



# Building a Mental Health Starter Toolkit for Media Arts Leaders

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*We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts.*



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## Summary of Acronyms

ACTRA (Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists) is the national union of professional performers working in recorded media in Canada. ACTRA represents the interests of over 30,000 members across the country – the foundation of Canada’s highly acclaimed professional performing community. (<https://www.actra.ca/>).

AFISH is an acronym for the steps in a method of conflict resolution that involves engaging in a Clearing Conversation (direct or mediated). The steps include Align, Facts, Impacts, Stories, Hopes.

AIA stands for Appreciative Inquiry Approach. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an energizing and inclusive process that fosters creativity through the art of positive inquiry. It builds new skills in individuals and groups, develops new leaders, encourages a culture of inquiry, and helps create shared vision and purpose by building on an organization’s core values and *strengths*. Perhaps, most importantly, are the outcomes that emerge during the process which provoke action, inspire commitment, and lead to *results*.  
<https://centerforappreciativeinquiry.net/resources/what-is-appreciative-inquiry-ai/>

With the proliferation of the AI being associated with artificial intelligence, for the purposes of this study, we have chosen to refer to AI as an approach to the methodology, as in AIA.

BFM stands for *Best Friend Me*, the title of one of the Beta test media arts productions involved in the study.

MI stands for Motivational Interviewing. MI is a counseling approach developed in part by clinical psychologists [William R. Miller](#) and [Stephen Rollnick](#). It is a directive, client-centered counseling style for eliciting behavior change by helping clients to explore and resolve [ambivalence](#). ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motivational\\_interviewing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motivational_interviewing)).

SCS stands for Safer Creative Spaces.

ULB stands for an Ultra Low Budget media arts production.

XYZ is a conflict resolution method that helps a person frame a concern they are experiencing using simple statement “*When X happens, I feel Y, because I need Z.*”

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*Before we begin, as part of our welcome practice, we wish to gratefully acknowledge that this project and the WIDC program originate from the traditional and unceded lands of the Coast Salish people, including the xmkym (Musqueam), Swxwu7mesh (Squamish), and slilwta (Tseil-wau-tuth) Nations. We also acknowledge the Indigenous Nations on whose traditional lands our guests, participants, and colleagues live, work and create, in particular the Songhees Nation on whose traditional lands our three partnering organizations are situated, the Songhees Nation Family Counselling, Family Services of Greater Victoria, and Stigma Free Productions.*

*We commit to working together in the spirit of collaboration and respect for the generations that came before, those living now, and the generations to come.*

*In this same spirit we also come to the work of mental health and wellness in our collective communities. We further acknowledge that the term Woman/Women is in an evolution of language, and that our intention in our use of these terms is to be fully inclusive of underrepresented persons who may identify as she / her and or they / them.*

*We wish to acknowledge key individuals behind this work:*

**SCS Leadership Team**

*Ana de Lara, Media Artist  
Charlene Hickey, MA, CCC  
Jane Taylor Lee, MA, CCC*

**SCS Project Lead**

*Dr. Carol Whiteman EdD*

**SCS Lead Researcher**

*Dawn Schell, MA, CCC,  
CCDP*

*We could not have completed this work without the collaboration of the individual artists, consultants, leaders, elders and subject matter experts who helped guide us all towards our goals of creating safer creative spaces for media arts leaders, their casts and crews. To learn more about our team, see Appendix 1.*

*Finally, we wish to acknowledge the participation of the Canada Council for the Arts without whose financial support this project could not have taken place.*



*We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts.*



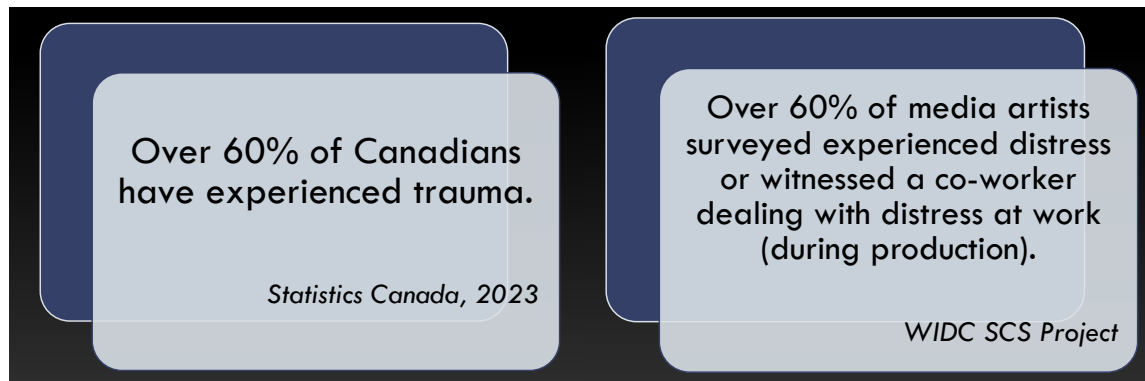
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**for the Arts** **du Canada**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*"Our aim is to disrupt stigma and provide practical, cost-free tools to address concerning mental health gaps in the media arts sector."*

WIDC Safer Creative Spaces project cultivated and tested a toolkit and protocols to improve the wellbeing of media arts leaders working in ultra-low budget media arts productions. Our aim: to disrupt stigma and provide practical, cost-free tools to address concerning mental health gaps in the media arts sector.

*Why?*



*Figure 1: Why this study data*

Over 15,000 hours went into our 5-D Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach:

**Discovery:** We collaborated with Family Services of Greater Victoria, Songhees Nation Family Counselling, Stigma Free Productions, Association of Mental Health Coordinators, and media artists with diverse practises and lived experiences to build common language, identify gaps, and define practical elements needed for 'safer creative spaces.'

**Dreaming:** We reviewed academic and sector-related literature, consulted with media arts creators and actors, intimacy coordinators and specialists (mental health, adult education) and interviewed a Songhees Nation music video director and 4 cast, to learn more about needs, and best practices around mental health protocols and training.

**Designing:** We designed a 'team wellness' toolkit for media arts workers including workshop, protocols, survey instruments to measure effectiveness, and a mental health referral network list.

**Delivery:** We proto-typed our toolkit with 45 cast and crew members of a BC-based ultra-low budget production; we then beta-tested an improved version of the toolkit with 32 media arts leaders (WIDC alumni writer/directors) across Canada.

**Destiny:** We reviewed outcomes using a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Reflecting on what we learned in the process, we identified key themes and strengths, areas for improvement and key recommendations for next steps.

### *Key achievements include*

1. **Wellness Starter Toolkit:** protocols, templates, Canada-wide mental health resource list and research report publicly available on [WIDC website](#). This toolkit is just the starting point!
2. **Disrupting Stigma:** By conducting workshops, encouraging conversations about mental health and wellbeing on set, and providing tools and resources, we believe we have effectively started disrupting stigma. Summing up, one participant said, *“Providing a safe, inclusive space in the form of this workshop, where participants felt comfortable and encouraged not only to learn new self-regulation, conflict resolution and motivational skills, but to use those they already inherently have... everyone naturally recognized the need and wanted to help each other and themselves.”*

### *Challenges faced*

1. Inclusion, it took longer than expected to:
  - a. Accommodate mental health and some significant life stressors.
  - b. Establish a common language and understanding as a team coming from the different sectors (media arts, adult education, colonial mental health, Indigenous-focused mental health). Good will was established, but still more to do here.
2. Hard data on reducing stigma in the Canadian media arts sector is challenging to collect.

### *Recommendations for the future*

1. Make toolkit widely available
2. Expand, seek funding, and collaborate with more organizations, film festivals and individuals across Canada
3. Build peer-led support network for media arts leaders to build on wellness (self and team) and conflict resolution skills
4. Advocacy for every media arts production to engage mental health practices including as a budget line item where possible.

Submitted to the Canada Council for the Arts  
June 14, 2024



# 1. DISCOVERY

Reflecting on what defines us and how we got here

## What Inspired the Project

Through our WIDC programs, conversations with alumni and our participation on education and training committees and advisory boards, CWWA became increasingly aware of instances of challenging mental health-related situations on sets and in the personal lives of media artists across Canada. Some of these situations appeared to be related to the kinds of content being created, such as explorations and re-creations of triggering narratives; some appeared to be related to other mental health struggles, which are outside the scope of practice of our organization.

While there are some Canadian studies on the mental health benefits of engaging *with* art, there are few studies focused on the mental health of those *creating* art. The low participation and funding rates of artists from under-represented communities in the media arts sector is well-documented; however, the impact from chronic discrimination and oppression on artists and arts leaders from under-represented communities has not been as well documented and one of our questions is about the ripple effects on mental health.

Our preliminary research, coupled with artists' tragedies in the news, reinforced our assumptions that a gap exists in terms of addressing un-supported mental health needs in the media arts sector. Add to this the potentially triggering nature of replicating / re-enacting distressing life experiences during the arts creation process, it became clear to us that it is more vital than ever that the arts sector actively support the development of mental health and well-being tools for artists and media arts leaders.

For an international context, The Looking Glass Report (2020), commissioned by the UK-based Film and TV Charity, states that 90% of off-screen professionals have reported experiencing mental health issues on the job. Workers were two times more likely to experience anxiety than the national average, and three times more likely to have self-harmed. Reports by the Australian non-profit Entertainment Assist (2015, 2020), show levels of depression in those who work in the performance arts were up to five times higher than the general population, four to five times more likely to plan to commit suicide, and twice as likely to attempt it.

According to Statistics Canada (2023)

*“Almost two-thirds (63%) of adults living in Canada reported that they had been exposed to a potentially traumatic event at some point in their lives. Events might have happened to them directly or indirectly. Survey respondents were instructed to include all four of the following: events that happened directly to them, events that they witnessed, events that they learned about that happened to a close family member or a close friend, and events that they were repeatedly exposed to details about as part of their job.”*

## Key Research Questions

- What does it mean to create 'safer creative spaces'?
- How do you improve mental health and well-being on sets with a low budget?
- What does our post-pandemic world need from us as leaders in the motion picture/media arts sector?
- What is the new normal?
- What are people grappling with in terms of their best well-being?
- What do we need to do to create a quality world for these workers?
- Is there a need for a mental health toolkit for media arts?
- What is the impact of the tools, protocols and workshops?
- Is what we are doing effective?
- Will implementing a mental health workshop or other tools and protocols reduce stigma with respect to mental health and substance use?
- Will having a team wellness workshop increase levels of confidence in addressing distress in self/others?
- Are there gaps still to address?
- Have we reduced stigma?

## Significance of the Study

### *New Supports*

While we acknowledge that unions and professional associations (ACTRA, CAEA, DGC, etc.) have created some useful resources and guidelines, anticipated positive impacts of this project include new supports for media artists who do not have access to these supports and are silently suffering or may have felt forced to abandon their arts practice due to mental health challenges. These artists will have greater opportunities to thrive in their profession or return to their media arts practice. Though our project is focused on the media arts sector, it will hopefully inspire and model opportunities for other arts sectors to embrace mental health best practices. Ideally, media arts production budgets would allow for these new supports to be added as a line item. However, on any budget, seeking help from this SCS report and starter toolkit will be valuable.

### *New Networks*

Individual artists/leaders and participating media arts and mental health organizations will build networks enhancing our respective communities. Artists will feel safer working in the media arts sector. Arts organizations and media arts productions will have more mental health tools to prevent or immediately address mental health triggers, or that may inspire them to create their own specialized toolkits. The arts sector will gain a model for creating mental health protocols and toolkits and the broader community will gain a better understanding of the impacts of creating artistic content as it relates to mental health.

### *Adding to the International Landscape*

This project will add to the research that is currently being done in this area (e.g. Documentality, Film and TV Charity UK) as well as highlighting the ongoing need for research and development of evidence-led practical interventions. If we can do this work (e.g. address mental health and well-being and stigma and create safer spaces for all) at an ultra-low budget level and it is proven to be effective – it has the potential to have an even greater impact where there is a budget for such supports.

## Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations

It is our theory that the more media arts professionals are able to model optimum mental health practices the more inclusive, equitable and sustainable arts practices will become for those who struggle with mental health concerns in silence. Project outcomes are intended to generate a more welcoming and inclusive media arts sector. Having improved tools to break systemic barriers and the stigma that causes feelings of isolation will also neutralize potentially emotionally toxic environments.

We assume that while media arts professionals are not mental health practitioners there are skills they can learn and protocols they can put into practice that would improve the mental health and well-being of all.

We also assume that participants in our study answered our questions honestly and truthfully. We created anonymous surveys, de-identified interview participants' responses and aggregated data where appropriate to ensure confidentiality and privacy of information.

Our study was aimed at the ultra-low budget realm and consisted of the cast and crew of two media arts productions as well as self-selected members of the WIDC alumni. We anticipate that the results will be more broadly generalizable to larger budget productions.

By revealing our findings, our study is intended to improve standards of practice for mental health and well-being for media arts professionals from leaders through to cast and crew.

We conducted three surveys with both the production and the WIDC alumni. The stated intent of the surveys was to "help the SCS project leaders identify gaps surrounding mental health & wellness concerns in the ULB media arts sector and to develop and fine tune the WIDC SCS Mental Health & Wellness Toolkit". The surveys were offered prior to attending the Team Wellness workshop, immediately after the workshop and at a later point with an opportunity for any final reflections. As often happens in survey-based research when there are multiple surveys over time, we had a diminishing number of returns with each successive survey. The surveys conducted with the cast and crew of an ultra-low budget production saw the biggest drop in numbers though we were still able to collect data on the final survey from close to half of the original respondents.

The qualitative interviews were conducted by three different interviewers with a standard set of questions. As each of the twenty-one interviews was conducted, there was flexibility within the question asking to allow for the interviewees to expand on what they considered to be important. Not every question was answered directly at each interview.

## What Led Us to This Work

More and more people are talking more openly about their struggles with mental health - anxiety, depression, feelings of grief and other mental health-related symptoms. While it is beyond CWWA's scope of practice to do mental health work, we see our role as infusing what we have learned about mental health and well-being into our workshops for leaders and sharing this knowledge as widely as possible.

## Anticipated Take-aways

We believe media arts leaders and other community members will agree that understanding more about mental health and how best practices can be applied to productions will create a more psychologically safe space for themselves, their cast, and their crew.

What might be as important as offering mental health resources is building capacity to address mental health and well-being on sets with workshops and protocols and building a road map for working with each other.

The framework for this much needed and specially designed Mental Health Starter Toolkit will ultimately be made available free through WIDC online channels.

## 2. DREAMS

Looking back to dream the future

### Appreciating/Identifying Advantages and Challenges Faced

- Who is doing the work?
- Concerns about stigma.
- Diverse sector – hidden?
- Not a sector studied by academia

### Description of Literature Review and Research Consultations Undertaken

One of the first steps we took was to scan for and review any literature that examines and reports on mental health and well-being in the media arts sector. Initially, we were looking for insights into general Canadian occupational mental health research and its potential relevance to the media arts. Primary search terms relating to mental health, media arts, safe(r) and respectful workplaces were supplemented by other search terms as the research progressed. Initial searches were conducted for articles and reports in English using Google Scholar and the University of Victoria library. Article searches were focused predominantly on Canada, UK, USA, Australia, and New Zealand literature.

### Defining Mental Health and Psychological Health and Safety

According to the World Mental Health Report (World Health Organization, 2022)

*Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in.*

According to the Survey on Mental Health and Stressful Events (Statistics Canada, 2023)

*Almost two-thirds (63%) of adults living in Canada reported that they had been exposed to a potentially traumatic event at some point in their lives. Events might have happened to them directly or indirectly. Survey respondents were instructed to include all four of the following: events that happened directly to them, events that they witnessed, events that they learned about that happened to a close family member or a close friend, **and events that they were repeatedly exposed to details about as part of their job** [our emphasis as it pertains to repetition in media arts development, production, postproduction and distribution (e.g., rehearsing, multiple takes of potentially triggering or distressing behaviours and events, reviewing the film and discussing traumatic elements of the making of the film while touring to festivals with one's film)].*

According to a July 2021 report from the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)

*In any given year, 1 in 5 people in Canada will personally experience a mental health problem or illness. A 2011 study by the Mental Health Commission of Canada estimated*

*that the cost to the Canadian economy is approximately \$50B/year due to mental health problems and mental illnesses and that it would rise to \$2.5 trillion by 2041 [there have been no further updates on this statistical reporting since 2011].*

The CMHA goes on to report that fewer than 25% of employees say they feel comfortable talking to their employer about mental health concerns. There are many reasons for this – stigma, fear of consequences, fear of being misunderstood or treated differently and more. On the other hand, 76% stated that they themselves would be completely comfortable with and supportive of a colleague with a mental illness.

