018 at a conference in Montreal. I have been working with the group Young Indigenous Women's Utopia (YIWU) since 2017. Since then, we've had all of our focus on gender-based violence and on how to help the community.

Since I joined YIWU and worked with Networks for Change, my life has changed. I started in grade 6 when I was 12 and I didn't think much of it. I was a very shy person who didn't know much. I am now in grade 10 and I can publicly speak and speak on things that need to be spoken on. I use my voice when necessary and when I know what I am talking about. All the work on gender-based violence has shaped me into the hardworking and independent woman I am today.

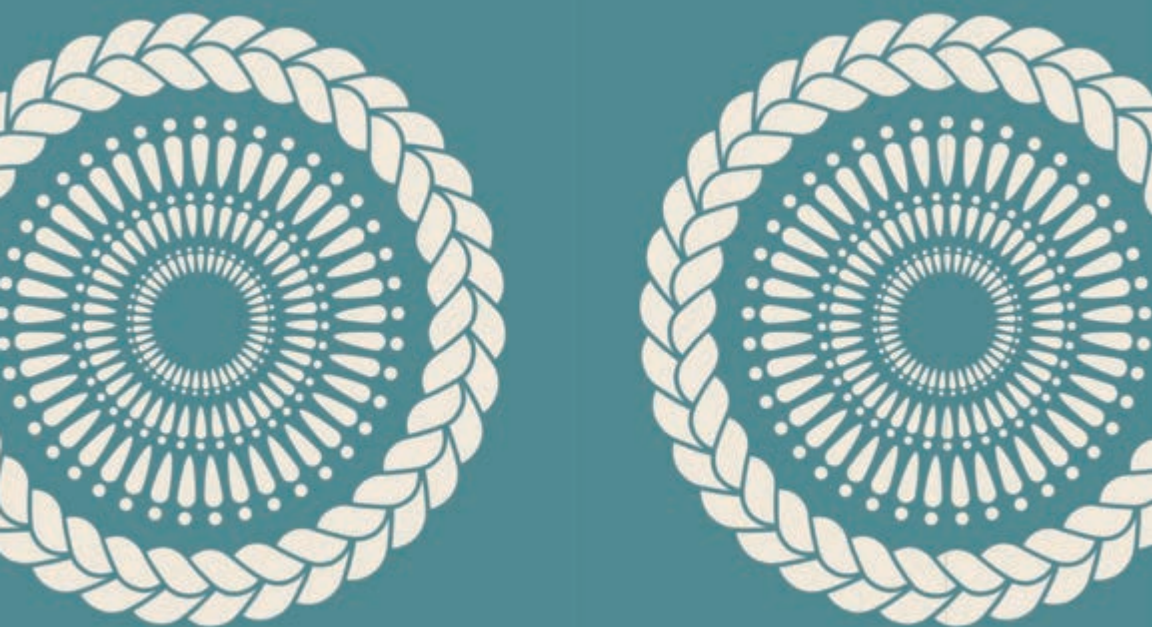


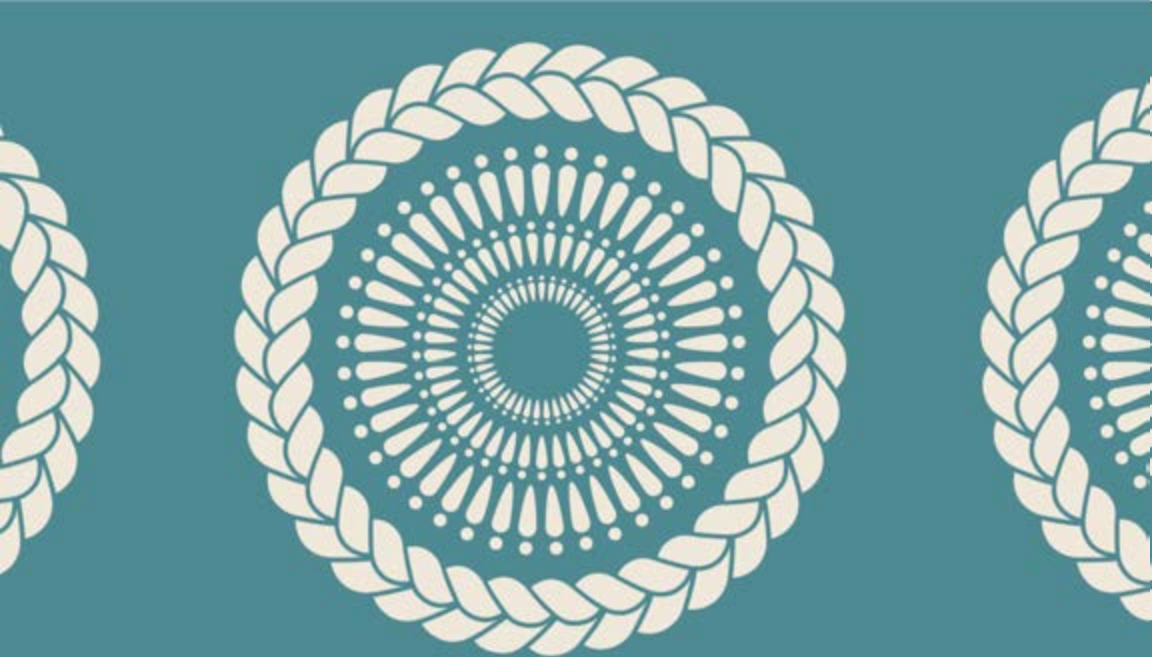
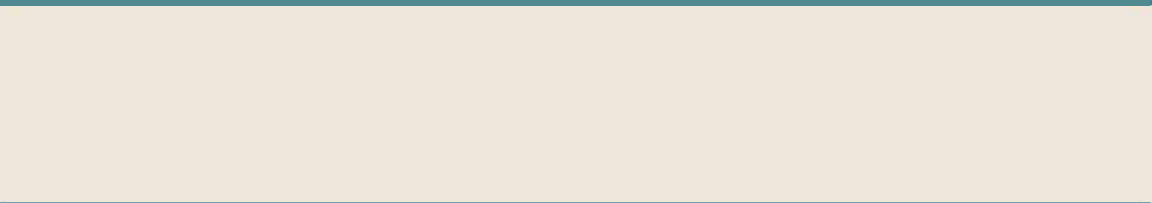
My mental health and my struggles have changed tremendously over these past years with ups and downs, but at the end of the day, I was a part of something that was amazing. Knowing I could teach younger girls about the world and what's to come was truly inspiring, and the work I have done by myself has been truly amazing. I can use my voice in so many places and I am so thankful for that and the opportunities Networks for Change has given me.



SECTION ONE

# TRANSFORMATION





# BONAKELE MAZIBUKO

## SOCIAL ILLS FIGHTERS

*Joining Social Ills Fighters (Networks for Change and Well-being) kungisize kahulu. Ngikholwa ukuthi ukubane angizange ngi join this organization ngabe angikho lapho engikhona njengamanje. Engikufundile ukuthi noma kungathiwa ukusiphi isimo or inkinga, angeke kuhlale kungalungi and ayikho into engadluli. And nome ngabe ukuyiphi inking uyazi ukuthi kunabantu abangakusiza asebephenduke Ifamily kumina (Social Ills Fighters and MamaXoli, Lebo, Lisa and Nkonzo).*

*I know some of us (including me) sesiya doubt, siyasaba ukuya phambili because wow life after matric is something else. All I want to say to Social Ills Fighters and to everyone who gonna read this is that noma kungathiwa you find yourself doubting how far you can go, just remember how far you have come. Remember everything you have faced, all battles you have won, and all the fears you have overcome.*

### NOTE ON TRANSLATION

**ISIZULU, LIKE SO MANY INDIGENOUS SOUTH AFRICAN LANGUAGES, IS SO BEAUTIFULLY COMPLEX.**

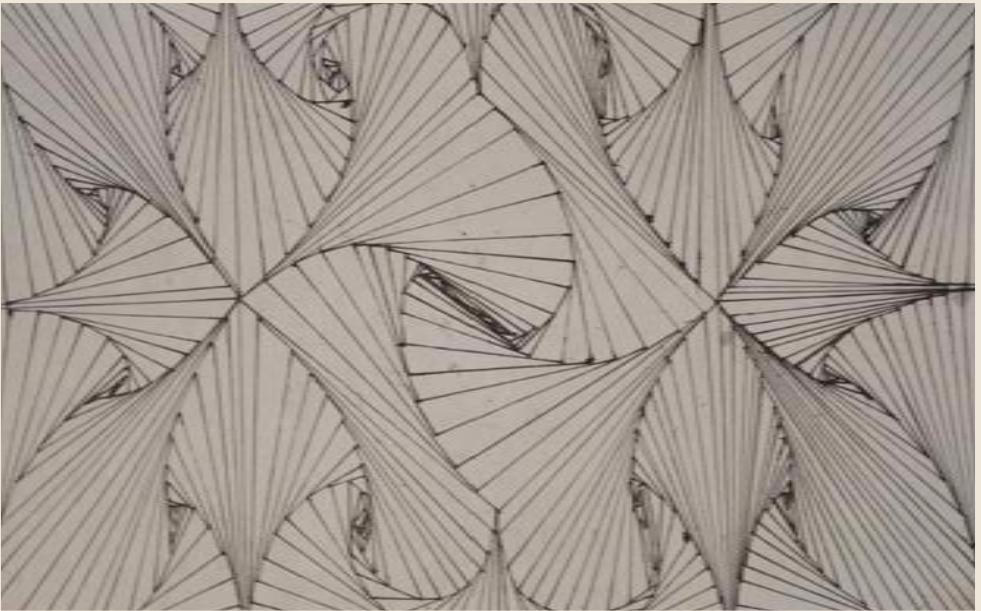
This usually means that meaning is often generated in the inflection and context of certain words, as opposed to the words themselves. And so, in order to protect the essence and meaning of Bonakele's piece, we could not translate the text directly from isiZulu (and some contemporary language she uses) to the English language. However, the meaning and personality of the piece is kept.



Joining the Social Ills Fighters and the Networks for Change really helped me a lot. If I had not joined this network, I don't believe that I would be where I am right now. I learned that any situation or circumstance can be changed for the better, and any challenge can be overcome.

Furthermore, I learned that in whatever difficulty/challenge I may be confronted with, there are always people that can assist me - these people have become family to me (especially the Social Ills Fighters, Mama Xoli, Prof. Lebo, Lisa and Nkonzo).

Life after matric is really scary, so much so that it makes me anxious to begin that journey; however, I just want to encourage my peers to never doubt their own capabilities and how far they can go. Remember everything you have faced- all the battles that you have won and all the fears that you have overcome.





# ZETHU JIYANA

GIRLS LEADING CHANGE



## HOW AM I IMAGINING THE FUTURE?



**I** saw this poster one day, saying “Men fear ghosts and women fear men”, the same men who are supposed to be protectors, and I realized the future is not so bright.

I heard of young innocent women and children being killed, people like Uyinene Mrwetyana, Tshegofatso Pule, Kwasa and Karabo, the list is endless.

In 2019/2020 we experienced a wave of killing of women and children. The President stated that we are facing two pandemics at the same time, namely GBV and the Coronavirus. So, while we were losing family and friends due to Covid 19, we were also worried about the safety of women and children. Every day we are hearing of women who have been raped and brutally killed, children disappearing, and their bodies later found abandoned. We are losing many of our sisters, mothers, and children.

## WHAT CHANGES AND TRANSFORMATIONS AM I SEEING?

After the President announced GBV being a pandemic, we started seeing some changes and developments:

TELEVISION PROGRAMMES ARE TAKING NOTICE, CREATING ADVERTS WITH MALE CELEBRITIES RELAYING MESSAGES ABOUT ABUSE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

WE SEE MORE EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGNS AGAINST GBV. (\*REALMENDONTABUSE)



WE SAW THE LAUNCH OF UYINENE FOUNDATION - ALL IN SUPPORT OF WOMEN.



WE HEAR SONGS COMPOSED AGAINST THIS GBV PANDEMIC, SUCH AS MADODA SABELANI.

THE GOVERNMENT IS TAKING MORE NOTICE AND GIVING SUPPORT TO VICTIMS OF GBV.

WE HAVE POLICIES BEING IMPLEMENTED AGAINST GBV.

RADIO STATIONS ARE TAKING NOTICE.



WHAT CHANGES AND TRANSFORMATIONS WOULD I LIKE TO SEE?

THERE IS STILL A LOT MORE TO BE DONE LIKE SENTENCING ANYONE WHO VIOLATES ANOTHER DUE TO GENDER.

CHILDREN FROM AN EARLY AGE SHOULD BE TAUGHT ABOUT GBV AND HELP CARE CENTRES THEY CAN GO TO, IN CASE THEY BECOME VICTIMS OR KNOW OF VICTIMS OF GBV.

I WOULD LIKE TO SEE MORE AWARENESS PROGRAMMES ESPECIALLY IN THE RURAL AREAS WHERE PEOPLE'S VOICES ARE NOT HEARD OR DO NOT HAVE A PLATFORM.

In all this we can see that more work still needs to be done. Each person has a duty, every platform you have, should be used to make a change.

*I, Zethu, therefore pledge that in the platforms that I can access I will address these issues so as to raise more awareness and give support to victims of this pandemic, until we have less and eventually no cases of GBV!*

*- Zethu Jiyana, currently a teacher*



# ELETHU NTSETHE

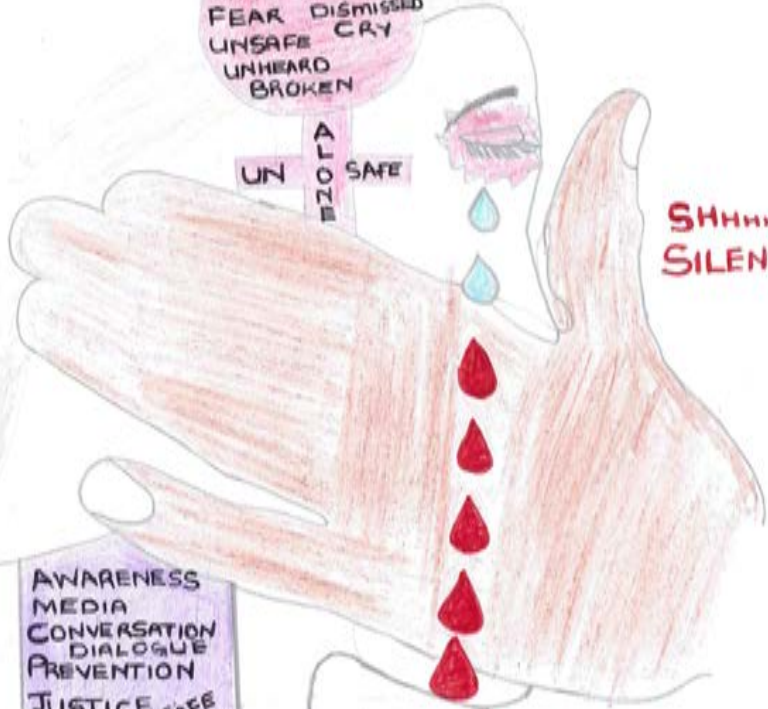
GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

"EMMA'S MENTAL CHECKLIST"  
 DATE RAPE  
 SEX EMPLOYMENT  
 HARASSMENT  
 STALKING  
 KICKING  
 HUMAN TRAFFICKING  
 BODY SHAME  
 MURDER  
 RAPE  
 HITTING  
 UNCONSCIOUS SEX  
 SEXUAL COERCION  
 BURNING  
 HAIR PULLING  
 CHOKING  
 INSULTING  
 THREATS



AM I NEXT?  
 AM I SAFE?  
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SHHHHHH  
 SILENCE...

