

National Skillshare Series – Student Organizers, June 9th 2021

Transcription is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings.

>> Carina Gabriele: Hello, everyone. Welcome to our National Skillshare Series. I'm going to give it another few seconds for folks to join us and then we'll get started.

>> Carina Gabriele: Hello, everyone. and welcome to the National Skillshare Series on Addressing and Preventing Gender-Based Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions in Canada. My name is Carina Gabriele and I am the Community of Practice Coordinator for the Courage to Act project. Before getting into introducing everyone, I want to say that throughout my time working on the Courage to Act project, I have been a full-time master's student at University of Toronto, and I was a previous student union executive at Western University. Due to my experience as an organizer as a past and current student, the Student Organizer toolkit in particular is a resource I am so excited to see released.

It's a toolkit that does exceptional work at amplifying student voices and experiences, and creating a road map to continue building off of for future student advocates. It's an incredible anthology of student voices and tools that I really wish that I had when I was organizing on my campus. It has been such a pleasure having the opportunity to work alongside our student team to create the first by-students, for-students anthology of its kind in Canada. So without further adieu, we are thrilled to welcome you to our skillshare today with our Student Organizer Community of Practice.

Before we begin, I have a couple quick notes on language and accessibility. Attendees can turn on or off captioning in Zoom as needed by clicking "closed captioning" in the controls bar at the bottom of your screen. You can also listen to the session in French by selecting the French language channel using the interpretation menu. Today's session is being recorded and will be available on our website along with a transcript of the session. A graphic recording will also be created from today's presentation by Annalee from Drawing Change. Her role is to listen deeply and translate our ideas into visuals. You can watch her drawing as she follows along with the session by spotlighting her video in your Zoom settings. Hi, Annalee. There will be a graphic recording available for all Skillshare Sessions, which you can find on the Education tab of our website, and when they are released as part of the Community of Practice tools on the Courage to Act Knowledge Centre.

Courage to Act is a two-year national initiative to address and prevent gender-based violence on post-secondary campuses in Canada. It builds on key foundations from the Courage to Act report, Developing a National Framework to Address and Prevent Gender-Based Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions. Our project is the first national collaborative of its kind to bring

together scholars, experts, and advocates from across Canada to end gender-based violence on campus.

A key feature of our project is our National Skillshare Series, where our Working Groups, Communities of Practice and keynote speakers will discuss tools, trends, and strategies that will shape how we address and prevent gender-based on campus. Through the Skillshare Series we are so pleased to introduce and offer insight into the development of the tools and resources created by gender-based violence experts across the country.

There will be a chance to sign up for piloting opportunities via the Courage to Act Knowledge Centre in Fall 2021. Attendees can also join a connected network of experts and advocates across Canada who are exploring urgent issues and promising practices. Supported by CAUCUS, these sessions are also a recognized learning opportunity. Attendance at ten or more live webinars and National Skillshare Series sessions also count towards an on-line certificate. Our project is made possible through generous support and funding from the Department for Women and Gender Equality, or WAGE, Federal Government of Canada.

We begin today's session by acknowledging that this work is taking place on and across the traditional territories of many Indigenous nations. The importance of this acknowledgement is particularly significant given that June is National Indigenous History Month and in light of the devastating discovery of a mass grave of 215 Indigenous children at the site of the former Kamloops Indian residential school in British Columbia.

We recognize that gender-based violence is just one form of violence caused by colonization to marginalize and dispossess indigenous people from their land and waters. Our project strives to honour this truth as we move towards decolonizing this work and actualizing justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls across the country. Any liberation from gender-based violence cannot take place without addressing the ongoing genocide, impacts of settler colonialism, and many forms of violence, historical and contemporary inflicted upon Indigenous communities in Canada.

This is an invitation to take a deep breath. It's been a heavy news cycle with the discovery of the mass grave of the 215 Indigenous children, as well as the recent terrorist attack fuelled by violent anti-Muslim hate and Islamophobia in London, Ontario in which four members of a Muslim family were targeted and killed.

We are all mourning in this violence. It has no place in a consentful world. We take another deep breath, because engaging in GBV work can be challenging. Many of us have our own experiences of survivorship and of supporting those we love and care about who have experienced gender-based violence. A gentle reminder here to be attentive to our well-being as we engage in these difficult conversations.

