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COMMUNAUTÉ DE
PARTAGE DE SAVOIRS



A Word from Savage

Tân'si my Friends and fellow Bridgers,

As we shift gears to welcome the 2024 season, we are also growing and shifting in Walls to Bridges. As W2B heads into its second decade, I continue to work closely with the wonderful people of the GVI Collective, the Ontario Community Collective, Tori, and Sara to ensure we continue our critical work. In fact, Tori, Sara and I meet regularly (in the summer) on rivers; these are always good places to hatch plans! In response, Walls to Bridges is continuing its efforts to train more instructors who represent and reflect incarcerated populations. Currently, we are exploring governance models that reflect our W2B values of collaboration, diversity, and non-hierarchical agency. In the new year, we will be holding an online forum for all Walls to Bridges alumni, students, and facilitators to organize and create a governing structure for W2B. We will lead in concert with folks with lived experience and those in academia. More on this as we progress!

We had a fantastic W2B instructor training session in June. As with most everyone across the planet, COVID really messed with our plans and this training was delayed three years! A huge thanks to the organizers and helpers: our GVI Collective, the Ontario Community Collective (OCC), Tori, Shoshana, Sara, Elya, Peter, and Susie. This training was incredibly memorable, and it demonstrates clearly that our team has not lost their energy, determination, and passion for this work. Next year's dates are tentatively set for May 25-29, 2024.

Walls to Bridges has grown exponentially in the past decade, we have more trained instructors and more classes running than ever before. This national program is creating headlines and has developed a considerable reputation for change making. It is no secret that Indigenous and Black populations in carceral settings are growing exponentially and more and more, our classes are reflecting this growth. In response, Walls to Bridges is shifting to have more trained instructors who represent and reflect our incarcerated populations. As there are limited spaces in each training session (15-17 trainees per year) our team will be prioritizing BIPOC applicants to reflect our Inside students. We would also encourage those of you teaching (and who will be teaching in the future) to consider the expansion of Black and Indigenous content to your courses. Not only does this shift represent the changing needs of our students, but also honours many of our academic institution's mandates to fulfill the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Report outlining the 94 recommendations. There are many resources online that respectfully integrate Indigenous content and 'Ways of Knowing'.

We transitioned from a Wilfrid Laurier to McMaster 'basecamp' and have a new listserv (w2b-l@mcmaster.ca) and email! You can email Walls to Bridges at info@wallstobridges.ca. Emails are monitored regularly, and we will try get back to you as soon as possible with your questions and inquiries. We also have a new logo to share with you! W2B is growing and we now have French speaking classes happening.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to thank Shoshana Pollack once again for her immeasurable support and dedication to Walls to Bridges; this program continues to be life-changing for so many of us.

ekosi,
Savage

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

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Tori (left) and Savage (right)

W2B GVI Collective

2023 W2B Instructor Training



After a few years of what seemed like the longest intermission ever, of feeling like we might soon run out of creative ideas of how to keep things not just going, but alive, much like our circles have been throughout the years, we finally made it! Coming into the W2B Instructor Training this time around felt unlike previous years - it felt like a breath, and the heart of our collective was restored. It was as if we did not miss a beat, as if the last few years did not even happen, or matter. Except it did, because the admiration and gratitude for every member of our circle, present, and extended was extremely apparent. The Collective and Trainees together created a very memorable experience, and without the perseverance and resilience of the Collective and the tremendous amount of patience and persistence from the trainees none of it would have been possible. I could not be more proud of the amazing group of people I get to collaborate with and every single trainee that came out

- Terri, W2B GVI Collective Member

Art Not Shame Workshop

Community partner, *Art Not Shame*, provided a creative and collaborative team development workshop for the W2B GVI Collective in October 2023.



W2B Ontario Community Collective (W2BCCO)

One of numerous events facilitated by the W2B Ontario Community Collective (W2BOCC) this year included a forum in BC, "The Decolonizing and Transformative Pedagogy of Walls to Bridges Prison Education" hosted by the School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University, and funded by the David and Cecilia Ting Foundation. Lorraine Pinnock (W2BOCC Coordinator), Tiina Eldridge (W2BOCC Member), and Cathee Porter (W2B BC Coordinator), lead an insightful workshop. Special thanks to senior lecturer Danielle Murdoch who attended the W2B Instructor Training in June, 2023 and made this event possible.

