



Western  Centre for Research & Education on
Violence Against Women & Children

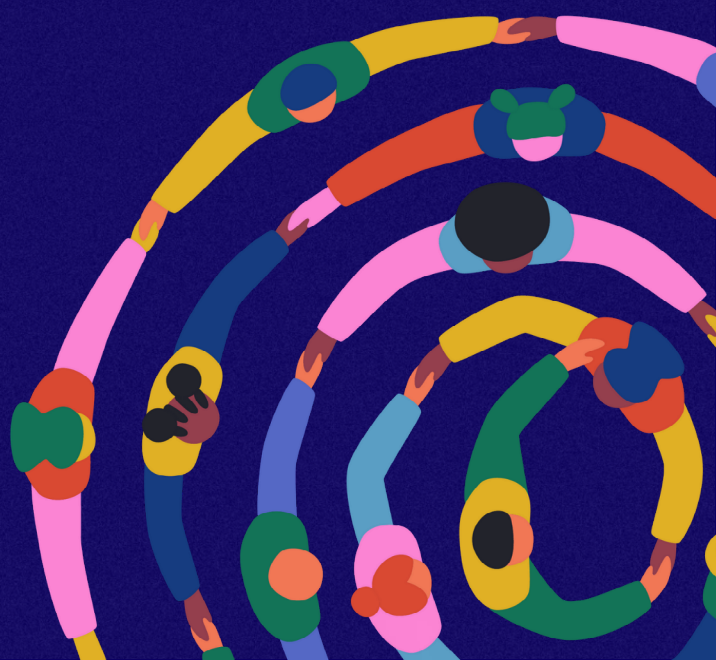
LEARNING NETWORK

LEARNING NETWORK VIRTUAL FORUM 2025 PROGRAM

Seeds of Possibility: Understanding Alternative Justice Practices in the Gender-Based Violence Sector

Tuesday, February 4, 2025 from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm Eastern Time

Wednesday, February 5, 2025 from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm Eastern Time



Welcome to the Learning Network Virtual Forum!

This **Learning Network Virtual Forum** will explore how alternative justice practices can enhance prevention, practices, and responses within the gender-based violence (GBV) movement and sector. Forum speakers include community and organizational leaders, practitioners, researchers, and advocates working across sectors to end violence, ensure accountability and build safer, more equitable communities.

Alternative justice practices, rooted in the knowledge, traditions and care practices of Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities, include not only restorative and transformative justice, but also a range of diverse culturally grounded and community-based approaches. In the context of GBV, these practices play a crucial role in community responses, emphasizing empowerment, healing, relationships and accountability, while shifting away from punitive carceral models of justice. While alternative justice practices have, at times, been adapted or repurposed within mainstream systems, this Virtual Forum will aim to explore how these practices are deeply rooted in diverse cultural traditions and their role in challenging historical and ongoing colonial structures of power, as well as resisting broader systems and institutions of power.

Anchored in its roots, alternative justice practices offer restorative and transformative potential to prevent, respond to, and address GBV, which often stems from colonial power structures. It is important to consider reimagining how we approach justice, grounding our work in decolonized practices, with the goal of creating a more just, healing, and transformative system for addressing GBV.

This Virtual Forum will provide an opportunity to learn more about alternative justice practices within the context of GBV work in Canada. Diverse speakers will focus on the history and core principles of alternative justice practices and share the strategies, challenges and opportunities for advancing them within the GBV sector and movement. Speakers also will highlight existing and emerging alternative justice models to GBV that centre Indigenous, Black and racialized communities, offering practical tools and approaches that can be integrated into your everyday work supporting survivors, communities, and those who have done harm.

Learning Objectives

By attending this Forum, participants will enhance their:

- Understanding of the history and core principles of alternative justice practices and their role in challenging colonial structures of power
- Awareness about alternative justice models and processes to end violence within diverse contexts including lessons learned, concerns, and challenges
- Application of culturally responsive and trauma- and violence-informed responses for supporting survivors and working with those who have done harm

Connect on Social Media

Connect with the Learning Network (LN) on social media throughout the event!