You can visit the self-care session of our Skillshare web page or visit our self-care room by visiting the link that will be posted shortly in the chat. You are invited throughout the entirety of this presentation today to enter questions into the Q&A box throughout the session, and it will be posed to the presenters at the end of the presentation. We will try to engage with as many questions that we can in the time we have together.

At the end of this hour you will find a link to the evaluation form. We would be very grateful if you could take a few minutes to share your feedback as it helps us improve. This is anonymous. Following the session we will also email with you a copy of the evaluation form and a link to the recording so you can view it again and share with your networks.

I'm so excited to introduce you now to our speakers who will also be taking part in a panel discussion later in the session. They will be talking about the anthology of tools created and led by members of the Student Organizers Community of Practice, all of whom are leading and doing this work on their own campuses. So, introducing Chenthoori, Jessica and Nell.

Chenthoori is a daughter of Tamil diaspora. She is a grass-roots feminist, anti-violence against women advocate. She lives and works on territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, Anishinaabeg, Chippewa, Haudenosaunee and Wendat peoples. She is completing her Master of Social Work where she creates a fair and healing justice framework. She is committed to a better world for all marginalized communities.

Jessica is a community activist and award-winning gender-based violence researcher who is defending their PhD thesis next week from the University of Toronto Ontario institute for studies in education and the department of social justice education. As a scholar activist at the University of Toronto, Jessica has led a student research team as part of Silence is Violence at UofT. In 2019, following a three-year project, the team published a 60-page report on a survey of over 500 students' experiences and understandings of gender-based violence on UofT's three campuses. This month Jessica will start a post-doctoral researcher position at McGill University as part of the impacts project which seeks to address sexual violence on Canadian campuses through policy change, education, and art activism.

Nell has recently finished her undergrad degree in sociology at Concordia University and will soon begin her MA in sociology at the university of Victoria. Her undergraduate honours thesis focused on policy response to sexual violence on public transit systems across Canada. Nell's previous advocacy work includes being a representative for the Concordia student union on the sexual violence and misconduct committee. Nell currently works as Partnership Liaison for the REES community, an online platform for reporting campus sexual violence. Nell is also grateful to spend time working with other students as the Coordinator of the Youth Advisory Board. She's an advocate for change, believer in the importance of policy, and someone who is dedicated to doing work that is intersectional and survivor centred. Welcome to the three of you.

>> Nell Perry: Hello, everyone. Thank you so much for joining us. The Student Organizer Community of Practice is a group of students who have been working together over the last two years. The Community of Practice has really been a community where students have had the opportunity to come together and discuss what is happening on their campuses, share promising practices, to prevent gender-based violence on campus, and to support one another with our individual work. Back in January of 2020 we met in person in Toronto to begin the start of the project, and it was so amazing to meet everyone back in person before the pandemic began and when we could do such things.

In Toronto we were able to start to plan what we wanted our toolkit to look like and what it would be about. Since then we've been meeting once a month with Carina to work on the project as a group, and then separately meeting with other members outside of those meeting times to write, edit and comment on each other's tools.

So here you see this lovely Zoom screen shot of our community of practice that was taken at our last meeting. Our group is filled with students from across Canada. We have a diversity of representation from different levels of study. We have undergraduate master's and PhD students. We also have a range of experience from our students, with students having experience in student government roles, non-student government advocacy roles, frontline support, and doing research.

A really important part about this group is that doing gender-based violence prevention work on campuses can often be an isolating experience. Being in this Community of Practice together has allowed students who often work in independent silos to come together to connect, and share ideas. Working together as a community has been an informative, empowering and rewarding experience. Having the opportunity to come together as a community of current student advocates has been a culmination of decades of student organizing that we are all grateful for and have learned from. Personally, I wanted to end with the note that I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work with all these incredible and radical student organizers from across the country.

>> Jessica Wright: Hi, everyone. I echo Nell in being so grateful to be here with you all today and to have been part of this project. I'm so excited to be introducing our toolkit today, and I'm going to talk a little bit about the toolkit that the Student Organizer CP has created. The title of which we leaned into the wonderful tool of alliteration to create. It's called "Courage Catalyst, Creating Consent Culture on Campus."

