



Spring 2019 Newsletter

We create educational opportunities in correctional settings where the experiences of teaching and (un)learning challenge assumptions, stigmatization and inequality.

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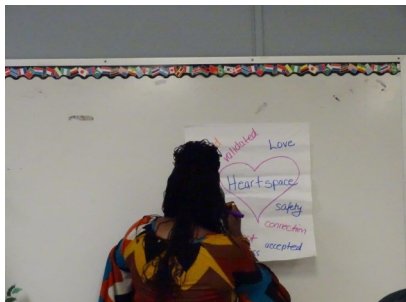
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A Word from the GVI Collective

On March 11th, 2019, the GVI Collective had a community-building workshop which was an opportunity for collective members to prepare for another W2B Instructor Training. It was a wonderful workshop that was facilitated by Rai Reece and Chris Leonard. We focused on the emotions that we bring into a space and how to navigate not only our emotions, but also the emotions of those around us. Since we had some new collective members, they found the experience positive and comforting, as they were new to the circle. We learned new things; not only about ourselves, but also about one another. Some collective members came in stressed, but left relaxed. We gained skills that assisted in our team building, and felt that Rai and Chris honoured the Walls to Bridges pedagogy, with using co-facilitation, circle work, and connecting mind, heart, and holding space.



Our 2019 Instructor Training will be held this year in June. We are excited for this year's training and have begun our planning. We are taking turns co-facilitating activities during our meetings leading up to the training to strengthen our facilitation skills, and to explore new activities that may be incorporated into our repertoire. We are always looking for new openers, readings, and circle activities to broaden our skills and grow as a circle. In discussing readings and how they will apply to experiential learning, we strengthen our passion to bring education to those with barriers of access to education. We are excited for this year's training and look forward to adding to our W2B circle with our new trainees. We are hoping to continue to expand our Walls to Bridges community.



- Jennifer, GVI Collective Member

W2B Canada Community Collective—Lorraine

It never fails to amaze me, even after facilitating countless W2B workshops, how extremely ill-informed folks are regarding POC/PAP (people of colour/people afflicted by poverty) legal rights when embroiled with the systems of justice. At the March 2019 event at University of Toronto's Hart House "The Cycle of Criminalization", we led participants through real-life scenarios that cycled the ordeal from arrest to life on the inside to parole, and finally, post warrant. That there are two sets of legal rights, one for the deemed superior race (white privilege) and one for the inferior race (POC/PAP), designed by systems of justice, became evident to the participants as we led them through each phase of the cycle.

Participants were receptive and eager to learn our truths and share their heartfelt feelings of betrayal and determination for change in the safe spaces we created for each other. Circles of trust, adapted from Parker Palmer's philosophy, are grounded in all W2B activities. For us, they represent safe spaces that honour and nurture honesty, and invite the most trustworthy parts of ourselves to be present. This approach, when first introduced to me back in 2011, boldly stripped me of the false identity I had created for myself, and re-created someone that it took me some time getting accustomed to. Suddenly I was fitting perfectly into Maya Angelou's, 'Phenomenal Woman'.

Despite what mainstream media dictates, despite articles by 'experts' on carceral spaces and issues, despite politicians' highfalutin testimonies, it is workshops such as these, that are the real eye-openers.

Lorraine has been part of the W2B student alumni since 2011 and continues to be a phenomenal W2B community collective member through workshop development and facilitation.



Photographs by Melody Chi Lok Chan



W2B Canada Community Collective—Rachel

Hello W2B Network, my name is Rachel and I've been a member of W2B since 2014 after taking my first course at Grand Valley Institution for Women (GVI). Walls to Bridges literally saved my life. I was in a very dark place when I learned about W2B and did not think I would ever return to academia. It was through this first class that I felt valued for my opinion, as a whole person. For the first time in a long time I regained my confidence and had hope for the future.

Following this course, I joined the W2B GVI Collective and assisted with the development and facilitation of workshops and Instructor Trainings for three years. During my first training in 2015, I met my current PhD supervisor Jennifer Kilty and committee member Sandra LeHalle.

I was released from GVI in 2017 and have been actively engaged in the W2B Community Collective ever since. I collaborated with other Collective members to deliver workshops and information sessions in academic and community settings around Ontario. Last year marked my first outside training day for the Annual Instructor Training in Kitchener, which was very exciting for me. Since my release, I have also assisted with interviewing potential training candidates.



Last September, I moved to Ottawa to begin a PhD in Criminology at uOttawa. My thesis research is based on my experience of incarceration, focused on the mental health of women prisoners and the conditions of confinement. I have been busy working as a teaching assistant, research assistant, and speaking at various conferences and events about my experiences. My Ottawa W2B colleagues (Jen and Sandy) and I co-authored a book chapter about uOttawa's first W2B class. I was invited to give a guest lecture on W2B to an undergraduate class in Criminology this January. On May 9-10, a few Collective members and I facilitated a workshop at the "De-carceral Futures" conference at Queens University in Kingston. I have also been invited to speak at the Elizabeth Fry Annual Conference in June and will be recording a 1-hour episode on the CBC Radio show "Ideas" this summer based on my current studies and past experiences.

I am eternally grateful to W2B for helping me move past my trauma and rediscover my academic potential. I am looking forward to continuing this valuable work with W2B and facilitating access to education for prisoners, which is a life-changing opportunity.