You can tag us on:

 **Facebook:** [@LNandKH](#)

 **X:** [@LNandKH](#)

 **LinkedIn:** [Learning Network and Knowledge Hub](#)

 **Instagram:** [@GBVLearningNetwork](#)

Use the following hashtags: #AlternativeJusticeApproaches, #RestorativeJustice, #TransformativeJustice, #CommunityAccountability, #RethinkJustice, #CommunityBuilding, #GenderBasedViolence, #SurvivorCentered

Zoom Support

Once you have registered for the Forum, an email from Zoom is automatically sent to you with instructions on how to access the session on each day. The email contains a unique link that should not be shared with others. Please use the link included in the email to join the session. If you can't find the email, please re-register for the session or check your junk mail folder in case the email was filtered as a spam message.

To view the ASL interpreter, click on the interpretation button, the globe icon 🌐 on the bottom navigation panel if you are using a desktop. If you are using a mobile device, tap on the More icon and tap language interpretation. Select “American Sign Language” and then a separate window will pop up, displaying the ASL interpreter in their own window.

For further support with Zoom, [please click here for helpful tips.](#)

Safety and Services

The content of these sessions is focused on gender-based violence and alternative justice approaches. It is possible that presenters will share their personal experiences of gender-based violence and help-seeking. We want you to take care of yourself as some of this content may be difficult.

If you would like to debrief during the live sessions, a support person will be available to text with you privately during the Forum (1:00 to 4:00 pm ET). You can access them by texting the toll-free number: 1 (833) 343-0186. We will share this number in the chat box during the Forum and please feel free to ask the Zoom panelists or email gbvln@uwo.ca for the number.

If you would like support during or after the Forum, [please click here to find services.](#)

Accessibility

The Learning Network recognizes that participants have different accessibility needs.

Accessibility features of the Virtual Forum include:

- Any presentation slides presenters use will be provided by email the morning of the session.
- Live ASL interpretation will be provided by the Toronto Sign Language Interpreter Service on each day of the Forum.
- Participants will have the option to turn on live closed captioning for each session.
- Recordings of the sessions will be emailed to registrants following the event and will contain closed captioning and ASL interpretation.

If you have any specific questions and suggestions, please contact gbvln@uwo.ca.

Virtual Forum Safety Guidelines

The Learning Network is dedicated to providing a safe, respectful, and inclusive Virtual Forum. These safety guidelines apply to Forum organizers, speakers, and participants within the Forum sessions, in addition to communications pertaining to the Forum (e.g. on social media). There is no place at this Forum for harassment or intimidation based on race, religion, ethnicity, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, appearance, or other group status.

Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- Deliberate misgendering or use of dead names
- Racial microaggression (brief and commonplace verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative slights and insults toward a person (e.g. I can't understand this person, their accent is too strong) and macroaggressions (obvious or overt system-wide comments, acts or slights)
- Use of slurs and other dehumanizing language
- Doxing (posting or threatening to post personally identifying information like addresses and phone numbers)
- Discriminatory “jokes” and language
- Intentionally disruptive behaviours (e.g. interrupting speakers, spamming, trolling)
- Sexually objectifying or harassing comments
- Bullying
- Threats or acts of violence

The Learning Network reserves the right to remove anyone who engages in harassing behaviour from the Forum. If you notice this behaviour, please report it by either sending a Zoom chat to all panelists if you are comfortable or privately reaching out to the Learning Network team by emailing gbvln@uwo.ca.

Forum-at-a-Glance

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2025 | 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM ET

FIRST PART

Virtual Forum Welcome

Traditional Opening Ceremony

Led by: Elder Gloria Thomson (Office of Indigenous Initiatives – Western University)

Restor(y)ing the Balance: Indigenous Understandings of Restorative Justice

Presenter: Janice Makokis (University of Windsor)

SECOND PART

Restorative Justice and Gender-Based Violence: Exploring Principles, Practices, and Challenges

Panelists: Kate Crozier (Community Justice Initiatives), Wyome Dion (Healing to Wellness Court), and Nermin Karim (North Shore Restorative Justice Society)

Moderator: Dr. Berivan Kutlay Sarikaya (OCASI – Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants)

Grounding Exercise Workshop

Facilitated by: Jazz Kamal (Inferno Movement)

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2025 | 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM ET

FIRST PART

Virtual Forum Welcome

Traditional Opening Ceremony

Led by: Elder Gloria Thomson (Office of Indigenous Initiatives – Western University)

Fireside Chat: What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now!