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GRAVE NUMBER  
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DON'T  
 LOOK  
 AWAY...

BE A PART OF A GENERATION  
 THAT ENDS GENDER INEQUALITY

CLOUTIER



# BONGIWE MAOME

GIRLS LEADING CHANGE



## CHANGE & TRANSFORMATION

The core difference between an apathetic person and a decent human being, in my opinion, is their willingness and capacity to care for themselves and others. I have come to understand that a significant part of the suffering, injustice, and unhappiness that we see playing out in society is caused by a general unwillingness to acknowledge, account for, and learn from our mistakes. This is exacerbated by an individual and/or a collective unwillingness or incapacity to care enough about ourselves as well as our communities, to actively change the present state of affairs. Fortunately, although gradually and painstakingly, things are beginning to change for the better. And I believe that this shift in trajectory is a result of the selfless efforts of individuals, collectives, and organizations, such as the Networks for Change (N4C) who work tirelessly to shine the light on social injustice, particularly, on issues of gender inequality, injustice, and education.

Through working with the Networks for Change I learned that meaningful social change is the direct result of decisively and persistently flying in the face of complacency and challenging problematic conventions at the different levels in which they exist: the mind, the home, the community, and the general society. The N4C introduced me to an entirely different approach to social activism -



one that challenged me to look into myself first and identify, confront, unlearn, relearn and reimagine my own opinions, thoughts, behaviors, practices, and biases. This approach provided me with a much-needed foundation for me to be able to effectively and meaningfully engage with and understand the inputs, behaviors and experiences of others. Thus, creating a safe platform for the launch of earnest and purposeful dialogue as a way to collectively map out a new, more positive, social condition. Oh, but it was a time-intensive and psychologically demanding process; it is one which I wouldn't trade for all the gold in the world.

On the shoulders of the GLC & the N4C, I grew. Moreover, it contributed significantly to my transformation as an individual; the experience itself challenged me to be deeply dissatisfied with being complacent and merely hoping for Change. It inspired me to care. It encouraged me to embrace & assert my role as an active agent & pioneer of social transformation. It continues to influence my personal philosophy and relationships; it informs my teaching philosophy & pedagogy. The essence of it is that I am a better person, a better academic, a better teacher, a better mother, and a better citizen of the world because of all that we managed and continue to accomplish through this project. And for that, I am forever grateful to the Girls Leading Change and the Networks for Change. Society has a long way to go still but, for me and many others this project has switched on a light and so it is our social duty to keep it on and pass it on.





# ASISIPHO MNTONGA

GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

*Everything that is happening around us becomes a learning process.*

Being part of Girls Leading Change (GLC) has provided me with such a tremendous opportunity. I developed a sense of agency and ability to advocate for social change and gained self-confidence. We learnt from each other, developing a sisterhood amongst ourselves. Our university, Prof Naydene and Prof Lebo, played a major role in bringing us together and molding us to be the best of who we are. I started feeling like a young woman when I enrolled to be part of GLC and discovered that my voice is as important as any other voice. I also learnt that hard work and patience pays off and yields good results. Learning about gender violence has not been easy, but through team efforts we were able to work together to achieve great success. Life is like the soil, what you decide you want to put in is what you get out, every choice we make has its own consequence.

**WE ARE BORN INTO A TIME WHERE EVERYTHING THAT IS HAPPENING AROUND US BECOMES A LEARNING PROCESS.**

We all need support, either from family or friends. On my journey, I realized that we need each other to succeed. Just like soccer, you can't score a goal alone for you need the whole team to help you. Identity is built through our surroundings, our culture, and our ways of doing things. Courage comes from being tested and knowing you can fail or succeed, as long you don't give up. Integrity has been one of the tools that has kept me rejuvenated and able to stand firm in what I believe. It's time to live like there is no tomorrow and use every opportunity to grow and fulfil your purpose. The ultimate purpose is to live and shower the earth with our gifts and serve the divinity of our human nature. Everything happens for a reason.

My family has contributed a lot toward the person I am today. Some of their teachings helped me develop as an individual. My friends too played a major role in shaping the kind of person I am. The tough years of my life where everything was rocky, that was when I learnt that a friend in need is a friend indeed. Knowing who you are is part of self-discovery and it makes it easier to know where you are going. Knowledge is gained through self-discovery and then becomes power and light for your own benefit as well as other people.

My wish is that we as Africans, men and women, would learn to appreciate ourselves as we are and know that we are a gift to be given. I wish our parents could open lines of communication with their children and talk about issues without being afraid. Sometimes some people suffer because of ignorance and cruel cultural practices. I wish to tell young women that it's okay so dream big and that those dreams are valued.

I am who I am because everything I went through was all worth it in the end, because I am wiser and stronger than before. Reflection is part of self-discovery and an important tool to use in analyzing our life.

**THERE IS NO MANUAL THAT STATES HOW WE SHOULD LIVE OUR LIVES. BUT WE LEARN AS WE GO THROUGH LIFE EXPERIENCES.**

There is no magic and nothing is certain, as all that happens is by chance. It's time to let go of the past and hold onto good things so that the next generation will not be left worse off or feel wronged, but are instead able to learn and improve even more than us. They say 'the sky's the limit,' but I say it's possible not to be limited by anything...

I had also gone through the marches at university that entailed gender-based violence issues. In the picture where I am wearing all black, I am part of the campus march held at university and we were fighting against women abuse and also breaking the silence. We marched together and talked about these issues and also showed that we are not going to keep quiet any longer while we are seeing the injustice being done in front of our faces. The march was a success and it took place in 2017/18 during exam period near South campus (NMU). The group photos are my most memorable pictures because we are girls leading change and it shows we have come a long way together. The pictures were taken during 2016 and we were caught by great chance. It was our first time going abroad, flying overseas, and it was a lifetime epic event. We learnt so much about cultures and there were a lot of similarities between our culture in South Africa and their cultures in the USA. I learnt about gender studies and other educational programmes that were very insightful. I learnt about coexistence; that if we respect and tolerate each other's differences we can actually live in peace and harmony.

All that I explored in my life was preparing me to become the best version of myself and I am a teacher who is now open-minded towards life and the lives of learners. I am dedicated to and inspired by my learners (or students) and give them life lessons that are rooted in themselves and thus enable them to discover themselves and find their own voice, what they want to achieve, and who they truly are.

IN MY LESSONS, WHEN I TEACH I DO NOT FORGET LESSONS ABOUT HOPE BECAUSE WITHOUT IT WE ARE DOOMED. LOVE IS A CORE VALUE WE OUGHT TO FIND AND GRASP ITS MEANING WITHIN OURSELVES AND IN LIFE.

## WE ALL NEED EACH OTHER TO SURVIVE.

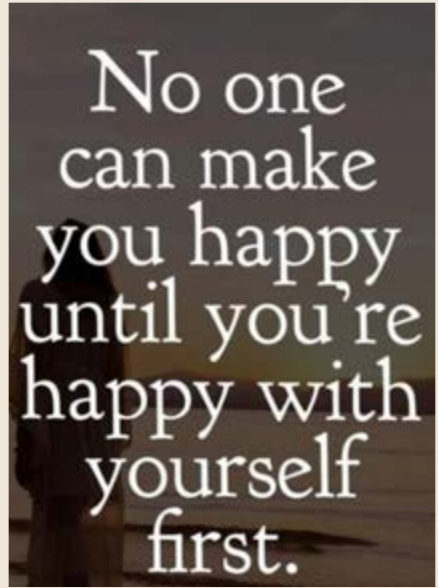
My three beautiful aunts and my mother in the middle with brown dress (isishweshwe), are standing near the kraal where the men are about to slaughter cows for the celebration. They represent that women are to be treated with respect and dignity because they are also part of the community and work hand in hand with men. As the saying goes 'the man is the head of the home, but the woman is the neck', helping the man stand firm and making joint decisions. Celebrations have a way of bringing families together.



MY COUSIN'S BROTHER'S TRADITIONAL WEDDING VIBES.



This picture represents the idea that we are all in the process of learning. The destinations are not clearly known or seen, but as you journey through life, your destiny finds you. Strength and courage come from within and you become more powerful and wise. So, know who you are and appreciate the gift of life with its challenges. The more difficult the path the greater the destiny.



Happiness is a state of mind and an attitude. We are not able to decide the circumstances we are born in, but we can decide how we choose to feel. CHOOSING HAPPINESS is one of the greatest choices because we all aspire to be happy. In Beyonce's music video, I WAS HERE, she is asked what her aspirations in life are, to which she answers that she aspires to be happy. At that time, I did not understand what she meant, but now I do. Happiness is a choice and a feeling that we all can aspire to!







This me and my friend Sandy. We have been close from varsity days and we also worked together in Girls Leading Change. We developed a friendship and sisterhood. This picture represents the value of my friends in life, as I am not able to share pictures of each and everyone. This picture reminds me of how far I come from with her help, I am filled with emotion when I think of how Sandy helped me to find my way through life and I am grateful for what she and her family have done for me. A friend in need is a friend indeed. Earth angels are for real (people with good hearts are still out there).



I marched for fighting against women abuse at the Nelson Mandela University. On South Campus, we students came together and with one voice and said NO TO VIOLENCE, also rape. We all wore black to represents sadness and mourning for those who have been broken by violence. We were saying 'Away with violence, We break the silence!'





It was a dream come true working with girls in the Networks4Change project and to establish good relations with each other. We also had a great opportunity of going abroad, to St Cloud State University, in the USA. Going abroad for a young rural girl like me was dream come true and I was inspired to dream even bigger and achieve great things to come. This group photo means so much and it shows how far we have come, we have come a long way together.





# LELETHU MLOBELI

GIRLS LEADING CHANGE



**BE INFORMED. AND INFORM.**

In my years of experience as a teacher, I have learnt to inform myself and be aware of learner differences in sexual orientation or gender and give them equal respect and treatment. I also try to teach that to learners in the hidden curriculum. I only get to teach about this during a certain topic in my grade 10 Life Orientation class. So, I also try to teach it as the hidden curriculum to other learners in my classes by my reaction or comments when this topic or anything related to it comes under the spotlight. I don't only do this at school, but in any space.

*- Lelethu Mlobeli, currently a teacher*



**ZIKHONA TSHIWULA**

**GIRLS LEADING CHANGE**

Being a GLC member has inspired me, Zikhona, in so many ways but what I learnt most from the project is being confident and being able to speak out. That has been a learning point for me as I really could not express myself. I will forever be grateful for learning that because now I am a young woman who is married, I have 3 beautiful girls and a loving husband who is supporting me in my life's journey. It was not easy, but I conquered it all.

The project has been an eye opener for me because I had experienced GBV. It really was not easy to speak about what I had been through, but this project has taught me self-agency. I am now part of a group of young women, we are the AMAQOBOKAZANA (Mothers of the Nation). It is a group of young teachers from my school and other schools as well as my friends.



ZIKHONA TSHIWULA (IN FRONT) WITH OTHER YOUNG WOMEN TEACHERS OF THE AMAQOBOKAZANA.

We formed the group to talk about things that are affecting us as young women, and we try to lift one another up and share ideas. There are a lot of things we do but most of all we try to create a space where we feel free to talk about anything. Power to women growth and uplifting other women to be strong!

**“Think like a Queen. A Queen is not afraid to fail. Failure is another stepping stone to greatness.”**

*- Oprah Winfrey*



# MELISSA LUFELE

GIRLS LEADING CHANGE



## I AM S.H.E.

Tell them I said Thank you but no Thankx.

I will not humble myself because I am still not humble. Tell them I am not coming and quite frankly I do not care how this response makes them feel because they too refused to care when I needed care.

I want to remind you about who I am. I am the girl they rejected because I wasn't light skinned enough to be smart, I am the girl that told on the pastor when the congregation said it can't be! "He is a man of God". I am the stupid girl that was left unemployed because I refused to earn my strides and climb up the corporate ladder through labouring on my back and knees. I'm the one that refused to be submissive when it meant I must be abused, battered and cheated on by a man to save the "Mrs Title".

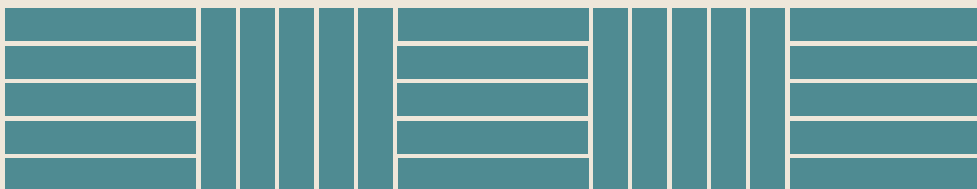
They called me a weakling. Apparently I wasn't even marriage material anyway; they said I wouldn't make it and for a split second I believed it and now they want to celebrate me? What for? Do they not know me? Few layers of foundation, a shade or two of eye shadow and they have forgotten me? Well I haven't forgotten them, I can never forget them.



Tell them to keep their praise I don't need it. I am refusing to place myself in that space of weakness because now I'm Empowered, I know my worth and I definitely know who I am. I am a woman unchained and liberated, without me there is no life because I breed creation into existence and nurture it to excellence, everything I touch turns into gold because I am a mastermind, an architect that directs every challenge or obstacle to take the shape and form I desire. How dare they reduce me to a nameless ornament?

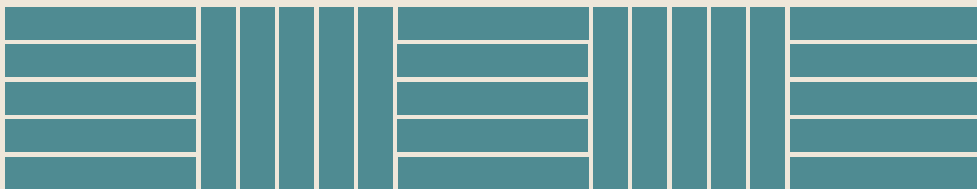
I'm sorry if my fragrance bruises their ego, in fact I withdraw that statement, I am NOT sorry because it's actually cute that my cough rattles their cage. How dare they? How dare you underestimate the power of a queen!

You want to know my response? Tell them their applause or acknowledgement won't make me shine any brighter than I already am because I am big, black, beautiful and too bright to go unnoticed.



I AM S.H.E., HONEY.

STRONG, HEROIC AND EMPOWERED.



- By Melissa Lufele





# SIYAMTHANDA NOGAYA

YOUNG GIRLS LEADING CHANGE



As I step into the world, I ought to take pride in my journey with the best description of fulfilled. I hope my dreams and toil will lead me to greener pastures, I hope my God hears my heart when my mouth can say no more. Most importantly, as I take the mask off of my true identity, I hope to “mask off” from the Corona virus as well. I see a bright future within the mist.



