

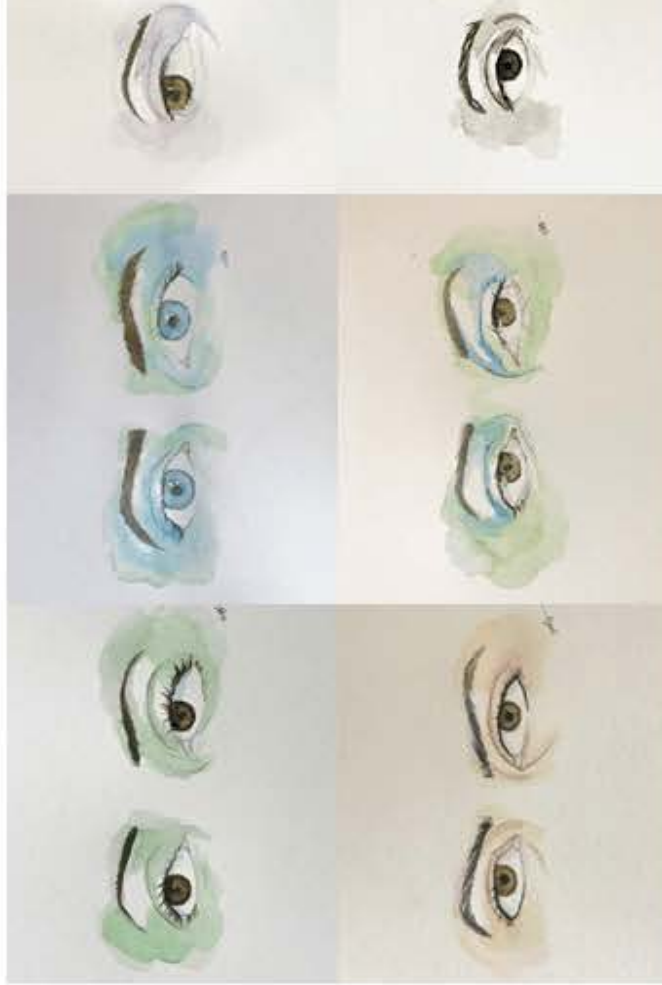


NEWCOMER  
WOMEN'S  
SERVICES  
TORONTO



# SISTER & SISTER

IMPACT REPORT  
May 2020



# SISTER<sup>2</sup>SISTER

NEWCOMER WOMEN'S SERVICES TORONTO

IMPACT REPORT  
May 2020



**NEWCOMER**  
WOMEN'S SERVICES  
TORONTO

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**Judy Fantham**  
*Executive Director*

“ We know we are making a difference. More importantly, we know our Sisters are making a difference ”  
**Judy Fantham**

**N**ewcomer Women’s Services Toronto was created for newcomer women by newcomer women in 1983 with the vision that strong women will build strong communities when they can draw upon the strength of the collective.

We have long sought to educate women, so they have the English language skills that are the passport to integration and the job skills to find employment as well as direct them to much needed basic resources.

Sister2Sister was designed to propel them further: to help them self actualize by knowing their rights as women, knowing how to recognize and support sisters who are suffering from abuse, learning how to activate their communities around a cause and building a network to advance their careers. We are proud of Sister2Sister. We know we are making a difference. More importantly, we know our Sisters are making a difference.

In this report we will tell how, and they will tell why. Welcome to Sister2Sister.

Judy



**Sara Asalya**  
Program Manager

“ I wish such programs existed when I was a newcomer to Canada!! It is absolutely thrilling to see the graduates of the first cohort growing and developing their sense of self and confidence ”

**Sara Asalya**

**S**ister2Sister is a leadership development program that is nurturing immigrant women to become advocates and peers supports in their communities for victims of gender violence and domestic abuse. The program supports 20 immigrant women in their leadership development and civic engagement journey.

The program launched on October 3rd, 2019 and targeted 20 immigrant women from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. We used a client-focused and needs-based approach in designing and developing this program to better serve our target communities.

This program introduced key concepts, debates and practical strategies and skills in leadership, community development, civic engagement, intercultural competency, equity, diversity and inclusion, digital storytelling and domestic and gender-based violence.

The general aim of this program is to develop engaged leaders and activists to become agents of change in their communities.

# PROGRAM VISION & MAIN THEMES

“ Without any exaggeration, this program can be life-changing, especially for newcomers who want to have a more productive life ”

**Program Participant**

The program works to reduce social isolation and gender violence by building leadership skills, self-sufficiency and mutual support among at-risk multicultural/multi-ethnic immigrant and refugee women.

Program activities include counselling, information and referral, volunteer and leadership training, workshops, support groups, community development and violence prevention programming.

The Sister2Sister program will build the capacity of newcomer and immigrant women with a curriculum tailored to their needs and aspirations through education (“information is power”), critical thinking, practice telling and sharing their stories, experiential learning and mentoring.

The aim is to leverage their voice and personal power as formal and informal leaders in their communities to build social networks and awareness of gender violence that prevents abuse and supports its victims.

## S2S

### MAIN THEMES

	Identity Exploration & Self-empowerment
	Leadership Development
	Career Advancement & Mentorship
	Sense of Purpose & Belonging
	Capacity Building & Community Engagement

# REDEFINING LEADERSHIP FOR IMMIGRANT WOMEN



*“ I was deeply moved by the participants’ personal journeys; this was the most uplifting part of the program for me because of the intimate nature of these experiences and the courage of such an exposure ”*

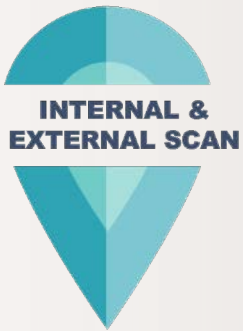
**Program Participant**

We redefined what leadership looks like for immigrant women based on the needs assessment and the community consultations that we conducted prior to the design of the program curriculum.

We concluded that in order for these women to be advocates and leaders in their communities, they need to be able to advocate for themselves first. Therefore, we developed these three leadership pillars for immigrant women: Self-advocacy, self-empowerment and self-actualization.

The program focused on these pillars. We took the participants into a self-discovery journey that allowed them to not only understand and realize their needs, but also their full potential.





- **Internal and External Scan**

An environmental scan was conducted to better understand strength, weakness, opportunities and threats of implementing such a program. One on one meetings were conducted with NEW internal staff, and external community members from the settlement sector and other non profit organizations.



- **Stakeholder Engagement**

- Community consultations: Throughout the program we conducted two community consultations. The first one took place in May 2019, when we invited 15 community leaders to identify gaps and needs as well as best practices to design this program. The majority of the participants in this consultation identify as immigrant women who had first hand experience of the challenges faced by immigrant women.
  - The second consultation took place in December 2019. The main goal of that consultation was to solicit feedback from our stakeholders about strategies to improve the program and sustain it.
- Building partnerships: We reached out to different organizations seeking their support in the program. We successfully engaged 15 organizations and they became our partners and supporters in this program.
- Guest speakers: we invited and successfully secured more than 20 community leaders to join us in the program as guest speakers. The aim of having these speakers was to expose our students to subject-matter experts and to expand their network.



- **Needs Assessment**

A needs assessment was conducted to better understand our target population's needs, challenges and aspirations.



- **Program Development & Curriculum Design**

The program was developed based on the feedback we received from our environmental scan and community consultations. Program vision, outcomes, success metrics, evaluation criteria as well as the curriculum were developed with our target population's best interests in mind.



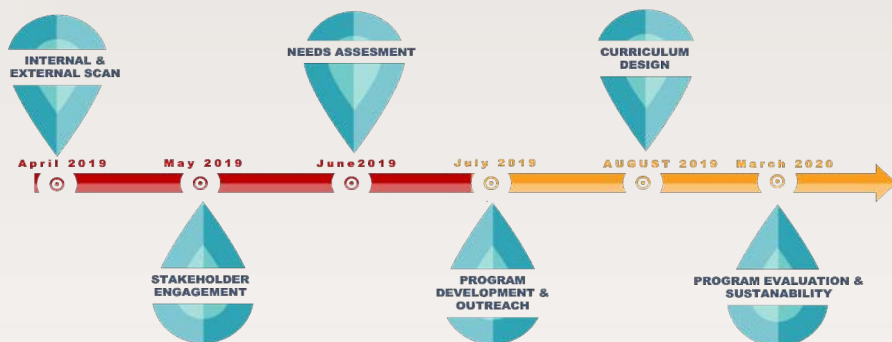
- **Outreach Strategy & Targeted Population**

We developed an outreach strategy to recruit participants. Originally, we were aiming for 10 participants and landed on 20. We received a lot of applications and accepted 20 to join the first cohort of this program. Our target population was immigrant women from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. We were intentionally inclusive and accepted applicants regardless of their immigration status.



- **End of Program Evaluation & Recommendations**

The program officially ended on March 2019. The original plan was to conclude the program with a gala and graduation ceremony for program participants. Unfortunately, we had to cancel the gala due to COVID-19. An end-of-program evaluation survey was sent to the participants to measure the impact of the program and to see if the program had met its outcomes.