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) Mental Health Playbook for Business Leaders (CAMH, 2019) corroborates that a supportive work environment can improve and protect employee mental health and well-being. Creating mentally healthy workplaces requires an investment of time, resources, and leadership regardless of the industry. As of 2019, only 39% of Canadian employers had a mental health strategy in place though that number has been increasing in recent years (Martin, et. al., 2024).

CAMH agrees that leaders are key agents of change and can play a significant role in changing culture and reducing mental health stigma. Working towards shifting the culture and designing mentally healthier workplaces can include creating an organization-wide mental health strategy, instituting mandatory mental health leadership training, and developing mental health supports.

These statistics were reported pre-pandemic and since the pandemic 68% of Canadians surveyed indicated their mental health had declined. While more recent research (Statistics Canada, 2024; Martin, et. al., 2024) shows some level of improved general mental health it also indicates that we do not yet know the full extent of the impact of the pandemic on our mental health, workplaces, schools, and other parts of our lives.

#### *Media arts sector literature review*

In addition to exploring the general state of mental health in Canada as a whole and in Canadian workplaces this literature review examined over 15 academic studies and 29 independent sector-generated reports plus sector-related articles published from 2019 – 2024 which offer insights into the mental health and well-being of media arts professionals. We purposefully sought any research done post-2020 to account for the impact of COVID-19 on results. The research came from Canada, US, UK, Australia, and New Zealand.

The research covered a range from surveys of health and wellbeing in the media arts sector to suicidal behaviours in the sector, to gender issues to decolonizing work practices and film school curriculum to addressing workplace harassment and bullying to the culture shock of COVID-19 and its impact on mental health. Much of the research focused on the documenting of issues in the sector with some suggestions for strategies to address the issues described.

#### *Higher rate of mental health issues amongst media arts professionals*

The consensus of the literature is that mental health issues occur at a higher rate amongst media arts professionals, that the working culture needs to be changed and that there are significant gaps in addressing the mental health and wellbeing of all who work in the industry.

### *Sector-related Mental Health*

The rigours and unique stressors of media arts production, perhaps even more so when in ultra-low budget productions scenarios, can have a negative impact on mental health and wellbeing. Sector-related reports cite some of the following as contributing factors:

- Workplace culture
- Financial pressures
- Irregular and often long hours
- Labour shortages
- Tenuous work/precarious work
- Isolation
- Systemic racism, sexism, exclusion, colonization
- Juggling multiple roles and responsibilities in work and life
- Extra stress for the marginalized
- Burnout-inducing working conditions
- Limited capability to provide workers with needed mental health supports, especially when working in the lower budget range

In parallel with our general society there's been a rise over the past several years of the arts sector (at all levels) talking about mental health and well-being with an emphasis on how the media arts can be healthy and sustainable for all. There has been an increase in the number of sources of mental health training resources for media artists as well as an increased number of trainings, certifications and other professional development offerings aimed at increasing mental health supports on sets.

As noted, for the general Canadian working population, having mental health training is an important component of changing culture and addressing stigma. Research, such as that conducted by Film and TV Charity UK in mapping out mental health training options, shows mental health training “does raise awareness and provide insights and knowledge to the trainees”. The research goes on to say, “research suggests that the training impact is twofold – on the participant and their own well-being and in their ability to recognise the signs of poor mental health in others”.

Training in mental health enables participants to change attitudes and to be able to recognize and respond to mental health issues. One of the key findings in the Film and TV Charity UK mapping project was that “mental health training should be core to any management development programme.

### *Confirmation of existing work being done in the media arts sector*

A systematic review across the media arts sector showed there are both well-established programmes and supports and new and emerging work on creating mentally health workplaces.

Organizations in Canada such as the Canada Council for the Arts (which invested in this work) as well as the Actors Fund of Canada, Respectful Workplaces in the Arts as well as Telefilm Canada, Canada Media Fund, unions, guilds, provincial organizations (e.g. Actsafe BC, CallTime Mental Health) and more have all been providing some information, services and supports for media arts professionals.



### Arts organizations

DOC and the Canada Media Fund have been doing excellent work with a project called DocuMentality, doing anecdotal research, creating dialogue, and seeking collaborative change on the key mental health and well-being challenges being faced by those working in the documentary community.

Some theatre, dance, music, general workplace non-profit organizations have recognized the importance of addressing the mental health and wellness needs of their members (e.g. Dancer Transition Resource Centre (DTRC), Healthy Dance Canada, Workman Arts). DTRC has created a comprehensive suite of services designed as a referral network for their members to address financial wellness, career transition, career coaching, and more.

### Unions, Guilds and Associations

Canadian unions, guilds and associations are actively seeking to address the mental health of media arts workers through a variety of initiatives such as the Canadian Performing Arts Workers Resilience Fund, the Canadian Labour Congress Mental Health at work online portal, as well as ACTRA, DGC, IATSE, Unifor (ACFC West, NABET 700-M) have been proactive in providing mental health resources, supports and advocacy.

While most, if not all, of the unions, guilds and associations from all provinces and territories do emphasize the importance of supporting mental health in media arts workplaces few of them have their own programs, such as the BC-based Calltime or Actsafe. They do provide mental health information and resources on their web pages, which often point to general Canada-wide mental health sites or to the BC programs listed below.

**Calltime Mental Health:** [was] developed in 2020 to support BC motion picture workers and their families, reduce the stigma related to mental health and substance use concerns, and to ensure that BC motion picture workers are aware of the services and benefits available to them through their Union Health Benefit Plans and broader resources that are available to the public” (Calltime Mental Health website <https://www.calltimementalhealth.com/about>, accessed 2024).

**Actsaf BC:** Since 1998, Actsaf BC has been preventing workplace injury, illness and death by providing world-class occupational health, safety and wellbeing programs and services to the employers, supervisors and workers in the BC motion picture, performing arts and live events industries (Actsaf BC web site <https://www.actsaf.ca/about-us/>, accessed 2024).

### *Comparison of how other sectors manage mental health considerations*

It is clear from the research that much attention is being paid at this time to the mental health and wellbeing in many creative industry sectors. Other sectors have been offering resources, support and information on mental health in the workplace for artists and cultural workers. The growing recognition of the importance of this work is reflected in some of these Canadian and provincial cultural organizations: WorkinCulture, the Ontario Arts Council, Ontario Creates, Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Arts Nova Scotia, Visual Arts Nova Scotia, Union des Artistes (UDA), Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (CALQ). More recently, the Unison Fund, Socan and Revelios launched a collaboration to address mental health challenges within the Canadian music industry.



*Summary of consultations and literature (organized by variable or themes), identifying the gaps and imagining (dreaming up) a generative image for the future*

The systemic stigma surrounding mental health still exists for workers in the media arts sector. As identified in the literature few people feel comfortable disclosing their mental health concerns to others, and most are less comfortable to come forward in the work environment where they fear being perceived as weak, less than capable or even untrustworthy. To be better able to provide mentally healthy workplaces we need to find ways to address the stigma.

Isolation has been identified as an issue for many in the media arts profession. The research shows that finding community and connection is key aid in protecting mental health. Creating safer creative spaces means creating some sense of belonging and community.

Reflecting on the 2023 Statistics Canada report when considering the effects of repetitive exposure to graphic content on the individual arts worker, on the impact on their families and, potentially, the broader community, the mental health of one person has the possibility of affecting a larger system.

The WIDC Safer Creative Spaces project aims to help fill a significant gap in tools to prevent and alleviate immediate mental health triggers on the job in the media arts sector. We aim to provide support and services to production members who are struggling with mental health and offer timely observation and intervention services by having a mental health consultant on set or easily accessible to address either an existing condition or situational (reaction/response to the artistic content of the current production).

As part of this work, the WIDC Safer Creative Spaces project has also gathered information on national, provincial and territorial mental health resources and supports that are available to the general public in hopes of being able to offer more affordable options to media arts works. This comprehensive research offers an excellent resource to those who are in positions of leadership across the Canadian network.

Workshops, in-services, and immediate intervention are not services or supports that are readily affordable nor generally provided in prep or during production or post. When an individual reaches out for help, they want and often need to get that help as soon as possible. These kinds of supports are the gaps our project proposes to fill with the creation of this Safer Creative Spaces Starter Toolkit.

We envision a world free of mental health stigma with an industry where individuals and creative work flourishes based on a culture of caring and where people know how to self-regulate, recognize, and respond to distress in others and help direct them to available supports.

### 3. DESIGN

How we worked together towards change

#### Our Collaborative Work Process

Our leadership team was made up of one representative each from our collaborating organizations (see Appendix 1 for bios)

Dr. Carol Whiteman, Women In the Directors' Chair (WIDC)  
Ana de Lara, Stigma Free Productions  
Jane Taylor Lee, Family Services of Greater Victoria (FSGV)  
Charlene Hickey, Songhees Nation Family Counselling (SNFC)

In order to situate ourselves and coalesce around the topic, we began with a series of Zoom meetings to do a deeper dive into key questions, concerns and possible approaches to the work. Through these meetings, we collectively generated ideas to help guide us towards what “safer creative spaces” means in practical terms.

#### Research Questions and Hypotheses

- What does it mean to create ‘safer creative spaces’?
- How do you improve mental health and well-being on sets with a low budget?
- What does our post-pandemic world need from us as leaders in the motion picture/media arts industry?
- What is the new normal?
- What are people grappling with in terms of their best well-being?
- What do we need to do to create a quality world for these workers?
- Is there a need for a mental health toolkit for media arts?
- What is the impact of the tools, protocols and workshops? Is what we are doing effective?
- Will implementing a mental health workshop or other tools and protocols reduce stigma with respect to mental health and substance use?
- Will having a team wellness workshop increase levels of confidence in addressing distress in self/others?
- Are there gaps still to address?
- Have we reduced stigma?

#### Early Steps

Since our team came to the project with diverse lived experiences as well as educational and professional backgrounds in the intersections of media arts and mental health practices, we determined to engage in research activities that would bring us a shared language and tools.

Our leadership team members did an online search for existing Mental Health First Aid courses which were then compiled into a resource list. Two team members attended a certified nine-hour online Mental Health First Aid course offered by the Canadian Mental Health Commission. They

found the tools offered applicable but not specific to media arts workers' needs, so the search continued.

## Key Consultations

Further searching found a training offering that specifically incorporated mental health for media artists presented by Bridgett McCarthy co-founder of the Association of Mental Health Coordinators (AMHC) based in Georgia, USA. Our team reached out to the AMHC who agreed to tailor a thirty-hour training offering based on their Artistic Mental Health Practitioner (AMHP) course of four core pillars of mental health for the arts, for up to eight participants. This training cohort included our leadership team members along with four invited consultants who represented an intersection of communities and lived experience, Heather Allin (she/her), a white professional performer, filmmaker and ACTRA Toronto On-set Liaison Officer (OSLO), Andy Marie (they/them), a queer Filipina-Canadian actor and writer based in BC; JJ Neepin, a First Nations filmmaker based in Manitoba; and Jen Viens (she/they), a queer white professional performer and Intimacy Coordinator based in Quebec (see Appendix 1 for bios).

With these targeted community consultations, we learned more about needs, lived experienced and best practices around mental health, situational assessment, and immediate response protocols.

Through our respective communications channels, our Leadership Team members put out calls for a Lead Researcher to assist with further collection of existing, ongoing research and mental health resources. Dawn Schell, CCC and Manager, Mental Health Outreach & Training at University of Victoria, was engaged as Lead Researcher.

Upon completion of a final draft of this long-form report, the team invited three elder / academic consultants to provide a final review. These key consultants included Dr. Dorothy Cucw-la7 Christian, PhD, independent scholar, writer, editor and storyteller who is from Splatsin, one of the communities of the Secwepemc Nation, Dr. Rita Shelton Deverell, EdD, C.M. theatre artist, professional performer, independent television producer / director, and Dr. Carolyn Mamchur, PhD, writer in residence, Simon Fraser University (see Appendix 1 for bios). Feedback received was incorporated into this report.

## Research Design

This section will discuss the research design, and methodologies used across the project. We employed a mixed methodology involving both traditional quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analysis.

We employed surveys, voluntary interviews, and participant observation within three settings:

1. an Ultra-low budget (ULB) production led by a WIDC alum
2. a Songhees Nation youth music video project
3. a self-selected volunteer group of WIDC alumni directors.

From these sources, we gathered information about what supports mental health and well-being on set. We aimed to collect this information from different participants with diverse lived experiences and levels of professional seniority.

Our intent was to learn more about how to create safe(r), inclusive, creative spaces and to understand the impacts of the Team Wellness workshops. We measured the impacts through the analysis of survey and interview data. We adapted the WIDC program's 10-question satisfaction feedback survey. Survey and interview data was aggregated to protect anonymity.

The surveys and interviews assessed attitudes, opinions as to gaps surrounding mental health & wellness concerns in the ULB media arts sector, assisted in the further development, and fine-tuning of the WIDC SCS Mental Health & Wellness Starter Toolkit.

## Research Method (Mixed qualitative and quantitative)

### *Qualitative*

Voluntary interviews / testimonials from all three of the projects' participant categories and leaders were conducted as part of the evaluation of the impact. Each interview was semi-structured. A common set of questions was co-designed by the leadership team and then asked in each interview. The interviews were set up to be more of a conversation to allow for other issues to emerge. The questions covered participants' personal perceptions of the workshop, current work environment and any impact they witnessed of the workshop on the work environment as well as their thoughts about mental health in the media arts as a whole.

As part of the quantitative survey data, we also offered respondents the option of adding further comments, ideas and suggestions through open-text responses.

The qualitative data from the Test Production (*Best Friend Me*) was analyzed for common themes, words, phrases. This was shared with the leadership team during team meetings and using Google Jamboards. The themes were agreed upon and the information was then used to inform the development of the next iteration of the Team Wellness Workshop for the WIDC alumni group.

Qualitative data from the Songhees Youth Music Video was analyzed for common themes, words and phrases. The common themes were shared with the leadership team and used to: a) confirm the main findings in the literature review and the Test production and b) to shape the development of recommendations for next steps particularly as it relates to work that needs to be done to further include Indigenous voices in the media arts.

Qualitative data from the WIDC alumni directors was gathered in two ways. Our lead researcher observed participants during the Team Wellness workshops and practicum sessions, noting comments, questions stated both verbally and in written form in the chat feature of our online platform. As in the Test Production we also offered respondents the option of adding further comments, ideas and suggestions through open-text responses on our surveys.

The data was analyzed for common themes, words and phrases and was used to inform the development of the final version of the mental health toolkit.

### *Quantitative*

The leadership team co-designed the three surveys for both the Test Production and the WIDC alumni directors, adapting the WIDC program's 10-question satisfaction survey with ranking scales.

The first survey included questions to collect relevant demographic information and questions related to ability to notice distress in self or others, confidence in being able to handle/manage distress in self/others as well as general mental health help-seeking behaviours. Additionally, questions were asked as a 'temperature check' on the media arts sector (e.g., have you witnessed someone in distress on set, have you worked on productions where mental health was addressed).

The second survey was focused on assessing to what extent the Team Wellness workshop achieved the intended goals, the levels of satisfaction with the workshop, the relevance of the workshop for their job and any suggestions for change and improvement.

The exit survey measured satisfaction, key take-aways, levels of confidence in using the skills taught, and recommendations for improvement.