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"Thank you so much for this session – I was not aware of this program before this session and was so grateful to have the opportunity to learn about it in such a warm and lovely way. I think you did a great job of starting the sparks to build a fire around this kind of work."

- Attendee Testimonial

"Thank you so much Danielle and all for this really unique and inspiring session..... I was feeling a bit uninspired about teaching. The session yesterday brought back my own spark."

- Attendee Testimonial

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Photo by Sofia Ortega

W2B Presentation at McMaster University

In October, McMaster students from Dr. Amber Dean's grad class *Public Mourning in Canada: What makes a Life Grievable?* participated in an interactive, W2B- style workshop. A member of the W2B GVI Collective, Nichelle, teamed up with a member of the W2B Ontario Community Collective, Melissa, to create a dynamic W2B experiential presentation. Many thanks to Dr. Dean who collaborated with W2B and made this event happen. Dr. Dean was one of the professors who attended the 2023 W2B Instructor Training in June.



University of Ottawa & Centre de Détention de Hull

We are extremely happy to announce that a Walls to Bridges course was offered for the first time ever in French, in May and June 2023, at the *Centre de Détention de Hull* in Quebec. It is also the first time that a W2B course has been offered in a provincial institution in Quebec, and would not have been possible without the support and wonderful collaboration of the warden, her team, and the person in charge of facilitating the project within the institution. In order to translate the meaning and the values of W2B in French, the program was named *Communauté de Partage des Savoirs*, or ComPaS for short. This intensive course took place in the maximum security ward over seven weeks, bringing together six inside students and six outside students. The course, entitled “Representations of Justice and Equity in Popular Culture”, was offered by the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ottawa, and allowed us to explore complex questions through shared and complimentary interests related to music, theater, video games and more. For example, we were able to unpack social representations in students’ favorite songs, in advertisements and even in video games, which we had access to – with the support of the institution. We were also lucky to be able to co-facilitate this course together, something that we feel grateful for and that we feel benefitted both us and students. Finally, we also want to say that this would not have been possible without the help and support of the W2B community and the national team, with special thanks to Shoshana Pollack, Savage Bear, Tori Poe, and Sara Howdle. Thank you! We feel that this moment will be a stepping stone for W2B/ComPaS, one that could allow the program to expand in francophone networks in Canada.

Sandra Lehalle and Alexis H Truong
Department of Criminology

W2B in the Community, Virtually?



Photo Mark Russell Suezor

Facilitate a Walls to Bridges course virtually? The idea has seemed to me anathema. But during Covid, I offered two such courses, bringing together individuals on parole with Toronto Metropolitan University students.

And therein, we discovered that the W2B magic can happen even in and through those little black boxes! Indeed, the 2021 course, which was on “Belonging, Exile, and Freedom” was the most successful W2B course I’ve witnessed (since beginning facilitating W2B courses in 2012) in terms of enabling conversation about highly charged, typically polarizing issues: participants remarked that there was something about being both present to each other and also in one’s own safe space that seemed to allow a genuine listening, caring and sharing even across significant and difficult differences; they found they forged community, solidarity, affection and respect for each other, not through consensus, but through being let into each others’ most personal worlds.

Nonetheless, in the 2022 course, participants were excited and relieved to be able to move from the online platform to meeting in-person (and discovering we all had legs!) part way through the course. In celebration of being let out of Covid lockdown, our final event was a graffiti alley tour, and a few hours in the Lyceum Art Gallery, where the art gallery owner invited us into the backroom to share a meal [pictured]. Virtual black boxes might facilitate certain kinds of vulnerability, sharing and new insight, but there’s nothing like breaking bread together and sharing a joyful adventure.