Presenters: Nneka MacGregor (WomenatthecentrE) and Dr. El Jones (Mount Saint Vincent University)

SECOND PART

Transformative Justice in Action: Reimagining Gender-Based Violence Support and Accountability

Panelists: Jenna Forbes (Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Services Society), Dalya Israel (Salal Sexual Violence Support Centre), and Misanka Mupesse (Social Worker and Sex Educator)

Moderator: Sami Pritchard (YWCA Toronto)

Traditional Closing Ceremony

Led by: Elder Gloria Thomson (Office of Indigenous Initiatives – Western University)

Session Details

Day 1 – Tuesday, February 4, 2025 | 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm ET

Restor(y)ing the Balance: Indigenous Understandings of Restorative Justice

Presenter: Janice Makokis, University of Windsor

This presentation aims to bring forward an Indigenous understanding of restorative justice, shedding light on Indigenous practices, laws, philosophies, and worldviews that have shaped these approaches. By examining the origins of restorative justice within Indigenous communities, this presentation will highlight the deep connections between justice, healing, and balance. Participants will enhance their understanding of restorative justice in the work of addressing gender-based violence (GBV), rooted in Indigenous knowledge and ways of being. In addition, this presentation will facilitate a conversation to re-imagine how we might shift our understanding of restorative justice to a decolonizing praxis to dismantle colonial power.

Learning Objectives:

- Bring forward an Indigenous understanding of restorative justice
- Highlight the origins of restorative justice based in Indigenous practices of laws, philosophies and worldview
- Enhance understanding of restorative justice in the work of addressing GBV, rooted in Indigenous knowledge and ways of being
- Raise awareness of how we can shift our understanding of restorative justice toward a decolonizing praxis to dismantle colonial power



Janice Makokis is a nehiyaw iskwew (Cree woman) and mother to son Atayoh Kan Asiniy (Spirit Rock) Makokis from Onihcikiskwapiwin (Saddle Lake Cree Nation) of Treaty No. 6 Territory in what is now called Alberta (Canada). She is an Indigenous legal scholar, an Indigenous rights advocate and a treaty educator. Currently, she is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Windsor. She was appointed the Ianni Legal Scholar in 2021, at Windsor Law School. She has also worked with various Indigenous Nations in the area of Treaty advocacy and protection, the development and implementation of Indigenous laws and land based Indigenous education and governance initiatives. She is also a co-producer of a film entitled “*Awasisak Our Future*” which tells the story of a group of treaty walkers who embark

on a learning journey and have conversations about the importance of Treaties, the treaty relationship, treaty obligations and the work required for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to work together for the betterment of future generations. Janice also serves as a board advisor for the Yellowhead Institute (Toronto Metropolitan University), an Indigenous led research and education centre.

She has worked for Federal and Provincial Governments and First Nations in the area of law, policy, governance and First Nations issues. She has been an advisor to tribal councils and First Nations advising on matters that impact upon First Nations rights and jurisdiction. Her greatest learning came in working with residential school survivors in the independent assessment process (IAP), as part of the residential school settlement agreement. She is also a sessional Faculty at the University of Alberta in the Faculty of Extension’s Indigenous programs, the University nuhelot’jine thaiyots’j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills (a former residential school), and Yellowhead Tribal College’s Indigenous Governance program. She is part of a University of Alberta SSHRC Research project

called “Just Powers” which is an inter-disciplinary and community-engaged network of research projects focused on climate justice issues. The project “Just Powers” focuses on creating socially just approaches to energy transition and a livable future for all. She frequently does presentations to law schools, law firms, universities, businesses, companies and many organizations about Indigenous Treaties, Indigenous advocacy, Indigenous nationhood, reconciliation and Indigenous politics and self-determination. She holds a B.A. in Native Studies (minor Political Science) from the University of Alberta, an M.A. in Indigenous Governance from the University of Victoria and an L.L.B (Bachelor’s of Law Degree) from the University of Ottawa.

She has been involved with International Indigenous advocacy work through various International bodies and United Nations mechanisms to advance the discourse on Indigenous People’s rights. She served as the co-chair/ co-coordinator on the North American Indigenous Peoples Caucus (NAIPC) from 2013-2016, a voluntary Indigenous body that makes recommendations to the agenda items that are addressed by the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Janice has also drafted submissions to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and attended the UN CERD on behalf of First Nations. She has been a rapporteur at international meetings with her involvement in the NAIPC. Janice has spent the past 25 years learning about nehiyaw (Cree) ways of being and laws from Elders and Indigenous knowledge keepers. She participates in activities/ education initiatives that help advance the struggles of self-determination; Indigenous governance and the recognition of Indigenous Treaties in Turtle Island (now called North America). She is passionate about anti-racism, transformative justice, decolonization initiatives, cultural resurgence and revitalization efforts.

