



## A Word from Shoshana & Savage

Tân'si and hello everyone,

It has been one and half years since our last newsletter! Since then, we celebrated W2B's 10th anniversary through a series of virtual symposiums. Thanks to all of you who joined as presenters, facilitators and/or audience participants. It was a wonderful testament to the work and passion of so many of our instructors, alumni, and supporters.

As most of the network is aware, Shoshana will be transitioning out of the position of Director and is thrilled to announce that Savage Bear - W2B instructor and Director of the Indigenous Research Institute at McMaster University - will be taking over. We are taking our time with the transition, working side by side as co-directors, until the summer of 2023. Savage is joined by Sara Howdle both of whom are now active members of the Grand Valley Institution for Women (GVI) collective and are rapidly learning the ways of our collective and collaborative work! Speaking of the GVI collective, we have finally been able to meet in person! We hope to be able to resume instructor trainings in 2023. We have such a backlog of educators from across Canada and Europe wanting to experience the W2B Instructor training. Stay tuned!

W2B classes have started again! What an inspiring start to our W2B fall semester. It's so good to see people again in real life. Once most of the restrictions were lifted, it took people no time at all to get back to teaching their W2B courses. Fall 2022 courses include Edmonton Institution for Women & the University of Alberta, South West Detention Centre in Windsor & University of Windsor, Stony Mountain Institution & University of Winnipeg, Collins Bay Institution in Kingston, Ontario & Queen's University, and Grand Valley Institution for Women & Wilfrid Laurier University in Kitchener, Ontario. As a way to enhance our connections across regions and provinces, we have been visiting W2B classrooms and learning and sharing with students and instructors. We hope these engagement visits will contribute to strengthening our network and enabling us to further share experiences, stories and leadership within our programs.

*Savage:* I'm honoured to be a part of the leadership team and really excited to work with everyone to continue the growth of W2B. We have come from some pretty challenging times and I think this demonstrates once again how resilient and responsive we all are as we navigate our work with W2B. Sara and I have come from Amiskwaciywaskahikanihk (also known as Edmonton) and worked with Edmonton Institution for Women and the University of Alberta to build a strong W2B and prison education there. We are excited to continue this work on a national level with the W2B Canada staff, instructors and alumni collectives!

In Solidarity,  
Shoshana Pollack and Savage Bear

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

### In this Issue

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| A Word from Shoshana and Savage                                | 1   |
| W2B GVI Collective - Community Engagement through the Pandemic | 2   |
| W2B Community Collective - Ontario                             | 3   |
| B.C. Collective - Collective Connections in Distant Times      | 4   |
| Special Issue of Journal of Prisoners on Prisons (JPP)         | 4   |
| Artists' Corner  | 4-5 |



Left - Shoshana, Right- Savage

## GVI Collective - Community Engagement Through the Pandemic

The W2B GVI Collective, the steering committee for the Walls to Bridge Canada National office at Grand Valley Institution for Women in Kitchener Ontario collaborated with two community organizations during the third year of the pandemic. There were incredible challenges for the GVI Collective operating with outside and inside members during the continued pandemic restrictions placed within the prison system. Despite the disjointed hybrid meeting space, where half the members were masked and spread out in a room trying to communicate with other members projected in 'ZOOM' squares on a screen, the GVI Collective persevered to create, learn, and stay connected.

### Blanket Project with Art Not Shame



“

*"It had been a long time since I had done any knitting, but the project was framed so there wasn't any pressure to get it right. Each square could be totally unique and yet we could all work independently knowing it would be stitched together to create something offering comfort and warmth. During a time when we had to be apart, it was a fantastic way to do something together."*

*- W2B GVI Collective member*

”

Special mention through the Art Not Shame website went out to the Walls to Bridges GVI Collective for participating with Art Not Shame's Knit-a-thon / fundraiser (October 2021-March 2022) asking knitters and crocheters of all ages and levels to sign up as individuals or teams to make squares that were then sewn into full sized blankets and donated to the *Guelph/Wellington Community Health Van*. As a multidisciplinary arts organization, Art Not Shame offers free and pay-what-you-can creative community-engaged programming. *Walls to Bridges* created two entire blankets in the organizational colours, red, black and white.

*"Participating in the knit-a-thon was an enlightening experience. I cannot knit, but I crochet daily. I completed a few squares to be sewn together within the blanket. Once I saw the blanket completely assembled it amazed me that so many different styles and techniques, by varying levels of experienced people, could create such a beautiful piece. I offered to crochet a border around the finished piece, and I am so glad I did. While crocheting the edge of the blanket, I was able to truly admire each and every block within... I was able to see our group, once again, woven together in unity. I could feel the energy within and was so happy to be part of such a wonderful cause." - Melissa, GVI Collective Member*

### Skill Development Workshop with The Making-Box

Fatigued navigating the COVID-19 pandemic, the GVI Collective sought out new learning opportunities to help us re-energize and reconnect. The Making-Box, a learning and team-building organization generously donated a training workshop called 'Teaming with Joy', in August 2022. Creative and adaptable, our talented facilitator Hayley Kellett adapted the workshop to virtual realities allowing both inside and outside collective members to participate through a hybrid format. Our collective participated in a fun series of collaborative activities inspired by positive psychology and applied improvisation. The training workshop, full of laughter, was a success and described by participants as 'informative', 'playful', 'energizing', and 'inspiring'- creating a deeper sense of togetherness and a collection of new positive shared experiences. The GVI Collective has been incorporating the new activities as 'openers' and 'closers' within our bi-monthly meetings and will incorporate these community building tools in future W2B Instructor Trainings.