S2S

HIGH-LEVEL TIMELINE

We took a holistic approach in designing and delivering the program activities to ensure that immigrant women are learning, growing and developing their skills and network. The program activities included the following:

## 1. Educational Activities and Training

- i. Leadership and community development
- ii. Civic action and democratic engagement
- iii. Gender-based violence prevention programming
- iv. Storytelling and public speaking
- v. Advocacy and allyship

## 2. Counselling and Support Groups

- i. One on one counselling sessions
- ii. SMART Goals

## 3. Experiential Learning

- i. Photo-voice project
- ii. Seeing Eye to Eye project

## 4. Students Awards and Acknowledgement

- i. Sister2Sister leadership award
- ii. Sister2Sister advocacy award
- iii. Sister2Sister self-actualization award

## 1. EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND TRAINING



**i. Leadership and Community Development:** One of the main themes in this program is leadership development. Our sisters learned how to develop their leadership through diverse workshops, training sessions and by connecting with and listening to experts in a given subject. Below are some of the activities related to leadership and community development that we successfully organized in the program.

- Women in leadership panel discussion
- Immigrant Women Leadership and Civic Action Symposium led by Olivia Chow in partnership with the Institute of Change Leaders
- Activating immigrant women leadership workshop in partnership with Milieu Strategy and Consulting Inc.
- Mentorship workshop in partnership with the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council.



Below are the learning outcomes of the leadership theme and the above mentioned activities and sessions.

- Explore the barriers facing immigrant women in different leadership positions
- How to empower immigrant women to take on leadership roles
- How to lobby the government to create more inclusive, welcoming and safe spaces for women
- Learn about different coaching techniques
- Acquire knowledge of the principles of strategic thinking and how to strategize.
- Recognize the importance of self and identity exploration and acceptance.
- Acknowledge the role mentorship plays in the leadership development journey



## 1. EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND TRAINING

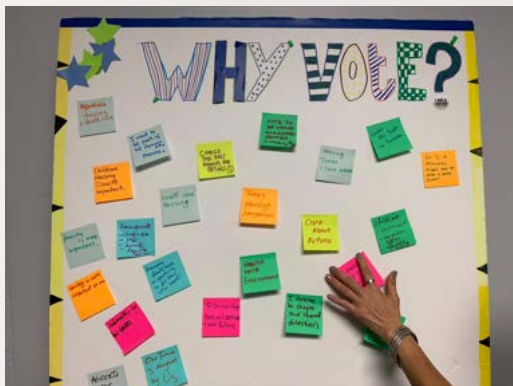
**ii. Civic Action and Democratic Engagement:** It was very important to educate our participants about civic and democratic engagement in light of the 2019 federal election. During the sessions below, participants learned how to engage in civic life, how to have a say in the issues that matter to them, how to advocate for specific causes and how to mobilize their communities around a specific cause.

Below are some of the sessions we organized for this theme:

- Civic and Democratic Engagement workshop
- Vote Pop-Up simulation session in partnership with Democratic Engagement Exchange at Ryerson University
- Education and awareness about the importance of voting.
- Canadian election and voting system 101

Below are the learning outcomes of this theme:

- Develop knowledge about the Canadian democratic and voting systems.
- Know your rights and the issues that matter to you.
- Understand the different ways to be politically engaged.
- Be aware of the barriers to civic engagement.



## 1. EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND TRAINING

“ I identified how I developed “fear of failure” from childhood abuse and oppression. That gender-based violence is NOT okay, in any way, shape or form, at any time, or place in our lives ”

“ I can conceptualize abuse and oppression, and how to share it with others. I am now more encouraged to have an open discussion with my father about his behaviour towards his family ”

### Program Participants

**iii. Gender Based Violence Awareness and Prevention Programming:** Immigrant and refugee women are at a higher risk of being victims to gender based violence due to many factors such as language barriers, lack of access to information and resources, social isolation, low socioeconomic status, and precarious immigration status to name a few. We provided our participants with educational resources on how to address and respond to gender-based violence, and prepared them to be advocates for immigrant women who are facing domestic abuse.

Through promoting a culturally sensitive approach and response to gender-based violence, we developed the following sessions:

- A workshop about addressing and responding to gender based violence in partnership with the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI).
- A public forum as part of the 16 days of activism to end gender based violence organized by our own events committee and led by our students. The sold out event was in partnership with Newcomer Students’ Association of Ryerson and Millennial Women in policy and was attended by approximately 70 participants

Below are the learning outcomes of this theme/sessions:

- Have an understanding of what gender-based violence means and looks like.
- Be aware of how to address and respond to it.
- Learn about the resources available in the community.
- Learn about violence prevention tools and strategies.
- Learn how to elevate women’s voices and how to be allies in preventing violence and supporting women.



## 1. EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND TRAINING

**iv. Storytelling and Public Speaking:** one of the needs identified by our participants is greater confidence in public speaking and in the ability to develop and tell their own stories in public. In our pre-program assessment, about 75% of the participants rated their public speaking skills as poor. Below are some of the sessions we developed for this topic.

- Storytelling workshop focused on self empowerment and identity exploration.
- Memoir writing workshop
- A unique Immigrant Women Toastmaster's program to enhance English proficiency and build confidence in delivering public presentations, in partnership with the Toastmaster's Danforth Chapter.
- Storytelling through art

Learning outcomes of these sessions:

- Learn about the power of storytelling as a public narrative.
- Learn tips and tricks on how to write your personal story.
- Recognize the emotional and psychological side of migration when writing your story.
- Master public speaking and self-confidence.
- Learn how to improvise and think on the spot.
- Engage in constructive debate and feedback.

**“** *The storytelling workshops especially the Toastmaster ones were very educational and engaging. I was encouraged to share my story and received great feedback from the facilitators and my peers* **”**

**Program Participant**



## 1. EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND TRAINING

**v. Advocacy and Allyship** our Participants identified the need to learn about advocacy and allyship, but most importantly learn how to advocate for themselves. Below are some of the sessions we delivered under this theme.



- An introductory workshop about theories of equity, diversity and inclusion
- Anti-Oppression training 101
- Advocacy and allyship session in partnership with YWCA
- Indigenous awareness through a Blanket Exercise session and activity in partnership with KAIROS.
- An off site trip to the “Undomesticated” exhibition in partnership with the Koffler Centre for the Arts.

Learning outcomes of the above sessions:

- Understand the psychological, political and emotional layers that shape our sense of home and belonging.
- Engage in a process of exploration aiming to interrogate systems of power, challenge assumptions, and inspire positive reflection and change in our communities.
- Recognize different advocacy tools and strategies.
- Realize what allyship means and how to be a good ally.
- Have the ability to connect and apply equity, diversity and inclusion

principles to real life examples.

- Build understanding about our shared history as Indigenous and non- Indigenous peoples in Canada.





## 2. COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT GROUPS



### i. One-on-One Counselling and Support Sessions

Throughout the program participants met with the Program Manager regularly for one-on-one counselling sessions. Each of the participants had an individualized personal plan to assist them in reaching their SMART goals. 85% of our participants rated the counselling sessions as excellent and helpful in achieving their goals.

**“** *One-on-one counselling sessions were great and helped me achieve my goal, It was a unique experience to expose our ideas and expectations to someone trustful* **”**

**Program Participant**

## 2. COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT GROUPS



### ii. SMART Goals

- Each participant with the support of the Program Manager came up with one smart goal to work on and achieve by the end of the program. 80% of the participants were able to achieve their goals by the end of the program.



## 3. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

“ Through this project, the sisters were able to find opportunities for growth, understand their passion and strength, create their own safe spaces and challenge oppression ”

**Program Participant**



### i. PhotoVoice Project

One of the unique components of this program is experiential learning. We gave the participants the opportunity to put theory into practice by engaging them in activities such as the PhotoVoice project. This is an art-based project aims to break down barriers and isolation. It is a medium to give immigrant women a platform and voice to express their feelings, emotions, and share their lived experiences.

The sisters were asked to write an essay inspired by a photograph that captured a story, emotion or idea that was important to them. The goal was for them to develop self-awareness and also a collective understanding of the diverse cultural influences that shape our communities.

The women shared drafts of their stories, engaged in an ongoing conversation with their peers and then reflected on the feedback they received. It was an opportunity for them to critically examine their lives' trajectories as well as become aware of any stereotypes and assumptions that were influencing their understanding of either themselves or others.

The sisters were encouraged to share their stories and appreciated each other's vulnerability. The 15 women who participated shared narratives that explore identity, migration and integration, self-actualization, gender-based violence, women empowerment and leadership.

Please refer to appendix B to see the projects.