Restorative Justice and Gender-Based Violence: Exploring Principles, Practices, and Challenges

Panelists: Kate Crozier (Community Justice Initiatives), Wyome Dion (Healing to Wellness Court), and Nermin Karim (North Shore Restorative Justice Society)

This panel aims to explore the application of restorative justice within the context of addressing gender-based violence (GBV), with an emphasis on the foundational principles and diverse influences that shape this approach. The discussion will dive into the practical application of restorative justice in GBV related work, focusing on how practitioners center GBV survivors in a trauma-informed way and take concrete steps to ensure safety throughout the process. Additionally, the panel aims to clarify common misunderstandings about restorative justice and explore ways to educate the broader community about its benefits and limitations. The panel will also consider the future of restorative justice, identifying key areas for growth and improvement within the GBV sector and related fields.

Learning Objectives:

- Gain insight into the journeys and worldviews that shape restorative justice practitioners’ approaches, including the foundation and influence of Indigenous teachings and practices.
- Learn how restorative justice can be applied in the context GBV, with a focus on trauma-informed practices and the steps taken to center survivors’ safety and well-being throughout the process
- Understand common misunderstandings about restorative justice, as well as key opportunities for growth and improvement in how restorative justice can be better applied within the GBV sector and related fields.



Kate Crozier (She/her) is the Interim Executive Director at Community Justice Initiatives (CJI). Before CJI, Kate dedicated much of her career to supporting individuals impacted by violence. Along the way, she worked with criminalized youth, homeless women, and sexually abused men—experiences that deepened her understanding of how systemic failures often lead to criminalization rather than the support people deserve. Over the past two decades, she has spent 10 years in the Violence Against Women (VAW) sector and 10 years in restorative justice. This journey has allowed them to address the impacts and root causes of gender-based violence while coordinating community-based projects and partnerships between CJI and other organizations.

Kate Crozier holds an M.A. in Leadership from the University of Guelph, a transformative experience that equipped her to lead and support teams through some of the most meaningful work they have ever known. Being part of the restorative justice movement inspires her daily because it provides a powerful framework for addressing both personal and systemic issues through learning and support. One of the most rewarding aspects of this work is collaborating with people who prioritize meaningful accountability, community building, and responding to the unique needs that arise from harm. Outside of work, Kate is passionate about CrossFit and loves encouraging others to experience its challenges and rewards.



Wyome Dion, nehiyaw iskwew, from Kehewin Cree Nation is a mother to two beautiful children, social worker/good relationships worker and a justice advocate for Indigenous communities. She is currently completing her Indigenous Masters of Social Work Degree with University nuhelot'jne thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills located just outside of St. Paul, AB. She has worked in the justice field for a number of years in different capacities working with victims of crime, restorative justice practices and now in her current role as the coordinator for the Healing to Wellness Court in St. Paul, AB. The Healing to Wellness Court emphasizes utilizing restorative justice working with individuals, families and communities that addresses root causes of harm, trauma and addictions. Transformative justice work is around reconnecting to identity, community, language and relationships. Justice that is rooted in ceremony and healing.



Nermin Karim is the Director of Programs and Operations at North Shore Restorative Justice Society (NSRJ). As a lawyer, she worked in family law, mostly with women leaving abusive relationships, and in poverty law. She held the position of manager of NSRJ's Restorative Response Program for almost 5 years. Her success in resolving sexual assaults restoratively led her to pursue her Master of Laws focusing on the use restorative responses to gender-based violence (GBV). In 2024 she worked with a colleague on a research project funded by the Law Society of BC, interviewing experts from all over the world who use Restorative Responses for GBV. The results of that study are expected to be released in 2025. Nermin's recent publication, titled "A Criminal Resumé – BC's Unjust Disclosure", addresses BC's misuse of non-conviction information (UBC Law Review 57:1). Nermin is a mother of four adult children who is constantly spamming her family with photos of sunrises and sunsets!