# ZIMBISO OKAFOR

NETWORKS FOR CHANGE RESEARCH ASSISTANT  
NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY



## BEING A RESEARCH ASSISTANT IN THE N4C PROJECT

Being a research assistant in the Networks4Change project and working with Naydene has been a very memorable and enriching experience. I got to visit one or two places in South Africa, something I never thought would be possible in this line of work. I got to meet different people who shared their insightful experiences which I appreciate. The Networks4Change project was an eye opener to the struggles girls and women go through. I had no idea the extent of the problems we face. I love that this project has given a space for young women to air the struggles they see and experience, and I am very grateful to be a part of it. I also learnt more about myself in the position, as I discovered that I can actually design a poster and had computer skills. Who knew! I had no idea that I had problem-solving skills until I started working as a research assistant, to make a plan when an odd situation arises and know that “I can.” I am forever grateful for this opportunity and will carry the skills I have attained further as I pursue my PhD studies.

Thank you for this opportunity,

*With love, Vimbisio.*



# TAKATSO MOHLOMI

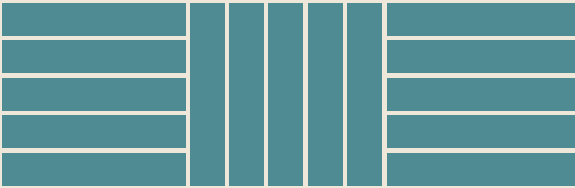
GIRLS LEADING CHANGE



## REMINISCING TOWARDS MATURITY

“WHEN YOU KNOW BETTER YOU DO BETTER.”

- Maya Angelo



Participating in GLC and Networks for Change enlightened my perspective to do better.

An incredible initiative. Sadly, may only directly impact a certain number of people in this world of so many different characters. After all these amazing workshops we still go back to converge with these characters.

I take with gratitude what I learnt in relation to Gender Based Violence (GBV) and how one can look after oneself.

However, they say experience is the best teacher. Sometimes adversity helps you realise how resilient you can be. It so hurts when you realise right after the storm that that's the awareness I've been hearing about all this time.

Only if the society we live in got the same workshops we attended, the world would be a much better place to live in. That's where we come in as teachers. The little bit we can do with GBV will go a long way.

I listened to and took to heart all what was shared, yet I still succumbed to GBV. I won't pretend all has been smooth sailing, No! I've had my ups and downs even though I had been made aware. This I call growth and maturity.

Awareness alone does not guarantee your safety. It's not a ticket to a GBV free life. However, I believe it's our unconscious decisions we take when faced with adversity that determine our safety.

The journey continues. Soul searching, finding one's strength and voice. Empowering myself with my studies. Striving for a change of scenario and a fresh start AGAIN.



# HANNAH BATTISTE

BREAK THE SILENCE: BE THE CHANGE



My entire life, I never imagined that I would be good enough to make it this far. I worked as hard as I can, just to get told my work was never going to be good enough or positive enough. I wrote down many stories and poetry that I hid from everyone, because I was too afraid to fail.

My biggest inspiration in life was to share my story through my poetry, and to inspire those who can relate. I've worked for years trying to get it right, trying to take my time and be patient. I let a lot of things take over my life in the process, but I am grateful that I went through what I went through, because it has made me who I am today. It has gotten me this far and for the first time in my life, I am ready for whatever the future has in store for me. My new journey is only beginning.

## JOURNEY

In the beginning there are roads  
Then you don't know which way to go  
You stop and wonder  
Then you hear the thunder

You're standing in between crossroads  
Unsure of which path to take  
Breathing in the summer air  
Wind blowing in your unwashed hair  
Wearing the same dress from decades ago

Your journey grows stronger but you get weaker  
The night sky falls  
You are freezing and wheezing  
The autumn leaves are coming  
Then you start stumbling with nowhere else to go

The whistle in the wind blows  
Your eyes and heart follow the noise  
The stop lights catch your attention  
You wonder what the world would be like  
If you only took a different path  
You wish to turn back time  
Deep breathe in and you open your eyes  
In the beginning there are bumpy roads  
You know which ways to go

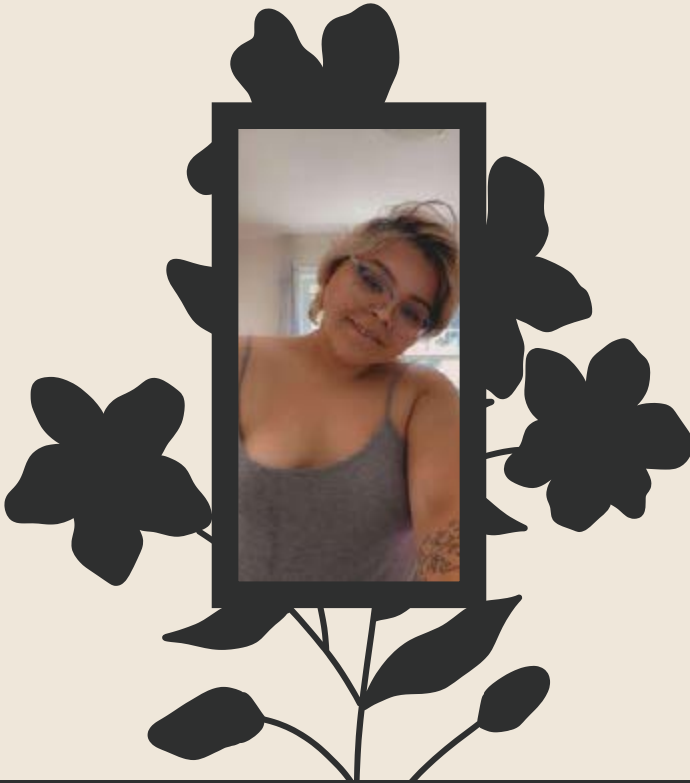
You never stop but always wonder  
Then you hear the familiar thunder  
But just to leave it all behind  
And let it go



# NICHELE GOOGOO

BREAK THE SILENCE: BE THE CHANGE





## NETWORKS FOR CHANGE

This group, program, project.  
Taught me a lot about myself and  
what important values to hold.

It gave me the opportunity to  
spread my wings and try new  
activities and grow with a bunch of  
beautiful young women.

It also helped show me my passion  
for crafting things, painting,  
knitting, crocheting, beading, that  
list can go on.

I've gained so many great memories  
and friends that no matter what  
happens we will all try to help each  
other, no matter what.

It also helped me realize it's okay to  
trust again and to love. This group  
helped me heal and be more alive  
than who I was before.

My family is a big part of the  
healing journey.

*Welalin*

# GET ART

GIRLS EXPRESSING THEMSELVES THROUGH ART

RANKLIN INLET, NUNAVUT, CANADA







GET ART GROUP PICTURE



NORTHERN LIGHTS PAINTING WORKSHOP



MAKING INUIT JEWELRY



THE GIRLS WEAR THEIR OWN CREATIONS



# RUTH UNDERWOOD

SISTERS RISING



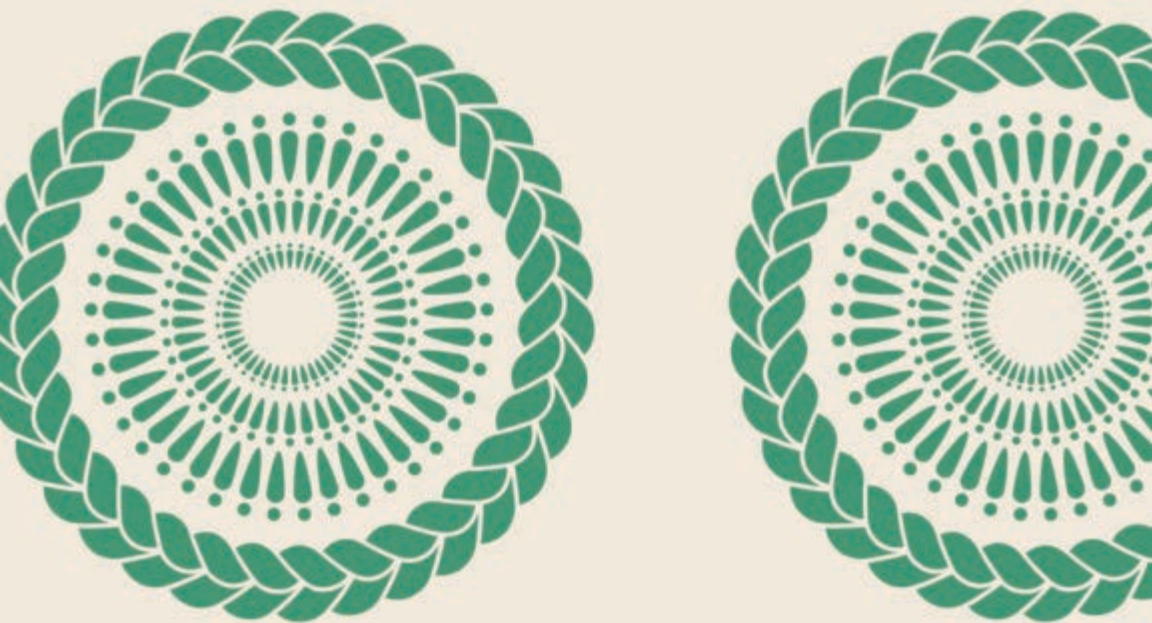
I was thinking of all the things that we carry from the history of our people. All the battles that were left on our shoulders. How we as First Nations today are fighting so hard to not be put down any more than we have been. When we can put aside our struggles and move forward. Not to move on and forget but, to discover more of who we are.





SECTION TWO

# REFLECTING ON





# PERSONAL SPACES



# NANDI KAUR-DEE MUCINA

## SISTERS RISING

### I CAN IMAGINE

I can imagine being taken away from my family  
I can imagine going far away and not knowing how long I will be gone  
or where I will be going  
Then I can imagine being treated in a cruel way all because I am Indigenous  
I can imagine having no voice  
I can imagine thinking “this is my land not white land”  
I can imagine thinking the world is changing and you need to change with it.  
I can imagine thinking Why is abuse your answer to everything  
I can imagine being stripped away from my culture  
I can imagine talking to my friends in our new,  
weird language saying “we’re just innocent kids”  
I can imagine being buried all together without the love from our families  
I can imagine hoping someone would find me and take me home to my family



## NOW

Now imagine driving to school and hearing the news on the radio  
and then hearing it in class

BUT not the whole story because there is too much guilt  
and thinking they are protecting us kids

Making us think Canada is such a nice place and that this is not in the past  
and that we don't need to worry about it

But we do need to worry about it

Because there has always been racism

and discrimination against Indigenous people and people of colour

Canada is not innocent – they are guilty  
and white settlers need to accept that.

BIPOC kids matter

BIPOC families matter

BIPOC communities matter

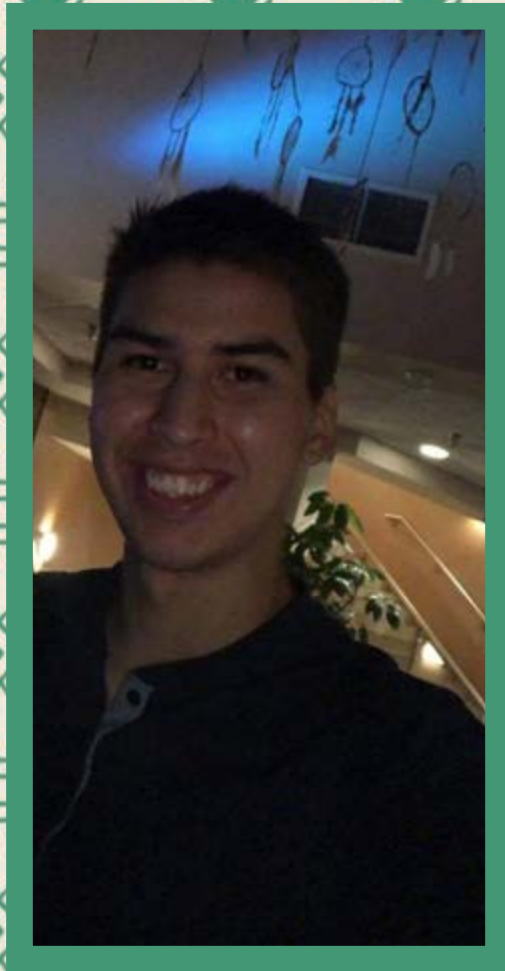
We want to know their names

We want to know their nations

We want to bring them home

# ANGELO BERNARD

BREAK THE SILENCE: BE THE CHANGE





## NATIVE MIND

A native mind sees so much misery,  
It reflects off of the bad history.  
A native mind knows of very bad places,  
Like Residential School that did all the erasing.  
A native mind knew a person of wisdom,  
A woman who faced a whole lot of racism.  
She went through much, and regained her talk.  
She wrote poetry of the mountains she walked.  
A native mind wants to end this poem –  
saying she was loved, and beautifully she wrote.

Dedicated to Rita Joe, an inspiring great grandmother.

*- Angelo Bernard*



# ASISIPHO MNTONGA

GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

## CORONA VIRUS ALSO KNOWN AS COVID 19

The corona virus affects all of us in different ways.  
It does not discriminate; it does not care whether  
you are young or old, Black or white,  
It can kill everyone, anyone, whoever you are.  
The pandemic that has become a global issue,  
This killer disease, is a pandemic of a world-wide scale.  
Society is left unsettled, disempowered and in disarray.

Allow me to echo these words and tell you my own story or should I  
Borrow your ears and eyes for a moment so that I can speak...  
Hoyina! Hoyina! Hoyina!!!

I have seen people dying - daily news reporting new cases, increasing  
numbers of infected people, increasing number of deaths.

I have seen the economy slowing down, businesses shutting down,  
People losing jobs... and losing their loved ones. A period of depression is  
hovering over us and we were losing hope and our dreams for a better future  
were shattered.

I have seen the faith of people shaken, tested to the extent of questioning  
their level of faith and understanding through their religion, cultural  
practices:

“Is it still worth believing even if I am alone?”

“Is it still worth believing what I believe, even though I am not allowed to go  
to church, or practise my culture and traditions the best way I know?”

I have seen families bury each other, I have seen children becoming orphans  
and I have seen people dying alone... with no funeral for them.

I have seen the government officials trying their best, encouraging people to  
stay safe and protect themselves in the Covid 19 pandemic.

But I have also seen the government failing its people in terms of exploiting  
the vulnerable individuals by not giving or rendering the services to them and  
breaking the laws that were meant to protect us.

I have seen foreigners struggling to satisfy their basic needs and how they  
make plans. They come with ideas just to make ends meet,

One such idea made me even more sad,

They had to queue for someone and get paid.

I have seen people suffering for various reasons and how violence has slowly  
Creeped in and covered all in the name of culture, religion and respect.

Days of lockdown have been the hardest

Because for people depending on their families or work,

It meant that they were no longer able to provide for their loved ones.

This feels like a terrible dream, a horrifying dream...  
The world is quiet, and gloomy,  
It's like no one ever existed...  
Depression and anxiety kicks in.