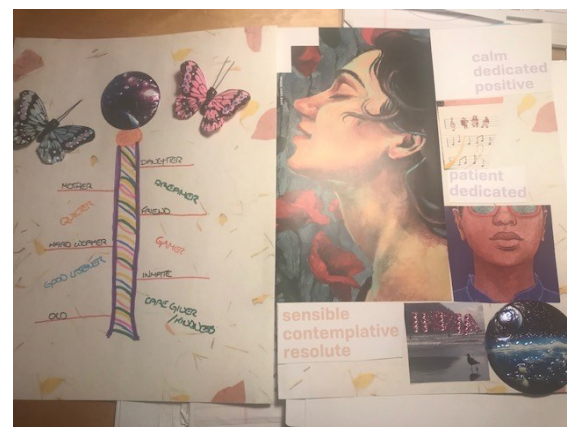
W2B Across Canada

University of British Columbia

We are working hard to get the first Walls to Bridges course this September (2019) at Fraser Valley Institution for Women. Nyki, Shay (both W2B Collective Members), and I are working hard to try to make this happen.

The small university where I work, Capilano University (CapU), has said yes to supporting a course for 8 inside students (and of course 8 outside students). We have been overcoming many hurdles (MOUs, waiving 'reliability clearance' for outside students, donated textbooks, etc.), but the latest hurdle is securing funding. A few colleagues have started a go-fund-me campaign to raise funds - our goal is about \$5000. While University of British Columbia is fully in support of the W2B program at the women's prison, they want to wait until September 2020, and we are eager to have a course earlier so Nyki is available to support!

At the moment, Nyki and I are co-facilitating a non-credit class called 'Art and Social Justice Education' - with about 8 students from the minimum, where Nyki currently resides. We are reading Parker Palmer this week and have read an article on disabilities - in our discussion we came up with 'environmental disabilities' and 'imposed disabilities' to capture how prisons are disability-producing sites. We read another article on identities - it was important to list our many identities especially in a place that seeks to strip one's identity - then we practiced tableaux. Nyki is training me and the other students - it is uncomfortable, it is unlearning, and it is decolonizing. We will surely be ready for W2B in September 2019!



- Kirsten (for Nyki and Shay)

University of Ottawa

Jennifer Kilty and Sandra Lehalle took part in the 5-day Walls to Bridges training during the summer of 2015. In 2018, they secured a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services allowing for W2B courses to be offered in both the fall and winter semesters (6 courses in total). They have received a tremendous amount of support from uOttawa faculty and administrative staff to ensure the success of the W2B program.

Professors Kilty and Lehalle jointly created the course Othering and Criminal Justice. This Field Research course offered by the Faculty of Social Sciences, explores the subject of “othering” and the divisive mentalities that pit groups in opposition to one another (us versus them). It focuses on the deconstruction of the other in relation to race, gender, class and poverty in the criminal justice system and the community.

In this course, students are encouraged to examine local, national and international cases/topics and to discuss the othering process as it occurs in these cases. Students are asked to consider how we (individually and collectively) actively engage in othering, how it works, as well as what we are trying to protect/defend by othering. Students learn through in-class activities, readings, group discussions, journaling and other writing assignments, and individual and group assignments based on academic and non-academic (popular culture) literature and materials. Notably, students’ commitment to the course philosophy is apparent in weekly discussions and in their amazingly creative final group projects.

Sandy and Jennifer created an in-depth written W2B evaluation form which allowed them to get feedback on the content and format of the course, its activities and methods of evaluation, the student’s class experience and expectations, and the impact and future of the program. They have established a W2B uOttawa Collective for all alumni of the program who want to stay involved. At this point, the primary goals of the collective are to keep the W2B community alive by maintaining ties through in-person meetings and snail mail (for those who remain inside); to improve the program and its pedagogical content; to contribute to the recruitment and selection of students (inside and outside).

Congratulations to Jennifer and Sandy for being awarded the 2019 Excellence in Teaching Award from the University of Ottawa’s Faculty of Social Science for the development of their W2B course!

“This course means a lot for me: it gave me the opportunity to be a student again and to learn so much from all these different individuals. They were great students and teachers. They understood very quickly the meaning, the pedagogy and the philosophy of the course. From Jen and I's first experience, I knew that my lesson plan was just a plan as it was impossible to know what would unfold, how the activity would turn out as they were the ones making the content of the course, I was just there to give them a safe space and the pedagogical tools to create knowledge on specific themes. That doesn't mean that it was easy (W2B is really not an easy class!). Everybody was challenged one way or another; some by the academic readings, some by the fact that all students had to handwrite their reflexive assignments on a notebook (no computer, no spell check), some by the obvious orange marker of othering, some by the issues we discussed, some by the very specific place we are in, and some by their shared experiences. By going through all our challenges (individual and collective) we did change ourselves. We built bridges with others, but also within ourselves. And I am so thankful to all of my students/teachers for that.”



- Sandra, W2B Instructor



Photograph by Melody Chi Lok Chan

"Circle pedagogy is foundation. The experience will transform your life, just as you will transform the lives of those women [at GVI]. For now, take the deepest breath you can manage and when you exhale, remember your purpose is bigger than your imagination."

- Denise in response to a W2B instructor
W2B Community Collective Member

Thank you Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation (KWCF) for your support & all other folks who have given generously to the W2B program!



Visit our website www.wallstobridges.ca for W2B publications, articles and further information.

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WE ARE ONE
NOT THE OTHER