Grounding Movement Workshop

Facilitator: Jazz Kamal, Inferno Movement

This workshop introduces simple and effective techniques to manage tension in the body and allow energy to ground and flow. Participants will practice grounding, restoration and self-centering through playful movement, tapping exercises, and breath and energy work.

“I eat, live, breathe my practice and every interaction with my clients is sacred. I am deeply committed to helping remove limiting beliefs around their physical abilities, and educating, so my clients can truly step into their most capable, aware selves.”



Jazz Kamal is a Holistic movement coach based in Toronto and is the owner of Inferno Movement. Her practice combines her background in combat sports, athletic training, energy work, body integration and restoration, and trauma informed coaching with a lens of constant learning and exploration. She works outside the parameters and structures of the status quo built into the fitness industry. Jazz’s training style looks at the person as a whole human, not just a body to be trained. This is her commitment to the body’s evolution through holistic movement.

“We make the Mind safe, so the Body will respond, and the Spirit can express authentically”

Inferno Movement embodies the primal and sophisticated expressions of human physical ability. It is the celebration of our uniqueness and the unification of mind, body and spirit. It ignites the fire that propels personal evolution and helps lift perceived boundaries. It is an honest commitment to being a better version of oneself daily. It aims to return “birthright” able bodied movements such as running, jumping and throwing.

The Inferno Movement Tribe is an ever growing community of all ages, bodies and life experiences, and each one of them are Warriors in their own right. Together, we are becoming stronger, smarter, and better than yesterday.

Session Details

Day 2 – Wednesday, February 5, 2025 | 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm ET

Fireside Chat: What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now!

Presenters: Nneka MacGregor (WomenatthecentrE), and Dr. El Jones (Mount Saint Vincent University)

Transformative Justice is a framework developed in the United States by Black women and people of colour. It takes into account the myriad ways in which various systems, especially the criminal legal system, fails to provide any semblance of justice for those who have been harmed, or accountability for those who have caused harm. Transformative Justice seeks to respond to violence in ways that do not reproduce harm, rather focusing on interventions that bring about individual and community accountability, healing, safety, resilience and prevention.

The gender-based violence sector's continued reliance on the criminal legal system fails to address the inherent continuum of trauma that many who navigate it face. Some view it as a 'soft on crime' alternative, without a proper understanding of the vision and goal of the Transformative Justice process. The aim is to create communities of care where violence does not occur in the first place, but when it does, to support those who have been harmed in finding safety and healing. For those who have caused harm, the process also seeks to foster connection and accountability, so that they do not harm others in the future.

Transformative Justice starts with an understanding of the complex and nuanced experiences of many communities who are targets of state-sanctioned racial and gendered violence, especially Black women, girls, gender-diverse, and trans individuals, people living with a disability, those engaging in sex work, immigrant and racialized newcomers, and migrant workers. It continues by creating space for individuals to define what justice looks like for them and supports communities to build capacity to better support each other, as they cannot rely on the police and the courts to keep them safe.

Learning Objectives

- Define what Transformative Justice is and its role in creating community and individual care and accountability
- Disrupt / debunk the myths about the carceral system as the only/best solution to address violence and provide justice
- Identify skills needed to engage in Transformative Justice processes
- Provide tangible examples of how to hold space for each other in our personal, professional and community interactions.



Author, poet, journalist, educator, and advocate. **Dr. El Jones** is all these things and more, an outspoken activist, thinker and writer whose strengths converge in her spoken word performances.

A respected poet, Dr. Jones was two-time National Slam champion in 2007 and 2008, Poet Laureate of Halifax in 2013-2015, resident of the International Writing Program at University of Iowa in 2015, and poet in residence at University of Toronto Scarborough in 2021.

What defines her achievements is a commitment to activism and community advocacy to highlight inequities and redress injustices. The recognition of her performances, teaching and political commitment testifies to the exceptional influence she has exercised during the Black Lives Matter movement and the expansion of Black scholarship in Canadian academia.

Currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political and Canadian Studies at Mount Saint Vincent University, Dr. Jones has taught at Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia Community College, and Saint Mary's University. In 2017-19, she was appointed to the 15th Nancy's Chair in Women's Studies, an illustrious position in feminist studies. She is also well-known in Wolfville: between 2012 and 2014, she taught five courses in Women's and Gender Studies at Acadia.