Like Nell mentioned, the Student Organizer CP all met in Toronto in January, 2020, and there we thought collectively about what the most impactful resources were that we could create to help other students who wanted to challenge rape culture on their campuses. We decided to generate a toolkit that captured our stories of advocacy, and that built on a rich legacy of decades of student organizing. We collaboratively chose what we thought were the

most crucial topics to take up based on our diverse lived experiences and advocacy efforts. The toolkit consists of 19 student stories, and 19 student advocacy tools. I'll talk a bit about the tools and Chenthoori will talk about the student stories a little later.

The work we're introducing today is meant to capture our stories of advocating for safer campuses. It's meant to provide concrete examples for other student organizers to be inspired by, and it's meant to give examples of tools for other students to create change on their campuses. I think it's also important to note that the tools don't include narratives of violence but rather they capture our voluntary experiences of campus organizing. and what's really neat about the tools, like nell pointed to, is that they include experiences of student leaders from all across Canada.

So the 19 tools range from how to write policy recommendations to building community care and leading workshops. and they really help a "how to" guide for current and future organizers. and the tool is also useful for folks to understand how thought -- for admin folks to understand how thoughtful and impactful student work is. The stories and the tools offer info to better understand and support students. and maybe that even means helping admin advance student organizing. like, for example, through providing or helping provide sustainable funding to student organizers.

So this is the list of tools that we created. I'm going to run through them and then briefly speak about the one that I wrote, then Chenthoori and Nell will also share a bit about the tools that they wrote. We created resources for talking with administration, campaigns, building community care, gender-based violence community consultations, creating support through self-care and community organizing, government relations, writing a letter to the government, hosting an event on campus, how to write a petition, partnerships, policy recommendations, policy review and feedback, protests, providing feedback and challenging poor service, self advocating within the system, self-care, self-soothing while organizing as a survivor, speaking with media, and workshops.

And the tools cover a breadth of topics related to campus organizing, they represent the diverse kinds of advocacy that can be done. The tool that I created or contributed was creating support through self-care and community organizing. In my piece I talk about how we sometimes have to create our own supports on campus to care for ourselves after sexual violence and while doing advocacy. I write about three different kinds of support that can foster a holistic sense of support.

The first is self-care where I mention the importance of taking care of yourself. because engaging in activism that recognizes that trauma is pervasive can be distressing. but I also talk about how sometimes self-care doesn't quite quiet or soothe the feelings of injustice around sexual violence on campus. Connecting to community support can be a form of self-care.

I suggest reaching out to campus groups or starting your own because the community with people who also want to end gender-based violence on campus has evolved, and I highlight that by contributing to political organizing and community work you can simultaneously validate your own struggles, while also helping make sure other people don't have to face similar trauma. The last kind of support I suggest building is institutional support, which can look like accessing services covered by tuition, like a health or wellness centre.

Finding institutional support can also look like working with your PSI to create the kind of supports that are missing. I suggest ways to do this like building networks across critical stakeholders at the PSI, or with student groups and unions to gain leverage. I'll now turn it over to Chenthoori to speak about the fabulous tool she created.

>> Chenthoori Malankov: thank you, Jessica. I think mine and Jessica's tools go hand in hand. because I also created a self-care tool. My tool specifically speaks to exactly what Jessica mentioned, which is the idea of grounding ourselves in our community. But first and foremost, what does it mean to think about radical self care? What does it mean to show up to this work while prioritizing your own needs, especially when many of us are survivors in our own ways. So many of the things that are addressed in my tool are really thinking about unpacking. What does it mean to support communities when we may also experience, carry, and hold on to our own forms of trauma? How do I recognize what vicarious trauma means? How do I know when I'm currently being triggered? How can I support my actual body and regulation in terms of my emotions when I am experiencing forms of triggers or something that is coming up when I am supporting and I'm creating a campaign?

So that's some of the work that I've had the privilege of supporting. Like Jessica, I now want to mention I'm so grateful to be here with you all today. I'll pass it over to Nell.