The surveys were given to the Test Production's cast and crew prior to production, immediately after the Team Wellness Workshop and after the completion of the principal photography, between mid-June 2023 and November 2023.

The surveys for the WIDC alumni were given between the beginning of March 2024 and the end of April 2024:

1. Prior to the initial Team Wellness workshop
2. Immediately following the first workshop
3. Immediately after the practicum session.

There was a tighter timeframe for the WIDC alumni with two workshops and three practicum sessions offered within a six-week window.

## Introduction of Prototyping

To ensure the workshops and tools are relevant for those in the media arts profession, useful in supporting mental health and well-being on set and that they build confidence in being able to recognize and address distress in self and others, we decided to prototype a Team Wellness Workshop and seek feedback on these and other issues. Gathering this information from a variety of sources assisted us to further develop and fine-tune the WIDC SCS Mental Health and Wellness Starter Toolkit (workshops and protocols).

*Setting and Sample (where / how we conducted our work and how we chose participants)*

**Test Production - ULB production:** All cast and crew and leaders were invited to participate. Forty-five participated.

**Songhees Youth Music Video Project:** As part of a summer camp for youth, the Songhees Nation were involved with a media arts company in the production of a music video. The eight youth aged 8 - 12 in the cast and four crew members were invited to participate in private interviews with Songhees Nation Family Counsellor and SCS Leadership team member, Charlene Hickey, CCC. Seven chose to participate.

**WIDC Alumni Directors:** We advertised the two prototype workshops and four practicum sessions via WIDC communication channels and thirty-three WIDC alumni self-selected to participate in both the workshops and the surveys.

Our sample was representative of the media arts sector from those with little/limited experience in this work to those with 20+ years of experience and from a diverse range of identities. We explicitly acknowledge identities are not singular. In making this statement, we are referring to the way in which individuals are shaped by and identify with a vast array of cultural, structural, sociobiological, economic, and social contexts (Howard & Renfrow, 2014).

While we did not specifically capture the intersectionality of each individual participant’s identities, in the collection of demographic information we did ask participants to “select all that apply”.

Here is how our sampling of participants self-identified:

<b>Identity</b>	<b>% of sample</b>
Cis-gender	43.9%
Transgender	4.5%
Non-binary	6%
2SLGBTQIA+	36.4%
Woman	68.2%
Man	15%
Indigenous	4.5%
Metis	1.5%
Inuit	0%
Black	1.5%
Person of Colour	33.3%
Person living with a disability	24.2%

Additionally, of the seven Songhees Music Video project interview participants, six identified as Indigenous.

## Data Collection and Analysis

### *How was the data collected?*

Surveys were sent out to the entire cast, crew and leadership of the Test Production via email. Survey links were shared during the Team Wellness Workshop. Survey links were distributed via email after the completion of the principle photography. Participants were offered an honorarium as a gesture of thanks for completing all three of the surveys. Those who participated but did not complete all three surveys were offered a lesser honorarium.

A similar process was used for engaging with the WIDC alumni.

Interview participants from the Test Production were selected on a volunteer basis. Everyone on set was invited to participate if they felt comfortable doing so and had the time during the three production days that the videographers were on set.

All Songhees youth and crew who participated in the music video were invited to participate in an interview to gather information about how to create safe(r) creative spaces from an Indigenous lens. Four of the youth and three of the crew members volunteered to be interviewed for this project. Those who volunteered were offered an honorarium as a gesture of thanks.

#### *How was data analyzed?*

The interviews and survey comments were collated into categories, searching for common language and impact phrases. Outputs and recommendations were generated from the Test Production and were used to inform the workshops for WIDC alumni. Responses between the Test Production and the Songhees youth and crew interviewees were compared both in terms of the commonalities between samples and in light of the literature review.

Survey results were analyzed using Google forms response calculations where there were rating scales. We compared responses between samples noting similarities and differences on the ranking scales.

It is significant to note that two additional Test Productions which we originally proposed to take part in this project, while enthusiastic when offered the opportunity, in the end declined to participate. They both stated that the Team Wellness workshop required more time than they felt could be spared given their projects were very close to production and schedules were considered too tight for cast and crew.



## 4. DELIVERY

What we did and what resulted

### Appreciative Inquiry Approach (AIA)

WIDC Safer Creative Spaces project cultivated and tested a toolkit and protocols to improve the wellbeing of media arts leaders working in ultra-low budget media arts productions. Our aim: to disrupt stigma and provide practical, cost-free tools to address concerning mental health gaps in the media arts sector.

Over 15,000 hours went into our 5-D Appreciative Inquiry (AIA) approach:

**Discovery:** We collaborated with Family Services of Greater Victoria, Songhees Nation Family Counselling, Stigma Free Productions, Association of Mental Health Coordinators, and media artists with diverse practises and lived experiences to build common language, identify gaps, and define practical elements needed for 'safer creative spaces.'

**Dreaming:** We reviewed academic and sector-related literature, consulted with media arts creators and actors, intimacy coordinators and specialists (mental health, adult education) and interviewed a Songhees Nation music video director and 4 cast, to learn more about needs, and best practices around mental health protocols and training.

**Designing:** We designed a 'team wellness' toolkit for media arts workers including workshop, protocols, survey instruments to measure effectiveness, and a mental health referral network list.

**Delivery:** We proto-typed our toolkit with 45 cast and crew members of a BC-based ultra-low budget production; we then beta-tested an improved version of the toolkit with 32 media arts leaders (WIDC alumni writer/directors) across Canada.

**Destiny:** We reviewed outcomes using a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Reflecting on what we learned in the process, we identified key themes and strengths, areas for improvement and key recommendations for next steps.

### Reflections on the Process

#### *Intentions for creating inclusion*

When we initiated this project, it was our intention to remain mindful of the mental health access needs of all of our team members. We wanted to walk the talk. In addition to studying safer creative spaces and what goes into creating them for media arts leaders, their cast and crew, we wanted to practice creating a safer creative space for ourselves as well as our participants.

In the end, while we feel we achieved a fair and thoughtful accommodation of the access needs our team and participants, it took months longer than expected. Mental health and some significant and unexpected life stressors were experienced by our leadership team members and consultants.

As a team coming from the different sectors (media arts, adult education, colonial mental health, Indigenous-focused mental health), we recognized that we had some work to do to establish a common language, approach, and understanding of the mental health field. We were sincere and



diligent in our efforts, which helped us establish common ground and good will in the face of our differences. We are proud of what we were able to accomplish together and acknowledge that there is still more to do here.

We also learned that collecting hard data on reducing stigma in Canadian media arts sector is challenging. When developing the survey questions would divert us onto multiple tangents of possible exploration.

## Beta-testing Team Wellness Workshop and In-service

The Team Wellness workshop was created and adapted from the sharing of subject matter expertise and the knowledge of our leadership team along with core concepts from mental health first aid courses presented by the Canadian Mental Health Association's Mental Health First Aid course (<https://cmha.ca/what-we-do/national-programs/workplace-mental-health/workplace-training/>) and a tailored thirty-five-hour mental health training provided by the Association of Mental Health Coordinators based in Georgia, USA. The training was attended by the leadership team along with four invited artist consultants with backgrounds in filmmaking, performance, First Nations community, Queer community, Intimacy Coordination and On-set Liaison work.

The leadership team originally looked at four pillars for inclusion in the workshop.

- How we are in community
- I feel I belong – that we matter
- There is room for me – generosity
- Independence and competence – core need to feel competent and trust to make my own decisions

Based on collective experience in working on media arts productions it was determined that in a high-pressure environment, conflict resolution tools would be critically important in maintaining smooth workflow. The leadership team also identified issues relating to identity, belonging, overwhelm, perfectionism, rest, and self-care as being important topics to address. The choice was made to address these in a general sense in the workshops under the heading of self-care.

In seeking consultation with our Indigenous colleagues, we heard about protocols that we could learn from and align with:

- Having an ethic of care
- Community-based caring
- Connection to a sense of identity
- The importance of embedding a sense of belonging (i.e. knowing where you fit in)  
The importance of respect and dignity.

A beta "Team Wellness" workshop was created collaboratively with the leadership team and revised based on input from attendees of each successive presentation.

## Adapting the Team Wellness Workshop

As the team reflected on immediate feedback from the delivered Team Wellness Workshops, adjustments were made primarily in the timing and the sample scenarios presented in the workshop. This immediate participant feedback afforded the team particularly valuable insights

into how to better frame sample situations around conflict resolution and how to practice the tools more effectively.

### Beta testing & Results

In the following, we describe the beta test workshops, toolkit, and protocols with participants samples and who delivered the workshops

#### Workshop Agenda:

- *Welcome Practice*
- *Self-Care*
  - *Self-Regulation*
  - *Access Needs*
- *Team Care*
  - *Community Agreements*
  - *Concern Navigation Pathways*
- *Conflict Resolution*
  - *XYZ of an Apology*
  - *Oops, Ouch, Sorry*
  - *Clearing Conversations*
- *Closure Practice*

## Beta-testing with Media Arts Production (Best Friend Me)

The workshop content is listed above. The workshop was offered four times in an online format and took two hours to complete.

The facilitators were members of the Leadership Team who had been trained as Artistic Mental Health Practitioners (AMHPs) and a Certified Intimacy Coordinator. A total of 45 cast and crew participated in the workshops.

#### Number of survey respondents (BFM)

Survey 1 – Pre-workshop Survey	33 +22*
Survey 2 – Post Team Wellness Workshop	40
Survey 3 – Post Practicum (aka after principal photography)	23

N.B. *\*the pre-workshop survey was completed twice by several participants. We chose to use the survey results from the largest sample though we are aware that in doing so we may have lost some of the nuances of percentages of responses. We did use any comments that occurred in both surveys.*

### Survey 1 – Pre-workshop Survey (version 2)

33 respondents

#### Demographics

- 43.8% had been working/volunteering in the media arts sector for less than 5 years
- 12.5% having worked/volunteered in the media arts sector for more than 20 years

- 17 (53.1%) identified as women, 2 as transgender, 1 as non-binary, 9 as men
- 8 (25%) identified as 2SLGBTQIA+
- 8 (25%) as Person of Colour
- 4 (12.5%) as Person living with Disability
- 1 as Indigenous
- 1 as Metis

### Distress/Trigger

When asked how confident they felt about recognizing their own feelings of distress or when they were triggered 84.3% rated their confidence between 8 – 10 on a 10-point scale.

No one rated their confidence lower than a 6.

4. As a film/series actor and/or crew member, I have experienced distress caused by working on creative content and/or working conditions that were...ng to me. (if No or Unsure, skip to Question # 7).

31 responses

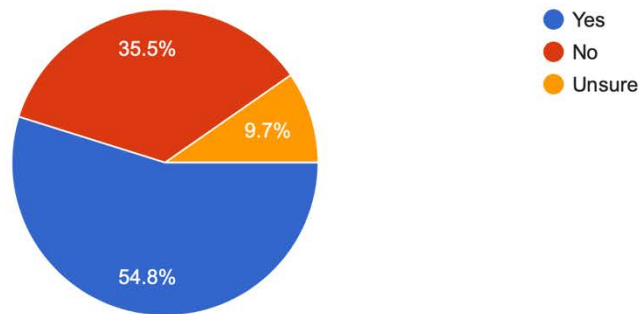


Figure 2: Pre-workshop Survey Question 4 results for BFM

Of those who said Yes, they had experienced distress, 60% stated they had considered reaching out for support and 84% said they were able to self-regulate and get back to their optimal self without assistance. This result corroborates our theory that when experiencing distress, most media arts workers tend to suffer quietly and / or try to work things out on their own.

Who did they reach out to? And how helpful did they find it?

Co-workers, Friends, and Family members rated the highest usefulness and frequency.

Frequency of who they would or have reached out to (most to least)

- Friend
- Family Member
- Co-worker
- Internet
- Counsellors/Therapists
- Department Heads
- Books
- I didn't seek support
- Spiritual Leaders
- Other

Ranking of the helpfulness (most helpful to least helpful)

- Co-Worker
- Friend
- Family Member
- Books
- Counsellors/Therapists
- Internet
- Department Heads
- I didn't seek support
- Spiritual Leaders
- Other

More people reported turning to friends and family though they found these sources of help to be moderately less 'useful' than turning to their co-workers. The lower rate of turning to department heads aligns with the national statistics on people not reporting to their employers any mental health concerns.

**Do they currently feel confident they can access support**

Respondents reported feeling 'quite confident' that they could access the support they needed, as 84.4% ranked their confidence as between 8 – 10 on a 10-point ranking scale.

In terms of their previous production experiences and whether there were protocols in place to support mental health it raises some concerns that 21.9% of respondents weren't sure whether there was a plan in place or not and 18.8% said the plans that were in place were 'unclear'. This is an issue where clarity and transparency are key. No one on a set should be 'unsure' or 'unclear' about this.

9. Looking back at my previous production experience (most recent), the production had protocols or procedures in place to support mental health and wellness (select any that apply).

32 responses

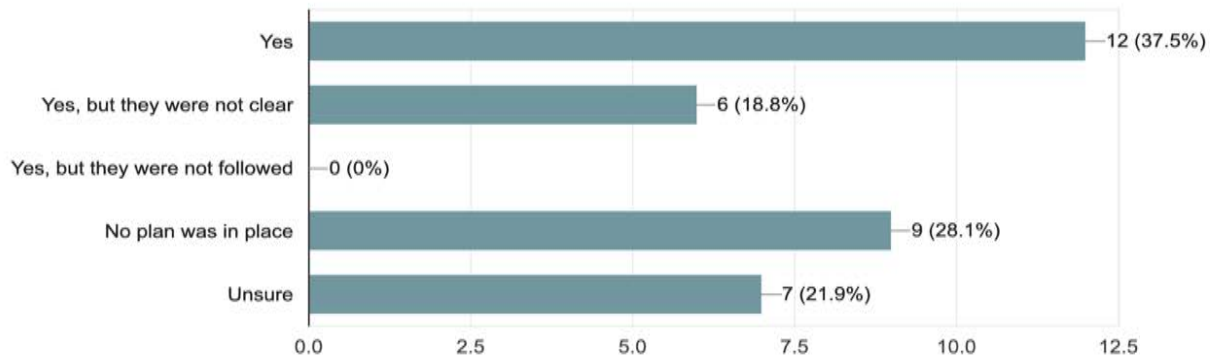


Figure 3: Pre-workshop Survey Question 9 results for BFM

As to supporting others while close to three quarters (approximately 75%) of respondents said they had witnessed a co-worker's distress, it is interesting to note in the light of the number of those who stated their best support came from co-workers, there was a mixed response in how confident respondents felt about offering support.

11. In at least one film/series project that I have worked on (paid or volunteer), I have I have witnessed a co-worker who was experiencing distress or feeling triggered.

32 responses

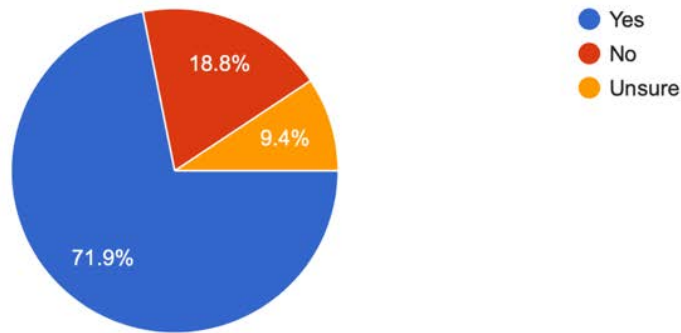


Figure 4: Pre-workshop Survey Question 11 results for BFM

12. I currently feel confident in offering support to a co-worker who is experiencing distress or feeling triggered. (10 is the most confident).