- Tori, W2B Program Coordinator



## W2B Community Collective - Ontario (W2BCCO)

Now that COVID restrictions are largely lifted, W2B Community Collective – Ontario is bursting at the seam with activities, and we are here for it!

We haven't been sitting around twiddling our thumbs though. Instead, we have facilitated online workshops at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU), 10th Anniversary Symposium and Humber College. Added to this list are guest speaker appearances at University of Toronto – St George and introductory speaker at the Lawrence Hill presentation as part of the W2B 10th Anniversary symposium. Some of our members were voluntarily interviewed by the media - one such occasion that stood out was Tiina and Rachel's interview with Desmond Cole on Prisoner's Justice Day (August 10). Meanwhile, Rachel and I represented W2B at the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) Housing Summit in Montreal on September 23 – 25, 2022.

Denise, Rachel, Tiina and I were part of the P4W 20+ Years Later Gathering in Kingston on October 21 – 23, 2022. Rachel also serves as a current member of the P4W Memorial Collective and was one of the speakers on the panel discussing Carceral Logics and the Limits of Reform. Upcoming events we are looking forward to are continuing workshops at OISE, Sheridan College, American University of Paris (France), University of Waterloo, and Train-the-Trainer workshops.

- Lorraine Pinnock, W2BCCO Coordinator

## W2B 10th Anniversary Symposium Presentation

The 10th anniversary of Walls to Bridges occurred in 2021, right in the middle of the pandemic lockdown restrictions. This meant that any events we planned on facilitating had to be hosted on an online forum, and it would not be possible for anyone to visit the inside collective members at GVI; making communication and collaboration difficult. True to W2B fashion, we worked together inside and outside prison walls to overcome these barriers and organized an engaging and innovative series of webinars to celebrate ten years together.

Our Ontario based alumni collective spent months together on Zoom calls to plan our session, which was held during the evening of January 20, 2022. The W2B Community Collective - Ontario (W2BCCO) facilitated the first session of the evening entitled: What our bodies know: Experience and embodiment in the shared space of W2B. We decided to focus on embodied learning in recognition of the challenges everyone was feeling throughout the pandemic due to isolation and the inability for us to physically share space together. We also wanted to acknowledge the embodied trauma many people were coping with, which was exacerbated by the coronavirus, social isolation, and emergent mental health issues. A central component of W2B pedagogy is experiential learning with our whole selves, while building a sense of community. Embodied learning, experiential activities, and strengthening social connections are extremely difficult via screens. We met this challenge head on.

We introduced our session with drumming while each facilitator read a brief statement or question. Next, we facilitated an activity, inviting people at home to respond to a question through solo writing, song, or artistic expression. Each facilitator took turns posing a different question, such as: "How do past experiences, whether traumatic events or accumulated body skills and wisdom, show up in our bodies in the present?" or "How do the power dynamics in a group or in an institution impact our bodies?" These questions were shared in advance with some current prisoners who were able to join via audio. We invited the audience to share their responses on screen or through the chat feature. Everyone seemed to engage with this activity, and we received written reflections, poems, sketches, and a brief song. Our session ended with another short drumming song.



Perhaps the most unique aspect of this evening, was throughout each session a graphic design artist created colourful, vibrant, images and phrases to capture the content of the session in a live graphic recording. The images that emerged from this event were fantastic, and formed the basis for articles that will appear in a special issue of the Journal of Prisoners on Prisons featuring ten years of W2B. Personally, I am excited to see what the next decade of this amazing program will bring!

- Rachel Fayter, W2BCCO

## BC Collective - Collective Connections in Distant Times

### W2B 10th Anniversary Symposium Presentation

The BC Collective presented as part of the 10th Anniversary Symposium celebration. In a virtual circle, the BC Collective engaged in an interview, exploring the history, tensions, and rewards of their collective journey amidst the uncertainties of the pandemic, in addition to all of the joys and struggles of new collaboration.