>> Nell Perry: So I actually had the opportunity to work on two tools. The first tool that I worked on myself was the policy recommendations tool. Then I also had the chance to work alongside Levi who is another member of our Community of Practice to create the tool about how to write a petition. Really, the goal of both of these tools is to break down complex, nitty-gritty organizing practices that can be widely beneficial when implemented when organizing against gender-based violence. These tools include directives that I wish I had a few years ago when I was learning about these organizing practices. The policy recommendation tool focuses on describing why a student would want to write policy recommendations, as well as why this practice can be impactful. The tool highlights the importance of finding motivation for the recommendations, and I provide reference to other integral work that has been done by students across Canada.

The tool also provides some tips about the logistics of writing recommendations, prompting students to decide on their audience, reach out to the community for collaboration, and I also have included some practical tips about writing recommendations.

The how to write a petition tool walks the reader through the process of creating a petition, first describing why petitions are important levers of change. The importance and the ways that they can determine the audience form demands and do outreach. The tool finishes with information about how to deliver a petition. Petitions are a great tool to use when trying to raise awareness about a specific issue with the want to describe and show how there's widespread support behind how that issue should be addressed. I'm really grateful to have had the opportunity to work with Levi on that tool.

>> Chenthoori Malankov: Amazing. So I will be talking to you folks today about why we created this toolkit. We wanted to ensure that many of these student experiences that were happening across the country - the organizing, the mobilization - were being highlighted and captured. We also wanted to address the needs of students who felt isolated on their campuses. Oftentimes the work that we do, the labour of love that we pour into our communities go unnoticed. When we're talking about gender-based violence on our campuses, oftentimes we don't have the right resources or the right community members that we are aware of in terms of organizing on campus. And thirdly, we wanted to also highlight the decades of student activism and offer tools and strategies and resources to continuously inspire and support future students in organizing on their campuses.

This toolkit, personally for me, validates the ongoing labour of love and care that many students across the country have done leading up to this moment. This toolkit and the courage to act project brought so many students together and created a courageous space to feel less isolating when doing this work. I know that Jessica initially mentioned that I will be speaking upon and touching upon the stories. One of the things that as a student advocate we wanted to ensure that many of our stories were highlighted but also left behind in terms of a legacy so people can read them, share them, and find joy in terms of the work and the ongoing legacy of advocacy that has been happening on our campuses.

In order to go about this our team collaborated and reached out to Sarah Boeseveld. Sarah is one of Canada's leading journalists on issues related to women and gender equality. We wanted to ensure that whoever was listening to our stories was someone who had a trauma informed lens, someone that was able to provide care while also teasing out our lived experiences.

As the student working group, it was important for us to share our stories. Story telling, as I'm sure many of you folks on the line today know, has been a longstanding practice in methodology used in the Indigenous community. It's not something new. However, it is a form of resistance to white supremacy, to decolonizing the ways in which we choose to tell our own stories with consent and our own forms of agency involved. It is important to share our stories for future activists as well as the longstanding activism that has already been taking place in our communities.

>> Nell Perry: So to summarize, four main takeaways have been that all of our work is built on decades of student organizers that came before us. The contents of the toolkit and student advocacy more broadly is the product of generations of anti violence activism and organizing on campuses. As well, students don't just have expertise about gender-based violence prevention on campus but are experts in the subject, especially in regard to a student centred approach. This work requires collective action and collective care between communities. Ultimately the tools and stories in this toolkit build on our experiences and offer a practical how-to guide for those looking to organize on campus.

And with that, I'll pass things off to Aubrianna, another member of our Student Organizer community of practice to moderate our panel. Aubrianna Snow is a k'taqmkuk inu'sgw newfoundland mi'kmaw woman, and has been a visitor on treaty six territory for most of her life. Aubrianna is also the vice-president of student life at the student association of MacEwan University. Outside of work she enjoys reading, writing, beading and spending time in nature and with her pets. Her life's work is to help prevent gender-based violence in all forms, and to support survivors in finding meaning and identity.

>> Aubrianna Snow: thank you so much for the introduction, Nell. I'm really excited to be here today to moderate this panel with my colleagues. This is an opportunity to expand a little bit on what was shared earlier in the session, as well as to provide deeper insight into the work of these folks as student leaders and activists on campus. With that we'll get right into the first question. The first question is: Can you tell us more about the work you've done on your own campus? What's one of the most impactful experiences as a student activist for GBV prevention? First off I'll pass that to Jessica.