32 responses

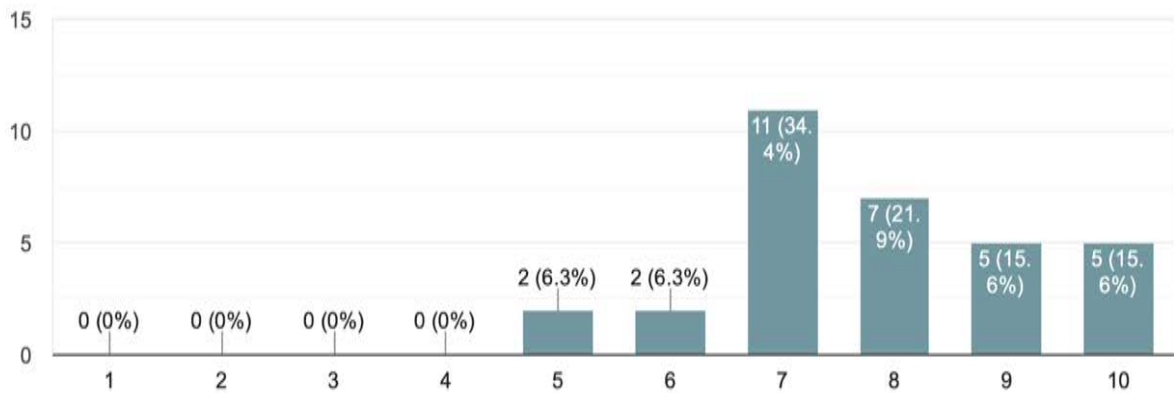


Figure 5: Pre-workshop Survey Question 12 results for BFM

## Survey 2 – Post Team Wellness Workshop

40 respondents

Participants were asked about satisfaction levels with both the logistics and content, relevance of the content to the work they do as well as key takeaways.

**How satisfied were respondents with the workshop?**

On a scale of 1 (not very) to 10 (very much) the range was from 4 – 10 with 50% ranking their satisfaction between 9 – 10.

**How relevant and helpful do you think it was for your job?**

On a scale of 1 (not very) to 10 (very much) the range was from 4 – 10 with 57.5% ranking the relevance between 9 – 10.

**Which element of the workshop did you find most relevant?**

*On a three-point scale of not relevant, relevant, very relevant*

- Access needs – 100% ranked as relevant or very relevant
- Conflict resolution tools & Clearing conversations – 100% ranked as relevant or very relevant
- Community agreement – 99% ranked as relevant or very relevant

Ranking on five-point scale when asked about satisfaction levels with the content of the workshop 75% of respondents scored it as 4 or 5.

While respondents were generally satisfied with the logistics, we also received constructive feedback about ways to improve the workshop from a logistical point of view which we incorporated into the next iteration of the workshop.

### Comments from Respondents

*Do[ing] a practice such as this helps me to feel that I am part of a community or team instead of feeling like I am an outsider. This activity also makes us accountable and puts us all on the same level of understanding.*

*I thought it was very good. I was also glad to hear about idea that folks sometimes don't know they are hurting someone and looking at ways to make clarify and say sorry. Thought that was great - everyone has blown it sometimes and practising resolving issues from both sides is invaluable.*

*Acting out the scenes really helped me understand the content more. The jam-board was also great, and I appreciated that the workshop was presented with various learning styles in mind.*

*I get bored and frustrated easily so 2 hrs was too long for me. Good info but I would tighten up the presentation to make it more efficient and condensed*

*...I don't like the way in which this program seemed to place the onus on the individual as opposed to the production companies/1stAD/Producers etc....*

*Perhaps we need to address the issue of both collective/systemic and individual responsibility*

*I felt strongly it would benefit a lot of people, and I plan to carry the teachings here forward for future productions I work on moving forward.*

*I absolutely loved this workshop & felt supported by both cast & crew when I WASN'T well.*

The most frequently mentioned key takeaway from the Team Wellness Workshop was 'learning how to support team members who may be in distress'. This highlights the way in which this workshop was able to convey the importance of developing a kinder, caring work culture on set. From this feedback, we can infer that the Team Wellness Workshop may help reduce one of the stigma symptoms around mental health – staying silent when we witness team members in distress.

### Survey 3 – Post Practicum (after the principal photography was completed)

23 respondents

The leadership team and the researcher met to discuss the questions for the third survey. We agreed on the intent, the number of questions, the wording of each question, pulling several questions from the first two surveys. The identified themes from the interviews were used to inform one of the questions for the third survey in each group (production and WIDC alumni) as to the major benefits of the workshop, tools, and protocols.

Reflecting on the Team Wellness workshop and how the tools were used (or not) during the production as well as what worked and what could be improved and any general observations about the process.

Respondents were asked:

One of the intentions behind the development of the Team Wellness Workshop was to create a safe(r), inclusive creative space on set. To what degree do you agree this was achieved?

On a five-point scale – 65.2% said 4 – 5.

What worked? (open-text responses)

*Having a safe space to be vulnerable made me feel like I was not alone in having special access needs. It reminded me to take care of my own access needs by taking breaks and having quiet time on set when I felt overstimulated.*

*Setting the groundwork for the whole production team really set the tone for the shoot*

What could be improved (open-text responses)

*I would love to have a summary of what we learned in written form.*

*A check-in part way through filming would be good.*

*The way we spoke to each other in times of high stress on set could be improved*

*Daily reminders/practices. Like so many stressful kinds of projects, it gets harder the longer we go, and the more tired people get.*

*I think once on set, more clarity about who to talk to or check-in with could become even more accessible.*

**Did you use or witness any of the tools being used during production?**

Close to 32% of respondents said they had used during the production. The most named tools were: AFISH, Community Agreements, and Access Needs.

**How confident and prepared did you feel in using them?**

On a five-point scale the self-rating of confidence ranged from 3 (47%) to 4 -5 (52%)

However, when asked how prepared they felt to use the tools, their responses ranged from 1 – 5 with most between 3 -5. Respondents (43.5%) reported witnessing the tools being used which is slightly higher than those who said they had used the tools themselves.

**Most effective tool?**

50% said Access Needs, followed by the Community Agreement, then AFISH and XYZ (conflict resolution tools).

**What do you think the major benefits were?**

For these questions we listed the themes we had gathered from interviews and comments from the previous two surveys. The following ranked as the top four:

- Common language for talking about issues – 69.6%
- Encourages inclusion – 60.9%
- Tone-setting – 52.2%
- Sense of caring – 43.5%

**Additional Comments**

*This may just be taking the idea of "went beyond lip service" up a notch. But by implementing these steps it made me feel like the production took them very seriously. Was very proactive compared to reactive which isn't always the case.'*

*Hopefully, more productions will start implementing similar infrastructure (both low and high budget) as a lot of the time it's more of an afterthought, and anything that comes up is "dealt with" rather half-heartedly.*

*This was a great program and I hope we have it on more shows as it takes time to make this a regular practice and for the tools to become second nature*

*I think we could have better discussed how to include people in different minority positions than (perhaps) ourselves and how to ensure they aren't an afterthought. Ex: Deaf, disabled, trans, BIPOC, fat, etc.*



*I think that this program will become even more beneficial as it grows and evolves.*

*I personally would be very open to taking this annually and believe it really could be done for all, especially because we work in such a stressful industry. Having seen people on our set before and after this training, I can see I saw a marked improvement in the way they treated people on set. I can't say it is only because of the training but I really believed it helped.*

## Beta-testing with WIDC Alumni Directors

For the WIDC Alumni the leadership team worked collaboratively to accommodate the amount of content that could be reasonably shared in two hours. It was decided to offer a second 'practicum' session where participants could come together to practice skills (such as motivational interviewing and conflict resolution).

During a practicum session we received feedback prompting us to change the practice conflict scenario we had planned to something more neutral. That change was made for subsequent sessions.

We offered two two-hour long theory sessions and four two-hour practicum sessions in an online format. The theory sessions were facilitated by the leadership team, always including at least one certified clinical counsellor.

Survey 1 – Pre-workshop	33 responses
Survey 2 – Post Team Wellness Workshop	27 responses
Survey 3 – Post Practicum (final reflections)	23 responses

## Survey 1 - Pre-workshop Findings

We noted that the WIDC alumni are more experienced in the industry overall.

### 13. I have been working / volunteering in the media arts sector for:

33 responses

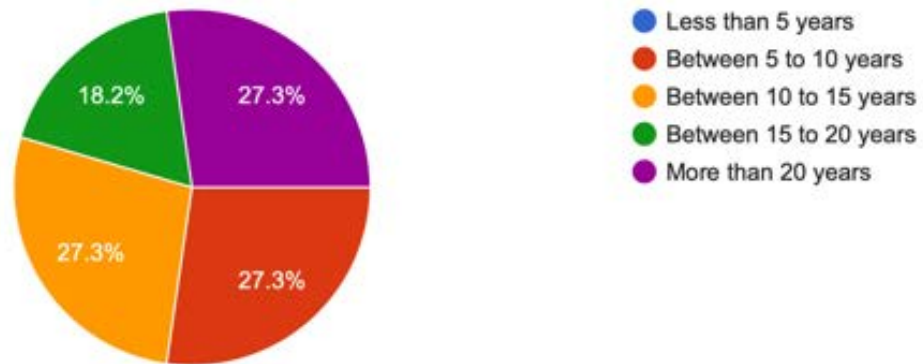


Figure 6: Pre-workshop Survey Question 13 results for WIDC alumni

When asked about their levels of confidence in recognizing their own feelings of distress answers ranged from 4 – 9 (no one chose 10) with 66.6% choosing 8-9

*As a media arts leader (e.g. screen director), I have experienced distress caused by working on creative content and/or working conditions that were distressing or triggering to me. A staggering 97% said Yes.*

Yet only 57.6% considered reaching out for help and only 43.8% saying they were able to self-regulate without assistance.

Respondent's self-confidence levels in being able to access support to manage levels of distress ranged from 3 – 10 on a 10-point scale.

When it came to recognizing distress in others - again confidence in being able to recognize it and offer support varied though 81.8% said they had witnessed distress in a co-worker.

In thinking about previous production experience – *"...the production had protocols or procedures in place to support mental health and wellness"* 72.7% said "no plan was in place"

#### Comments

*Several terrible experiences in the industry have made me consider leaving it altogether several times... I really hope we can all keep working together to find a successful lasting solution for this industry so that our valuable artists may continue to create and thrive*

*Wellness education is so important and helpful, especially the stress on set is enormous*

*Over decades of work in the industry, my distressing experiences cover a broad range from traumatizing to merely distracting. This is partly due to hard-earned resilience, but conditions have also improved a great deal, even on ULB sets. There's still a lot of work to do, but advances like established anti-harassment and DEI policies, if not always completely effective, have opened*

*the door to further conversations. The key is not only to help people feel safe to start those conversations, but more importantly, for those in power positions to recognize and respond.*

## Survey 2 – Post-Team Wellness Workshop

Overall satisfaction with the workshop ranged on a 10-point ranking scale from 6 – 10 with 62.9% of respondents ranking their satisfaction levels at 9 – 10

When asked how relevant and helpful do you think it (the workshop) was for you as a leader? 81.4 % ranked as 9 – 10.

### Key Takeaways

*Conflict resolution tools, community agreement and access needs*

*I'm not alone.*

*The systematization and clarity of wellness protocols and their step-by-step implementation*

*Mental wellness can be a priority for leaders without a big budget to pay for professional on-set mental health support, AND support can be part of the budget on larger shows.*

*I feel that my communication in the future - whether in my professional or personal life - will improve. I feel like I can be more confident dealing with situations, avoid misunderstandings, and nurture a safe/respectful/enjoyable environment for everyone included in a production. The workshop made me further aware of accessibility needs and how to make sure to include space, time, and budget for it. I will definitely be using the AFISH technique to clear conversations and de-escalate situations. Additionally, I think the community agreement will be life-changing for every single person on a team which will affect the entire environment thus positively reflect on the project as well.*

Generally, respondents were satisfied with logistics and the workshop content. Though, again, many noted a need for more practice time.

### Which element of the workshop did you find most relevant?

- Community agreement 23/27 very relevant
- Conflict resolution and clearing conversations 24/27 very relevant
- Access needs – 21/27 very relevant
- Concern navigation pathways – 19/27

### General Comments

*All very informative and makes me more hopeful about the industry!*

*I really enjoyed it and wish that it could be longer so that we could include breakout groups to discuss experiences on low budget productions and how we might apply some of the approaches*

*Looking forward to using AFISH, XYZ and oops ouch sorry*

*Overall: I'm so encouraged and grateful to know that this work is being done! One concern is that with current industry disruption, the "contraction", AIA, etc., mental wellness is at even greater risk, ...There will be resistance to wellness practices, especially as budgets have shrunk since it's easy for producers to cry poor. However ultra-low-budget shows with closer-knit teams, where the creator/leader has more control/influence (and has to look everyone in the eye) are a great place to start normalizing making on-set wellness a priority, so it's locked in as their careers progress to larger, bigger-budget projects.*

*I'm so glad I participated and feel it's very timely for me. It reminded me that we are making art and to make good art we need to have a safe and nurturing environ I am grateful I participated. It reminded me that to create great art, we need a secure and nurturing environment, and I can't wait to practice what I learned.*

## Survey 3 – Post-practicum

As was asked in the beta production surveys – we asked respondents the following:

One of the intentions behind the development of the Team Wellness Workshop was to help leaders to create a safe(r), more inclusive creative space on set or in other practical settings. To what extent was this achieved?

On a five-point scale 91.3% said 4 or 5.

### What worked well?

Several respondents named the opportunity to practice the skills as being helpful as well as the sense of safety in the space.

*The space created during the workshop felt very safe and honest. The session was very interactive and eye-opening as well. I feel like everyone (from speakers to attendees) was working hard to make the workshop as effective as possible by sharing different perspectives and by being open. The intention (helping leaders create a safe and creative space) was there all along. I felt like I learned a lot.*

*Providing a safe, inclusive space in the form of this workshop, where participants felt comfortable and encouraged not only to learn new self-regulation, conflict resolution and motivational skills, but to use those they already inherently have. I found the participants immediately aligned with the overarching goal, as everyone naturally recognized the need and wanted to help each other and themselves.*

### What could be improved?

The following were identified by several of the respondents.

- More time (to practice or to absorb the concepts)
- More examples to choose and learn from
- More 'realistic' responses to conflict situations and how to navigate those

*It felt like it was too many areas jam packed into one session. The strongest part was the AFISH and OAR acronyms. It was useful on how to navigate tricky situations that may arise on set and gave useful language. I think it was a bit surface level for accessibility and disability training as*

well as how to handle trauma and traumatic scenes on set. To me that feels like it needs to be an entirely separate workshop.

Talking about how these will realistically be used in an on-set environment.

Working on our own community agreements for our own sets so we leave the workshop with an idea of what we want and have it ready to bring up next time we make a film. Deeper movement into the concepts and less concepts in general. More examples and role play after extensive prep and grounding.

The Practicum felt rushed, something we had previously identified as a hurdle in the first workshop. The concepts are insightful and undeniably useful, but complex and cerebral, where conflicts are often emotionally driven. The acronyms help, but it will take time to practice, integrate and internalize them. A longer format with more breathing room would have been helpful to allow participants to experience the impact of the techniques on a deeper level. It's also important to recognize that a supportive workshop where everyone is aligned is a very different scenario than a busy set full of wildly diverse personalities and conflicts, so a further focus on finding ways to connect these intellectual concepts to real-world examples could be useful.

*Did you use any of the tools? (Between the theory session and the practicum session)*

Just over 60% of respondents indicated that they had indeed used the tools after the workshop while a small percentage indicated that they planned to use the tools. About a quarter of respondents indicated they had not used the tools.