## 3. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

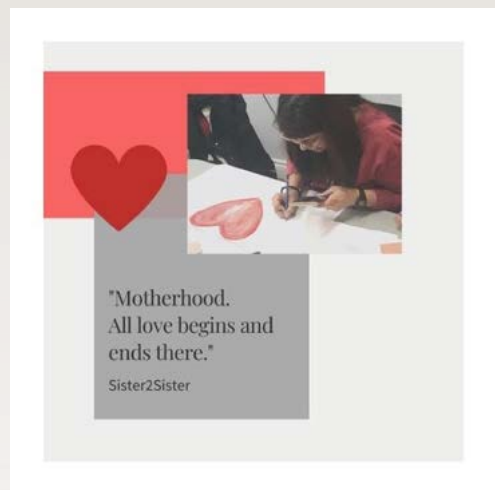
### ii. Seeing Eye to Eye Project

“What I enjoyed most about painting the women’s eyes was getting to know them and their stories,” she said. “While I was sketching, I was also able to listen in on the sessions and hear them talking about their lives. The stories from these powerful women are incredibly inspiring”

Alicia Sanchez, Artist

The Seeing Eye to Eye project is an art-based project documenting the feelings and emotions of the sisters. We partnered with a 16-year old artist Alicia Sanchez who delivered a workshop about “Art as a Form of Communication”. Alicia says “artwork is the visual expression of an idea or experience. It is the language that we use to express ideas/experiences that everyday words can’t express.” During the session, the participants were encouraged to reflect on previous experiences and use art to express their emotions and share their stories. They were also designed campaigns about International Women’s Day and Valentine’s Day using art.

In the second part of this project the artist sketched the sisters’ eyes, then asked them to reflect on the illustrations of their eyes. We used these illustrations in a social media campaign to share the sisters’ stories and to highlight the personal impact of the program.



## 4. SISTER2SISTER AWARDS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We created three different awards to acknowledge the exceptional work of our students throughout the program and the skills they were able to gain and demonstrate in their leadership journey. These awards recognize those who have gone above and beyond in their learning journey, taken initiative, shown passion and an eagerness to learn and have impact in their communities.

### i. SISTER2SISTER LEADERSHIP AWARD

This award is given to a sister who has shown exemplary leadership throughout the program, demonstrated strong initiative in her endeavors and had a clear impact on her community as a result of her actions. The award also recognizes those who motivate and develop the leadership capacity of others and exhibit a high standard of integrity by leading through example. We wish to acknowledge one sister in particular who has demonstrated leadership, vision, maturity and perseverance in her learning and integration journey. This sister will have contributed to a positive and supportive learning environment by encouraging diverse perspectives and opinions.

*“ I became a sister because I wanted to be an effective voice and problem solver for my fellow immigrant women. I want to provide them with effective leadership, guidance and resources to help solve their problems. ”*

**Program Participant**

## 4. SISTER2SISTER AWARDS/ STUDENTS ACKNOWLEDGMENT

### ii. SISTER2SISTER ADVOCACY AWARD

This award is given to a sister who actively contributes to the advancement and development of women beyond the program. The award recognizes those who continuously support and advocate for women in leadership, and actively encourage debate about the importance of gender diversity in the workplace.

The award recognizes those who are fearless and bold in their advocacy and act as a voice to the voiceless. Actively mentor, advise and nurture emerging women leaders. The award is given to those who work tirelessly with educators in their communities to promote the importance of women empowerment everywhere and to advocate for the elimination of gender-based violence.

### iii. SISTER2SISTER SELF- ACTUALIZATION AWARD

This award is given to the sister who is able to create a vision towards a goal, remains focused and navigates challenges to achieve that goal; is able to adjust priorities as needed to achieve the desired goal, is a beacon of positivity in the face of challenges and failures, able to uplift her peers through a positive outlook, Inspires greatness and growth from others. This award is given to those who demonstrated commitment to their life goals through being purposeful, visionary and continuously promoting self-reflection. The award recognizes those who understand leadership from within, they start with themselves to understand what leadership means and how to lead their own lives before leading others.

## S2S

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Recognize their infinite potential
- Recognize their personal growth & achievements
- Recognize the power of storytelling & community building and connection

#### RECOGNIZE

- Identify their strength, weakness
- Identify their career plans and professional goals
- Identify cultural competency and be able to connect across differences

#### IDENTIFY

- Expand their social location, knowledge and skills
- Expand their social capital
- Expand their leadership skills, community knowledge and civic engagement

#### EXPAND

“ The support I received throughout the program changed my life. Because of that support, I have achieved the goal I set for myself at the beginning of the program. I have started a job that is a great fit for me and I created a five-year plan that I am excited about ”

Program Participant

Throughout the program we used qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to better understand the participants experiences and program impact on them. Pre, mid and post program evaluation surveys were conducted. Below are the results from the post program evaluation survey.

The program successfully met its objectives and outcomes. See highlights from the survey below.

- **100%** of the participants are satisfied with the program.
- **95%** of participants rated the program as exceeding their expectations.
- **90%** of participants said the program successfully met their needs.
- **100%** would recommend the program to their friends.
- **100%** said they would participate in this experience again.
- **85%** rated the one on one counselling sessions as helpful.
- Although employment was not an intended outcome of the program, **35%** of participants were able to find employment as a result of joining the program.
- **80%** of participants have met their goals, planning for their future and making changes in their communities.
- **100%** of participants feel:
  - A bigger sense of belonging to their community.
  - More connected to resources and services.
  - Can advocate for themselves and other women in their communities who are victims of abuse.

For full program evaluation, please see appendix A



1. Decrease the program time from 6 months to 4 months as we noticed participants started to lose momentum after four months.
2. Apply a better process in recruiting and selecting participants in the program.
3. Decrease the number of educational activities and allow more time for counselling sessions, self-reflection and group support during the program.
4. Expand the program by creating an advanced Sister2Sister program so participants can continue their learning and acquire new skills.
5. Create a Sister2Sister network where previous graduates and cohorts can meet new cohorts, mentor them and expand their network.
6. Consider applying a condensed format of the program. For example, meeting monthly for two full days instead of weekly. This was one of the feedback given by some program participants as the weekly format didn't work with their work schedule.
7. Create an "off-shoot program" that focuses on the employment and advancement of Immigrant Women that contains many of these same elements and is also tailored to work.



**2** Community Consultations

**15** Partnerships

**20** Participants

**24** Guest Speakers

**1** Public Forum

**2** Panel Discussions

**1** Symposium

**15** Photo-voice Projects Delivered

**20** Workshops & Training Sessions Delivered

**1** End-of-Program Gala

I had the pleasure and honour of speaking with the Sister 2 Sister program students regarding advocacy, resilience and empowerment. My first impression was how well organized, prepared and welcoming the program organizers were. Sara and Judy created a fun yet safe environment where myself and the participants could have an honest and direct conversation. As a guest speaker, I was delighted to experience such a strong group of women who were passionate and engaged throughout the entire session; they asked tough questions and shared impactful personal stories. I left the session yearning to continue these types of conversations. It is imperative that our community continues to foster these kinds of spaces, where we can inspire and empower other women all while building a sense of community and belonging

**Khadra Abdulle**

*Sister2Sister Guest Speaker*

The Sister 2 Sister program is an exciting initiative by Newcomer Women's Services to empower newcomer women, build capacity, and help newcomers realize the strength of their collective and individual voices in Toronto. Newcomer women have a valuable perspective to share that policymakers and community leaders need to hear. It's so wonderful that this type of women-positive advocacy space exists for newcomers

**Jasmine Rezaee**

*Sister2Sister Guest Speaker*

The Sister2Sister program is a critical initiative to empower and build capacity for newcomer and immigrant women leaders. Participants in the program are passionate, smart and keen to contribute to society. This program allows them the opportunity to truly shape their leadership journey. Through engaging in innovative workshops, listening to civic leaders and applying the lessons to their own projects. Participants get a crash course on how to effectively participate in civic life. Through the program, they get to know first-hand how to get the issues that matter to them and their communities on the agenda. Each one of the participants I interacted with had such an incredible vision for their community and broader society. The Sister2Sister program allows to translate the vision into reality. Keep up the great work!

**Anjum Sultana**

*Sister2Sister Guest Speaker*

Building confidence in a new environment is never easy. Having worked with many newcomer women over the years, listening to their stories of self-doubt, vulnerability and anxiety from the pressures of keeping it all together, I was truly impressed and delighted with the empowering transformation the Sister2Sister program participants expressed. I saw the strength and hope in the way they spoke to each other, I heard the confidence and joy in their voices, and hope to see this in many more newcomer cohorts to come. The program was very thoughtfully brought together, strategically guided by the needs and aspirations of the participants, and led by a passionate and capable program team.

**Rania Younes**

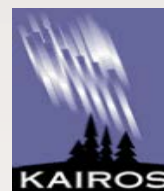
*Guest Speaker*

## Testimonials From the Sisters

- Would definitely recommend the Sister2Sister program to any person who is looking to discover/re-discover themselves, drive a change in their community, build their network and want to also have fun in the process of doing so!
- Sister2sister gave me courage, confidence and resilience as an immigrant to stand-up for myself. It give me the knowledge and tools to achieve my goal. I would recommend all the women to join Sister2sister and have a life changing experience.
- I wholeheartedly recommend this program, especially to newcomers and women in isolation and distress. Thursday evenings were like a breath of fresh air to me.
- An excellent program. I really liked the way external partnerships were brought in to engage in helping us to identify strengths and skills. It was in one of these workshops, that I learned about my fear of public speaking came from being told as a child that I was "ugly and stupid". Before this, it was not something I have ever thought about.
- A great program! You're going to learn about yourself, and you will also discover how much we all have in common. Use the skills you acquire to advocate for the issues you care about."



# OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS



**Appendix 1: Evaluation**

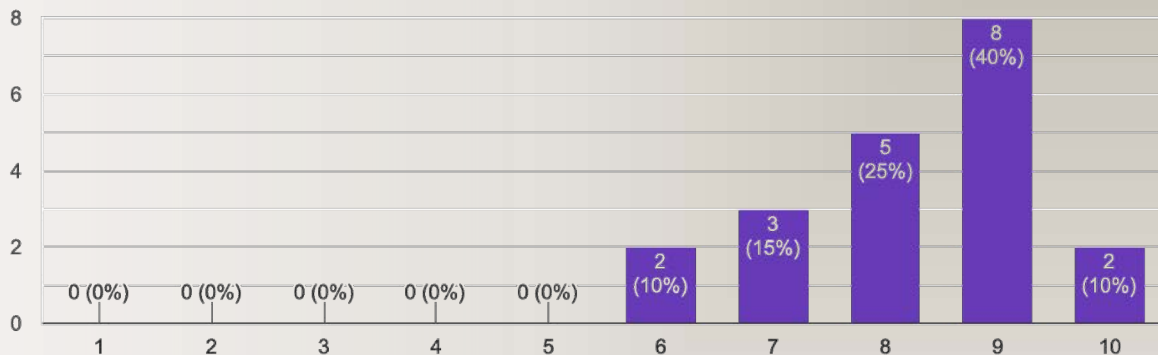
**28**

**Appendix 2: Photo Voice Project**

**43**

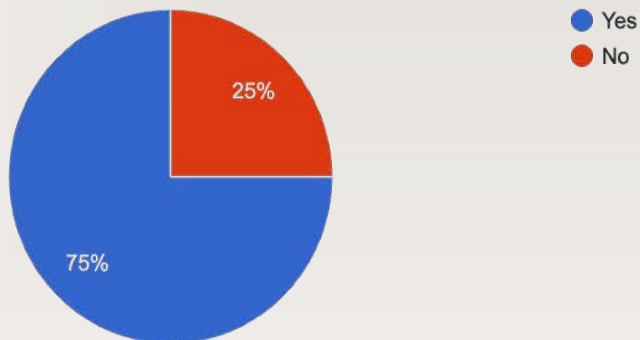
How confident are you in sharing your story in front of others now?

20 responses



Would you consider yourself someone who is politically and democratically engaged now?

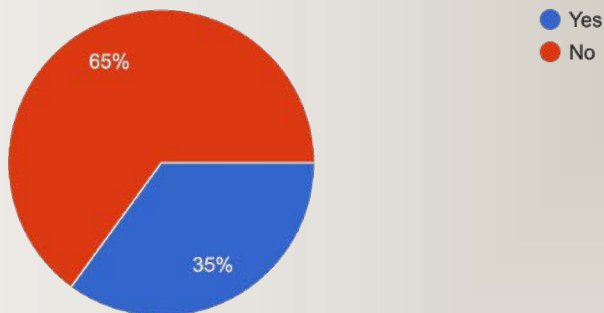
20 responses



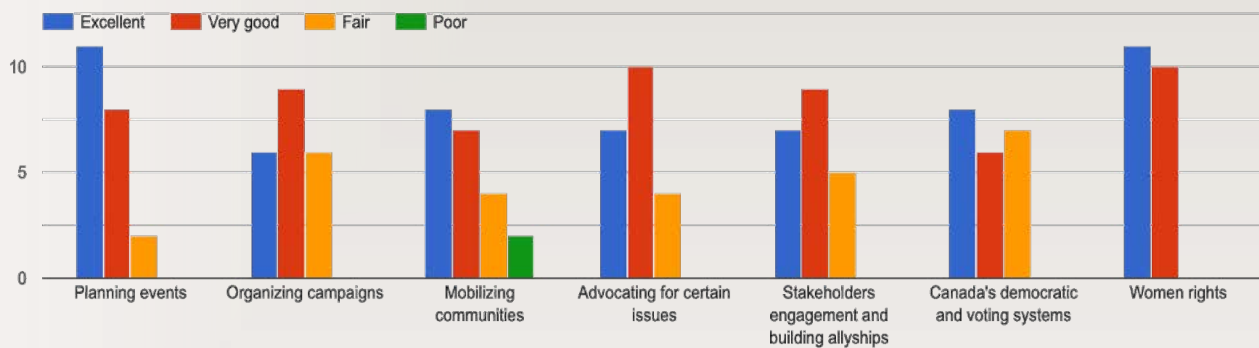


Have you received any gender based violence training before the program?

20 responses

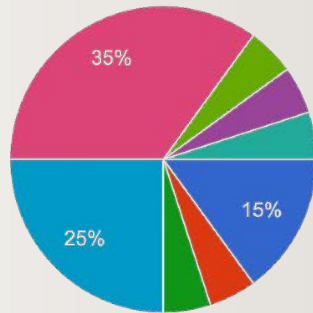


Can you rate your skills, experiences and knowledge in the following areas?



Which session was the most impactful to you?

20 responses

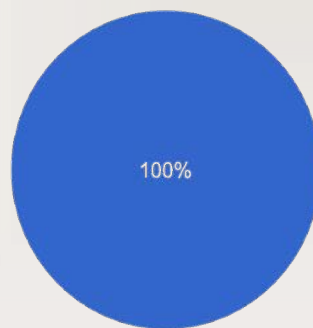


- Gender-based violence
- Civic and democratic engagement
- Allyship and advocacy
- Women in Leadership panel
- Kofflar centre exhibition
- 16 Days of Activism public forum/event
- Leadership summit with Olivia Chow
- Activating women leadership & identit...

1/2

Would you recommend this program to a friend?

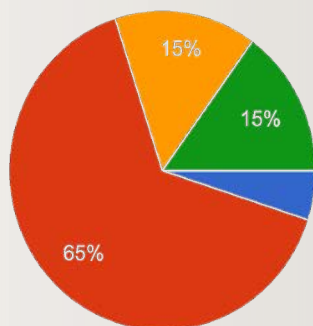
20 responses



- Yes
- No

Which of the following best describes your situation before joining the program? (select one)

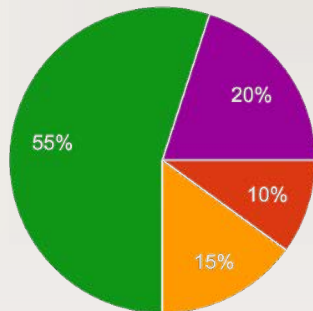
20 responses



- Coping: I am struggling to meet my basic needs
- Getting by: I am building my basic knowledge and resources, but still req...
- Making changes: I am making progress to meet my goals
- Getting ahead: I have met some of my goals and am beginning to feel stable
- Thriving: I am stable and planning for the future

Which of the following best describes your situation now? (select one)

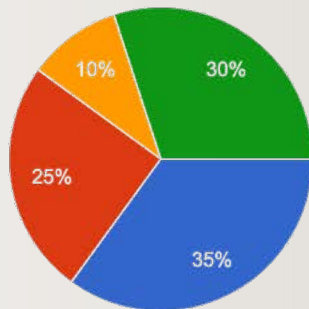
20 responses



- Coping: I am struggling to meet my basic needs
- Getting by: I am building my basic knowledge and resources, but still req...
- Making changes: I am making progress to meet my goals
- Getting ahead: I have met some of my goals and am beginning to feel stable
- Thriving: I am stable and planning for the future

Tell us about any changes in your situation since you joined the program.

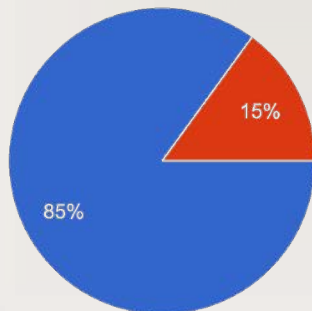
20 responses



- I found a job as a result of my participation in the program
- I have gone into further training or education
- I became more involved in the community through volunteering
- I expanded my network

Have the one-on-one sessions been helpful to you?