Everything and everyone is mourning,  
Even the sky no longer shines bright,  
The birds no longer sing lovely songs.  
There is silence ... there is quietness,  
but behind closed doors a lot of things are happening.  
Technology, the Internet have become the chord to unite us all  
To some people it has become a place of dreams, work and fun  
It has made us come together, more than ever.  
It has helped us to harbor humanity (Ubuntu) within and between us.  
A year of quarantine is indeed a year of personal reflections  
Our existence is through the experiences we have and how we try to live and  
love within the space and time we are given.

# KELLIE KAKUM

YOUNG INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S UTOPIA  
SECOND GENERATION





# MELISSA LUFELE

GIRLS LEADING CHANGE



## REFLECTING ON MY EXPERIENCE OF NETWORKS4CHANGE

Where does one begin to speak about such a legacy? A legacy that managed to rewrite history and give hope to a generation of young women who will live on to tell the tale. Writing this piece just reminded me of the first story I wrote for the Girls Leading Change project, a story I titled “The Smile of a Broken Child”. Thinking about it today I realise I needed Girls Leading Change more than it needed me, I needed an outlet to cry and heal wounds I thought had long healed, to confront the demons head on. I needed a space to discover my true self - an identity I had not yet crafted for myself. I needed to grow into my fullest potential, to live, breathe, laugh, share, and be empowered. Networks4Change did that for me.

The project opened doors for me to discover a young woman in me that was hidden and just waiting to be unleashed. I learnt the power of words, a power that liberates, unshackles and releases my restless soul. This project was bigger than me and the girls, it is part of a nationwide movement to curb a pandemic that unfortunately cannot be fought with gloves and masks. A pandemic that requires a mentality shift in society, a destabilisation of the current status quo, one that forces us to ask the tough questions that trigger resistance and rejection.

This fight against gender-based violence forced us to leave our comfort spaces and become loud voices that disturb peace, challenge normalcy and aspire to influence this new generation who will inspire a new and just society for women and children across the board. It was a challenging experience that demanded us to first identify GBV in our lives. The process required us to be informed in order to be informative, it demanded that we face reality outside our sheltered lives. We had to listen to the muted voices in our corridors, voices that were silently crying against sexual harassment in our supposedly safe spaces, come face to face with policy makers and highlight the problems with their respective solutions. We were asked tough questions that were hard to answer at times because unlike the rest, we were merely rural girls in big institutions that needed us to act so that other girls like us can be free of any form of GBV.

Girls Leading Change and Networks4Change taught us not only to be good storytellers and writers but change makers in our communities. I learnt that change does not require me to speak to millions of crowds for a thunderous applause; change is achieved one person at a time. It's me teaching young girls and boys in the mentorship club what GBV is, it's me listening to a learner struggling with sexual identity and offering the information I have learnt along the way without judgment. It's me refusing to be part of social circles that find life in stereotypical scenarios, change is me sharing information with colleagues to better prepare them for a new generation of young people who are mentally woke. I am an agent of change because I do not tolerate any form of gender-based violence in my life and I challenge any norm that teaches me otherwise, be it patriarchy or culture. I refuse to be enslaved simply because I am a woman.


Plans for my future include me continuing the work I have started in grooming young people in the KING&QUEEN ME Mentorship Club. I will continue to influence the learners who enter my classroom each day to be better than yesterday, to aim higher and work harder. I want to continue working on my poetic pieces and hopefully publish them in a book titled "Conversations from the Heart: Sister to Sister". From here I will continue to rise because I have received the tools, the baton is in my hands and it is my responsibility to pass it to generations that come after me. For this last publication, I have decided to dedicate this piece of writing to women and girls who have had it hard, ladies that have been hurt, rejected and ridiculed by people and systems meant to protect them. To my fellow sisters I say "we have been rendered powerless for far too long, but now that we have discovered our own power, no one will ever enslave us again because we are **Strong, Heroic and Empowered**". My piece is titled "***I am S.H.E***".



# NOZINGA NYAMAKAZI

YOUNG GIRLS LEADING CHANGE





Everything has changed ever since the Corona virus came and I am not the same person I was before ... I can see I've changed. At home things are not the same, my parents are not working. I so wish things can get better so that they can go back to work. I don't think things will be normal again because there are more deaths, and the virus is causing more deaths. My only wish now is to get into a school (college or university) so that I can change my home situation, because we are living on a Sassa grant (provided by the government). Things have changed, in our country women are being killed every day and homeless kids are the victims of rape. I wish I can change that.

# AMAHLE DLALA

YOUNG GIRLS LEADING CHANGE



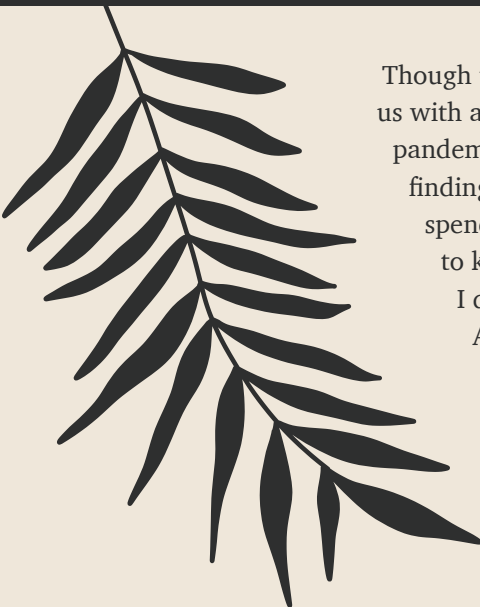
Greetings to everyone. My name is Amahle Dlala. I come from a very small town, Paterson, in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.

I will start by telling or sharing some of the changes I'm experiencing now. It is the new normal, where I have to follow the protocol of the new normal. The new normal really changed a lot of things in my life, such as losing relatives, having one person to provide for the whole family...This has affected us negatively as a family especially us children. Some people lost their jobs. We had to spend the last Christmas in pain and hurt and yet, we had to pretend to be fine.

## HOW AM I IMAGINING THE FUTURE?

Our country will never be the same again ...the country's economy will never go back to the way it was.

## HOW AM I IMAGINING MY LIFE?



Though the Covid-19 took so many souls, it left us with a task of knowing ourselves. During this pandemic I had time to sit with my loved ones, finding out wonderful things about them, spending more time with them. It helped me to know more about myself - it turns out I didn't know me, I didn't know who is Amahle. So I did self-introspection... it was the best thing I ever did. Especially after high school, it is every important to know what you want and who you are.

# NICOLETTA DANIELS

## YOUNG INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S UTOPIA

### HOW COVID-19 AFFECTED ME



**C**ovid-19 has affected me in many ways by death, online school, highs and lows, and birthdays.

During Covid-19, we were all stuck at home and because of that I wasn't able to see my grandparents, family, and friends. And when online school started, nobody was allowed leave. Then my birthday came around and it wasn't getting any better so my whole family came by my house and sang. Now the part I don't like to talk about: death.

I have lost a lot of people this year but the person I loved the most, my papa Noel, he was the most important person to me. And he was always happy and he loved everyone. He was never mad or sad; and then my uncle Jon Jon. He was so funny and happy all the time. Then my uncle Wheese, he never had a bad bone in his body, he was funny and loving. Now my high and my lows; one of my highs was my granny and auntie Mona recovery from Covid and my second nephew was born (Brixton James Miller). And my lows were losing three people this year and it was hard, but I know they are in a way better place now and happily watching over me and my family.





# ANDRAYA DANIELS

## YOUNG INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S UTOPIA

### 2020: A TEENAGE CREE CANADIAN POINT OF VIEW



The year started like every other year  
Although there were bush fires, Royal  
family drama, and the passing of Kobe  
Bryant  
I thought “wow, what a bad start”  
But everything went on as normal, still  
in school,  
I hate school  
But at the end of the day it was a normal  
year  
And then March 13, 2020 hit  
I heard of “corona” but I knew it  
wouldn’t hit Canada  
And when it did they sent us out of  
school, woo hoo! a two week break  
Unfortunately, we didn’t know that that  
wasn’t the case  
Eventually, the email came, we were  
done school for the year and we mercy  
passed

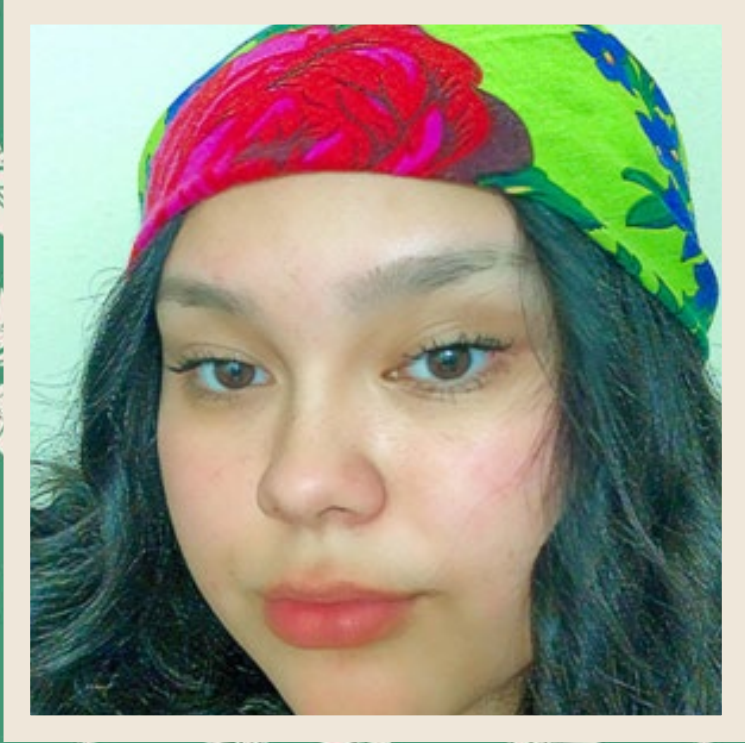
TO 2020... THANK YOU FOR THE GROWTH  
TO 2020... THANK YOU FOR THE EXPERIENCE  
TO 2020... THANK YOU FOR THE GOOD AND BAD TIMES  
TO 2020... YOU SUCKED

Lockdown?  
I hated it at first  
Sleeping, painting, and eating everyday  
It wasn't enough for me  
One day I woke up and started discovering  
March to June became the best months of my life  
Self care, writing, and walking  
I was finally happy  
I adapted to it, I woke up and lived differently everyday  
Watched and fought for social justice issues like BLM  
I suffered loss and became a person I didn't like  
I started in school and failed a lot  
Then got a job  
I completely lost myself to the pandemic

TO 2020... THANK YOU FOR THE GROWTH  
TO 2020... THANK YOU FOR THE EXPERIENCE  
TO 2020... THANK YOU FOR THE GOOD AND BAD TIMES  
TO 2020... YOU SUCKED

2020 was crazy but I cannot be mad  
I was happy at a time and proud of myself  
I did everything I could and even wore a damn mask everyday  
2020 was something you only experience once and I'm okay with that

TO 2020 ... I LOVED YOU BUT HAPPY IT'S 2021



# GABBY DANIELS

YOUNG INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S UTOPIA

## HOW COVID AFFECTED ME

Covid-19 affected me, a young nehiyawak girl in so many ways. During this pandemic I've lost and gained, I've hit low and I've climbed back to the top, and I've learned to be more grateful for the life I've been given.

I was able to get my driver's license right before everything was shut down, and then I had my first car crash. That brought my self-esteem down a lot because I thought I was the worst driver in history; eventually I got over it though.

In April was when I first started online school and doing zoom classes, I really enjoyed getting to be in the comfort of my own home while still in class. At this point I thought my grade 11 schoolwork was easy and what I wanted. It was getting tougher to have motivation and continue with my classes. I was lucky to have the opportunity to take my final grade and finish grade 11, that helped me a bunch and made me happy.

I realized I missed my cousins, aunties, uncles, and grandparents a lot. All my life I've been so close to both sides of my family, we would have so many birthday parties and dinners all together on my father's side; and on my mom's, we would drive down to Nevada to visit them a couple times a year. Not being able to see them made me quite lonely. I became closer with my 2 sisters and little brother, we did what siblings always do; argue, fight, forgive.

In may, I went to a BLM rally and stood with so many loving people who thought George Floyd deserved better. Seeing all this racial injustice happen made me feel like people of colour would never get any justice. In my head, I wondered why there was so much hate in this world.

My summer was filled with being outside lots with the 2 little girls I babysat, hanging with my siblings, and starting to somewhat see family again. My life was going great and I was happy.

Then September came and it was time to decide if I wanted to go back to school, or take online grade 12 classes. I took the online option, which was one of the worst mistakes I've ever made. I had no motivation at all to do my classes, I started to fall behind. It went on like this for about 2 months. My life was hectic and draining, and then tragedy struck my family.

My grandparents, auntie, and 2 cousins caught covid. With me being a family person I was so scared and worried for my kin, I didn't want anyone to have this sickness, and here my family had it. They recovered but my Papa was hospitalized from other health problems. Our Papa meant so much to us and not being able to call him or talk to him really took a toll on our family.

On December 18th around 7pm we learned our papa wouldn't make it through the night. My family was a mess, we all stood outside the hospital seeing as we couldn't all be in the room with him. We were allowed 2 at a time in the room, and I'm happy I could see him

one last time. I thanked him for everything he did for my parents, for my siblings, and myself. I was lucky to have him in my life, seeing him suffer that night made me feel even more sad than I ever was. I saw my uncles cry for the first time, my dad, and my grandma.

We lost him in the early morning of December 19th. It took my family a lot of time to heal and mourn, we never thought we would have to say goodbye to such an amazing person.

It's been 2 months since he's left to the spirit world to be with our other family. We've been there for our Granny so much because she doesn't want to be alone.

About 2ish weeks ago we received a call saying my mom's brother was on life support after a complication in surgery, this struck us all so fast we couldn't even react, he died a couple hours later after that call.

My mom was hurting and so were me and my siblings and dad. My uncle was a bright soul who always lit up a room. Since

he lived in the states we couldn't go down, my own mother couldn't even mourn for her brother. It hurt so bad to know we couldn't be down with our family, that we couldn't see him one last time.

A week later my mom's oldest brother suddenly passed. I have never seen my mom so heartbroken. At this point we had to go down and mourn with my mom's side. We drove to Nevada and stayed for about a week and a half. We're on our way back to Canada as I type this.

My Papa and uncles are now at rest, and so is my family. From now on I plan to be grateful for every day I am gifted. As I finish typing this I have a couple last words. Hug and check up on the important people in your life, live every day to the fullest, take some time for yourself, stand for what you believe in, and stay safe.



Thank you so much for reading my creative writing.

- Gabby Daniels



# SOCIAL ILLS FIGHTERS

## EMANGWENI LOSKOP, KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

The Social Ills Fighters are a group of girls and young women based in the deeply rural Loskop, KwaZulu-Natal Province. They are committed to creating change in their community and use drama, participatory community maps, drawing, cellphlms, and digital stories to explore the presence of sexual violence in their lives.

They use art to show how violent some cultural practices and traditional gender norms can be for girls and young women, including forced and early marriage. Their efforts created dialogue with the police force, schools and traditional leadership, to create real change in their community.