#### 4. Did you use any of the tools from the Team Wellness Workshop? (e.g. AFISH, apology)

23 responses

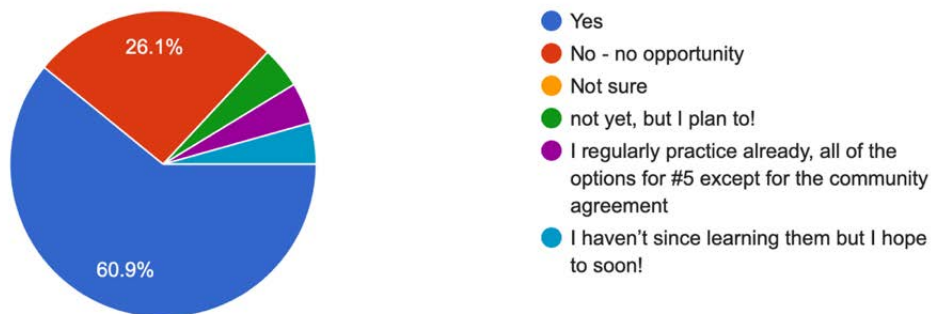


Figure 7: Post-practicum Survey Question 4 results for WIDC alumni

## Which ones?

### 5. If yes, which tools did you use?

17 responses

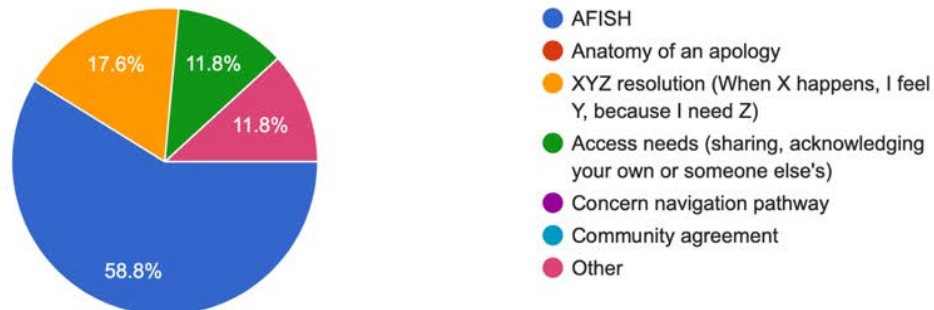


Figure 8: Post-practicum Survey Question 5 results for WIDC alumni

### Which tool did you think was most effective?

There was a range of responses as some respondents named all the tools or some combination of the tools rather than a single tool.

Where a single tool was named the order of ranking was:

- AFISH – 34.8%
- XYZ – 13%
- Anatomy of an apology & Community agreement – 8.7%

What do you think were the major benefits of the Team Wellness Workshop? (using themes based on original production surveys and interviews)

- Sense of caring – 82.6%
- Encourages inclusion – 78.3%
- Shared understanding of how to resolve issues – 73.9%
- Tone setting & Applicability of workshop to future settings – 65.2%

### Additional Comments

*I'm grateful to have such a workshop and program. Happy crew and happy working environment will improve production quality. Filmmaking is stressful and pressing, this will make our lives much better.*

*Super appreciate this workshop and where it fits on my career trajectory. To see women in all stages working on the same issues is affirming. Wish it was a tad longer to dive in a little more.*

*More tools and more case studies would be awesome.*

*While our access needs vary and everyone experiences challenges in different ways, most of us are experiencing those same challenges. Spaces like this workshop are wonderful in the way they create a sense of safety and community so we feel less alone — hopefully so that when we're in*

*leadership positions like directing, where we're "above" others and therefore solo, we can carry that feeling with us.*

*I would have liked to be able to choose multiple options for which concepts we use like AFISH, etc. instead of just one. I think the process would have been better if it was teaching a Director how to identify their own feelings first and then move into communicating them. Then they can learn how to mediate other folks.'*

*I found both the workshop and practicum to be informative and supportive, and I am certain I will take away tools that will improve communication and comfort/safety for myself and my colleagues.*

*This feels like a really good tool kit for anyone who needs to deal with people (so everyone). They are especially helpful because they will most likely be used in the "heat of the moment" and aid in defusing difficult interactions and situations.*

## Interviews with Songhees Nation Youth Music Video Cast and Crew

8 youth performers

4 crew members

As part of our collaboration with Songhees Nation Family Counselling we were able to interview some of the participants from a Songhees Nation commissioned music video.

We conducted seven interviews with the cast and crew from the Songhees Nation Youth Music Video project. These voluntary interviews were conducted as part of our main research question about what it takes to create safe(r) creative spaces for all. The interview questions also aimed to assess any gaps still needing to be addressed and the potential impact of having a mental health toolkit for media arts.

Each interview was semi-structured. A common set of questions was designed by our Songhees youth and family counsellor and then asked in each interview (see Appendix 2 for full list of questions). The interviews were structured to be more of a conversation to allow for other issues to emerge. The research questions were adapted for the particular circumstances of this production and for the age of the cast.

Four youth agreed to be interviewed for this research. The youth involved in the music video ranged in age from 8 - 12 years old and for all of them this was their first time being involved in a media arts production.

We recognize that this was a small data set from which to extrapolate data, however three main themes stand out which demonstrate a common thread with the rest of our research. Community, connection and supporting one another make a difference in creating a safe(r) creative space as does addressing access needs. Being supported in the process matters – whether it's getting help to choose the lyrics to the music or the locations or simply having the film crew help you 'figure out what to do'.



## Comments from Respondents

*It's more comfortable to do filming with friends.*

*It was a little awkward (with the film crew) 'cause they were strangers.*

*It was nice having friends and people I know.*

*Giving someone 'a minute' when they may feel shy or uncomfortable could make a difference [to help someone feel safe]*

## What would you change to be more comfortable and safe?

*If it was me – let them have a minute and let them do it when they wanted to.*

Three crew members from the Songhees Nation Youth Music Video also volunteered to be interviewed and were asked a set of questions (see Appendix 2). Again, we recognize that this was a small data set, however, the following are the main themes that emerged.

## Why do you feel it's important for Indigenous people to participate in film?

*A lot of people don't really know about us, our history, why land matters...(representation) keeps our culture alive.*

*It's not just on screen but we can have full lives as members on set.*

*There's major underrepresentation in all the arts*

*...having more people of colour employed and seeing people of colour on set would benefit Indigenous artists- to see more people who come from where they come from.*

## What barriers keep Indigenous people from participating in or wanting to participate?

*I do everything I can to provide more accessibility to the world of creative employment - especially for those on reserve or with no access to higher education".*

*Poverty.*

*If you could make one change in the industry to make it better for Indigenous artists, what would it be?*

*Being invited into community and having community involved (i.e. Songhees Nation) makes a difference in terms of building trust and a sense of safety and comfort*

*Make sure elders are involved*

*At least having something to start and going off from there... [indicating that having a toolkit (such as that proposed by WIDC) would be a starting place].*

*When working with youth how do you ensure no harm regarding their mental health and emotional wellbeing? Is there any Mental Health policies in place should a cast or crew have a mental health crisis?*

*Give everyone the space they need and respect those who may not be comfortable.*



## Interviews with Media Arts Production Cast and Crew

We conducted fourteen interviews with cast, crew, and leaders on the beta production, *Best Friend Me*.

Voluntary interviews / testimonials from all three of the projects' participants and leaders were conducted as part of the evaluation of the impact. Each interview was semi-structured. A common set of questions was co-designed by the leadership team and then asked in each interview. The interviews were structured to be more of a conversation to allow for other issues to emerge. The questions covered their personal perceptions of the workshop, current work environment and any impact they witnessed of the workshop on the work environment as well as their thoughts about mental health in the industry.

After the interviews were completed the researcher and the leadership team watched the videos and reviewed the transcripts for common themes that emerged. These themes were then posted on a Google Jamboard with accompanying statements by the interviewees. This was reviewed by the leadership team and was used to inform one of the questions for the third survey in each group (production and WIDC alumni) as to the major benefits of the workshop, tools, and protocols.

Ten themes were identified, and space was also made for comments that did not fit any of the themes.

### Common language

*It was nice to learn new terms and how to use them properly.*

*Everyone I've talked to we're all on the same page.*

*Learning more efficient ways to communicate with other departments and other people.*

### Tone Setting

*The workshops allowed a sense of familiarity to be created between the cast and crew. setting the groundwork for the whole production team really set the tone for the shoot.*

### Encourages inclusion/Genuine inclusion

*There was lots of inclusivity.*

*Wonderful to be working on a set that is so inclusive.*

*I think it's been more inclusive though I am aware of my privilege so I'm hesitant to speak about it.*

*Really rewarding to work with people from different backgrounds.*

*I think it would be more beneficial to teach people in positions of power how to be more inclusive.*

*Extremely positive experience on this set and in my view, inclusive.*

### Stigma busting

*Mental health has not really been important in the past. It's all fairly fresh now and more is happening.*

*Touched by dealing with the themes of mental health.*

*I'm a big advocate of wellness prioritization in any sphere.*

*Focussing on wellness works.*

### Shared understanding of ways to resolve issues

*Talked about conflict navigation strategies and self-regulation strategies set the foundation of coming together with good intentions and everyone entering the space with a shared understanding that we are all doing our best and trying to help each other.*

*Complications were efficiently sorted out with no hard feelings afterwards.*

*The space needed when things got heated up. The listening was very strong between crew members and cast.*

### Usefulness/applicability of the workshop material in future settings

*It would be great if there is a standard and policy in place on Union, Industry organization. There will be a template for any productions to follow through this type of protocol.*

*The effect of this model in the industry would be a huge aspect for mental health – shorter days, conversations between crew, less pressure on department heads from up top. It will be challenging.*

*It would be great/cool to do this with other people to see if it has the same effects, It will do great things for the film industry – improve quality of life and people having longer careers.*

### Sense of caring

*It's so important to take care of each other on set.*

*There's been so much respect – what a respectful environment it's been – everyone has been so respectful of my cultural identity.*

*How we have been working together has been wonderful, meeting everyone and having everyone be open, so respectful.*

### Sense of safety

*Having the workshop established safety and built us up as a team, ready to support one another, and I found that feeling continued onto set.*

*Having a safe space to be vulnerable made me feel like I was not alone in having special access needs. It reminded me to take care of my own access needs by taking breaks and having quiet time on set when I felt overstimulated.*

*I feel everyone had a very clear understanding that steps were being taken to ensure that the production and set were spaces where we felt safe.*

#### **Sense of comfort**

*Being able to take space for yourself has been the most important.*

*Feels more relaxed than a lot of sets I have been on.*

*Being given the space to make mistakes or more emotional space can really help (with pressure).*

#### **Beyond lip service**

*At least speaking about it kept it top of mind.*

*You can see in the energy of the set and everybody around – this is an island of misfit toys – everyone is getting along and really respectful of each other.*

*The way people talk to each other is genuine and nice.*

#### **Miscellaneous comments (a few examples)**

*I think it gave some good tools but didn't see any of them used, mostly because they didn't seem to need to be used.*

*The space was creative and cooperative.*

*There was a good understanding of times when it was necessary to focus on personal objectives or family needs.*

*Establishing the framework and saying this is what we prioritize means we have good people.*

## 5. DESTINY

What we learned in the process and what could be next

### Summary of Findings

In the literature review it became clear there is a systemic gap in how the media arts sector deals with, manages, responds to mental health issues and a growing awareness of how the conditions/culture within which the work is done contributes to a negative pathway towards declining mental health.

One of our findings confirmed there have been many times on sets where people have either been personally distressed/triggered or witnessed distress/triggers in others. They stated they were somewhat confident in their ability to regulate themselves without assistance. The respondents stated they would seek first to talk to co-workers about any issues they did experience however they lacked confidence in knowing how to support others. This finding confirms the need for the type of workshops, tools and protocols we prototyped.

Feedback received via surveys and interviews indicated the need for some way to better understand mental health, to build confidence in the ability to self-regulate, to be together in community with clear agreements, concern navigation pathways, and conflict resolution tools.

After the workshops, participants confirmed the value of the content for themselves, co-workers and to the industry at large.

We found that we can create a culture of caring that can support the mental health and wellbeing of all. We also know there is a need for professional mental health support beyond local media arts productions. To that end we created a Canada-wide mental health referral network list.

## Reflecting on the Questions, Process and Outcomes

<i>What was asked?</i>	<i>What was expected?</i>	<i>What actually happened?</i>
<p>What does it mean to create 'safer creative spaces'?</p> <p>How do you improve mental health and well-being on sets with a low budget?</p> <p>What does our post-pandemic world need from us as leaders in the motion picture/media arts sector?</p> <p>What is the new normal?</p> <p>What are people grappling with in terms of their best well-being?</p> <p>What do we need to do to create a quality world for these workers?</p> <p>Is there a need for a mental health toolkit for media arts?</p> <p>What is the impact of the tools, protocols and workshops?</p> <p>Is what we are doing effective?</p> <p>Will implementing a mental health workshop or other tools and protocols reduce stigma with respect to mental health and substance use?</p> <p>Will having a team wellness workshop increase levels of confidence in addressing distress in self/others?</p> <p>Are there gaps still to address?</p> <p>Have we reduced stigma?</p>	<p>A smooth timeline for the research and workflow of the project.</p> <p>The creation of a toolkit, protocols and resources for best mental health and wellness practices for media arts leaders, cast and crew, particularly those working in ULB productions.</p> <p>Multiple opportunities to beta-test with cast and crew of up to three ULB productions.</p> <p>To receive constructive feedback on ways to improve the workshop, toolkit and protocols.</p> <p>To Disrupt stigma</p>	<p>Our timeline was disrupted by life at multiple junctures in the process.</p> <p>There were fewer opportunities to beta-test than originally planned for/anticipated.</p> <p>We identified more needs for other topics, conversations, and further research.</p> <p>We received constructive feedback through surveys, individual interviews, and participant observation in the workshop sessions</p> <p>Even though the number was smaller than in the first survey, the subsequent feedback was relevant, helpful and participants were generous with their time.</p> <p>In surveys and interviews with cast and crew, we repeatedly heard participants state how these tools provided a sense of belonging, inclusion, and created a safe(r) environment for them to work in.</p> <p>WIDC alumni shared similar thoughts based on hearing others' stories.</p>

Figure 6: Key Research Questions, Expectations and Outcomes

## Key Achievements

1. **Wellness Starter Toolkit:** We created a set of protocols, templates, and a Canada-wide mental health resource list and a research report, now publicly available on [WIDC website](#). This toolkit is just the starting point!
2. **Disrupting Stigma:** By conducting workshops, encouraging conversations about mental health and wellbeing on set, and providing tools and resources, we believe we have effectively started disrupting stigma.

Summing up, one participant said,

*“Providing a safe, inclusive space in the form of this workshop, where participants felt comfortable and encouraged not only to learn new self-regulation, conflict resolution and motivational skills, but to use those they already inherently have... everyone naturally recognized the need and wanted to help each other and themselves.”*

## Key Recommendations

1. Make the Mental Health Starter Toolkit widely available.
2. Expand on the work, seek funding, and collaborate with more organizations, film festivals and individuals across Canada.
3. Build peer-led support network for media arts leaders to expand on wellness (self and team) and conflict resolution skills.
4. Advocacy for every media arts production to engage mental health practices including as a budget line item where possible.

## Conclusion

*What we make of our narrative*

*“It’s a terrible waste of bandwidth to worry about psychological safety” (Dagan Nish, CallTime podcast, November 20, 2023).*

We want people to be able to bring their best and most effective selves to their media arts work and not to worry about having to choose between being well and working.

In terms of our intentions to reduce stigma and build safer creative spaces, we have learned that a first, perhaps most effective step is to work towards creating ‘kinder’ creative spaces. In other words, we want to instill an ethic of care (Noddings, 1999) into the art and craft of creating media arts narrative.

*We all have a role to play.*

We need to take a systems approach to reducing harm and promoting mental health and wellbeing – policies, procedures, safe work practices.

We all need to be able to show respect, kindness, understanding and to be able to speak our access needs without fear.

### *How do we create a kinder, healthier workspace when we don't have any budget?*

Leaders set the culture, and yes –safety (and more) ‘needs to come from the top down’, so we encourage media arts leaders to create their own Leadership Pledge that incorporates a value statement around mental health and wellness.

In building their teams, leaders can create space for drafting and sustaining and sharing community agreements and concern navigation pathways.

If leaders incorporate an understanding of and appreciation for ‘access needs’ into the vocabulary of media arts production – as a workshop or in print form or during onboarding or as part of the start pack or on hiring cast and crew, the ethic of care becomes infused into the culture of the company. This can be achieved by:

- Including a value statement in crew and casting calls
- Developing a personal leadership pledge and sharing it with the team
- Presenting the parts of a community agreement that are non-negotiable and building from there.
- Sharing mental health and well-being tools like the WIDC SCS Mental Health Starter Toolkit with cast and crew in start packs, well before production starts.