>> Jessica Wright: Thanks Aubrianna. Most of my organizing around GBV on campus has been at the University of Toronto, and it's been with Silence is Violence, a student and survivor-led collective that has advocated for change on campus. Rooted in anti-oppressive principles, the bulk of my work has been as lead of the research team. Like was mentioned earlier, we did a three-year project where we collected student perspectives on GBV on campus. Then we put them into a 60-page report which we released through a media campaign that reached the national level. There really wasn't one moment that really defined my experience as a student advocate per se, but it was all of the meetings and emails and discussions that took place over several years. Because all of this collaborative effort resulted in a project that captured hundreds of survivors' experiences on campus, and really honoured them by calling for change so the next generation of students might not have to struggle in the same ways. This for me was the most powerful experience of student organizing - seeing the passion and the care for one another and for the community, then seeing that channel into research findings that could be used to push for change.

>> Aubrianna Snow: That is really powerful, Jessica, thank you for sharing. I'll pass it to Chenthoori next.

>> Chenthoori Malankov: Thank you. Similar to Jessica, I don't think there's a one-time moment that captures my experience. I think there were so many experiences that allowed me to do this work today because of the ongoing, relentless advocacy and persistent group of community members that I have been able to have the honour of working with. But similar to many of these folks online here, my activism started with the sexual assault survivor support line in leadership at York university here in Toronto. It was an instrumental moment for me because I was able to advocate and work alongside many survivors when it came to our campus community. So really pushing for a sexual assault policy at York University was one of our biggest wins. Our policy came before many of the other universities had a policy onboard, and I think that says a lot to the credit to many of the students who, you know, mobilized day in and day out. Through email exchanges, through in-person meetings, through occupying our dean's offices, to all the forms of ways that we show up for our communities to address gender-based violence.

And I think that form of organizing has allowed me to also connect to systemic forms of oppression such as, you know, a prison abolition. Because when we think about gender-based violence, it is beyond something we're fighting for in this world. That's how I envision this and come to this work. It's beyond our campus communities. It is currently happening within our prison system, within our criminal justice system. So it's really a form of intersectional way of thinking about it in our organizing. So I think that's something that I'm really deeply sitting with here as I come to this conversation.

>> Aubrianna Snow: Thank you so much for sharing. I think that a comprehensive perspective is so important. Nell, would you like to share a little bit about your experiences?

>> Nell Perry: Definitely, and I couldn't agree more and echo what folks have already said. I also can't really speak to one particular moment as a student activist and advocate, and I really agree with what Jessica mentioned about it being all the little moments. The e-mails and the meetings and saying hi to someone in the hallway and following up on a meeting that didn't go very well or what have you. It's about really the community and collective action that combine all of those smaller moments as well. I think that it's just so important that it's, you know, it's collective action at the end of the day that really makes that advocacy. That can create impactful and sustainable change at the end of the day, and it's really about the work that the community does as a whole together and the way that they come together. For me, and some of the work that I've been able to do and connect with other communities with, as was mentioned in my bio, is that I've been able to be the undergraduate representative for my student union during my undergrad on the administration, sexual violence committee. Last year I was involved in doing a policy review there which is really where I drew a lot of experience and information on in writing my tool about writing policy recommendations and, you know, policy reviews really all about as a student representative, advocating about the needs of students. and using survivor-centred approaches.

I've also had the opportunity to work on some of the education modules from our mandatory consent training that was implemented and mandated by the Quebec government a few years ago which has been very interesting to observe. And then, as well, with REES which is an online reporting platform for campus sexual violence i've had the privilege of being able to bring increased reporting options and increase access to information to campuses across the country. and that role I've been so honoured to work alongside students on our youth advisory board. as well as students and student government doing this work to bring REES on campus.

>> Aubrianna Snow: That's some really amazing and important work, Nell. Thank you so much, and thank you to all of you for sharing on that question. This next question is something that is very near and dear to my heart and I'm curious to hear what you folks have to say about it. Maybe we'll go in the same order. The question is: What does a student centred approach to campus gender-based violence look like for you? Jessica?