The ‘ukuthwala’ tradition of forced marriage by capture, was prevalent in Loskop and accepted as a traditional cultural practice by traditional authorities. Ukuthwala is a form of abduction that involves kidnapping a girl or a young woman with the intention of compelling the girl or young woman’s family to endorse marriage negotiations. Girls as young as 10 often are victims to this practice.

Through determined advocacy, demand for policy change and partnerships with local organisations, the work of the SIFs has led to the commitment of the eMangweni Traditional Authority to end the practice of forced and early marriage.

In the first months of 2020, just weeks before the national lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the leaders of the eMangweni Traditional Authority approved a protocol which brings the customary practice of Ukuthwala in the region firmly in line with statutory law. The Reporting and Response Protocol on early and forced marriage in eMangweni establishes a system for the reporting of and response to practices associated to early and forced marriage.





COLLAGE CREATED BY MEMBERS OF THE SIFS TO ADDRESS FORCED AND EARLY MARRIAGE. VOWS FOR COWS REFERS TO HOW POVERTY REPRESENT A GREATER RISK FOR GBV. FAMILIES WOULD APPROVE MARRIAGES IN EXCHANGE OF THE DOWRY OR LOBOLO. IN THE WORDS OF THE GIRLS: LOBOLO HAS AN IMPACT ON EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE (EFM) "DUE TO PARENTS WANTING COWS"



YOUTH USE STORYTELLING METHODS, INCLUDING PHOTOVOICE.



LOCAL MARCHES RAISE AWARENESS OF THE IMPACTS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.



COMMUNITY DIALOGUE IN EMANAWENI (LOSKOP).



THE SOCIAL ILLS FIGHTERS WEARING THEIR T-SHIRTS AND WORKING ON A LEADERSHIP EXERCISE.



**MELISSA LUFELE**

GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

Marking the end of the Networks for Change and Girls Leading Change project has been extremely hard for me because it felt like removing a part of me from me. My transformation has to be my growth since joining the project in 2013. I have grown so much emotionally, psychologically and intellectually. I'm more socially aware of things that I would not normally pay attention to. I'm involved, I'm bothered and I take action. If there is one take away from the project for me it's to be the change I want to see. I have shared so much of myself and my personal journey through various publications produced by the project and I am so grateful for each opportunity I had to inspire and be inspired by my fellow sisters. I'm going to miss the network, the relationships developed, my support structure for the past 8 years but I am surely going to continue with

the work. In my little corner I will touch lives, just like my life was touched and changed forever. I have decided to write you all a short story for this last publication and I titled it "***My Wolf in Sheep's Clothing***". It explores the themes of gender-based violence in religious spaces, misogyny, patriarchy, relationships, self love, strength and transformation. It is inspired by the stories of different courageous women I've met along the journey, women who have seen it all, experienced it all and rose to victory. All those powerful stories of pain, hope and transformation gave life to the story of Asakhe Malanga/ Khanyisa Jack. May you be inspired by her as you continue to learn and discover your own journey as a liberated woman.

***I am Philiswa Melissa Lufele. Remember my name because this is only the beginning for me.***

# L4YWS

## LEADERS FOR YOUNG WOMEN'S SUCCESS

### KHETANI, KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

Through the creation of visual artefacts, Leaders for Young Women's Success show how poverty, gender norms and hegemonic masculinity make girls and young women vulnerable to gender-based violence.

L4YWS' creative work reveals the challenging consequences of violence in their community, which includes youth pregnancy, the spread of HIV and AIDS, and the loss of life by murder as well as suicide. Importantly, the artwork of L4YWS also shows great hope for change which they advocate for through collective community action.



L4YWS BESIDE THEIR POLICY POSTERS

Breeding Machines

Inequality

Dependence

**NO RELIEF FROM THE PAIN**

What not to wear

Punching BAGS

Rules

Power

House Keeping

CHORES

VISUAL ARTIFACT

With the creation of visual artifacts L4YWS show how gender norms, poverty, hegemonic masculinity, and substance abuse make girls and young women vulnerable to GBV.



### AWARENESS MARCH

The L4YWS led an awareness march and community dialogue focusing on violence against girls and women in Khethani on International Women's Day 2017. 250 people joined the march and dialogue, including girls of the *Social Ills Fighters* from a neighbouring village. The posters they used in the march contained slogans as "Stop the War on Women's Bodies"; "No Means No"; "Break the Silence"; and "Rape Culture is Not Our Culture".



### COMMUNITY DIALOGUE





# ELETHU NTSETHE

## GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

### ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

The noise pollution is increasing daily,  
It is increased by the cries,  
Cries of the innocent women;  
That are violated by men-  
With their lies.....  
With their beats and harshness

Every day is filled with fear,  
Fear that another girl's future will be doomed  
By the one she trusts and honour,  
By the one she calls a father, a brother.....  
But why.....?  
Why should women suffer this much?

*Ingaba kukuphela kobuntu kusini na?* (is it the end of humanity?)

*Ingaba kukuphela kwethemba yhini na?* (is it the end of hope?)

*Izizalwane ziyabulalana,* (relatives kill each other)

*Yhini na ubudoda madoda?* (what is manhood?)

*Kukuxhaphaza abasethyini kusini na?* (is it to abuse women?)

*Luphi uthando?* (where is love?)  
*Luphi uxolo?* (where is peace?)  
*Iphi imbeko?* (where are our manners?)  
*Iphi intlonipho?* (where is the respect?)  
*Buphi Ubuntu?* (where is humanity?)  
*Konakala phi na mzi wakowethu?* (where did we go wrong?)

There used to be peace,  
Where everyone respected each other.  
But now we are living with the preys-  
That are preying at women.  
Ready to take away their peace,  
  
Ready to take away their confidence,  
Ready to discomfort them.  
But why?  
Is it because they are women?  
Is it because they cannot fight back?  
Is it because they are more responsible than men?  
If so, men have jealousy towards women!

A lot has happened,  
And nothing has been done.  
To stop a lot that is happening.  
It is time for change.  
It is an introduction of the new era.  
The women era, the most peaceful to be.

It is time for “*kwanele, ndonele*”

Enough is enough.

It is time for “zero tolerance”

Of any kind of violence.

***Kwanele.*** Enough is enough.

***Amandla!*** Women of wisdom!

Forward with the struggle for peace.

Forward with the struggle for equality.

Forward with the struggle for empowering women.

***Kwanele!*** Enough is enough. My no is final.

Respect it. Live with it. Have peace of life.



The background of the page is a repeating pattern of yellow geometric designs on a light beige background. Each design consists of a central sunburst or fan-like shape with radiating lines and dots, enclosed within a braided or woven border. The patterns are arranged in a grid-like fashion, with some designs partially cut off by the edges of the page.

SECTION THREE

# CONNECTION



# SISTERS RISING

LƏK<sup>w</sup>ƏŋƏN AND WSÁNEĆ HOMELANDS  
COLONIALLY KNOWN AS BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA



**We** raise our hands to our ancestors and all our relations, to those who have survived and to those who were stolen, and to all of those who grieve, resist, and walk in dignity through pain and resurgence.

Our work “is about restoring our connection to all our relations, lifting up the love we share for our kinship to live lives free from this violence.”



Our amazing team, which comes from a diversity of nations, was committed to “working in a good way” by following appropriate protocols with Elders, youth and communities, and ensuring consent and ownership of artwork and stories shared. We were committed to upholding our values and ethics of respecting, honouring, and asking for the consent of our participants throughout the whole process. Working with hundreds of participants across BC, our work was focused on upholding the dignity, resurgence, blanketing, and honouring of Indigenous people. Our purpose was to (re)center Indigenous teachings and ways of being with regards to gender and sexuality specific to the communities we come from and work within.



*“Watching the confidence of the youngest members of our workshops increase with each passing day – including the power of raising our voices proudly in song and community – was an honour to witness and participate in. This event solidified my already existing knowledge that we are experts on our own lives and experiences, and are crucial knowledge-holders and change-makers. It reminded me that we are always more strong and powerful when we are together.”*

*- Chantal Adams, Haida Nation*



The “Fearless Sisters Rising” Mural is permanently exhibited at the University of X, which occupies Lekwungen and W̱SÁNEĆ homelands. The large mural was created in collaboration with youth participants from Sisters Rising, the Innovative Young Indigenous Leaders Forum (IYILS), and the Fearless Collective, with guidance from First Nations lead artists Brianna Bear and Nicole Neidhardt. The design celebrates the power and presence of Indigenous girls and women, and speaks to the healing spirit of kinship and our relations with land and water relatives. The red wings contain hand-written words of transformation by Indigenous participants from across BC, Canada, and South Africa. These youth participated in the international forum on Indigenous Gender Wellbeing, hosted by Sisters Rising in 2018. To promote knowledge mobilization, the mural includes an explanatory plaque with a scannable digital code that links to our project websites. Funding for the creation and exposition of the mural was provided by CIHR, the Canet Foundation, and the Faculty of Human and Social Development (University of Victoria).



# NOSIFUNDO BOLOVVAYI

YOUNG GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

## HOW AM I IMAGINING THE FUTURE?

I imagine success. I imagine myself educated and obtaining a better job.

## WHAT CHANGES ARE YOU SEEING IN YOUR LIFE?

My life has become difficult. I lost both parents in 2020, they died of Corona. That is when I saw the huge role that my mother played because she was the breadwinner at home.

## WHAT WOULD I LIKE TO SEE?

I would like to see the economy of the country going up, hoping that people will get jobs. I would like to study after matric so that I can get a decent job that will improve the environment at home. I believe my siblings would also want to continue with their studies if I can go to college. I would like to see people wearing masks all the time and washing their hands. I would like to see my family staying close and supporting each other.

# SIPHOSETHU MABHALA

YOUNG GIRLS LEADING CHANGE



## HOW AM I IMAGINING THE FUTURE?

I am imagining a future where I will take care of myself by being responsible and not dependent on other people. I realized that depending on other people can destroy you, like if they die tomorrow what will I do? I am teaching myself to be independent.



## WHAT CHANGES AM I SEEING IN MY LIFE?

My life is not the same anymore. My mother lost her job in 2020 and we are struggling in the house.

## HOW AM I IMAGINING THE FUTURE?

I would like to see myself continuing with my studies. I hope I will get a space at the college this year. I would like to see people getting jobs so that they can provide for their families. I would like to do community work, like to continue motivating other girls to continue breaking the silence on gender-based violence.

# PHELOKAZI NYAMAKAZI

YOUNG GIRLS LEADING CHANGE





## HOW AM I IMAGINING THE FUTURE?

I am imagining my future being bright. I managed to go to college this year. I am imagining myself being a successful young Black woman.

## WHAT CHANGES ARE YOU SEEING IN YOUR LIFE?

Getting used to being at home all the time, which has developed my communication and relationship with my family. I now have more “me time” than time with friends.

## WHAT WOULD I LIKE TO SEE?

I would like to see the Covid-19 pandemic going away. I would like to see businesses that have closed to open up again. I would like to see children going back to school everyday, not two days a week.



# XABISA BLESS

YOUNG GIRLS LEADING CHANGE






# ELETHU NTSETHE

## GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

### AN INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW ERA

It is unfortunate how, even after so many years of gender equality education, women and children still face violence in different forms – physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, financial. This is a worldwide crisis and human rights violation. When I was younger, I always dreamt of being an activist, fighting for what is right and ethical. The society we live in provides room for the destruction and dehumanization of women and children. I believe that by becoming a teacher, I followed the right path towards becoming what my younger self thought I would become, educated and an activist.

I would like to think that social change begins with education and action. By joining forces with Networks for Change, I became a better version of myself. I came a step closer towards the dream I always had for myself and other girls, fighting for the liberation of young girls and women who have grown to settle for less than what they value. I have grown to understand that though I think and speak of greater becoming, I, too, am an infinite work in progress. As a teacher and an agent of change, I teach new ways of becoming a free individual. I always encourage my learners to express themselves and share how they feel about things happening to and around them. I always encourage them to free themselves from the chains of oppression, hurt, neglect, insecurities and abuse by embracing their own power.



I have learnt that no one in this world is ever going to save me, but myself. Every day I choose me because I, too, matter to myself. I have learnt to celebrate the scars in my body and soul because they led me to a new destination, my final destination – the new way of seeing things. I have learnt to be the kind of a woman I would call to when things go wrong. I have learnt to be a motivator and an encourager of dreams. I have learnt to be strong, kind, bold, passionate, a believer and to stand for the truth. I have learnt to accept that I am enough and I can do anything.

My hope is for a future of fearless, strong, independent, bold young women who are free from all sorts of abuse. I dream of a nation where we will walk through the streets without fearing for our lives. Too many have died in the hands of men; I only hope it ends with this generation. I hope this generation will mark the end of gender-based violence and gender inequalities in the world. I dream of a brighter tomorrow where we will all live freely and equally without the injustices of today. I believe that there is room for us all to be free, happy and successful. Let us learn to lend a hand to those behind us and pull each other up. Let us unite and build a legacy for the generations to follow. Let us turn the tables and take up spaces to address the issues of today.

# ALYSSIA CHRISTMAS

BREAK THE SILENCE: BE THE CHANGE



Hello to everybody reading!  
My name is Alyssia Christmas  
and my spirit name is Golden  
Rainbow Woman. I am Mi'kmaq  
and I was born in Unama'ki.  
I have been involved with  
Networks for Change Eskasoni  
since 2018, when I was 16 years  
old. I was only in high school  
when I joined the 2SLGBT+  
study and it taught me a lot of  
essential professional skills.

As I look back and reflect  
on my journey since I began  
working with Networks for  
Change, I realize that the team  
and work helped me with  
working outside of my comfort  
zone. It taught me to work  
efficiently with a team and to  
be confident with independent  
work.



Networks for Change made  
me realize that I need to make a  
change in myself and for myself.  
I realized that the healing we all  
need as Indigenous people lie  
within our culture, traditions,  
the land, and one another. For  
the past two years of my life, I  
have been focused on doing a lot  
of inner healing. A big help with  
my healing is my best friend  
and mentor, Jayden Jeddore-  
Gould. She introduced me to  
tarot, crystals, astrology, and  
even taught me a lot about our  
culture as Mi'kmaq people.



I was inspired from many sources such as Networks for Change, my friends and family, to begin my healing journey. I wake up every morning thanking the Creator for gifting me another day with brand new opportunities, to the Grandfather Sun for allowing me to see him again, and to the Grandmother Moon for the wisdom that is gifted to me. I recently started a small business focused on candles with crystals and herbs inside. My creativity comes from my late great grandparents as they were medicine people and basket makers. I put my love and healing energy into every step of the way through candle making. Networks for Change has made such a huge ripple effect on my life, stretching to my family and friends. I am truly grateful to work with Networks for Change as it proves that anything is possible if you are genuine and passionate.