Nneka MacGregor, LL.B. is co-founder and Executive Director of the Women's Centre for Social Justice, better known as WomenatthecentrE, a unique non-profit organisation created by and for women, trans, and gender-diverse survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). A Black Intersectional abolitionist feminist, international speaker, and Transformative Accountability/Justice practitioner, Nneka is an expert advisory panel member of the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability and sits on several Boards and committees, including the Federal Advisory Council on the Federal Strategy Against GBV. She co-founded the Black Femicide Canada Council, and her research focuses on sexual violence, and the intersection of strangulation, Traumatic Brain Injury and GBV. She received the 2019 PINK Concussions Award

and the 2020 YWCA Women of Distinction Social Justice Award. She was recently appointed one of two 2024 Activists-in-Residence (AiR) at the University of Guelph, in Ontario, Canada.

Transformative Justice in Action: Reimagining Gender-Based Violence Support and Accountability

Panelists: Jenna Forbes (Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Services Society), Dalya Israel (Sala Sexual Violence Support Centre), and Misanka Mupesse (Social Worker and Sex Educator)

This panel aims to explore the principles and application of transformative justice within the context of gender-based violence (GBV), focusing on how it can be applied to support survivors, those who have caused harm, and communities. Panelists will dive into how transformative justice fosters healing, accountability, and community, emphasizing its potential to challenge traditional justice systems. Through the discussion of key misunderstandings, practical examples, and real-world applications, the panel aims to highlight effective approaches and strategies for implementing transformative justice in GBV work. Additionally, panelists will share lessons from their practice and identify key opportunities for growth, offering concrete steps to further advance transformative justice in the GBV sector and related fields.

Learning Objectives:

- Gain insight into the historical and community-based roots of transformative justice
- Deepen understanding of how transformative justice can be applied within the gender-based violence sector to support survivors, individuals who have caused harm, and communities.
- Identify challenges and opportunities for growth in transformative justice practices in the GBV sector and related fields.



Jenna Forbes is a proud First Nations woman with roots in the Gitksan, Ts'msyen, and Haida Territories of BC. Jenna was born in Prince Rupert, BC and currently lives in Vancouver, BC.

Jenna is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Vancouver Aboriginal Transformative Justice Services Society (VATJSS) and has now been in this role for 7 years. Prior to this role, she was the Senior Justice Advisor for 8 years. As CEO, Jenna uses traditional Indigenous approaches to support community members in conflict with the law. Primary services at VATJSS include Criminal Diversion; Indigenous Resource Workers within Corrections and local court houses; Gladue Aftercare; and various crime prevention projects. Jenna currently volunteers as a Board Chair Aboriginal Community

Career Employment Services Society (ACCESS), Chair of Urban Spirit Foundation (USF), Co-Chair of the Justice Roundtable for Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC) as well, she is the assigned Representative for the Indigenous Housing Steering Committee (IHSC) at the Metro Vancouver Homelessness Partnership Strategy and sits on the Vancouver Police Department Indigenous Advisory Committee (VPDIAC).

Prior to her work with VATJSS, Jenna gained significant experience in community-driven organizations including the development of the Recreation Department at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society, Managing Coordinator of Kivan Boys and Girls Club and the Child and Youth Leader for the Vancouver Parks Board.

In 2016, Jenna acquired her Indigenous Business Certificate through UBC's Sauder School of Business, which has helped her immensely create strong business strategies for VATJSS. Over the years, she has also obtained certificates in business writing from Vancouver Community College, Gladue report writing from the Legal Services Society, Facilitation Skills from the Justice Institute and in 2002 completed her 2 year diploma in Therapeutic Recreation. In 2007 she received a service award from the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres for her work supporting Aboriginal youth.



Dalya Israel (she/her) is Salal Sexual Violence Support Centre's (previously WAVAW) Executive Director. Dalya began her journey at Salal in 2002 as a volunteer and later went on to join the Victim Services Program in 2005. For the past 20 years she has had the honour of supporting survivors as they navigated systems after sexual violence and harm while also amplifying survivors' voices in circles of influence in order to make substantive changes that reflect the lived experience of survivors Salal serves. Dalya believes deeply that intersectional feminism, feeding our spirit and connection is the antidote to rape culture and that we must all continue to dream of the world we want for survivors in order to create it.