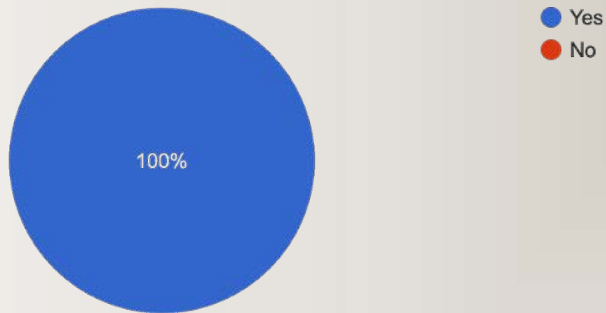
20 responses



- Yes
- No

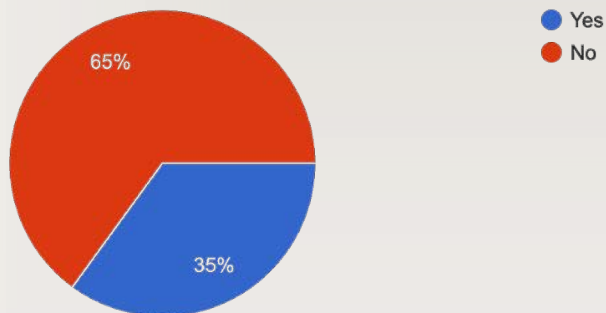
Do you recommend the same program format for future cohorts? (think about program duration, class time and duration, program design and delivery method)

20 responses

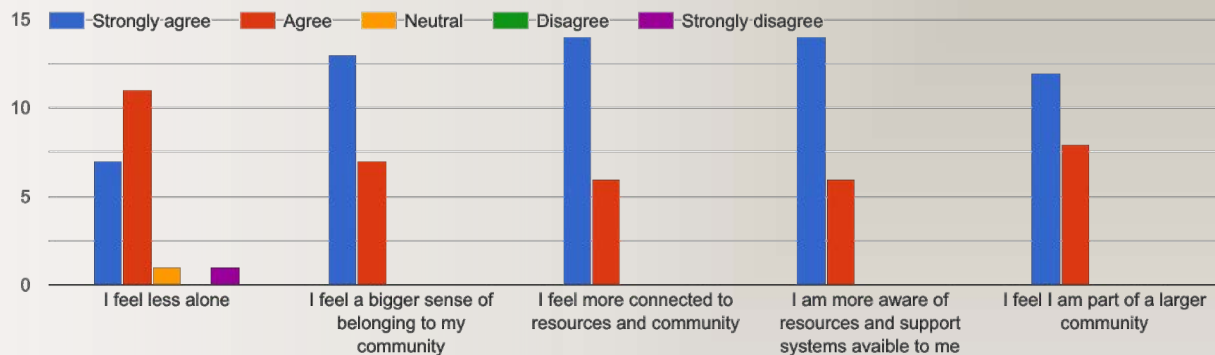


Were you able to find employment as a result of joining the program?

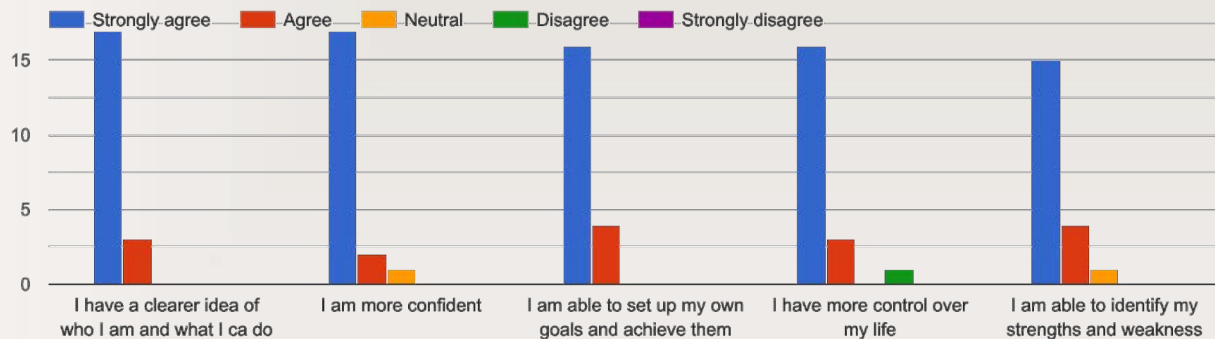
20 responses



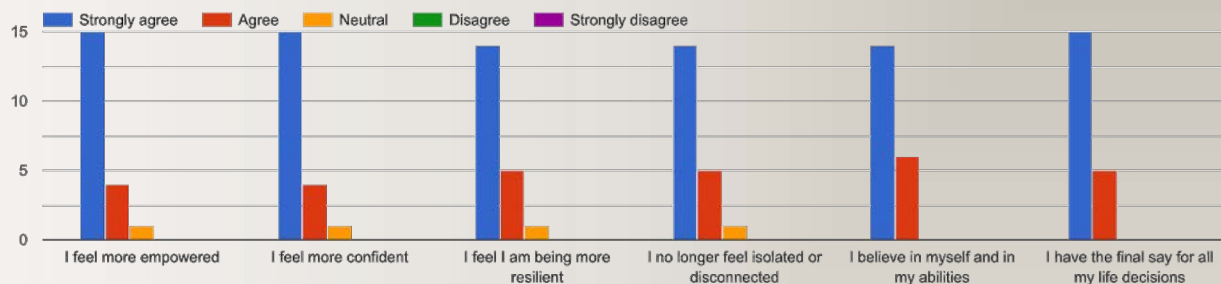
## Getting Connected: How much do you agree with the following: Since I joined the Sister2Sister program



## Building your sense of self: How much do you agree with the following: Since joining the Sister2Sister program



self-empowerment: How much do you agree with the following: Since joining the Sister2Sister program



Would you like to participate in this experience again?

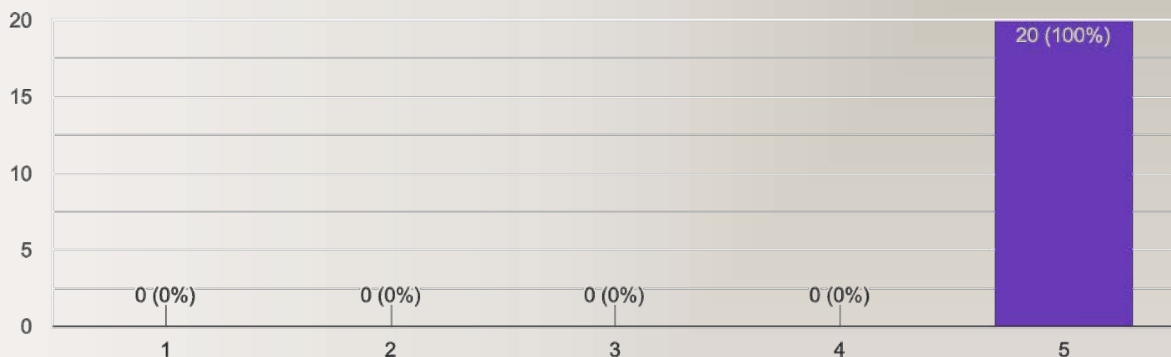
20 responses



# EVALUATION & PROGRAM OUTCOMES

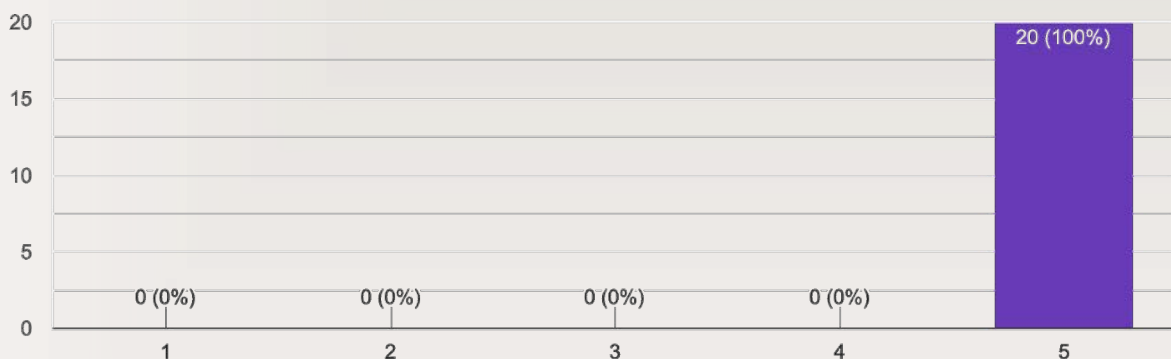
On a scale from 1 - 5, with one being very unsatisfied and five being very satisfied, can you please rate your satisfaction with the program.

20 responses



On a scale from 1 - 5, with one being poor and five being excellent, can you please rate program content, design and delivery methods?