>> Jessica Wright: Thanks, Aubrianna. For me, I think a student centred approach looks like a diverse group of students having a seat at the table. And by this, I mean students who are queer and trans, BIPOC, disabled, madd, poor, working class. Particularly sex workers, and international students. And I don't just mean that folks who have marginalized identities and are student government representatives need to be at the table. I'm also thinking about grass-roots representation like Cat Dunn, one of our fantastic CP members talks about in her tool on how to be involved in government relations as a student. It's often privileged students who can get and then maintain these positions. It's really important for student government leaders to have a seat at the table, and it's crucial for universities to listen to grass-roots organizations who might be able to highlight a really radical perspective. Grass-roots organizers might not be tethered to the institution in the same way that student governments need to be and so they might be able to push the agenda forward in transformative ways. Especially with the support of student government reps who are at the table. But overall, I think a student centred approach means moving beyond just including students in the process, necessarily. It means actually listening to and taking direction from diverse student perspectives about campus gender-based violence.

>> Aubrianna Snow: I couldn't agree more, Jessica. Very well said. Chenthoori?

>> Chenthoori Malankov: I think Jessica was reading off my notes. That's incredibly powerful, and you highlighted such really valuable ways of thinking about it, especially for our administrators in institutions. What does it mean to collaborate with grass-roots organizations? To meaningfully collaborate with communities that are not a part of our institutions but that need to be a part of our institutions is what I also believe as well. And I think for me, I want to move beyond the check box. I want to move beyond the fact that just because I am my skin colour that I'm invited to the table. I want to not be an afterthought. And I think that's one of the many things that many students for many years have been advocating for. Many, many folks -- just because you want to fulfill this racialized identity box that you want to have me there, I think that's important to be mindful of. But I think that shouldn't be the only reason I deserve a seat at

the table. It should be my brilliance, my lived experiences. That I come from a wealth of community knowledge. So for me, a student centred approach is really listening to students, just like Jessica said. Allowing students and especially QTBIPOC folks to take up the space and knowing what students and survivors know what they need. Allowing students from QTBIPOC, Indigenous communities to allow them to bring their three dimensional selves and not have to leave themselves at the door just because we are talking about institutions and bureaucracy. So I think that's something that really resonates with me.

>> Aubrianna Snow: That is so true and so impactful. Wow. Your answers on this are just blowing me out of the water here. I'll pass it to Nell, thank you.

>> Nell Perry: Definitely yes. Big echoes to both those answers that were just given. I 100% agree, and I think something I'm pulling from both of your answers that I think about when I think about a student centred approach is how it requires acknowledging power. The power differences that different students experience in comparison to other members of campus communities, like staff and faculty. I think it's important to particularly acknowledge that students often lack the same amount of power as other community members, and that it's essential to acknowledge how this influences and perpetuates gender-based violence as well as responses to gender-based violence on campus. Again, as my other panelists said, it's essential to acknowledge intersections in different positionalities that students can experience. and ensure that a diverse representation is at that table. There is also in our toolkit some really important work as well about meaningful consultation as well, which I point folks to once that's available.

>> Aubrianna Snow: Absolutely, thank you. And I feel like these conversations are going to become more important and complex in the next little while as we move back on to campus. That leads into the next question. What do you see as opportunities and challenges for student activism on gender-based violence as we move into a post-COVID world. Jessica?

>> Jessica Wright: Thanks, Aubrianna. So, COVID has, as we all probably know, created a shadow pandemic of gender-based violence. This is also happening on campus. The severity of sexual violence has increased in some instances with, you know, students being in pressure cooker situations, of being isolated, being out of work, and struggling with mental health. Students already tend to live on a dime, and some students have had to stay in extremely violent living situations because they can't afford to move away from their abuser. I've seen students that have had to endure increased sexual violence from their employers or landlords because of their precarious financial situation due to COVID.

Student activism to try to address some of these things has almost entirely been moved online, and this presents some challenges in terms of coalition building, gathering volunteers, or even just being motivated. There's something about being in person with passionate people that can inspire a lot of energy and isolation is draining. But with that said, I think that what I've also seen

is COVID has energized new ways of organizing, especially through social media. I've seen fellow students be incredibly creative and resourceful in mobilizing online campaigns for change. Partly out of necessity because there are some survivors who are in really bad situations right now, and the infrastructure is not necessarily there at PSIs to support these students.