We don't expect leaders to become experts themselves. However, if they can seek to educate themselves in healthy conflict resolution practices and share these practices with their team, mental health and wellbeing (during and after media arts creation) will be better. Better is better, after all.

## Call to Action

By aligning with the broader media arts community and its leaders (e.g. Actsafe, DocuMentality, Film Festivals, Equity-deserving Community Groups, and so many more), and individual artists [such as](#) WIDC alum, Elizabeth Lazebnik who has embarked on a Canada Council for the Arts-funded study investigating how autism and creative process may be linked, we are called to continue to advocate for the need for this work to be done and the need for a shift in our collective culture around mental health and wellness to that of a kinder more caring space to create our best works of art.

We welcome feedback and input from all quarters, especially from subject matter experts and the vibrantly intersectional community of media artists across Turtle Island and beyond, and we again thank the Canada Council for the Arts for providing the support for us to take this first impactful step towards a brighter, healthier future for all artists.



# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1 – Our Team

### *PROJECT LEAD / LEADERSHIP TEAM*

#### **Dr. Carol Whiteman, EdD**

President & CEO, CWWA / Co-creator & Producer WIDC

Best known as co-creator and producer of the internationally respected Women In the Director's Chair (WIDC) program, Dr. Carol Whiteman (she/her) is a two-time Governor General's award nominee and multiple award-winner for promoting gender inclusion in Canada's screen-based media community. Since 1997, Dr. Whiteman has helped advance the careers, and narrative screen projects (fiction feature films, television, and digital series), of a generation of women and non-binary screen writers and directors. Through WIDC she has produced over 150 short films and is executive producer on thirteen award-winning feature films with two more projects in the pipeline. In 2019, Whiteman completed her doctorate in Transformational Change at Simon Fraser University, British Columbia. Her dissertation chronicles over two-decades of WIDC's work in creating and sustaining space for authentic voices to thrive in Canada's screen industry and offers an inspiring call to action for those seeking to create paradigmatic change. It is her mission to share the goals and values of equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging while steering towards practical solutions that respectfully facilitate our basic human need for our voices to be heard. She does this with appreciation for the evolution of understanding around gender identity and expression. She also gratefully acknowledges the Indigenous Nations on whose traditional lands she lives, works, and plays, with respect for the generations that came before, those living now, and those to come.

### *PROJECT LEADERSHIP TEAM* (in alphabetical order by first name)

#### **Ana de Lara**

Filmmaker, Ana de Lara Productions / Stigma Free Productions

Ana de Lara (she/her) is a Filipina-Canadian performer turned film director, screenwriter, producer and editor who has earned over 30 accolades for her films and screenplays in North America and Europe. She was the lead producer for the feature drama ALL-IN MADONNA and the feature mockumentary OPEN FOR SUBMISSIONS, which earned her nominations for the 2021 CMPA Emerging Producer Award and 2021 and 2019 BC Leo Award for Best Picture. Ana has written, directed, and produced a number of award-winning short films, from hard-hitting dramas to laugh out loud comedies, tackling social issues such as racism, euthanasia, suicide, domestic violence, and gender inequality. Her short films have screened on CBC, Air Canada, Air Korea and festivals worldwide, including the academy qualifying Raindance Film Festival, Montreal World Film Festival, the Rhode Island International Film Festival and Reel Sisters of the Diaspora where she was presented the 2018 Spirit Award. Ana's films and screenplays have received funding from Telefilm, Creative BC, MPPIA, the Indigenous Screen Office, BIPOC TV & Film, BC Arts Council, the Caribbean Tales Media Group, and the NFB. She is an alumna of Women In the Director's Chair, Telefilm Talent to Watch and the CineFam Limitless programs. Her first feature script, THE VIRGIN MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB, based on her popular one-woman play was developed at Women in the Director's Chair Story & Leadership, won the 2016 Telefilm New Voices Award and was a finalist in Women in Film and TV Vancouver's 2017 screenplay competition. Ana is slated

to direct the comedy digital series BEST FRIEND ME, with series creator and lead actor, Andy Marie and producer Arnold Lim. Told from a queer POV, BEST FRIEND ME brings healing laughter and light to the topic of mental health, suicide, self-harm, and the road to better mental health.

**Charlene Hickey, MA, CCC**

Clinical Family Counsellor, Songhees Nation (former) and Indigenous Stopping the Violence Counsellor at the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre (VSAC)

Charlene Hickey is a First Nations woman originating from the Cree community of Saddle Lake in Edmonton Alberta. Her mother and grandparents are members of Saddle Lake Cree Nation, her father is from a small village located in Quebec on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, which is also where Charlene was born and raised. Charlene has been living on Lekwungen and W SÁNEĆ territories for 11 years now with her two children. Charlene has been happily employed at both Songhees Nation and VSAC for 4 years now where she works as a counsellor. She moved to Victoria to pursue her dream job of becoming a clinical counsellor 11 years ago. She started her educational career in the Early Childhood Education Diploma at Algonquin College. She then went on to do her Bachelor's degree at Thompson Rivers University in Psychology, and then her Master's degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of Victoria. She completed her internship at UVic's counselling services and at ŁÁU, WELNEW Tribal School. She has experience working with all ages of individuals – children, youth, adolescents and the elderly. She honours diversity and is very mindful of one's cultural upbringing and beliefs; she aims to apply traditional Indigenous ways of knowing within the realm of Western academic institutions, creating a space for open and respectful dialogue. Charlene is also an Artist, Writer and Social Media Strategist. She was a writer on the 2018 Telus STORYHIVE-funded short documentary *The Camp(us)* about the residential school system as a symbol of the colonial socio-economic oppression felt by the Indigenous Peoples of Canada. Twenty-two years after the last residential school has closed, we see its effects in our school system today. However, amongst these numbers are outstanding students utilizing their post-secondary education to cultivate their own personal relationships with their culture. The story is about Indigenous learners today, acknowledging the atrocities of residential school and its impact on the subsequent generations of Indigenous people through a celebration of their successes. By showcasing the unique work being done by these students the film is an inspiration to further generations and fosters a respectful dialogue with the public.

**Jane Taylor Lee, MA, CCC**

Executive Director, Family Services Greater Victoria (retired 2024)

Jane Taylor Lee (she/her) has worked with civilian and military individuals and families for over 28 years, assisting them with challenges ranging from separation and divorce, communication, intimacy, parenting, anger management and domestic violence, to coping with and managing symptoms of post-traumatic stress. Jane has researched, designed, and facilitated couples' workshops addressing anger management and violence prevention, parenting, intimacy, depression, grief, and loss. As a child specialist for 25+ years and an experienced divorce coach, she understands the complexities of relationships and the stressors that can end them. It is through this unique combination of experience and dedication that Jane helps individuals, couples, and their families to manage traumatic and stressful events and create opportunities for transformative healing. Jane coordinated Caught in the Middle at the agency from 2001 until 2003 and then served on the FSGV Board of Directors for six years. She has facilitated parent groups and has been on the team of co-facilitators for the Parenting After Separation workshops since 2002. Jane earned a Masters degree in Counselling Psychology from Adler University in Chicago,

Illinois, and provides clinical supervision to Master's students and mental health professionals. Jane celebrates ethnic, cultural, and spiritual diversity in her work. As well, Jane has over 15 years' experience working with EAP providers and strongly believes these services are of paramount importance to individuals and families navigating the emotions and challenges of complex family and work dynamics. In May 2018, Jane took over the position of Executive Director at FSGV. Jane expanded existing programs and services and support to FSGV clients and the broader community. Family Services of Greater Victoria (FSGV) is British Columbia's premier agency for all family members facing change and challenges in their relationships. FSGV's professional staff combine current knowledge with training to provide a wide range of caring, timely, and effective services. Jane also has a background in theatre and film.

### *LEAD RESEARCHER*

The SCS Lead Researcher assisted in the review of the literature, analysing resulting data collected from the project as well as assisting the Leadership Team / Steering Group in drafting the final report and Toolkit materials.

### **Dawn Schell, MA, CCC, CCDP**

Dawn graduated from Simon Fraser University with her Master's in Counselling in 1987. Since that time, she has worked with several not-for-profit societies and educational institutions as a counsellor, trainer, researcher, and supervisor, served on boards and committees, conducted qualitative and quantitative research, developed and evaluated programs, and participated in city-wide and region-wide initiatives for youth. Over the past twenty-five years she has facilitated workshops, meetings, seminars, and retreats on a wide variety of subjects. Dawn is a highly skilled facilitator who brings a light-heartedness and sense of calm reality to her work that people immediately are drawn to no matter what the topic. She takes pride in assisting teams to work more effectively and believes in a collaborative approach to achieving practical results.

### *PROJECT CONSULTANTS*

#### **Bridget McCarthy**

Mental Health Coordinator / Co-founder, Association of Mental Health Coordinators  
Georgia, USA

Bridget McCarthy (she/they) is an artist, advocate, and a mental health coordinator for theatre, TV and Film. She is a Trauma and Resilience Trainer (CTRT), a Certified Trauma Support Specialist (CTSS) with Trauma Institute International, a Certified Mental Health First Aid instructor with the National Council for Behavioral Health, and is currently training with the North American Drama Therapy Association as a Drama Therapist candidate, as well as pursuing a Master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at New England College. Her solo work has centered around programming that amplifies under-heard voices, including time spent as a staff member and facilitator with Shakespeare Behind Bars. In 2020, they were recognized by Young Nonprofit Professionals of Atlanta as a member of their "30 Under 30" Cohort.

As an actor, Bridget is an artistic associate of Stage Door Theatre, and is seen frequently on stages around her beloved chosen home of Atlanta, GA. They have also been on the stages of Atlanta Shakespeare, Synchronicity Theatre, Burning Bones Physical Theatre, Alliance Theatre, Essential Theatre, and Georgia Ensemble Theatre. Nationally, Bridget has appeared with Cincinnati Shakespeare, Elm Shakespeare, Pigeon Creek Shakespeare, and many others. Their

original solo show, “*Fat Juliet*” has toured nationally and features Bridget’s love of stand-up comedy, Shakespeare, *AC/DC*, and *The Lion King*. Bridget lives in Atlanta, GA with her wonderful partner, Joey, and can be found kayaking or hiking with her rescue dog, Oberon.

### **Megan Wong**

Intimacy Coordinator, Principle Intimacy Professionals

Megan Wong (she/they) is a queer, neurodiverse, Chinese-Canadian Intimacy Professional working primarily in the Pacific Northwest residing on the stolen lands of the Lekwungen-speaking peoples, and the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations (Victoria, BC). She has trained in intimacy internationally with organizations including Intimacy for Stage and Screen (UK), Theatrical Intimacy Education (USA), and Principal Intimacy Professionals (Canada) and is a committee member of the National Society of Intimacy Professionals. Megan’s primary background includes classical ballet, movement theatre, and psychology (B.A.). She is also a practicing special educator and sexual assault support worker and incorporates skills from those disciplines into her practice from a trauma-informed lens. Megan has consulted internationally as an intimacy professional and aims to support young and neurodiverse performers in their needs on stage and screen. She believes in collaborative, process-based art and finds beauty and excitement in the unique circumstance of all her performers. Megan has additionally been credited in film as a Set Costumer, 1st AD, and Mental Health Coordinator.

### **Heather Allin**

Actor, Filmmaker, Artist, Advocate

Heather Allin is the Producer and Executive Producer of the comedy short film *Reel Women Seen*. Conceived as an advocacy film for ACTRA, *Reel Women Seen* was shot in both Vancouver and Toronto in 2016 with 100% female cast and creative and over 90% female crew and post. It shines a light on work opportunities for women in front and behind the camera and was sponsored by 40+ industry partners, unions and guilds. The film has travelled the world winning awards and screening at festivals in Europe, Asia, Ireland, France, Canada, the United States. As an actor, Heather Allin’s recent performance credits include *DADA*, *Banned*, *Chubby*, *A Daughter’s Revenge*, *Played*, *The Listener*, *Rookie Blue*, *Small Town Murder Songs*, *let him be*, *George Romero’s Survival of the Dead*, *Dan for Mayor*, *Welcome to Mooseport*, *Flashpoint*, and *Degrassi: The Next Generation*. Her stage credits include her one-woman show *Just Lift Your Feet*; *Lying on the Escarpment*; *Asleep At The Wheel*, *You Won’t Be Here Tomorrow*, *Richard III*; *A Comedy of Errors*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. Allin is a playwright, having written and produced *Just Lift Your Feet*, and is currently writing a short and a feature film.

A member of ACTRA Toronto and National councils, Allin was President of ACTRA Toronto from 2009 to 2013, she was the founding chair of the ACTRA Toronto conferences, now celebrating nearly 25 years. Allin chaired the negotiating caucus for Toronto for two IPA and one NCA contracts. In her term at council, she helped to create the ACTRA Awards in Toronto, The *I Work ACTRA* campaign, is a producer for the TAWC video *Get Women Working* ([youtube.com/watch?v=YmsJ\\_vTGhEk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YmsJ_vTGhEk)), and the TAWC Tool Kit. She was a board member and member of the Artistic team for Shakespeare in the Rough, The ROI (Return on Innovation fund with over 1 Billion in assets) and is a board member for CWWA the non-profit that oversee Women In the Director’s Chair. Allin is a proud advocate for a vibrant Canadian film, TV and New Media industry, and one who seeks stories from diverse cultures, communities and particularly stories by women.

## **JJ Neepin**

Filmmaker, JJNeepinFilms

JJ Neepin is the founder of JJNeepinFilms INC. and has screened many of her works at festivals worldwide. She began her TV career directing for several documentary series including APTN's *Taken* and *Michif Country*. In 2022, JJ moved from documentary to scripted television and directed an episode of *CTV's Hudson & Rex, season 5*. In Spring of 2024, she directed an episode of *CTV's Acting Good, season 3*. JJ has written, directed and produced several short films with her company JJNeepinFilms INC. In between shows, JJ takes every opportunity to learn and improve her skills, ready for the next challenge put in front of her. One of her main goals is to make her first feature *Luminous* and to eventually create and Showrunner her own television series. When she finds time to relax, JJ enjoys reading and watching true crime, binge-watching Netflix documentaries, reading manga, and writing more stories. JJ is a director alum of WIDC and recipient of the CBC Films WIDC Talent Development Award for her feature script *Luminous*.

## **Jen Viens**

Performer, Writer, Filmmaker

Intimacy Coordinator, Intimacy Coordinators Canada and Intimacy Coordinators Canada Quebec

Jen Viens (they/she) is a queer intimacy coordinator, filmmaker, actor and coach with over fifteen years of experience in film, television, and stage. Before relocating to Montreal, Jen owned and operated a theatre school and production company in British Columbia. They specialized in unique classes and workshops for kids of all ages. The focus of instruction ranged from structured improv, to filmmaking, to physical theatre. In addition, Jen has been actively working as a producer, actor, director and writer in the film industry for over ten years. In the past several years, Jen has branched out and lent her knowledge and expertise to many different milieus, including coaching business professionals in public speaking, performing improvised scenarios for corporate training sessions, and coaching professional actors of all ages in scene study. In addition to a strong background in theatre and film, Jen has extensive experience in project and team management, event coordination, and community support. They have dedicated many hours and years to training in anti-oppression, conflict resolution, mental health support and constructive communication, to name a few. These fields have allowed Jen to cultivate skills in collaboration, leadership, critical thinking, and attention to detail. These skills, together with a solution-oriented perspective, a growth mindset, and ten plus years of one-on-one and on-set coaching allow Jen to facilitate scenes of intimacy in a variety of settings, for diverse communities, with an attentive and tailor-made approach that addresses specific goals and personal boundaries. Intimacy Coordinator credits include *Witchboard* (A-Nation Media); *Sorcières* (Amalga Créations); *Hunted* (Neshama Entertainment); *Belle-Mère* (Trinome & Filles), *Foxtrot* (Apple TV), *Obsession* (Amazon). Jen has a deep love for storytelling, and aims to make it a safer, healthier place, one intimate scene at a time.