-Kym Maclaren



Photo by Star Spider

Stony Mountain Penitentiary & University of Winnipeg

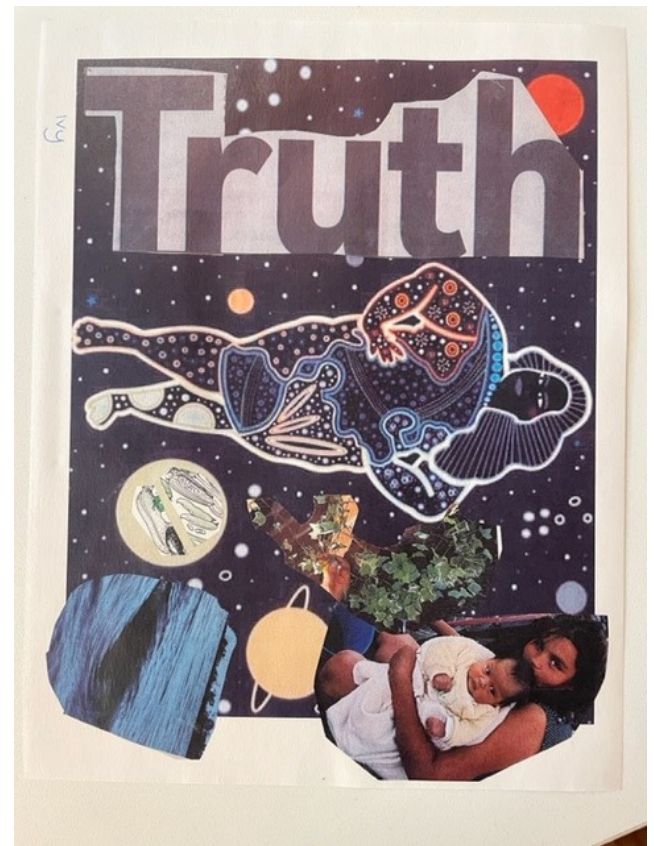
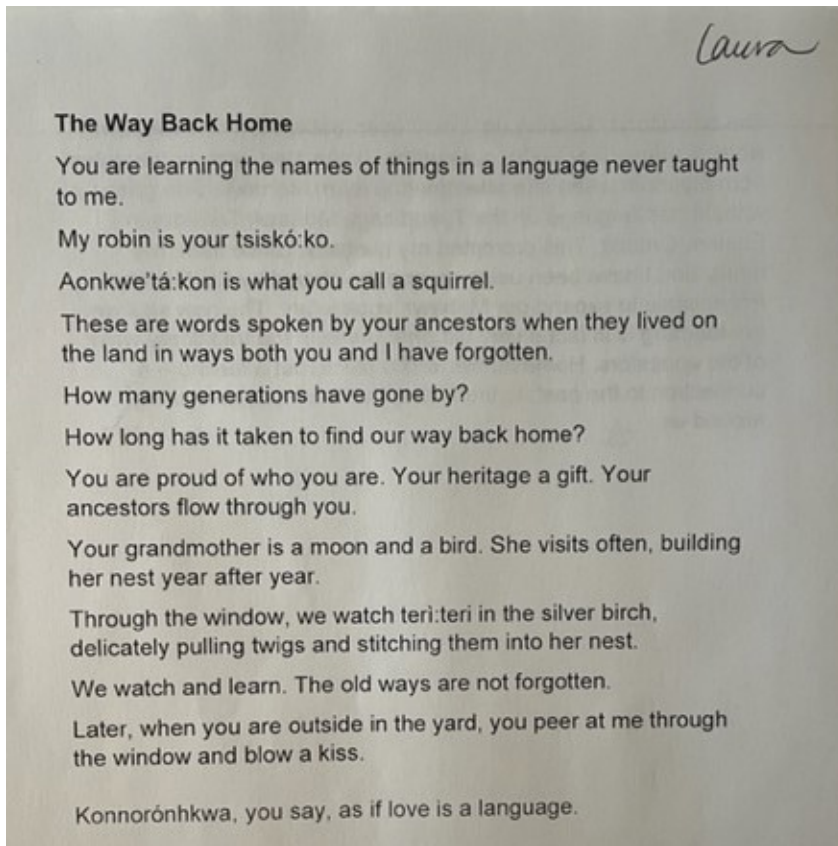
Fourteen students gather in a circle preparing to go on stage. They are all wearing light blue shirts, a costume for some and a uniform for others. Nervous energy fills the space, but along with it excitement and a sense of accomplishment. They are all in this together, they will have each other's backs, and in the end they will take a bow as a group. This pre-performance moment just happens to be inside a correctional institution, but in this moment they are all actors focused solely on taking the stage.