For instance, a lack of emergency housing has been a big issue. And I'm thinking of one new organization at the University of Toronto that was just created that's doing online advocacy work to address emergency housing. The organization is called "pairs" and it has really inspired me recently with the ways they've been consistently trying to connect different sections of campus online in order to create a web, more like a pear tree to help survivors and build advocacy. Social media has been key in these times to community build and have campaigns, and I think COVID times have taught us a lot, especially about organizing online. I think these lessons will strengthen our ability to forge coalitions across time and space going forward.

>> Aubrianna Snow: Absolutely. Thank you so much. Chenthoori?

>> Chenthoori Malankov: Yeah, thank you. I think I really resonate with what Jessica shared. One being that there is a momentum that we can't sleep on, because of the shadow pandemic that has been created which we know there has been increased numbers of gender-based violence, sexual violence that has been happening. Especially because of COVID-19. This term mutual aid has been long lasting and long existing prior to the pandemic. Because as racialized communities, QTBIPOC folks, we've always had to depend on mutual aid because of the situations that the systems have put us in. These systems have not been built for us and so mutual aid has been a huge component of healing, organizing, and mobilizing. But I think this idea of mutual aid has come about more during COVID-19, especially because of the pandemic and realizing that resources are scarce. And for who is it scarce? Who are the most vulnerable people impacted in our communities by COVID-19? Who are the people that are frontline workers? Where are migrant workers getting support? I think we have uncovered a numerous amount of real -- like an unveiling of what has been really happening to vulnerable populations when we're in a global pandemic.

So I think for me, one thing I really resonate with Jessica is for me, my student union has been a huge form of support. I think oftentimes a lot of students, just like myself, I also was a student organizer. I used to be the president as well as the vice-president of my student union. Until I got involved, I didn't know that my student union existed. I didn't know what kind of services they offered. And I think -- I'm smiling because it blows my mind now looking back at the experiences I've gained from my student union. But I think it's such a valuable resource. I think a lot of organizing and mobilizing that has been happening on social media. With that being said, I think a lot about international students. That's the part that I think Courage to Act and many of our organizing committees have been really centering the conversations around: how are we supporting international students during this time? What forms of care? What forms

of resource building do we need to provide for international students for someone like myself who is privileged enough where I can access these resources because I've been on my campus for several years.

So I think those are the kinds of questions I've been asking and kind of organizing a part of my campus community. So those are some of the things I think about when I think about this question. So, yeah, thank you.

>> Aubrianna Snow: Yeah, thank you so much. I really resonated with what you were saying there about the level of awareness and engaging folks and how important that is. Nell, would you like to share?

>> Nell Perry: Yeah, quickly. Both of those answers are so impactful and powerful, and thank you for sharing both of those. I think something else that I think has been seen on campus is the absence of being on campus physically, and the overall experience of just being a student and surviving during COVID has perhaps led to not as many new students getting newly involved in activism. Not necessarily having those same types of connections that you would between student organizers on campus, which is one of the reasons why it's been so wonderful to be able to have the student organizers' community of practice. especially during covid when there's been less connections in person.

And I think that you know, there's perhaps this gap that will be left of knowledge that hasn't necessarily been passed down to other student organizers that would have been had there been the opportunity to connect in person. Even with so many students in our Community of Practice who have graduated and are moving on now at the end of COVID, because we've really been isolated from the student community on our campuses for the last year. And I guess a part of it kind of moving into the more helpful part of this question is hoping that resources like our toolkit are able to begin to fill that gap a little bit.

Although we haven't had the opportunity to necessarily connect with other folks on our campuses as much as we would have during COVID times, now there's new resources to really ensure that knowledge is being passed down, and that progress continues instead of, you know, backing up a little bit and needing to be evaluated at every new generation of student organizers. This has been highlighted I think with the unveiling of the ways that systems of oppression impact so many individuals during COVID and kind of the momentum that's going with that as well is that hopefully, you know, once folks are back on campus there's new energy that comes to advocacy. I'm hoping for lots of excitement and energy around there. I'd also like to note that I hope with this rise in awareness that I think students have definitely had over the last year, I hope that administrators return to campus eager to make change and really listen to students who might not have had the same opportunities to share about their experiences in the last two years.

