



Arts Based Storytelling

Providing a safe and inclusive space for women+ to work through trauma through art

What is the Challenge?

- Education and advocacy for women+ at risk of or fleeing violence
- Provide support that would give women+ autonomy to share their stories
- Empower women+ to take control of their narratives
- Make the issues visible, break down stigma



What is the Prototype?

The Arts-Based Storytelling Prototype:

- Aims to create a safe space
- Is facilitated by trained art therapists
- Provides a space for women to take control of their own narrative



Curated Outings to Galleries



Support Groups

For women+ to share their stories and their art with others who can understand their trauma



Supervised Art Therapy Sessions

To provide support for women+ potentially re-experiencing their trauma



Lectures & Workshops with Artists

How does it work?



Sonya is stuck in an abusive relationship. She feels isolated from everyone around her.



One night, she finds the courage to leave. However, there's still a long road to go to feeling like herself again.



While at the Violence Against Women shelter, she starts talking to a Peer Support Specialist, who gives her a flier for an art therapy program.



Sonya is hesitant but calls for more info. A volunteer, Cheryl, explains that the location is private to protect the participants, gives her the location details, and offers to send her a bus ticket.



Sonya decides to attend a session at VNFC the next week, where she meets Cheryl from the phone call and the art therapist who will be holding the workshop.



As Sonya paints and speaks with the other women, she feels less alone and more empowered to tell her story.



After some sessions, the women have enough art to hold an exhibition to amplify the issue of violence against women and to share their stories.



Sonya decides she wants to volunteer/work with the program to help more women.

Key Learnings, Challenges and Opportunities



Testing & Iterating

- Tested prototype with trained art therapist at Victoria Native Friendship Centre and adjusted workshop to encompass feedback
- Tested with other prototype teams and peers to gather more feedback
- Additional testing sessions will be with women+ who have experienced violence and or homelessness and support workers with art therapy experience
- Positive feedback from participants created a sense that there could be real value



Interwoven prototypes + Learning from others

Through connecting with other prototype teams...

- Received additional art related workshop exercises that other teams had utilised before
- Built potential intersection points for Peer Navigators (PSSN Prototype) to direct their peers to this program

Multi-generational healing



Opportunity for artwork produced to be shared with participants' children to help explain their mothers' journeys.

Key Learnings, Challenges and Opportunities



Time constraints & Capacity

- Difficult to do as much testing as the team would have liked
- Difficult to find people to test with, especially because some of the potential engagements at supportive housing sites were cancelled due to COVID



Art & learning

- Based on feedback, workshops could include art appreciation outings, designed to expose participants to varying forms of visual language that would provide the women with ideas and methods to express themselves.



Power of Art!

Valuable insights from the testing sessions

- Being able to share and articulate their stories can be a powerful tool for healing.
- Being able to share with others who have similar experiences creates a community.

"This process has inspired me to do arts based storytelling on my own journey..."
- Katie W.