I had the privilege of teaching an Applied Theatre course at Stony Mountain Institution in the spring of 2023. Applied Theatre uses theatre for social change and focuses on community-based work. Despite the fact that most of the students were new to theatre, the creativity of the group was incredible, but so was their passion and commitment. After doing solo oral storytelling and group devised performance projects, the class brainstormed a final presentation to share with an invited audience. There were many options, but ultimately, they wanted the piece to be about the Walls to Bridges program and its value. By performing a piece that models the power of Walls to Bridges, the students wanted all those attending to see just a snapshot of what they had experienced over six weeks of work together. They all played inside and outside students interchangeably in the performance, thus the blue shirts for everyone. In the same way that they were all equal in the classroom, they wanted the audience to be unable to differentiate between them. They chose to end the performance by each speaking from the heart about what Walls to Bridges had done for them. The common theme was that it was life changing.

-Hope McIntyre
Department of Theatre and Film

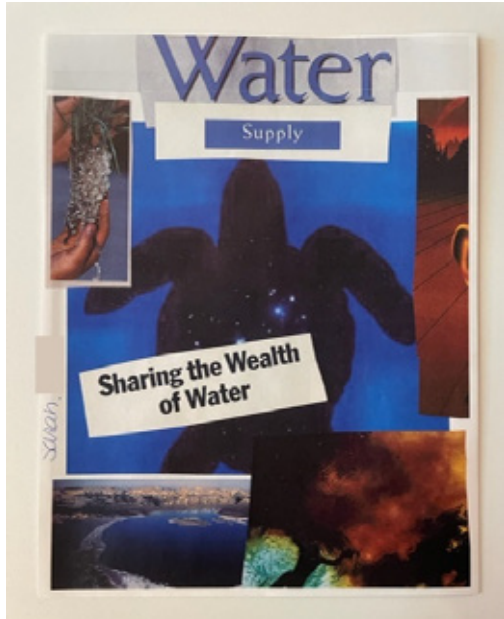
Artists' Corner

Grand Valley Institution for Women / Indigenous Studies Department, McMaster University



Images from W2B Course - Indigenous Resurgence co-facilitated by Dr. Savage Bear and Sara Howdle (PhD Candidate)

Artists' Corner Continued



Images from W2B Course - Indigenous Resurgence co-facilitated by Dr. Savage Bear and Sara Howdle (PhD Candidate)

Edmonton Institution for Women (EIFW) & University of Alberta

Pages from W2B Student Project: Newsletter called "The Conditional Release" - created by students in the 2023 winter course, *Practicum in Indigenous Studies (History and Creation of Prison Newsletters)* based on their study of past prison newsletters by the Native Sisterhood and Brotherhood.

Co-facilitated by Dr. Nancy Van Styvendale & Dr. Allison Sivak
Faculty of Native Studies

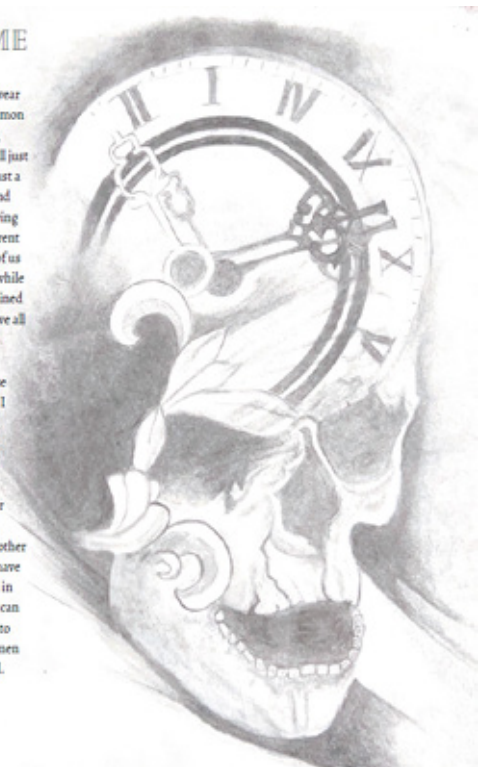


By Tavia G.

DOING TIME

Underneath the masks we wear we all have one thing in common may we be white, asian, indigenous, or black we are all just skulls. At our core, we are just a skull covered with flesh and muscle. We also are all serving sentences, all of them different down to the second. Some of us are at the countdown stage while others do not have a determined date of release. Either way, we all have time on the brain.

I chose this piece because it represents something I believe each and every one of us can relate to. I hope with that said we can be reminded of our similarities rather than our differences, and we can empower each other throughout our days. We have strength in numbers and in "Doing Time" together we can strengthen each other into stronger independent women and help each other heal.
All My Relations



By Victoria L. M.

WE ARE ONE
NOT THE OTHER

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