## **Andy Marie**

Performer, Writer

Andy Marie (they/them) is a Filipino-Canadian, non-binary queer writer and performer. They created *Best Friend Me* from their own experiences with mental health challenges and recovery. In the shooting style of *Orphan Black*, Andy will be playing the three lead roles of Andy, and their alter-egos, Neg and Best Friend Me as they comedically navigate alcoholism, relationship troubles, and therapy on the road to better mental health. Andy's early pandemic experience with the Actors' Fund's Mental Health First Aid course inspired this genesis of this project.

## **Anna Cooley**

Filmmaker, Erratic Pictures

Anna Cooley is an award-winning director, writer, cinematographer, and producer. Her projects push the boundaries of conventional storytelling by identifying unique narratives, collaborating with artists from a diverse range of disciplines, and experimenting with cutting-edge technologies. She gravitates towards projects that tackle difficult subject matter with humour and empathy. Anna directed her first scripted feature *Faultline* which premiered at the 2023 Calgary International Film Festival. She wrote and directed the documentary feature *A Sauropod Abroad*, and the short documentaries *Garden Shark: there are some things dementia can't touch* and *See Me*. Other recent works include Canadian Screen Award short documentary nominees *The Goats of Monesiglio* and *Clebs*, CBC's *Living Without Menace*, *Abracadavers Season 2*, and the VR project *sandboxxii.com*. Upcoming projects include the web series *Scout and Gender? I Hardly Know Them*, and the feature documentary *300 Million BC*. Anna is an alumna of the Whistler Doc Lab, Women In the Director's Chair Story and Leadership Program, and the Canadian Academy Directors Program for Women. She has shadowed directors Todd Slavkin on *Shadow Hunters* and Eleanor Lindo on CBC's *Heartland*. She teaches, mentors, and is a long-standing board member of the Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers.

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## **ELDER / ACADEMIC CONSULTANTS**

### **Dr. Dorothy Cucw-La7 Christian, PhD**

Independent Scholar, Writer, Editor & Visual Storyteller

"I acknowledge that I live, work and play on the unceded territories of my Coast Salish cousins, the xmkym (Musqueam), Swxwu7mesh (Squamish), slilwta (Tseil-wau-tuth) and kikm (Kwkwetlem) Nations."

**WATER** the embodiment of **SPIRIT**

Dorothy Christian Cucw-la7 is a visual storyteller, scholar, writer and editor who is from Splotsin, one of the communities of the Secwepemc Nation. She also honours her Syilx ancestry. Christian currently is the Associate Director, Indigenous Policy & Pedagogy, in Graduate Studies at Simon Fraser University (SFU) and respectfully acknowledges that she lives, works, and plays on the lands of her Coast Salish cousins. Dr. Christian has served two terms on the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Advisory at SFU and was "Elder/Auntie" advisor when her terms were complete. Currently, Dorothy is working with the Dean in Graduate studies to create a community of practise that is started with recognizing Indigenous specific racism. She advises and collaborates on Committees/Working Groups that focus on decolonizing and Indigenizing within the larger SFU academic community. She is co-lead on the Working Group who is developing the Indigenous Welcoming Procedure - "*Beyond Self-Identification: Who Are Your People?*" that will be instituted as policy throughout the university. Before graduate school, Dorothy segment produced, directed, and wrote for the national broadcaster Vision TV where she accumulated over 100 professional production credits. She is a Board member of the national Indigenous Screen Office. During a study leave in 2025, Dorothy will attend the Santa Fe Arts Institute for a two month residency to collaborate on a Story Sovereignty project.

### **Select Publications include:**

Christian, D., Medel, S., Mazawi, A. "Talking In/Talking Out: Indigenous Knowledge, Filmmaking and The Decolonizing Poetics of Visual Sovereignty: A Conversation With Dr. Dorothy Christian" in *Post-Colonial Directions in Education*, Vol. 8, Issue 2, 2019.



Christian, D. Curatorial Essay, Dawsoma: *Making Meaning – A Retrospective of Victor Masayesva, Jr.’s film works*. Vtape in collaboration with 2019 ImagineNative Film Festival, Toronto, Ontario. Essay at this link: [https://www.vtape.org/wpcontent/uploads/2019/09/VOL\\_Imaginative2019\\_FINALdigital.pdf](https://www.vtape.org/wpcontent/uploads/2019/09/VOL_Imaginative2019_FINALdigital.pdf)

Christian, D. “Indigenous Visual Storywork for Indigenous Film Aesthetics” in *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology* (2019), J. Archibald, J. Lee-Morgan & J. DeSantolo (editors).

Co-editor of *Downstream: Reimagining Water* (2017); co-authored Chapter “Unmapping Watershed Mind” in *Thinking With Water* (2013).

Chapter “Reconciling With the People and the Land” in *Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation Through the Lens of Cultural Diversity* (2011).

Co-authored chapter “History of a Friendship” in *Alliances: Re/Envisioning Indigenous and non-Indigenous Relationships* (2010).

**Dr. Rita Shelton Deverell, C.M., EdD**

Theatre Artist, Professional Performer, Independent Television Producer/Director,  
Co-Founder of Vision TV  
Chancellor, Lakehead University

Rita Shelton Deverell was the first woman to lead a journalism program in Canada as acting Director of the University of Regina’s Journalism School in the 1980’s and concluded her term as News Director at APTN in 2005 where she mentored her Aboriginal successor. She was the first CanWest Global Fellow at the University of Western Ontario (2006) and Storyteller in Residence at Centennial College’s Centre for Creative Communication (2008-09). In 2010 Deverell’s play *McCarthy and the Old Woman* had a first production by the School of Drama, University of Washington, which meant its central character appeared on the same stage from which she was blacklisted during the cold war 60 years earlier. Deverell is the author, editor, or major contributor to seven books and producer/director/writer of eight independent TV titles. In 2016 her multi-media e-learning kit “Women, Contemporary Aboriginal Issues, and Resistance” was acquired by the National Film Board’s CAMPUS portal giving it widespread North American distribution.

In the summer of 2005, Dr. Deverell returned to the theatre and drama. She also began to develop her fiction feature film through Women In the Director’s Chair in Banff. Since then, she has written and performed three, one-woman shows, *Smoked Glass Ceiling*, *McCarthy and the Old Woman*, and *Big Ease, Big Sleaze*. She received the 2007 WIDC Centennial College @Wallace Studios Award to shoot her docu-drama *Not a Drop*, an exploration of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and Canada’s forgotten people. Eight of her TV drama titles have gone to air on OMNI, APTN, SCN, and Bravo!

Deverell has served on several boards and advisory committees, including MediaSmarts, the campaign cabinet of the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre and OCADU. She is currently a Trustee of the Royal Ontario Museum and a Director of CBC/SRC. She was the 12<sup>th</sup> holder of Nancy’s Chair of Women’s Studies at Mount Saint Vincent University from July 2009 to June 2012, and in 2015-16 was a Mentor for the Canadian Senior Artists Research Network (CSARN). She holds a BA in Philosophy (Adelphi), a MA in the History of Religions (Columbia), and her doctoral thesis (OISE/University of Toronto) focused on arts policy for children.



Deverell's other honours include two Geminis, the Black Women's Civic Engagement Leadership Award, membership in the Canadian Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame, and in 2022 the Governor General's Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Achievement in Broadcasting. Her 2005 *Order of Canada* citation says in part: "Rita Deverell's career in journalism has been one of pioneering innovation and creativity. With an unceasing drive for social justice, she is one of the first Black women in Canada to be a television host and a network executive...An inspiring mentor and teacher, she serves as a role model for young journalists and audiences alike."

Author of "American Refugees: Turning to Canada for Freedom" (U. of Regina Press, 2019), other distinctions include, 2019 Toronto Fringe Festival "Who You Callin Black, Eh?", Teen Jury Award and a recipient of a 2022 Canada Council Digital Now grant. 2024 started with an appointment as Senior Fellow at Massey College within the University of Toronto, an energizing financial award from Nightwood Theatre, and a sold-out collective hit "Disarming Venus" from Act 3, older women writer/actors.

### **Dr. Carolyn Mamchur, PhD**

Writer In Residence, Simon Fraser University

Carolyn Mamchur is the award-winning author of psychology texts, articles, poetry and children's books, including *Insights, A Teacher's Guide to Cognitive Type Theory and Learning Style, The Popcorn Tree, and Into the Garden*. She has written ten feature film scripts and a half-hour drama for CBC. Her script, *Sunnyside Canal*, is presently under option by Stuart Margolin. She has a script, *Winter Rose*, in development with WIDC director alum, Elizabeth Becker. She is a story editor/consultant for Telefilm Canada and has acted as story editor on four scripts growing out of her workshops offered in Montreal in 2009, 2010. She is a popular guest speaker and presenter and has lectured and delivered a myriad of workshops in Europe, the Soviet Union, the Orient, the United States and Canada including at the former PRAXIS, Centre for Screenwriters in Vancouver, and has been a lead instructor / mentor for the WIDC since 2002.

Carolyn earned a doctorate at the University of Florida where she studied with the founders of CAPT, Centre for Application of Psychological Type and with southern writer, Harry Crews. She did post doctorate work at the Jung Institute in Switzerland where she furthered her research and studies in the application of psychological type theory. As a writer and educator, she is presently focusing her interest in psychology and creative writing, particularly screen writing and the use of the archetype in creating authentic characters. She became certified as part of her latest Jungian studies to use a branding instrument, which determines organizational and personal archetypes. She is incorporating that work into her ongoing, never ending book on character that better get done this year. Based on the success of her faculty wide program, Foundations of Academic Literacy, Carolyn created and taught a "first time ever" course, Foundations of Self Efficacy: Finding Voice and Place in Academia. She was named a Teaching Fellow for her work in this area and was advisor to the Academic Vice President in how to improve teaching and learning at Simon Fraser University.

Her professional work is balanced by her love of gardening and animals. Her latest book, *Crazy for Trees*, describing just how and why a woman in her fifties would find it irresistible to create a garden in the middle of a forest, is the subject of a series for television called *The Dolphins* under consideration by Force Four Productions. She has just completed a trilogy, *Maria Kat*, and has begun work on a second trilogy about the same character as an adult.

## ARTISTS

### **Test Production #1 – *Best Friend Me***

*Produced by Stigma Free Productions, this Telefilm Canada Talent to Watch-funded digital short series project), deals comedically with mental health and potentially triggering content from an IBPOC queer perspective.*

All cast and crew were invited to participate in the beta test of the WIDC SCS Team Wellness Workshop designed by this project. Forty-five participated.

### **Test Production #2 – *Songhees Nation Youth Music Video***

All cast and crew were invited to participate in a one to one interview with SCS Project Leadership team member Charlene Hickey, who was on staff at Songhees Nation Family Counselling at the time of interviewing.

Seven cast and crew members participated.

### **Test Group #3 – WIDC Alumni / Artist Leaders**

All of WIDC's over 330 Director Alumni were invited to participate in the beta test of the WIDC SCS Team Wellness Workshop for Media Arts Leaders.

Thirty-three alumni, including current Board members of CWWA, volunteered to participate in the beta test Mental Health Starter Toolkit for Media Arts Leaders workshop being designed by this project.

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## PROJECT COORDINATOR

### **Zed Loseth**

Currently based in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Zed Loseth (they/them) considers themselves a jack of all trades who always appreciates learning new skills. After graduating high school, they spent six years living in Montreal immersed in a community full of artists and rekindling their love of storytelling through music. During that time, they worked at a variety of occupations including as a nanny, an apprentice to an herbalist, and in an underground art cooperative. In 2020 they spent half a year living on a cattle and flower farm in England and upon their return to Canada they made the move back home to the boreal forest of Saskatchewan where they worked as a manual labourer, spending their days with horses, chickens and seemingly endless amounts of firewood. In 2023, after a year of driving a school bus, Zed transferred their skills working with very young people by taking on a teaching assistant role with the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division. They are currently supervising a cafe kitchen, channeling their creativity into soups and scones. Zed has program managed the WIDC Story & Leadership program for four years and was delighted to be invited to project coordinate for the WIDC Safer Creative Spaces project. Being part of the WIDC support team offers them an opportunity to reconnect with artists and storytellers and broaden their knowledge and perspective.

## Appendix 2 – Surveys and Feedback

### Surveys

#### *Survey 1 – Pre-production*

#### **WIDC Safer Creative Spaces Project: Pre-Production Survey**

##### **Preamble**

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts. We also acknowledge the Indigenous Nations on whose traditional lands our guests, participants, and colleagues live, work and create. We commit to working together in the spirit of collaboration and respect for the generations that came before, those living now, and the generations to come.

**The WIDC Safer Creative Spaces (SCS) Project** aims to explore, develop, proto-type and test a specially designed mental health and wellness toolkit and protocols for the ultra-low budget (ULB) media arts sector. To do this we are consulting with artists, mental health and adult education specialists, and Indigenous leaders.

As a cast or crew member on an upcoming production that has agreed to work with WIDC on our project, we invite you to complete three surveys:

Survey 1 - pre-production

Survey 2 - immediately after our workshop

Survey 3 - after your production is complete

Your survey responses will be collected anonymously (no names or emails) and will help the SCS project leaders identify gaps surrounding mental health & wellness concerns in the ULB media arts sector and to develop and fine tune the WIDC SCS Mental Health & Wellness Toolkit.

We welcome your suggestions for changes to the language, format and delivery of this survey so that it is inclusive and accessible to all participants. We also welcome constructive feedback that may help us achieve the goals of the project.

Thank you for participating!

The WIDC SCS Leadership Team

Per

Women In the Director's Chair (WIDC), Family Services of Greater Victoria (FSGV), Songhees Nation Family Counselling (SNFC), Stigma Free Productions

1. I agree to participate in the SCS Surveys as described above.
2. I am aware that my responses to the survey are anonymous (no name or email), however I agree to share details of my identity in terms of gender identification and expression, race, ethnicity, etc. so more can be learned about possible trends by community sector.

### Self-Assessment

In addition to content that may be triggering, working conditions and working with someone who does not know how to self-regulate can lead to distress or triggering feelings. We invite you to share reflections on your own experiences.

3. I currently feel confident in recognizing my own feelings of distress or when I'm feeling triggered. (10 is the most confident).
4. As a film/series actor and/or crew member, I have experienced distress caused by working on creative content and/or working conditions that were distressing or triggering to me. (if No or Unsure, skip to Question # 7).
5. When I became distressed or triggered, I considered reaching out for support. (if No or Unsure, skip to Question # 7).
6. When I became distressed or triggered, I was able to self-regulate / get back to my optimal self without assistance. (if No or Unsure, skip to Question # 7).
7. In response to my distress, I reached out to (select all that apply), and found it helpful (10 was most helpful and 1 was not helpful at all).

Reached out to:	Rating of helpfulness
Counsellor or Therapist	
Spiritual Leader	
Department Head	
Co-worker	
Friend	
Family Member	
Books	
The Internet	
I didn't seek support	
Other	

8. I currently feel confident that I can access support to manage my distress or feelings of being triggered. (10 is the most confident).
9. Looking back at my previous production experience (most recent), the production had protocols or procedures in place to support mental health and wellness (select any that apply).
  - Yes
  - Yes, but they were not clear
  - Yes, but they were not followed
  - No plan was in place
  - Unsure
10. I currently feel confident in recognizing someone else's distress. (10 is the most confident).

11. In at least one film/series project that I have worked on (paid or volunteer), I have I have witnessed a co-worker who was experiencing distress or feeling triggered.
12. I currently feel confident in offering support to a co-worker who is experiencing distress or feeling triggered. (10 is the most confident).

### Demographic Data

This information will remain anonymous and will help us define who might benefit from our project's recommendations.