# FARRAH STEVENS

**BREAK THE SILENCE: BE THE CHANGE**

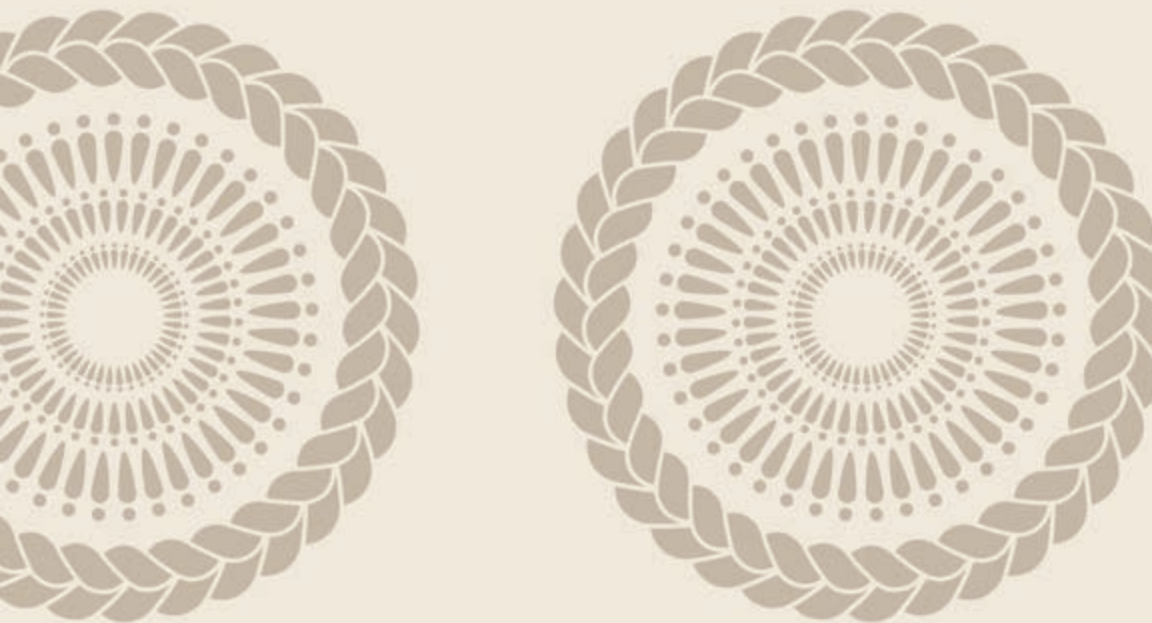


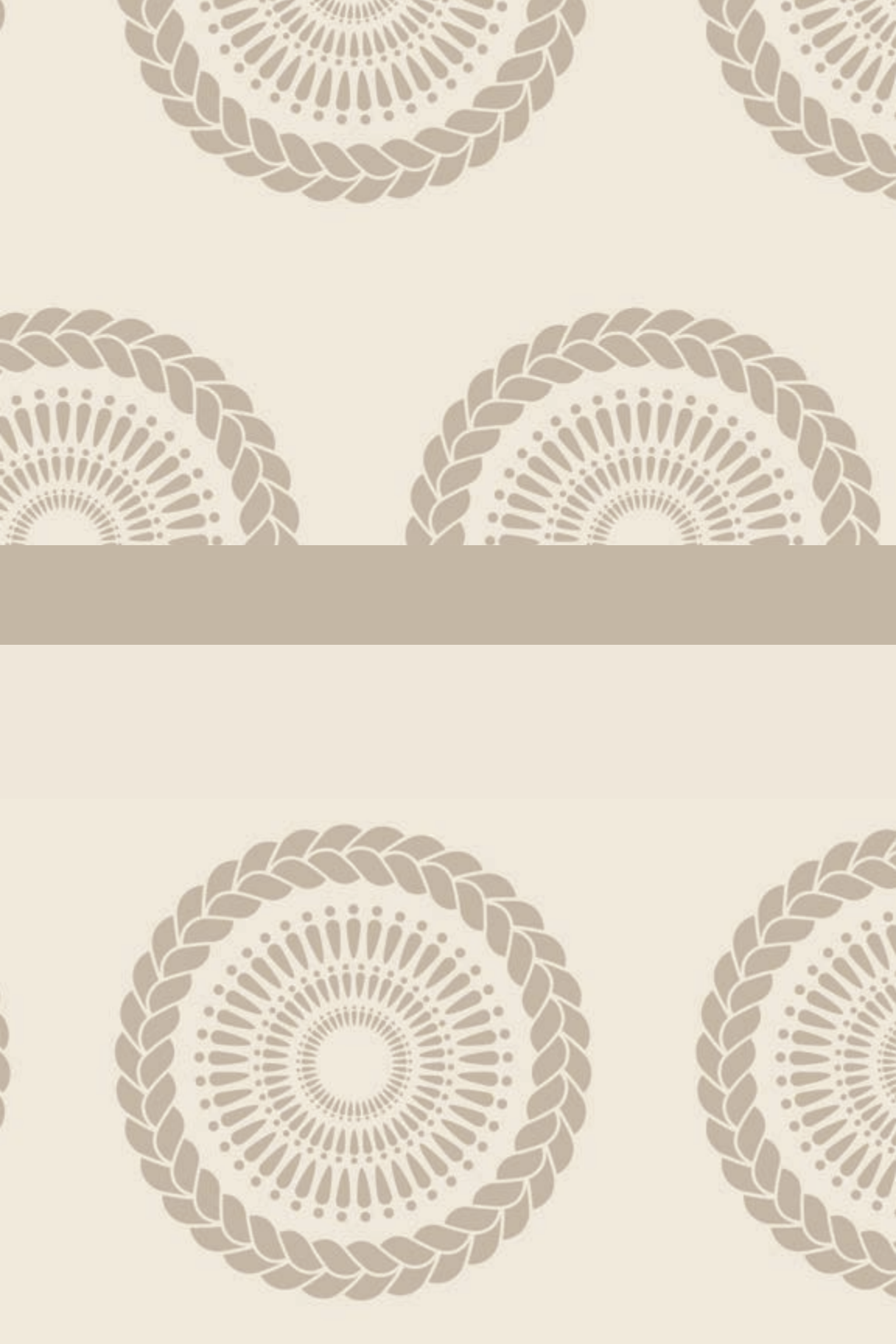
Networks4Change has been a part of my life for some time now, and being a part of this group and working alongside many wonderful people has really made me feel a good sense of belonging and happiness. I want to thank Networks for giving me amazing opportunities and involving me in work with others around the world. What this group has accomplished and how it has helped and shown support for so many different communities is amazing and I cannot wait to see it grow and achieve more.



## REFLECTIONS

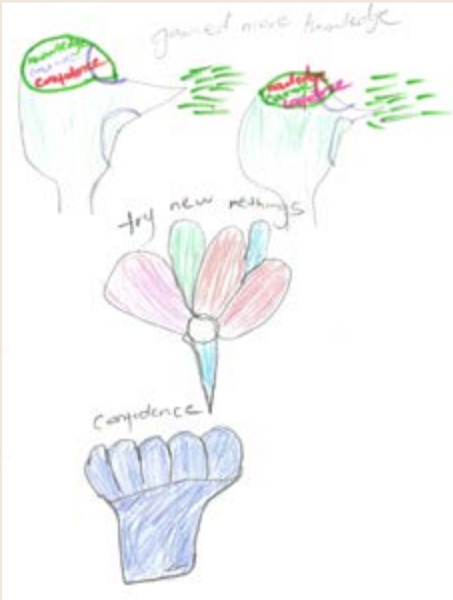
**GIRLS SPEAKING ABOUT WHAT WAS THE  
BEST MEMORY OF THE PROJECT AND THEIR  
DRAWINGS OF MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE**





# THINA KAMNQA

## GIRLS LEADING CHANGE



*Good day everyone, I am Thina Kamnqa. I am going to share what the Networks for Change has made for me.*

Firstly, I am a teacher and a member of Girls Leading Change. I have drawn three pictures; the one I am going to explain first is 'gain more knowledge'. When we are having conversations with colleagues about GBV I am able to join the discussion because I have learnt lot of things.

The second picture is a flower, it reflects new things. I am willing to try new things, like in varsity I majored with languages but when I went to the work field, I didn't choose to teach language, instead I chose to teach Life Orientation because life orientation deals more with gender-based violence and other social issues.

The third picture shows a hand, it reflects confidence, I also gained more confidence because I am able to stand up in front of being without being shy. Therefore, network for change really developed me and changed me a lot.



WHAT IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE  
IN MY LIFE AFTER JOINING  
N4C

I titled my drawing, "What is Gender", because I feel a lot of people do not understand Gender.

I was so closed minded when it comes to gender and sexuality mainly because the community I come from and my religious background.

My journey in N4C has taught me about Inclusionity when it comes to gender and sexuality. Learning about gender and sensitivity of the concept when it comes to sexuality has really opened my eyes to see gender in a different way. The LGBT session was the most informative session for me which really opened my eyes.

I titled my drawing with a question that could be a rhetorical question or just a question. It's the sign of my curiosity because I still want to learn more about gender.

I have drawn a picture that represents a female and a male but, in this picture, they have been combined together and if you look at the colours, you know pink represents the female and blue represents the male. This shows how indoctrinated we have been, to be raised up and be told that you as a girl you need to wear pink and your hair must be done like this, you are a boy you do not cry, you should do certain thing up to becoming manhood. So, all these roles that have been allocated to us, they made us different, but in this picture, I sort of put them together so that you cannot tell the pink from the blue and it makes a really beautiful colour when you combine them together.

The title is, **What is gender?** The reason I ask what is gender could be a rhetorical question or it could be just a question. When I arrived at the networks for change, I didn't know much about gender, but I got such a great exposure to it. It sort of changed my mindset, the way I think, the way I look at people, it sort of transformed me. I was very inspired when we were at St. Cloud University when we saw the bathrooms. There were bathrooms for males and females and then there was an inclusive one, when I saw it I started thinking that we have learnt a lot about inclusive education but do we put that inclusivity into gender.

That left me thinking, it is a question that I would like to explore more, I feel like I have a long way because gender is a very sensitive and complex topic that we need to understand. It is something that I want to share now that I've been enlightened into this subject of gender, it is something I want to take further to those who were once like me, who were told that this is a role of a male, and this is a role of a female. We were told that a woman doesn't take leadership, we were told that the woman cannot share the work of god because the bible says so and so. For me this is a light of what is gender, so we really know what gender is. It is something that has been a significant change, the biggest change that has happened in my life, learning about gender.

### **THE MOST IMPORTANT/SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN MY LIFE:**

- I titled my drawing, "What is Gender?" because I feel a lot of people do not understand gender.
- I was so closed minded when it comes to gender and sexuality mainly because the community I come from and my religious background.
- My journey in N4C has taught me about inclusivity when it comes to gender and sexuality. Learning about gender and [sensitivity] of the concept when it comes to sexuality has really opened my eyes to see gender in a different way. The LGBT session was the most informative session for me which really opened my eyes.
- I titled my drawing with a question that could be a rhetorical question or just a question. It is the sign of my curiosity because I still want to learn more about gender.

# LELETHU MLOBELI

## GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

Hello everyone, what I have learnt through Networks for Change is not to accept what is happening, and how women are being treated as normal, I have learnt that the reality is for women to have their own power and realize that they do have power and not to accept anything the society has said women are. Growing up I have seen women being abused as doormats by their boyfriends and husband. It is something I thought I don't want to grow up to that. Network for Change taught me not to accept that to put myself first as a woman.

### THE MOST IMPORTANT/SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN MY LIFE:

- Gender based violence is not only a [South African] pandemic - women across all countries are fighting the same devil.
- N4C has opened my mind to the realities we are facing as women, what we thought was normal (normalised) but was actually not.
- As a grown up, I know what I want and believe should have and accept as a woman. I have the power to decide what I want and what I don't want.
- Seeing my mother and other women in abusive relationships, that is what I thought I am going to grow up to, as women have normalized and accepted abuse.



# HAPPY MTHETHWA

## GIRLS LEADING CHANGE



The most significant change for me ever since I became part of the networks for change is similar to what Thina has said, which is knowledge, because I believe that knowledge is power and key for any individual to grow. I've also grown personally;

I am more conscious, and I have also learnt in everything to put myself first. I am more observant, I have seen and experienced that in a space when people are conversing, I always make effective comments based on issues of gender-based violence. I have also discovered my identity, like who am I alone. I am also willing to learn new things. In all, this is my picture, the first picture is myself representing knowledge, and the other pictures represent community. With what I know I am willing to share it with the community. In the first picture I am holding a candle, other people in the community are heart-broken, others do not have knowledge of GBV. Me holding a candle I want to enlighten all the people in the community with issues of gender-based violence.

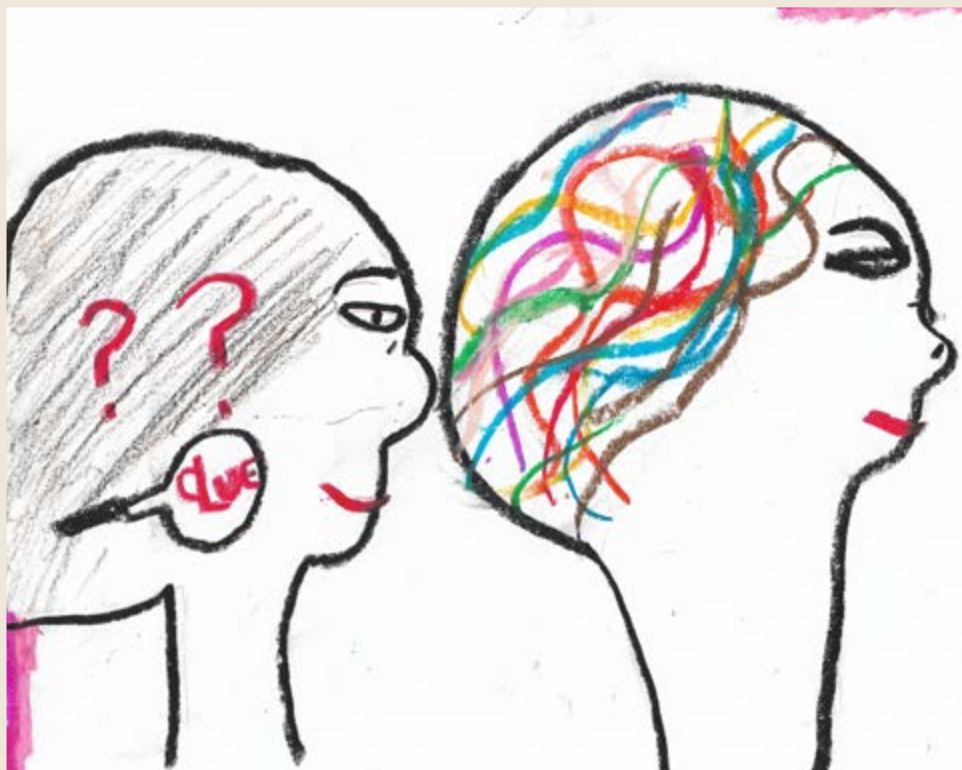
### THE MOST IMPORTANT/SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN MY LIFE:

- Knowledge
- Ready to take on life
- Nurtured
- Willing to try new
- Learn confidence
- Discovered my self-identity
- Observant
- Effective comments



# SANDISWE GAIZA

## GIRLS LEADING CHANGE



If you can see this picture, the first person is myself, clueless, knowing nothing about gender-based violence. You can see the question marks in me. When I joined this program I gained more knowledge. I am aware of gender-based violence, even the cellfilms that we did made me more aware of date rape, which I wasn't aware of, sexually transmitted infections, which are happening in our schools. It has also taught me to be open minded and try new things and not to accept anything from anyone which I believe is not right, be able to stand for myself and defend myself in anything I believe is right for myself.