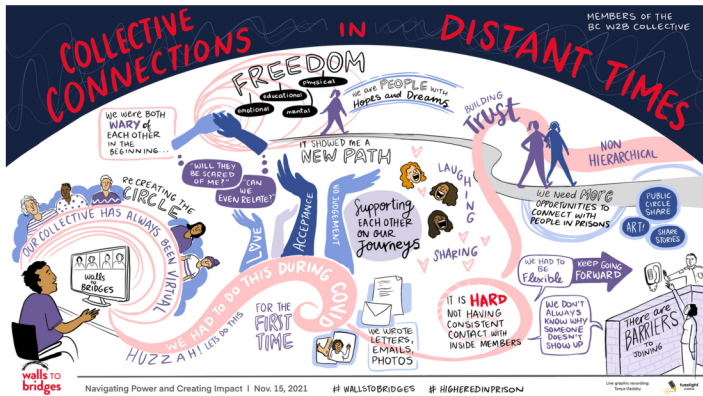


Photo: Graphic Recording of "Collective Connections in Distant Times" (November 15, 2021) by Erica Bota, Fuselight Creative

### W2B Impact Evaluation

In the spring, a group of students from University of British Columbia (UBC), launched an Impact Evaluation to assess feedback regarding the Walls to Bridges program. A sampling of 20 formerly incarcerated people and people who don't have incarceration experience, were interviewed and asked to speak about their transformation, if any, after their experience with the Wall to Bridges courses. An advisory board guided the team and lent a helping hand to ensure the most accurate results were collected. Lorraine (W2BCCO), Nyki (W2B – BC), and I, Cathee (W2B – BC), have been involved in the research.

As a junior researcher, funded through a grant, I have gained knowledge of writing an evaluation guide, conducting ethical and unbiased interviews, coding interviews, and other specialized strengths. We are currently analysing the data collected and soon will be able to disseminate the information regarding our results. This is a very exciting evaluation with amazing responses, insights and unexpected outcomes. Spoiler alert...overwhelmingly positive feedback from most!

- Cathee Porter, W2B BC Coordinator

## Special Issue of Journal of Prisoners on Prisons (JPP)

Building off of the learnings from the symposium series in 2021-2022 celebrating the 10th anniversary of Walls to Bridges, a special issue of the Journal of Prisoners on Prisons (JPP) will be published in 2023. Co-edited by Shoshana Pollack and Christine Mayor, the issue will feature 10 articles written by W2B students, alumni, facilitators, and collective members across Canada.

Topics will include:

- collaborative art- and film-making created by the BC and the GVI Collectives during the pandemic
- the role of Indigenous Elders and ceremony in W2B
- reflections on key moments in the classrooms and tips for facilitating in carceral spaces
- the impact of the pandemic and other limit situations on learning, the role of emotions in pedagogy
- solidarity efforts between Black and Indigenous alumni and facilitators in furthering racial justice, Land Back and Black Lives Matter movements, and confronting colonialism and white supremacy in W2B and in prisons
- and more!

True to W2B values, the issue will centre the lived experiences of those currently or previously incarcerated, reflections on how relationships across bridges and different circumstances can be built and maintained, and wholistic ways of knowing.

## Artists' Corner



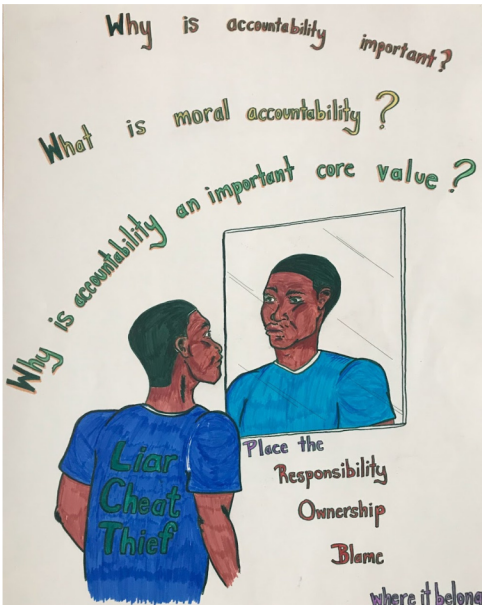
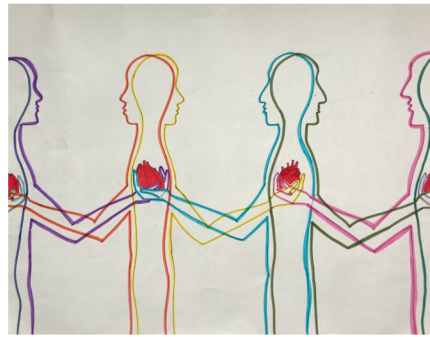
Final Class Project - University of Windsor/South West Detention Centre



Artwork by Coco, W2B Alumni



# Artists' Corner Continued



Final Class Project - Queens University/Collins Bay Minimum (Kingston, ON)

- Top Left by Nathan
- Top Right by Lakshmi
- Bottom Left by C.J.
- Bottom Right by Laavannya

Final Class Project - Wilfrid Laurier University / Grand Valley Institution for Women (Kitchener, Ontario)



**WE ARE ONE**  
NOT THE OTHER

Copyright © 2019 Walls to Bridges, All rights reserved. <http://www.wallstobridges.ca/>  
wallstobridges@wlu.ca

Walls to Bridges Faculty of Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University 120 Duke St. W. Kitchener, Ontario,  
N2H 3W8