20 responses

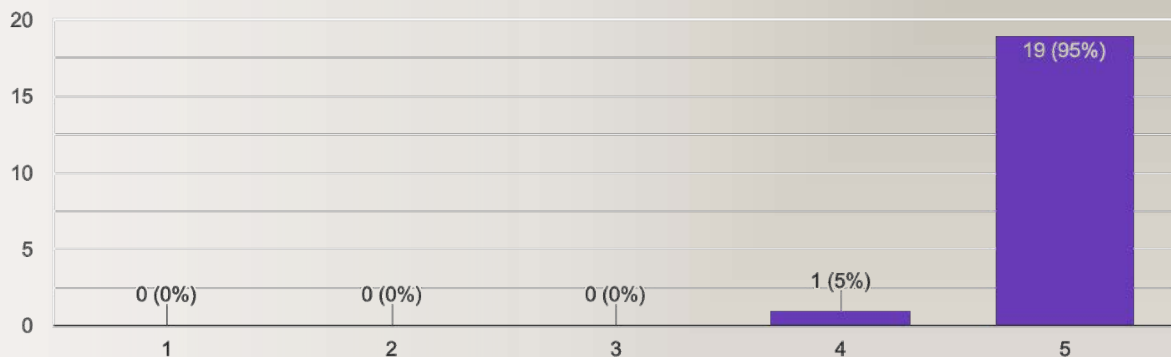




# EVALUATION & PROGRAM OUTCOMES

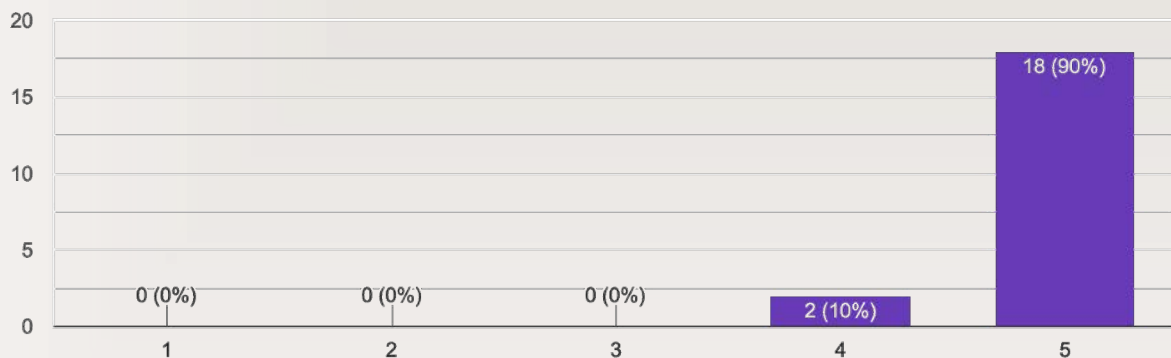
On a scale from 1 - 5, with one being below expectations and five exceeding expectations, can you please rate how well the program matched your expectations.

20 responses



On a scale from 1 - 5, with one being poor and five being excellent, can you please indicate how well this program addressed your needs?

20 responses



## Staff Evaluation



Open ended questions were also included as follow:

## **1. How can we further support you to reach your goals and potentials?**

- Keep running workshops/programs such as sister2sister and provide opportunities to volunteer.
- Keeping our connection, and if possible, providing the advanced level of the program.
- By engaging in future events and providing an opportunity to give back to the group. Meetups can be arranged with Alumni once in a month as well to actively engage us.

## **2. If the one-on-one counselling sessions were helpful to you, can you please explain how?**

- one-on-one sessions were clarifying the tasks. It was also a unique experience to expose our ideas and expectations to someone trustful in an intimate way which doesn't normally happen in public. It gave me the feeling that the program is so participant/client oriented. and that it is my story and progress that matters.
- I was able to identify past setbacks and are now more confident to express myself.
- They helped in giving direct feedback on progress of learning and facilitated confidential discussions.

### **3. Can you please provide us with an overall feedback about the program?**

- A very good program, thank you for organizing this -- good length, a wide range of topics, engaging speakers from different spaces and walks of life, a caring community. I really enjoyed being in this space and I am sad it ended.
- Great program. I love the variety of topics we learned and discussed, the skills we acquired, and the people I got to know.
- Very informative, educative and empowering. Overall, this program is organized very well.
- The program is so excellent. it should continue because it helps women find themselves.

### **4. Is there anything that we could have done differently to enhance your experience in the program?**

- If we could have more exposure to technical skills, kind of an internship or volunteering opportunities while the program is going on, that would enhance the experience.
- The timing is a bit difficult for people who work full time so maybe a later start time would have been better.
- Connect us with professional mentors.

## 5. Can you please share an example or story of how your life has changed since joining the program?

“ The program pulled us out of our comfort zone into a realm of productivity and possibilities; for instance, I didn't expect I would get the opportunity to help organize an event about gender-based violence. I also never expected that bringing all those diverse women together would be so straightforward. I learned a lot from this experience. It was a real confidence booster

Program Participant

- I am a lot more aware of my strengths & weaknesses and understand how I can help the community and talk about important issues. For me personally, it was very difficult to talk about mental health issues that I had experienced closely with some family members and it was through the Sister2Sister program that I found my voice to be able to talk about it and raise awareness about how common it is and how it affects people from all age groups.
- Since joining the program my life changed in many positive ways. Among the many positive changes in my life, I confidently say the major change came through the great networks I made at the program that led to my employment at one of the best Universities in Canada, Ryerson University. This was a major achievement in my life considering that I am still a newcomer to Canada.
- My life has changed because I was able to have a discussion with my father about ways in which his controlling behaviour towards us is wrong. He was not very receptive but acknowledged the conversation.



## **6. If you can describe the program in one word, what would it be?**

- Empowering
- Life changing
- Engaging
- Safe space
- Community building
- Belonging
- Sisterhood
- Unique
- Inspiring Growth
- Inclusion
- Acceptance
- Community care
- Leadership

# SISTER2SISTER

## PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

March 2020

The Sister2Sister leadership program takes a holistic approach to ensure that newcomer women learn, grow and develop their skills and network.

One of the unique activities was the PhotoVoice project. The "sisters" were asked to write an essay inspired by a photograph that captured a story, emotion or idea that was important to them. The goal was for them to develop self-awareness and also a collective understanding of the diverse cultural influences that shape our communities.

The students shared drafts of their stories and then reflected on the feedback they received. It was an opportunity for them to critically examine their own lives as well as become aware of any stereotypes and assumptions that were influencing their understanding of either themselves or others.

Hearing the other women's stories fostered a sense of solidarity when they realized that they were not alone and could learn from one another. The 15 women who participated shared narratives that explore identity, migration and integration, self-actualization, gender-based violence, women empowerment and leadership.

# SISTER<sup>2</sup>SISTER

## PHOTOVOICE

Leila Naderi



## Magic Carpets

*The bonds women weave into their rugs  
are a reflection of their enduring sisterhood.*



In the corner of my living room, there is a framed mini-rug hanging on the wall. It is a hand-made piece that my elder sister made for me before leaving my hometown forever. Whenever I look at it, it takes me back to my childhood and the community where I grew up. It reminds me of the days that we sat in front of a huge wooden loom weaving and of the stories my mom, aunts and grandma shared. After school, my sister and I would have a quick lunch, and then we would join other adults (mothers, neighbours, and those relatives who couldn't afford a loom) to weave rugs and carpets. It would take several months for four or five women to make a delicate silk carpet. Sometimes it was torturous for me because it stole all my time away for homework, playing, and watching TV. The adults, however, enjoyed their time together listening to the radio, chatting, gossiping and singing Bartonana songs, which are Kurdish folk ballets for weavers. For them, it was only torturous when it came time for the trader to come to buy the finished carpet. The weavers all knew that handmade (silk) carpets made in Kurdistan (Iran) were sold as luxuries mainly abroad, and the makers were ridiculously underpaid. They were powerless to change this imbalance. Carpet weaving has a long cultural heritage in Iran. It is mainly done by less privileged women who are often abused financially while the dealers become wealthy because they have access to international markets. Despite this, it was always a happy occasion when the rug was cut from the loom and was ready to be sold. The weavers have strong sisterhood bonds, they share their happiness in front of the loom, and they support each other in hard times.



# SISTER<sup>2</sup>SISTER

## PHOTOVOICE

Hilda M



## Carry On

*Working together we can stitch  
our dreams together.*

**“Empowerment happens when women help one another to make even small positive changes in their lives.”**

What does women empowerment mean? For some, it means something big has to happen or something big has to change because of the support women have given to each other. The change happens in a holistic way when women have a sense of ownership about their life and when they have access to information, capacity building, education, leadership and governance. For me, empowerment happens when women help one another to make even small positive changes in their lives. Little changes culminate into one huge success. That's why I chose this photo. This beautiful bag was made by stitching together different pieces of cloth. To me, it's a metaphor for how any help—even if it's small and coming from different sources—can create something that is meaningful. It's about identifying gaps and working together to come up with a plan and strategy to achieve a goal. Whether it's a bag—or a life-changing dream—a little help goes a long way.

# SISTER2SISTER

## PHOTOVOICE

Feroza Mohammed

### Mother and Daughter

*Breaking barriers towards independence.*



I grew up in a patriarchal family, the eldest of six siblings, with one brother. Our parents hoped that their girls would grow up, get married, start families, and that would be how their life would unfold. After high school, I started to work for a top jeweller, and it was a job I loved. Later, I married a co-worker, who was very much in love with me. Marriage for me, however, was a way to leave my parents' home. I was never in love with him.

Shortly after our first wedding anniversary, our beautiful daughter was born. In her, I found new hope, courage and strength. I had perfected the craft of being a wife, a homemaker, and then a mother, but I wanted more. I needed a better quality of life for my daughter, Akeisha. In 1988, people were migrating to Canada in large numbers. I saw this as my chance to break away from the traditional life I was living. I told my husband and family that we were going on a holiday to Canada, but I knew in my heart, that we weren't coming back.