# ZIKHONA TSHIWULA

## GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

Hello everyone, the most significant change in my life after joining networks for change was starting over, meaning moving forward. I mean being a whole new person.

Firstly, the way I think, the way I speak and the way I behave. In the picture here there is a sun, which represents the light and there is a rainbow which represents a brand-new day, that means a new me, a brighter me a tougher me and a braver me.



There is also a butterfly which lies on top of the tree, it shows that it is free as I am free now. Below the tree there are broken chains, it means I have broken the chains, I am free from my life being so hard. I make sure I speak louder and share my story so that I can touch other women's lives because especially women that have experienced the similar situations like experiencing gender-based violence, so MEMEZA girl and have self-agency because there is light at the end of the tunnel as you can see from the picture there is a tunnel where there are voices who are willing to hear you and work with you. The power is in your hands.

# ASISIPHO MTONGA

## GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

The most significant change after joining the networks for change. The title of my drawing is the *art of listening*. As you see there are two heads, I am the talking voice and below is a responding voice. It is important to unlearn the wrong things. Is change a good thing? Yes, change is good because after joining Girls Leading Change, I learnt a lot which means we can unlearn the wrong things. There are wrong things but if you let yourself accept and realise that this is wrong then that can be fixable, but if you do not have a teachable spirit, a spirit of reflecting that was wrong. It was learning more about myself as

a woman. I also learnt that platforms such as these ones are very crucial for social change and can be used as a way to help people to talk and get real with themselves. The art of listening is the work I came up with because I learnt that listening is very important. It is very important to listen, than to listen to respond for reaction but listening with the intention of learning, seeking understanding. This world can be changed also listening and then doing, you first listen and then do, react and then do. Significant change in my life was self- discovering, learning about myself was learning to be free without expectations, without people's validation. The people that I have drawn here represent myself in opposite direction or in opposite sides talking to each other. This also represents the mirror image, when you are standing in front of the mirror talking to yourself. It also brought some self-awareness in me, the willingness to learn and having a teachable spirit.



# WANDISWA MOMOZA

## GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

Hello everyone. My drawing talks about change of perspectives. Being in the group has made my mind to grow, to change the way I am thinking. The drawing reflects how my perspectives has changed. As you can see from the picture, there is darkness from this side, on the other side there are bright colours, meaning I have been enlightened or my perspectives has been enlightened. For instance, yesterday I was talking to Prof about the rate of teenage pregnancy in my school. Prof was like, you should talk to those girls and I was like, no the Life Orientation teachers will do that, but Prof insisted and advised me to be the change. That is what the globe is representing in the picture, meaning I should be an agent of change to the world through learning from networks for change and girls leading change.



# ELETHU NTSETHE

## GIRLS LEADING CHANGE



Growing up I had bigger dreams for myself which were later clouded by the beliefs of the society I had to live my life in a way that did not make sense to me, but then my thoughts and actions were controlled. It was like someone had found a second chance to life and breath through me.

The networks for change brought light and direction into my life. It planted a tree of hope which grew and brought peace into my life as it got watered. I found myself, my voice, my strength and power. I found my identity and had my own values. She lived again. She found her voice. She mattered and has connected with her dreams again.

Growing up, I had bigger dreams for myself. When we're clouded by the beliefs of the society, I had to live my life in a way that did not make sense to me, but them. My thoughts and actions were controlled. It was like someone had found a second chance to life through me.

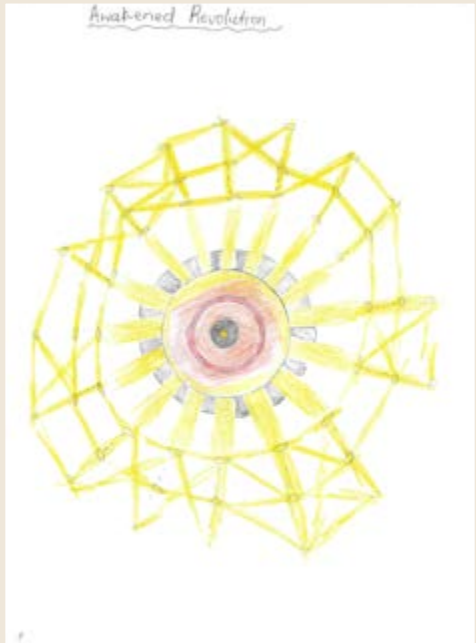
The Networks for Change brought light and direction into my life. It planted a tree of hope which grew and brought peace into my life as it got watered. I found myself, my voice, my strength and power. I found my identity and had my own values. She lives again. She found her voice. She mattered and has connected with her dreams again.

# MELISSA LUFELE

## GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

Good morning everyone! When you look at my picture there is a tiny tiny dot which is yellow and for me that represents my innocent self, the naïve, sheltered and the content person I was in my little corner. The bright light represents the seed that I had not yet discovered. I was happy with the innocent self because I did not know there was something more.

Let's move to the outer layer, which is little bit black, for me that represents challenges, insecurities, ignorance, insensitivity, clueless and the anger that I had. I did not realise, but the minute I got this platform it surfaced. Things that I thought were not there came to the surface and I was forced to deal with them. When I say forced, it is because when you do not recognize something, you don't need to deal with it but the minute it comes up to the surface then you are forced to fix it because you cannot move if you don't do that. Those were personal conversations I had with myself in order for me to grow and realise my potential.



Then, I moved to the red layer mixed with a bit of orange. I knew that was my awakening hence I titled my drawing *Awakened Revolution*. My awakening got to a point of the knowledge I was receiving was giving birth to the woman I want to become hence I say it was a birth of a new woman unshackled, confident, curious, assertive, rebellious, strong, courageous - courageous enough to question. It was an introduction of selflessness, the need to be more, to do more, to reach more, to teach more and save more. The yellow represents an energized revolution.

Out of this introduction I grew my identity, I crafted it. I embraced myself and settled it and when I became the person that knew myself, I was able to stand in front of a crown and teach people what I have learnt because I believe there is no use in gaining knowledge that you will keep to yourself. Every little bit of information you get you are informative let us now be informative and share it with other people.

The yellow represents the energized revolution movement within me, informative information transferred, positivity transferred, challenging norms and the status quo. The black dots represent the continued resistance the backlash we continue to face in the systems regardless of where we are, the rejection. The blocking of our desire transformation but in the midst of all if you see the yellow light penetrates because that is my goal that in the midst of it all let us be able to penetrate in these spaces and inspire and hopefully the inspiration will aspire to inspire more people that will be like us. That is why you see the yellow going out, these people are inspiring others in their own circle that is my wish for myself that everything we learnt in the past years not be a waste, let it be transferred, let it move, even after Prof is not there, even if we are not there, people will be able to say there were Melissas, there were Prof Naydenes of that decade because of the work that continues.

So, I say I am emotional because since last night I have been looking at everyone's transformation. I think of that day when we wrote 14 times a woman, we were crying our hearts were so broken because we were caring so much. It was not easy, even today it is still not easy, wherever we are it is not easy but what is important is what keeps up going which is so magical. I was the first in my family to go to university. I was the first in my family to graduate. Those little dreams mean nothing to other people but to us they are more than just dreams. I want you guys to have that. I want our children to have that because it was magical.



# TAKATSO MOHLOMI

## GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

### THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN MY LIFE AFTER JOINING NETWORKS FOR CHANGE.

Amongst all the important things I have learnt today I would like to specify on identity and self-awareness. I don't think I would have known what I know now should I not have joined the networks for change and girls leading change. I would like to give light of why I appreciate this more.

Coming from a Christian upbringing family and community where we have been told you are a girl or you are a boy and it ends there, you do this, you do that and told that other things are sin. But what if I feel that is who I resonate with or relate with. It is a shift in perspective. That is why I have drawn shades in my drawing. It was like at first you see the world through people's thinking or from what someone has documented and called a way of life, which is what we refer to as a bible which only allows you to see things this way or that way. But, after I joined this group I learnt that it is ok to identify as who you feel you are and who you feel you are comfortable with. To me that has been a greatest shift.



## IDENTITY 🖐️



My drawing represents a picture of a peaceful morning at the beach, there is a sunrise and you are drinking your hot coffee that says this is who I am. I might be a girl, a boy, a gay, a lesbian but let us learn to embrace it and learn to be comfortable with it. At first it was a topic that I thought I understood but it got to be real to me when you have someone in the family who feels this is something different to what we've been raised to and what humbled me the most is to be the safe space for someone who feels they trust you enough to come and talk. What I celebrate more is that when I went back in my own space trying to reflect on what we shared, I asked myself if this is what I really relate with? Takatso, is this who you are? I was so proud to discover this is exactly who I have come to be. To me, to be a comfortable space for somebody else, for me that has said so much about what I have gained, and I wouldn't have gained it anywhere else but here. It is a shift in perspective for me.

# BONGIWE MAOME

## GIRLS LEADING CHANGE



Hello everyone, my name is Bongiwe. My picture has a lot, it has a bit of elements and a silver lining through. You guys know me, I can talk for days. I can talk a lot. If I think back, I think of the first session we had and how much Bongiwe talked. I felt at that point in time, this is how you become an agent of change, you talk and talk a lot. Yes, it is part of it, but as part of my growth I learnt from the network that, that is not all there is to it.

My picture is me in the middle, the part you see on the sides is waves of the chaos, which is different voices coming through, different experiences: like what I see happening from other people or what I see happening in the world. Also voices of myself, like how I view myself and how I exist as myself. There are different voices, words and phrases coming out of the chaos but maybe you can't see from the drawing, but there are shut ups, there is help, there is do nothing, there is why, there is you don't have to, there is leave it, it has always been like that, there is you don't matter.

All of those are the words I have been getting and that is what raised me, I think. So, I learnt at first, like I would be the person that would take all the words and voices and take them back and shout without first internalizing it. I learnt to revel in my activism, take a moment and listen more actively wherever I am, I might be at school, in public or anywhere in the work. I need to listen to what I am seeing. For me listening actively means activating my heart and engaging my mind and my entire being. So, listening to my entire being and the experiences of another being, listening to my own experiences, my own changes, my own perspectives and then after listening to those be able to make connections and attach the appropriate voice to whatever it is that need to be spoken. I said in my picture let your voice speak, let your mind speak and after let your actions speak. If I was going to be a voice for change and speak for those who are marginalized and speak for those that are oppressed. I can't just speak from my own perspective. I learnt that to speak for someone who can't speak I need to hear what is it that they need to say. In order for me to say what they want to say I need to internalize it and be them in order to communicate their message. I need to speak for them, I need to speak with them because I am also them. That is why my picture is titled *listen more actively*. I think I have been more ethnocentric in a sense that being African is who I am, but not all who I am. The angle that I came in by having this drawing and having these earrings, the earrings are like the African continent. What I was trying to bring across there was, with earrings as a woman I need to understand me as being me, and now being a teacher. I am not just there as a representative of myself in every space that I go into. I am not just Bongiwe being in America or Bongiwe being in this boardroom today. But, I am Bongiwe who is representing so many other Bongiwes. To me, those Bongiwes are Africans. Its African young women like myself, experiencing similar things to my own and these girls need to speak through me. I need to do a better job by listening to them before I speak for them.

# XABISA BLESS

## YOUNG GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

The most significant change in my life is this, the title of the picture is saying I became a guy in a woman's body. You will see that I have scratched the guy and wrote woman for a reason, back in our community we were raised to think that a man has power, a man has everything we do not have. We only as women do house chores, taking care of the babies and that is all. I say I became a woman in a woman's body. The reason I scratched the name 'guy' is to claim back the power of women, letting people know that we as women have the power. I am not discriminating against any gender, but we as the women have the power to stay firm and stand together to fight the gender-based violence. We as the women have the power to say what we want and what we don't want and also the power I have and gained after joining the project cannot be compared to anything. Now I am able to stand in front of everyone and share my experience, share how life was back then when I didn't know anything about gender-based violence. How things were in my community and how I dealt with many issues before joining the project. Now I am able to tackle any issues based on gender things. I am not going to talk about my experience, but I have experienced lots of things when it comes to gender. From my drawing, you will see a lion, meaning I am not afraid to say to a person I don't like what you are doing and its wrong. I don't care if the person touches me but I won't touch the person back, as long as I stay firm and say I don't like what you are doing. I have also gained strength to speak out and stand for what is right. I say strength and power goes together I can go a long way with them.



# AMAHLE DLALA

## YOUNG GIRLS LEADING CHANGE



Hello everyone, my name is Amahle. For my heading I wrote, the queen I have become but then again, I scratched it and wrote power was me. Finally, I gained power. The power I was longing for, for all my life.

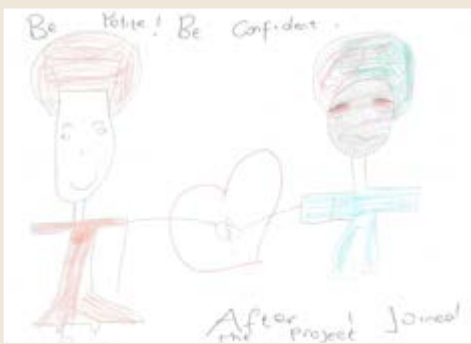
Joining this project from a very young age, I have learnt a lot and also gained a lot, in a way that, wherever I go my crown shines, since I said I am the queen because I am the queen. I said I became a leader, when you become a queen, you are a leader of your own castle. My castle is my community back home in Paterson.

During this journey, I have gained lot of experience. Growing up I had a fear of public speaking, but now I can speak, I am not afraid. Marianne taught me a lot, she taught me to use a teacher's voice. Whenever we were presenting, she would say, use your teachers voice. I have gained lot, I am a new person, I am no longer the old Amahle who was scared of everything, who was scared of expressing her feelings.