Misanka Mupesse is a dedicated social worker and sex educator with many years of experience. Specializing in sex education for youth, she creates empowering programs that promote informed decision-making about bodies and relationships. Additionally, she has extensive experience supporting Black communities through grief, providing culturally competent care that honours individual experiences. With a holistic approach that integrates emotional, social, and educational support, Misanka aims to empower individuals and families to navigate life's challenges.

Indigenous Elder



Gloria Thomson (pronoun she/her) is a proud Metis woman with roots in the Northwest (Manitoba). As a Kairos-trained Blanket Exercise Facilitator and former Senator for the Metis Nation of Ontario, Gloria brings a wealth of experience and cultural knowledge to her role. Her journey of discovering her Metis heritage as an adult uniquely positions her to understand the challenges many face in reconnecting to their Indigenous roots.

Currently serving as a Visiting Elder for Metis students at the University of Western Ontario's Office of Indigenous Initiatives, Gloria is dedicated to supporting and encouraging others on their path of cultural discovery. Her approach combines humility, openness and a deep commitment to sharing and learning.

Elder Gloria Thomson will be leading a Traditional Opening Ceremony on Day 1 - February 4 and a Traditional Opening and Closing Ceremony on Day 2 - February 5.

Moderator Biographies



Dr. Berivan Kutlay Sarikaya (she/her) is a Kurdish-Canadian prison scholar and Project Coordinator for the Initiative to End Gender-Based Violence at the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI). Her extensive human rights and social justice work focuses on designing trauma-informed, culturally responsive programs for non-status, refugee, and immigrant women.

She earned her PhD from University of Toronto, specializing in critical prison studies, decolonial feminist theory, and gender-based violence. Her research focuses on the experiences of Kurdish women political prisoners during Turkey's military junta era, exploring gendered colonial violence, criminalization, and revolutionary resistance strategies from a decolonial feminist lens. Currently, she is transforming her dissertation into a book while

advancing interdisciplinary projects connecting Kurdish, Indigenous, and Black feminist activism against carceral colonial violence. An active member of the Kurdish Gender Studies Network, she continues to advance critical conversations on gender, incarceration, and transformative justice.



Sami Pritchard is a passionate and experienced community organizer, advocate and communicator with a deep commitment to anti-gender-based violence work. Much of Sami's career has been dedicated to addressing systemic violence and barriers, working with individuals and communities impacted by gender-based harm and advocating for more equitable, community-driven approaches to justice. Her dedication to creating communities where people feel a sense of belonging, respected and cared for have guided her career and led her to her current role as the Director of Advocacy and Communications for YWCA Toronto – the city's largest multi-service organization serving women, girls and gender diverse people. Through her role she leads the organization's advocacy and government relations work, and advances strategic communications and knowledge mobilization efforts.

Through her work at YWCA Toronto and as a lead of the YWCA Ontario Coalition, Sami has led collective efforts to have the City of Toronto and province declare intimate partner and gender-based violence an epidemic.

Energized by community, Sami is a firm believer in the power of collective action, care and liberation. Her thoughtful, intersectional approach to addressing systemic issues and commitment to building and centering community voices in her work supports efforts to positively influence public policy and government action.

Acknowledgements

This year's Virtual Forum focus and topic were organized in consultation with Nneka MacGregor (WomenatthecentrE) and Janice Makokis (University of Windsor). We thank them for their time, expertise and contributions.

The Learning Network wishes to extend its gratitude to the ASL interpreters from Toronto Sign Language Interpreter Service for their invaluable support. A special thank you goes to the Knowledge Hub team for their key behind-the-scenes support. Additionally, we wish to acknowledge the support and work of CREVAWC's Digital Communications Assistant, Emily Kumpf, for her creative contributions.

Learning Network

The Learning Network is committed to ending gender-based violence through knowledge mobilization that identifies gaps and emerging issues, establishes meaningful collaborations, and values diverse ways of knowing. We develop evidence-informed resources, facilitate Virtual Forums, organize Resource Spotlights, Special Events, co-present Webinars with the Knowledge Hub, and promote Ontario-based resources for the gender-based violence sector and its allies.

The Learning Network works with a Provincial Advisory Group (PAG) made up of dynamic leaders from organizations across Ontario with mandates to end gender-based violence. PAG members provide expertise to the Learning Network on research, practice, and prevention across the continuum of gender-based violence. They also offer unique knowledge on principles of diversity, equity, and accessibility.

[Click here to learn more about the Provincial Advisory Group.](#)



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