We arrived in Toronto and although it wasn't an easy journey, we made it our home. At first, my family and my husband were angry, but I knew I had made the right decision. Especially now, when I look at my daughter and see who she has become. I'm proud of her work; she is a wonderful mother and has a loving husband. His mother immigrated to Canada from Iran as a single parent the same year that I did.

Their love story happened because two mothers had the courage to take a chance in a new country. Akeisha often says to me, "Thank you Mom, for bringing me to Canada."

The Sister2Sister program has helped me understand how gender-based violence has affected my life. As a girl, I was a sad and introverted young woman. I lacked self-confidence and had low self-esteem. I had been physically, verbally, and mentally abused. Neither of my parents were educated and perhaps didn't know better. I now have a better understanding of my mother's lifetime of unhappiness, due to neglect, abuse, and oppression.

During my visit in December 2019, while having a conversation with someone on global politics, my father shouted at me, "You know too much; it's better to know nothing." His words reminded me of exactly why I left with my four-year-old daughter. She has every right to learn and to achieve her fullest potential. We deserve a life with dignity, integrity and self-respect. I am proud that I was able to break out of the barriers of patriarchy, cultural traditions, religion, oppression and abuse, to live a life of freedom and independence.

# SISTER<sup>2</sup>SISTER

## PHOTOVOICE

Afshan Razvi



## Tracking Time

*"My mama always said you have got to put the past behind you before you can move on."*

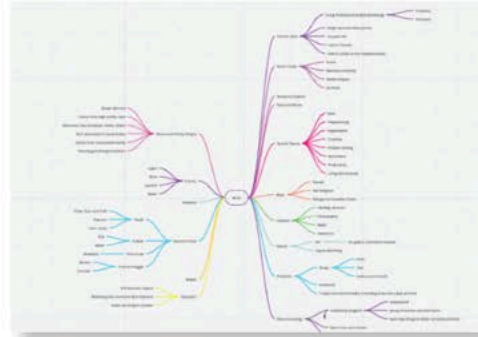
– Forrest Gump

I took this photo on a family vacation to Switzerland, and I look at it often to remind myself that life waits for no one. I find railway tracks fascinating because they are a metaphor for our lives, in the sense that you get to choose the route, decide what your journey is going to look like and determine the destination where you want to be. For me, life has always been about moving forward and being resilient in the face of different challenges, and I think that is the reason this photo speaks to me. My father's sudden death was probably the most challenging thing to move forward from; there was a point in my life when I thought I would never be able to get out of bed and deal with the idiosyncrasies of the world. However, with time I learned how to cope. I still hang on very dearly to the loving memory of my father, but I now use the anger of losing him to move forward in my life. After his death, I left my hometown of Karachi, Pakistan and moved to Dubai, UAE. At first, it felt like an escape, but the experience of moving to a different country and starting a new life from scratch made me realize that the human spirit is built to be brave. Twelve years later, here I am again, starting a new life in Toronto, Canada, not because I have to but because I choose to move forward in life and make the best of what the world has to offer. I guess what I am trying to say is that when the railway tracks call out to you, just get on the train.

# SISTER2SISTER

## PHOTOVOICE

Alicia



## Game Plan

*"The privilege of a lifetime is to become who you truly are."*  
– Carl Jung

I'm on a quest to learn more about myself, my true values, inspirations—and my vision for who I want to be and the kind of life I want to live. I grew up in Saudi Arabia, where my life was very different from my life in Canada. I was the only girl in a family with eight brothers. We lived a middle-class life and my parents were conservative. I never felt I belonged anywhere, but now I feel home within myself. Crafting this new vision—this new meaning of home—has been very freeing. In the first Sister2Sister class, we did an Identity Tree Map exercise, where we were

**"I never felt I belonged anywhere, but now I feel home within myself. Crafting this new vision—this new meaning of home—has been very freeing."**

asked to write down everything that defines us. This includes our hobbies, talents, background, interests, likes, dislikes, influences, interests, beliefs, obstacles, and goals. When I first signed up for the Sister2Sister program, my goal was to understand myself better. By the end of the program, my goal is to know my abilities, preferences, strengths and weaknesses. I also want to be able to talk about myself and my life assertively. I will be self-confident, and I will be a better judge of situations and people. I will also be able to communicate my ideas and emotions. All of these changes will make me a better artist. With the support I have from Sara, the program manager, I feel I have made significant progress. When I first started to work on my identity map, I only wrote down a few points, but now I can't fit everything onto one page! So, can drawing a map of your life really change your life? Good question. The answer is a definite "Yes!" Today I have set down a five-year plan, and I feel great about it. I found a job that is a perfect fit for me, and I am gradually spending less time on irrelevant activities and living more consciously. This exercise has inspired me to continually reflect on my life and that has brought me clarity and a greater sense of self.

# SISTER<sup>2</sup>SISTER

## PHOTOVOICE

Sarah Ashimwe



## How are you?

broken, sad, lonely, hurt, upset, alone,  
depressed, suicidal, angry, hateful,  
breaking down, screaming, dead, empty,  
nothing, crying, shouting, giving up,  
hiding, wearing a mask, cutting, horrible,  
down, hollow, worthless, misunderstood,  
incapable, inferior, vulnerable, distressed,  
lost, pathetic, shameful, bitter, forced,  
uneasy, tense, dominated, pessimistic,  
distrustful, tearful, crushed, offended,  
aching, wronged, shaky, timid, wary,  
victimized, tortured, pained, lifeless,  
cold, dull, nervous, scared, suspicious,  
alienated, numb, stressed, bruised

**I'm fine**

# SISTER2SISTER

## PHOTOVOICE

Binal Wala

## What Women Leadership Looks Like

*"Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality."*

- Warren Bennis

### LAXMI AGARWAL

**She helps me grow.  
She makes me resilient.**

Laxmi Agarwal survived an acid attack by a stalker in 2005 when she was 16. Since then, Agarwal has established grassroots campaigns to tackle the surge of acid attacks. One of her petitions led the Supreme Court to order the Central and State Government to regulate the sale of acid. She was also the former director of the Chhanv Foundation, an NGO dedicated to helping the acid attack survivors in India.



### MY MOTHER

**She guides me.  
She inspires me.**



My mother was married at 19 to a man she had met once. He turned out to be a heavy drinker, and she did everything in her power to sober him up. Finally, after 16 years of being married, she succeeded, and he quit alcohol forever. She was so happy. It brought her a feeling of relief and solace. But unfortunately, the happiness was brief as my father died from cancer when she was 45 years old. However, she continues to wear a smile every day and gives hope to every woman in society just **LIKE A TRUE LEADER.**

### GAURI SAWANT

**She keeps me hopeful.  
She empowers me.**

Gauri Sawant is a well-known transgender activist from Mumbai, India. She is the director of Sakshi Char Chowghi, which helps transgenders and people with HIV/AIDS. She was the first to file a petition in the Supreme Court of India for transgender adoption rights. Sawant also founded Sakshi Char Chowghi Trust in 2000. It's an NGO that promotes safe sex and provides counselling to transgender people.



# SISTER<sup>2</sup>SISTER

## PHOTOVOICE

FK



## Group Therapy

*"A sense of community is the feeling that members have of belonging, the feeling that the members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that their needs will be met through their commitment to be together." - McMillan & Chavis, 1986*

### Sister2Sister Leadership Program Goals

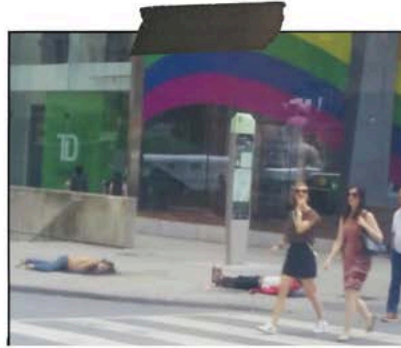
1. Build strong social networks.
2. Offer support.
3. Advocate for sisters who may be victims of gender violence and domestic abuse.
4. Participate in civic and democratic engagements.

I met more than 20 fellow immigrant women from very diverse cultural backgrounds when I joined the Sister2Sister program. My goal, like theirs, was to adapt to a new environment and quickly assimilate into the community. I needed to find a sense of belonging, a sense of care, a sense of support and a sense of shared aspirations. And through the different program activities offered, including mentoring, counselling and leadership training, I have been empowered to overcome my fears, re-discover my strengths and abilities and create a safe and secure community around me. We have shared our stories, our experiences, and in doing so, have built a sisterhood of mutual support. Now I can support other immigrant women and help them overcome their difficulties. I'm proud of my new network of friends who are eager to support, share and celebrate achievements.

# SISTER2SISTER

## PHOTOVOICE

Anna



## Styles of Poverty

"Style, however, rests on the most fundamental principle of cognition, on the essence of things—to the extent that it is granted us to perceive this essence in visible and tangible form."

– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

**T**wo images: "underdeveloped" Mexico and "developed" Canada. Poverty can be experienced in so many different ways. Economic constraints can be offset by solid family networks embedded in communities with robust cultural memories. And vice versa: GDPs can conceal social disintegration and precarious minds. Mexico and Canada, two landscapes: what would we see if, like Goethe, we knew how to look? My journey from Mexico to Canada resembles a timeless vacation in Purgatory, with the first circle of Hell just around the corner. Every morning my retina struggles to apprehend a colorless horizon—I can't tell the sky from the pavement. I emerge out of my overpriced cell to board a dysfunctional subway. I am surrounded by beggars, drugged-out self-talkers, and occasional "trespassers" on TTC tracks. These are human beings crushed by the GDP. I flush yet another CV down the drain. *"Hello, Canada, anybody there?"* I am a redundant number. Good morning, Groundhog Day.

**"For the brown man there is only one destiny. And it is white."**

– FRANZ FANON (SLIGHTLY MODIFIED)



# SISTER<sup>2</sup>SISTER

## PHOTOVOICE

Rebiya Sulaiman



## Never Again?

*What was supposed to never happen again,  
is happening. Why?*

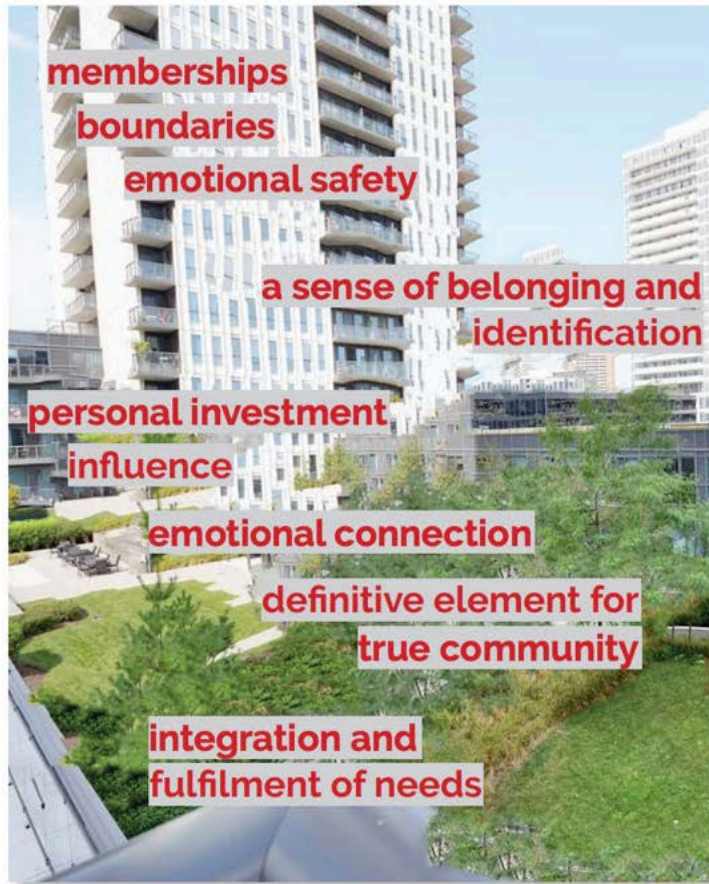
I titled this picture "A Culture on the Edge of Extinction." What you see above is a Uighur cultural hat called a "Doppa." For me, it represents a nation whose culture is in danger of extinction. Uighurs are Turkic ethnic groups who live in the Xinjiang Province of China. In 2017, China's government built internment camps where Uighurs are now imprisoned. The goal is to erase Uighurs from their land and, even from this earth. Three million Turkic ethnic people, such as Uighur, Uzbek, Kazak and Kirgiz have been sent to these camps just because of their ethnic identity. This is similar to a Nazi concentration camp. The "Never Again" is happening again. As humans, we all deserve to live equally with others regardless of our ethnic origins, racial backgrounds or cultural differences.

**"The goal is to erase Uighurs  
from their land and,  
even from this earth."**

# SISTER2SISTER

PHOTOVOICE

Elizabeth Singh



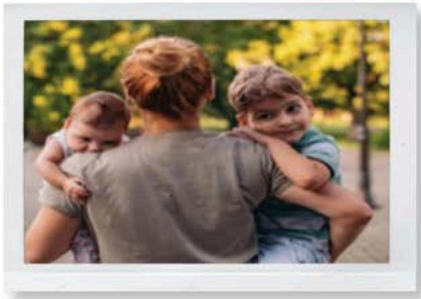
## Building Blocks

*Great communities don't just happen.  
They're carefully built by the people who live there.*

# SISTER<sup>2</sup>SISTER

## PHOTOVOICE

Syeda Bokhari



## Family Tree

*A mother is her family's foundation.*

**“A mother is the trunk to her kids who are her branches. She holds her kids up and she watches them grow.”**

I called this picture “The Trunk to the Tree” because it portrays a mother with her kids, and around them, you see beautiful trees. A mother is the trunk to her kids, who are her branches. She holds her kids up, and she watches them grow. This is the way we create a community of our own, surrounded by our parents, our kids and our grandkids. When we immigrated to Canada from Pakistan, I left all my family and friends behind. I came here to start a life. In our new home, my kids made me feel safe, and they gave me a chance to experience a new chapter in my life. As they grew up, I saw the changes within them just as the leaves change colours with the seasons. Thus, I am the trunk to my kids, and they are the branches to my trunk, and together we are growing a beautiful tree.

# SISTER<sup>2</sup>SISTER

## PHOTOVOICE

Yris Diaz



## Calm Waters

*Finding a sense of community  
means you're never alone.*

My migration journey has taken me down a road to discovering my true inner self. In my new land, I have made connections with good people who genuinely care for each other. One of my first—and fondest—memories is the time I went to a church in the town of Fort McMurray, Alberta. It was January, and it was the coldest winter I have ever experienced in Canada. I knew

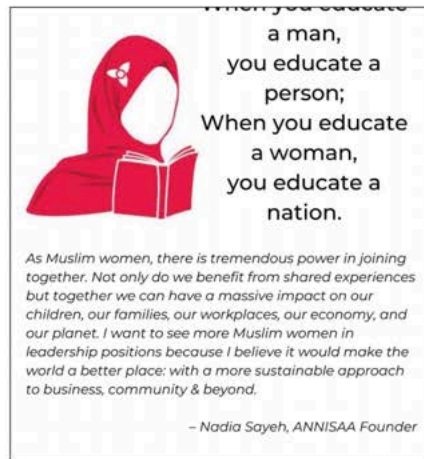
**"I remember  
saying to myself  
'I am worthy just  
as I am.'"**

I would meet people who, like me, were by themselves but wanting to connect with others who wanted to share God's empathy. They became my friends, and they helped me through a hard time. When I look at this picture, this group of ducks symbolizes what it means to be in a safe space where you have a sense of self-respect and compassion for yourself and others. Like these ducks, we're all living in a community feeling naturally free and happy. This feeling brings me peace; it empowers me. It also strengthens my confidence to believe in my inner voice. I remember saying to myself "*I am worthy just as I am.*" This takes away the negative feelings that can happen when I see people being discriminated against because of their race, gender, language, disabilities or social class. Today I have a sense of belonging. I feel at peace with myself. I also feel grateful for the place where I was born and the good memories that I have of my life there. Being a good leader starts with developing a positive inner self. From there, one can flourish and do marvellous things.

# SISTER<sup>2</sup>SISTER

## PHOTOVOICE

Nadia Sayeh



## Lesson Plans

*When you educate a man, you educate a person.  
When you educate a woman, you educate a nation.*

**A**s Muslim women, there is tremendous power in joining together. Not only do we benefit from shared experiences, but together we can have a massive impact on our children, our families, our workplaces, our economy, and our planet. I want to see more Muslim women in leadership positions because I believe it would make the world a better place: with a more sustainable approach to business, community and beyond.

*Nadia is the founder and executive director of ANNISAA,  
a Toronto-based Muslim women's empowerment organization.*

# SISTER2SISTER

## PHOTOVOICE

Suman Malik



## Vision Quest

*Discovering the "art of my happiness" begins by finding joy in small, objects, like my Buddah.*

I always like to keep objects that bring calmness, happiness and harmony into my life. In one of the corners in my living room, I have created a space that is very dear to me. It's where I study, relax and plan my activities. It's also where I meditate. The one object that has special meaning is the small purple-colored Buddha, which my best friend gave me. When I look at it, I feel a sense of inner peace; a sense of belonging. It also reminds me of a beautiful meditation center that we visited four years ago. It was a mesmerizing setting and the temple could hold up to 8,000 meditators! During our week together, I learned about the importance of having joy and harmony in my life. Since then, I have read about mindfulness, spirituality and how to create an environment of happiness around me. I believe that everyone should devote some time to explore how they are living their lives. Most people want to be happy, but they don't know how to achieve that. But I have found that happiness can be found in small things—like my Buddha. It reminds me to create and nurture a vision for my life that accepts there will be challenges and that I need to be patient and to work hard. I call this object "The Art of My Happiness."





SISTER **2** SISTER