*I have gained a lot, thank you.*

# NOZINGA NYAMAKAZI

## YOUNG GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

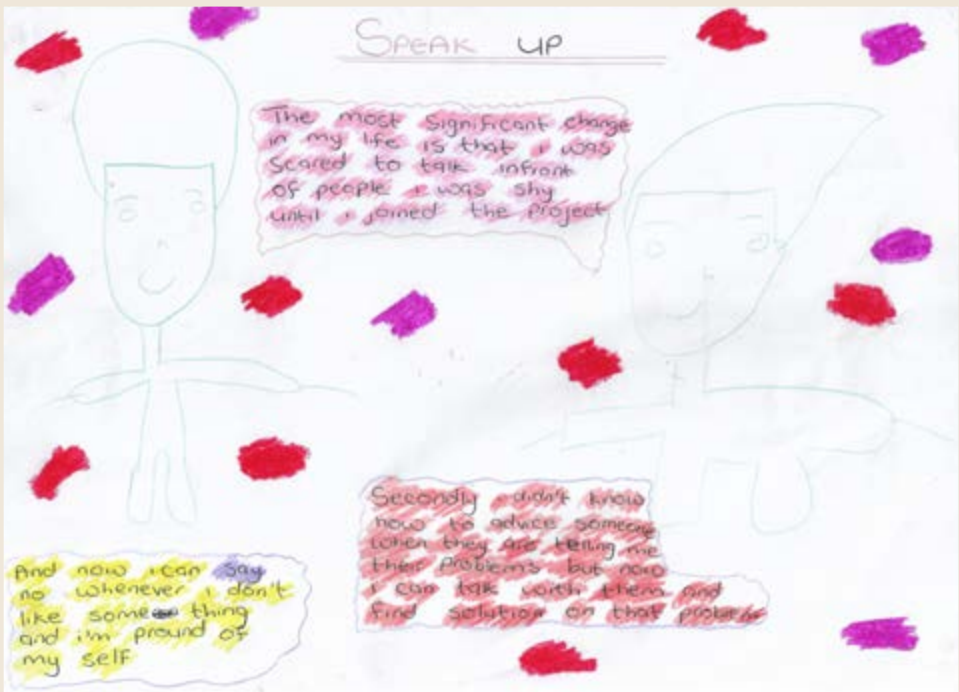


Good day everyone, my name is Siphosethu, Nozinga. There are many things I learnt in the project such as, being independent and accept the way you are, love yourself and be proud of yourself. But, the most significant change in my life is to be able to speak out and let my voice be heard and say no to something I don't like without fighting. The project taught me how to talk to people in a polite way. So, love yourself don't be ashamed of who you are.

*The most [significant] change in my life is I now know how to speak up and say no on something I don't like without fighting. The project [taught] me how to talk to people in a polite way. Be polite! Be confident!*

# SIPHOSETHU MABHALA

## YOUNG GIRLS LEADING CHANGE



Good day everyone. The most significant change in my life is that I was scared to talk in front of people until I joined this project. Secondly, I didn't know how to advise someone when they were telling me their own problems but now I can talk with them and find solutions. Now, I can say no to whatever I don't like and I am proud of myself.

# PHELOKAZI NYAMAKAZI

## YOUNG GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

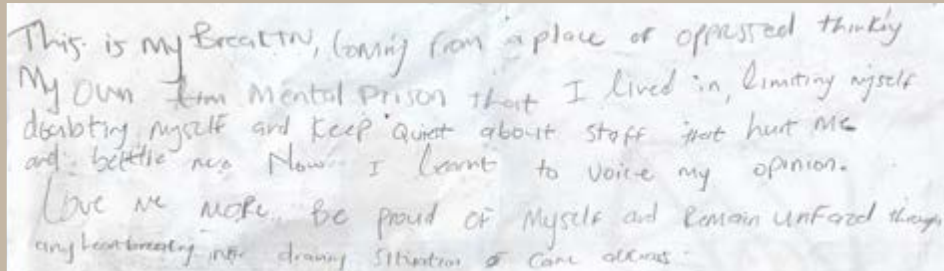


Good day everyone. My name is Phelokazi. What I have learnt from the project is to speak out, not be afraid to speak out. I have learnt to be open to my mother about everything. I have learnt to know my right and who I am.



# SIYAMTHANDA NOGAYA

## YOUNG GIRLS LEADING CHANGE



This is my BreakTV, coming from a place of oppressed thinking  
My Own I am Mental Prison that I lived in, limiting myself  
describing myself and keep quiet about stuff that hurt me  
and belittle me. Now I learnt to voice my opinion.  
Love me more. Be proud of myself and remain unforced though  
anybody making me drawing situation & come across.

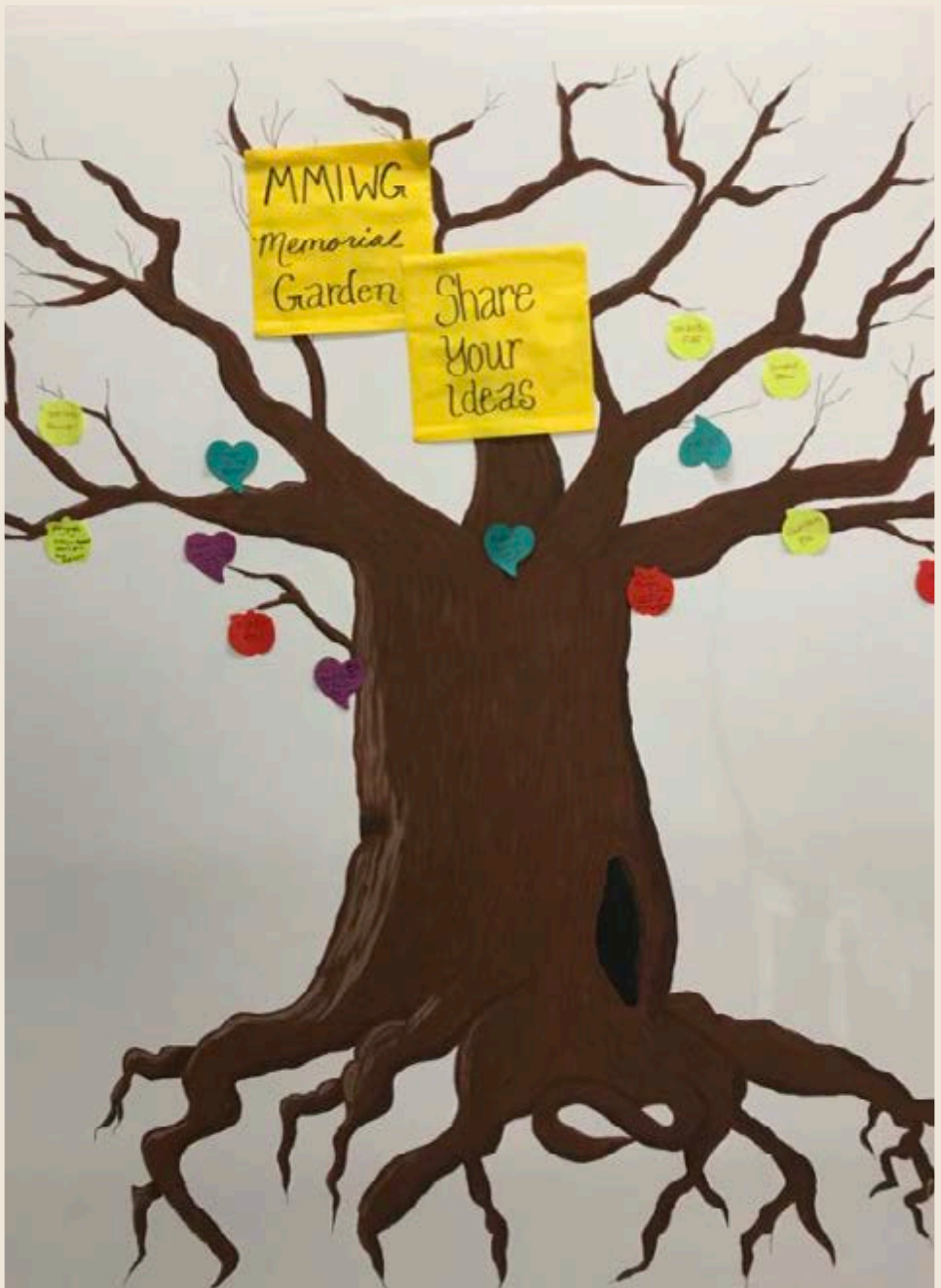
Hello everyone. My name is Siya and this is my drawing. So, my drawing has been split into two parts. The first part is me when I was growing up, everything that used to drag me down. I let those things be part of me. Joining the project at such young age has helped me enlighten myself. Enlighten me in the way I think, the way I act, the way I interpret things, the way I behave and the way I carry myself in the new world. Being from Paterson to Port Elizabeth, being surrounded by new people outside of my hometown, learning new ideas and being in Cape Town now with new girls who come from different background, like they were taught different things in their upbringing. Using those things, they have learnt to build me. Being part of the project has helped me to voice my opinion. I now know how to say things without offending someone. For the longest time I feel, whenever something was addressed at me, I used to defend myself without understanding what the other person actually meant, without realizing that they were saying these types of things to help me and grow myself. At this moment, I am in the space where I can talk, there is love in my life from me and the people around me. There is lot of positive energy. I am curious. There is a lot of light coming in and I feel so positive about the upcoming years just because of the foundation you guys have provided for me.

# HANNAH BATTISTE

## BREAK THE SILENCE: BE THE CHANGE

### NETWORKS FOR CHANGE

When I first joined the group Networks for Change, I was afraid of many things. I did not dream in a million years that I would become a published poet. Growing up, I wrote a lot. When I was nine years old, my father passed away, and then a few years later my older brother passed away. Growing up, there was a lot of drugs, alcohol and suicide in my life, to me it all felt normal. I never really understood the way my brain thought about things, and why it “made” me do certain things, I would try to express the way I felt, but would only be made fun of, so that is where the writing came in. I started a journal on January 8, 2008, and I never stopped writing. I started to notice that I had a huge imagination, and I used it as much as I was able to. I would write stories and poetry, as soon as I picked up my pen and paper, that was it for me, I started something, and I was not going to be stopped until it was perfect. I started to write more and more about things that would make me angry, because I felt that was the only way at the time, I was able to release any anger. Being in this group has made me connect more with my inner self and my culture. I have learned so much and took all the knowledge I had into my writings. One poem I will always be proud of is “Our People,” which is the first poem I had ever gotten published. I have learned so much since then, and I am always more than willing to grow. I never thought I would be the person I am today, and there was a time in my life where I was not able to see pass my twenties, but I made it and I am still making it. “Our People” will always be important to me, because it’s the way I express my culture through my art. My people deserve any kind of recognition and with every opportunity I get, I try my best to involve my culture/community. I will always be proud of my culture and my writing. I aspire to be as big as Rita Joe, she is a strong representation of who I want to be when I get older. If it weren’t for Networks for change, I’m not sure where I’d be or who I’d be.





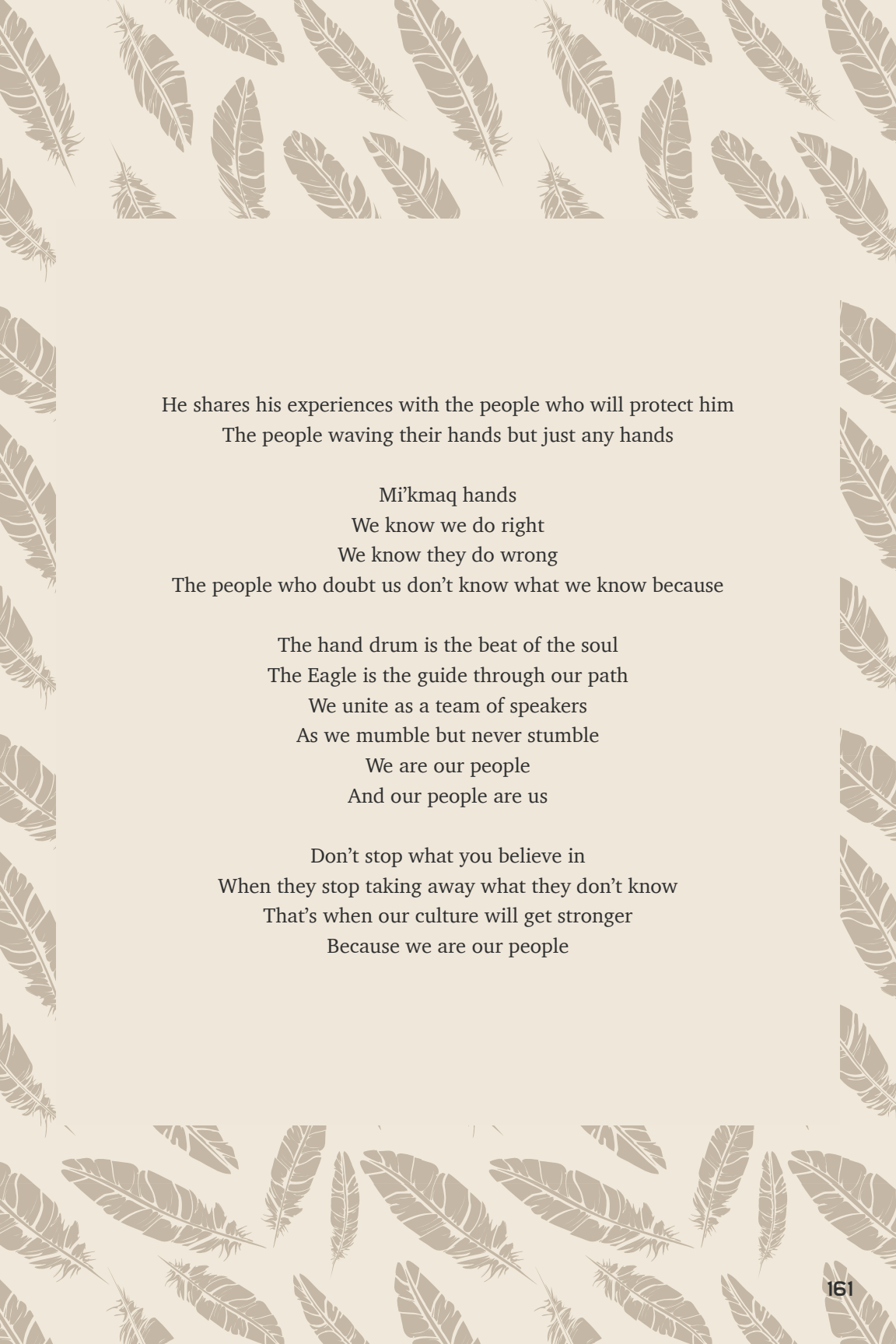
**OUR PEOPLE**  
**BY HANNAH BATTISTE**

Step by step dancing through the wind of the aboriginals  
She held her head high mumbling to the beat of the hand drum  
The sound of the bells are the key to the song  
Her slippers slip through the grass of the Eskasoni powwow grounds  
Then she knows she is home

The sun is shining through her braids and feather earrings  
Her arms moving and her legs stomping  
She dances in circles while holding an eagle's feather  
Then she knows what she is doing

The hand drum is the beat of the soul  
The Eagle is the guide through our path  
We unite as a team of speakers  
As we mumble but never stumble  
We are our people

The old man who believes in the most gets punished  
He says what he believes and how others do us wrong  
The ringing in his ears are voices telling him that he is wrong  
They tell him he is wrong for speaking for us  
We have the rights to be us  
The skies are gray with sadness in our way  
He struggles to get his way because his way is right



He shares his experiences with the people who will protect him  
The people waving their hands but just any hands

Mi'kmaq hands  
We know we do right  
We know they do wrong  
The people who doubt us don't know what we know because

The hand drum is the beat of the soul  
The Eagle is the guide through our path  
We unite as a team of speakers  
As we mumble but never stumble  
We are our people  
And our people are us

Don't stop what you believe in  
When they stop taking away what they don't know  
That's when our culture will get stronger  
Because we are our people











# NETWORKS FOR CHANGE & WELL-BEING



CIRCLE BACK: STORIES OF REFLECTION, CONNECTION AND TRANSFORMATION •