13. I have been working / volunteering in the media arts sector for:

- Less than 5 years
- Between 5 to 10 years
- Between 10 to 15 years
- Between 15 to 20 years
- More than 20 years

14. I am a member of (check any that apply):

- ACTRA (UBCP/ACTRA), UdA
- ACCT
- ACFC
- AQTIS
- CMPA
- DGC
- Film Co-op
- IATSE
- Women In Film / Réalizatrices Equitables / GEMS Vancouver
- WIDC alumnae

15. I personally identify as (select all the apply):

- Cis-gender (identify as assigned at birth)
- Transgender
- Woman
- Non-binary
- Man
- 2SLGBTQIA+
- Indigenous
- Inuit
- Métis
- Black
- Person of Colour
- Person living with Disability
- Age under 25
- Age 26 – 40
- Age 41 – 55
- Age over 55
- Person living in large urban setting (population over 500k)
- Person living in medium or suburban setting (population 30k to 499k)
- Person living in rural or small community setting (population under 30k)
- I am a low income earner (see link below for definition)
- <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1110024101>

### Thank You & Final Thoughts

Thank you for participating. Your responses will be very helpful to the project. Please feel free to offer any further comments here.

## *Survey 2 – Post Team Wellness Workshop*

### **WIDC SCS Project: Post-workshop**

#### **Preamble**

Thank you for participating in the WIDC SCS Team Wellness Workshop. We hope you learned and had as much fun attending as we did organizing it.

We want to hear your feedback so we can keep improving our logistics and content. Please complete this quick survey and let us know your thoughts (your answers will be anonymous).

1. How satisfied were you with the workshop? 1 (not very) to 10 (very much)
2. How relevant and helpful do you think it was for you as a leader?
3. What were your key take aways from this workshop?
4. How satisfied were you with the logistics?
  - Communication emails
  - Welcome activity
  - Workshop Content
  - Activities
  - Closing practice
  - Venue
5. Additional feedback on logistics
6. Which element of the workshop did you find most relevant?
  - Welcome Activity
  - Access Needs
  - Community Agreement
  - Concern Navigation Pathways
  - Conflict Resolution & Clearing Conversations
  - Closure Practice
7. How satisfied were you with the session content? Both presented and any pre-read material
8. Any overall feedback for the workshop?

## *Survey 3 – Post-production / Practicum*

### **WIDC Safer Creative Spaces: Post-production / Practicum**

#### **Preamble**

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts. We also acknowledge the Indigenous Nations on whose traditional lands our guests, participants, and colleagues live, work and create. We commit to working together in the spirit of collaboration and respect for the generations that came before, those living now, and the generations to come.

The WIDC Safer Creative Spaces (SCS) Project aims to explore, develop, proto-type and test a specially designed mental health and wellness toolkit and protocols for the ultra-low budget (ULB) media arts sector. To do this we are consulting with artists, mental health and adult education specialists, and Indigenous leaders.

As a cast or crew member on a production who has attended the WIDC SCS: Team Wellness Workshop and completed the first two surveys (links below), we invite you to complete this third and final survey:

Survey 3 - final reflections after your production is complete.

In case you have not had a chance to complete them here are the links to the first two surveys:

Survey 1 - pre-production (<https://forms.gle/f7YnrZAL15tfqjoZ>)

Survey 2 - feedback immediately after our workshop (<https://forms.gle/YfnyK415xv548HDe9>)

Your survey responses will be collected anonymously (no names or emails) and will help the SCS project leaders identify gaps surrounding mental health & wellness concerns in the ULB media arts sector and to develop and fine tune the WIDC SCS Mental Health & Wellness Toolkit.

We welcome your suggestions for changes to the language, format and delivery of this survey so that it is inclusive and accessible to all participants. We also welcome constructive feedback that may help us achieve the goals of the project.

Thank you for participating!

The WIDC SCS Leadership Team  
per

Women In the Director's Chair (WIDC), Family Services of Greater Victoria (FSGV), Songhees Nation Family Counselling (SNFC), Stigma Free Productions

### **Reflections on the Team Wellness Workshop**

One of the intentions behind the development of the Team Wellness Workshop was to create a safe(r), inclusive creative space on set.

1. To what degree do you agree that this was achieved?
2. What worked well?
3. What could be improved?
4. Did you use any of the tools from the Team Wellness Workshop? (e.g. AFISH, apology)
5. If yes, which tools did you use?
  - AFISH
  - Anatomy of an apology
  - XYZ resolution (When X happens, I feel Y, because I need Z)
  - Access needs (sharing, acknowledging your own or someone else's)
  - Concern navigation pathway
  - Community agreement
  - Other
6. How confident did you feel when applying the tools you learned?
7. How prepared/supported did you feel in applying the tools?
8. Did you witness any of the tools being used?
9. Which tool do you think was most effective?
  - AFISH
  - Anatomy of an apology



XYZ resolution (When X happens, I feel Y, because I need Z)  
Access needs (sharing, acknowledging your own or someone else's)  
Concern navigation pathway  
Community agreement  
Other

10. How confident do you feel in using the tools in the future?
11. What do you think were the major benefits of the Team Wellness Workshop? Please check all that apply drop-down.
  - Tone-setting
  - Encourages inclusion
  - Common language for talking about issues
  - Shared understanding of how to resolve issues
  - Applicability of workshop material to future settings
  - Sense of caring
  - Stigma busting
  - Sense of safety
  - Sense of comfort
  - Went beyond 'lip service'
  - None of the above

### **Final Thoughts**

12. Please feel free to offer any further comments here.
13. Would you be willing to be interviewed for the Safer creative Spaces project or for the BFM mental health tips? (not required)
14. If so, please indicate this when you send your invoice to collect your \$100 CDN honorarium.

### **Thank you & Instructions for Invoicing**

Thank you for participating. Your responses are a crucial part of what will make this a successful project. We invite any final comments.

## **Interview Questions – Best Friend Me Cast and Crew**

ULB Production Cast and Crew Interview questions

- Name and Role on set
- How did you get involved in this project?
- Any comments/thoughts about the Team Wellness Workshop you participated in
- Have you ever experienced a workshop like this before?
- What do you think the effect would be/will be on this production?
- Any of the tools from the workshop you have used or have seen being used on set so far?
- Any thoughts about the Community Agreement?
- What impact do you see the Community Agreement having on set?
- Given the topic of the production – any thoughts or comments about how it is being addressed?
- One word to describe the production?

## Interview Questions – Songhees Nation Youth Music Project Cast

- What was your reason for wanting to be part of that music video?
- What was your favourite part of the filming process?
- What was your least favourite part of the filming process?
- What part did you like better – there were parts when you were filmed with your friends or when you were filmed on your own? Which did you like better – group or on your own?
- Did you have a favourite spot where the filming was done?
- Did you get to pick the spots where the filming was done?
- Did you get to pick the words to the song?
- What was your piece of the song on?
- What about what the song was about? Did you like it or not like it?
- If there was anything you could change about the entire process what would you change to make it better?
- How was the crew with the whole process? Did you feel safe/comfortable with them? Or was it awkward?
- What if you were filming with strangers – would that change anything for you?
- Would you do it again?
- Were there ever any times during the process when you wanted to stop?
- Did you ever notice any of the other youth being filmed upset/angry/crying?

## Interview Questions – Songhees Nation Youth Music Project Crew

- What made you want to work in film?
- Do you only work with other Indigenous artists or producers?
- Why do you feel it's important for Indigenous people to participate in film?
- What barriers keep Indigenous people from participating in or wanting to participate?
- In your experience are there any recurring patterns or issues or triggers for Indigenous artists working on set?
- If you could make one change in the industry to make it better for Indigenous artists what would it be?
- What was it like working with the group of youth?
- Can you describe the leadership structure of your crew while working on set?
- When working with youth how do you ensure no harm regarding their mental health and emotional wellbeing?
- Is there any Mental Health policies in place should a cast or crew have a mental health crisis?
- Is there anything else you want to share that you think might be helpful?

## Appendix 3 – Workshop Outline and Template Samples

### Team Wellness Workshop Outline

#### Welcome Practice

- Self-Care
- Self-regulation (Definition)
- Wellness Spectrum (Diagram)
- Access Needs (Survey template sample)

#### Team Care

- Community Agreements (Definition and template sample)
- Concern Navigation Pathways (Diagram sample)

#### Conflict Resolution

- Motivational Interviewing (Definition)
- AFISH (Acronym for: Align, Facts, Impacts, Stories, Hopes)
- XYZ (Communicating needs)
- Anatomy of an Apology

#### Closure Practice

### Access Needs Survey – Best Friend Me production template sample

Access needs are awareness of barriers or issues that prevent participation, access, and performance. Everyone has them, not just those living with disabilities.

There is nothing wrong with your access needs or with you for having them. In the Best Friend Me production, you are welcome to communicate your access needs and request support.

Access needs can change daily, even moment by moment. For example, something may happen on set or in your personal life that creates a new access need for you to continue performing your job. It is a good self-care practise to regularly be aware of your access needs and tend to them or ask for support.

Stigma Free Productions is committed to creating an equitable, inclusive and accessible working environment. We will do our best to accommodate your access needs, but we may be hindered by our budget. If we cannot afford to accommodate your access needs, we will work with you to find alternate solutions.

#### The Survey

This Access Needs Survey is designed to help you identify barriers or issues that may prevent you from:

- Participating in our production and meetings
- Accessing production information
- Performing your job to the best of your ability

Read the examples below to help you identify your access needs.

#### Familiar Access Needs Examples:

- I need a wheel-chair accessible washroom.
- I need a gender-neutral washroom.
- I need an ASL interpreter.
- I need parking close to set.
- I need my service animal with me on set.
- I need large-print materials.

#### Physical Access Needs Examples:

- I need a place to sit, as standing up for long periods is difficult on my feet and knees.
- I need assistance or to be excluded from lifting heavy items.
- I need healthy options for craft services and catered meals.
- I need food options that address my dietary restrictions or allergies.
- I need shelter from extreme weather.

#### Medical Access Needs Examples:

- I need printed production documents as I get migraines when reading on a computer screen.
- I need personal breaks at particular times to take my medication, monitor blood sugar, administer insulin, etc.
- I need to have my medication nearby at all times.
- I need to have crew members who work near me learn how to administer my epi pen in case the First Aid Attendant is not nearby
- I need a work environment that is allergen-free (perfume, smoke, peanut butter, etc.)

#### Mental Health Access Needs Examples:

- I need to step away from the set when we film the suicide attempt scene.
- I need to be able to take time for self-regulation when I feel distress.
- I need a work environment that has comprehensive harassment, racism, and bullying policies with clear protocols on how these issues will be dealt with should they arise.
- I need to have a 10-12 hour turnaround so I can be properly rested.

#### Other Access Needs Examples:

- I need to carpool as I don't drive/own a vehicle.
- I need reminders of meetings on the same day.
- I need my co-workers to use my pronouns and to have them included in the callsheet and crew/cast list.
- I am autistic and have sensory challenges that make loud environments challenging.

#### Access Needs Plan:

You can keep your access needs private and attend to them individually or you can share relevant information with the appropriate crew member (first aid attendant, mental health coordinator, producer, head of your department, etc.) and request specific support.

Example of what this looks like in the Access Needs Survey:

<b>My access need:</b>	<b>I will attend to this on my own by doing the following:</b>	<b>If I need support, I will communicate this to:</b>	<b>The specific support I will ask</b>
<i>I need to be able to take time for self-regulation or selfcare when I feel distress.</i>	<i>When I start to feel anxious, I will do breathing exercises.</i>	<i>Head of my department and department colleagues</i>	<i>I will share with my department head and department colleagues that when I get anxious, I may need to step away for 5-10 minutes to self-regulate, and may need someone to cover my duties.</i>
<i>I need to carpool as I don't drive or own a vehicle.</i>	<i>I will use the crew list and email people in my department to see if anyone can give me a ride to and from set</i>	<i>Production manager or coordinator</i>	<i>I will ask the production manager or coordinator if they can find someone who can give a ride to and from set</i>
<i>I need a place to sit, as standing up for long periods is difficult on my feet and knees.</i>	<i>I will bring my own folding chair to set.</i>	<i>Locations manager</i>	<i>I will ask the locations manager if it's possible to have a chair on set for me.</i>

Using the examples above, please use the table below to list barriers or issues that may prevent you from:

- Performing your job to the best of your ability
- Participating in our production and meetings
- Accessing production information

Include your plan for attending to them. If you're unsure who to talk to about your access needs, contact: [companyemailaddress]@gmail.com

<b>My access need:</b>	<b>I will attend to this on my own by doing the following:</b>	<b>If I need support, I will communicate this to:</b>	<b>The specific support I will ask</b>

## Community Agreements – Anna Cooley 2022 production template sample

A community agreement is a set of values a group of individuals working together agrees to uphold.

Community Agreements usually include guidelines to ensure open, active, inclusive, and respectful dialogue and participation when working together.

- Based on a group's values
- A consensus-based approach
- For everyone

The Community Agreement needs to be shared with all group members and be accessible to everyone at any time.

Each member of the team is expected to be familiar with the values, protocols and expectations laid out in the Community Agreement.

Remember that a community agreement is a living document that can be added to and altered throughout the creative process.

One of our consultants, Alberta-based filmmaker Anna Cooley shared this Community Agreement sample that she developed with one of her productions in 2022.

## OUR VALUES

- ~ Respectful listening.
- ~ An openness to discussion.
- ~ Disagreement is not a bad thing! As long as discussions are always in good faith and respectful.
- ~ Ask for help
- ~ An understanding that writers rooms and writing for TV are new to some folks. There will be patience for people as we figure out this new medium.
- ~ Bio needs!(bathroom, water breaks, stretching/standing) Take these when you need to.
- ~There will be discussions of race, privilege, class, and inequality in the room. If, at any time, anyone feels uncomfortable or needs to be excused we will honour where that person is at.
- ~ Daily check in and check outs.
- ~ Ouch Clause (Saying ouch, when there has been something said which has created a feeling of harm. An acknowledgment of this in the room. The person who has said ouch can choose to address their feelings in the moment, or choose a time later.)
- ~Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down (if you need to leave the room at any time, giving a thumbs up when leaving means you need some time but don't need someone to come and check on you. Thumbs down, means you need time and you do need someone to come and check/speak with you.)
- ~ The freedom of failure - embrace failure as a whole, and use it as an opportunity for creative discovery.
- ~ This is a living document. We can keep editing this throughout our time together, if we as a group feel an edit is in order.
- ~ The Right to Refusal - You have the right to refuse to talk about something if it makes you feel uncomfortable
- ~Open to swears and potty humor
- ~ 1/N. Do not take up more than 1/N of the space in the room.
- ~available light theory- the people, amount of time and resources we have is exactly what we need to complete the task ahead of us.
- ~This is a tab judgment free zone

*Figure 9: Community Agreement Template, Anna Cooley (2022)*



## Concern Navigation Pathways – Safer Creative Spaces template sample

Before concerns arise, it is helpful to establish a concern navigation pathway or communication chain for everyone to follow. The question we ask ourselves is, “Am I able to resolve this concern on my own (self-regulation), or do I need to speak with someone else?” Below is a template for a visual depiction of a typical pathway for a media arts production.



Figure 10: Concern Navigation Pathway image template (media arts production sample)

## Conflict Resolution Tools

Visit the WIDC.ca web site for some basic starter tools: <https://www.widc.ca/widc-safer-creative-spaces/scs-wellness-starter-toolkit/conflict-resolution/>. Or reach out to existing mental health and wellness resources through the network at Appendix 4.

## Appendix 4 – Mental Health Resources Network

We have organized this list of existing mental health and wellness resources by First Nations-focused, Canada-wide, and then by province (west to east), territory and placed it on a dedicated page on the WIDC.ca web site: <https://www.widc.ca/widc-safer-creative-spaces/safer-creative-spaces-resources/> .

- First Nations-focused
- National
- Provincial
- Territories

Please note that if you reach out to access, some of these services are free, some are not.

Within our capacity, we are always updating this resource network. If you are aware of updates, new resources, any errors or omissions, please share them with us by reaching out at [enquiries@widc.ca](mailto:enquiries@widc.ca).

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