>> Aubrianna Snow: I think those are some great hopes and concerns and things to be thinking about as we come out of this very strange chapter for post-secondary, especially. So, as you've all shown today, students do really amazing impassioned work on campuses around gender-based violence. And as you've so kindly pointed out, sometimes that wealth of knowledge leaves with them. When we're talking about legacies, what are the reminders that you folks want to leave for the next generation of student activists? Jessica?

>> Jessica Wright: Thanks, Aubrianna. I think my answer to this question today is pretty short. It's just, you know: learn, as well as honour the work that's been done before you. Be bold. Trust your instincts. Your anger at rape culture is justified, and all of the other systems that feed into it. And finding a community that shares your values will be a major bomb.

>> Aubrianna Snow: Couldn't agree more. Chenthoori?

>> Chenthoori Malankov: Yeah, very similar sentiments as well. I'll keep it short, but I think for me one thing is: honouring our ancestors. Our ancestors allow us to do this work because there are so many people that didn't make it this far. For us to be able to continue, you know, voicing these concerns, yelling on top of the roof and saying, "Hear us. We are here to stay." I think one thing for me, though, I've been recently reading Emergent Strategy by Adrienne Murray Brown. It has been one of the most healing works of writing, or other books. Because when I think a lot about this work, I think a lot about dreaming towards liberation. Because we don't know the end result of where this movement will take us, but we do know that when we plant a seed it grows. It grows because we nurture it. We care for it. We love it. And we hold it in very tender, tender ways.

So in the same way, we are nothing different from when we think about community organizing. When we are organizing with one another, we need that same level of care, love and support and tenderness when we approach one another. This world is harsh. And so when we have each other to hold on to and speak with, I think it's really important to honour each and every one of us that come into this space that does this really radical and brave and courageous work that is, like, a really, really long time in the making. The people before us, we keep acknowledging the people before us. And we're still here, right, so this means that there are going to be people after us.

That might take even more years, but just really acknowledging that a real victory and real wins come because of community love and tenderness. As I continue dreaming towards a world and life of liberation, I want to mention that we will win. And we will be free. And we will be seen. Because that is the work that is being done through this project. That is the work that is being left behind with the toolkit. And so I have a lot of hope in my heart and a lot of care while I'm on this call.

>> Aubrianna Snow: That is incredibly beautiful and well said, Chenthoori. Thank you. Nell?

>> Nell Perry: Yes, that was so beautiful. and I really couldn't agree more. And I don't even know if I have anything more to add. It's really about community and finding that community, whether that's on your campus or within other institutions at large. And really just learning from it, remembering those who have come before you. Those who will learn from your work afterwards. And not getting discouraged. Stay hopeful while you can. Connect with the community when that hope is needed, and if it's lost. And, yeah, I think community and collective care have just been really shown throughout the pandemic to be so essential to really important parts of organizing and just taking care of one's self, especially when organizing against gender-based violence.

>> Aubrianna Snow: Absolutely. Thank you all so much. I think I'm passing it to Carina now.

>> Carina Gabriele: Hello, we don't have any questions in the Q&A as of right now. However, folks in the audience, if you do have any questions please feel free to type them into the Q&A box. Aubrianna, if you have any other questions for the panel, I think we have time for at least one more question.

>> Aubrianna Snow: Okay yes, I definitely do have one more question for the panel. so, I think this is a really nice way to kind of wrap up the conversation today. We've spoken a lot about the power of this work moving through generations of student activists and the importance of keeping that momentum alive, and a lot of the transition periods that are happening right now with this work on campus. What do you think is the power of being in community with other students in this work? Jessica?

>> Jessica Wright: Yeah, I feel like there's so much to say on this topic. The power of being in community is kind of like life blood. I feel like even in my own journey of healing, connecting to community is what allowed me to come back to life and really to heal. It's through community and through narrating our experiences of, you know, trauma, violence that we heal. And so there's nothing more beautiful than connecting with community and caring for community and being cared for by community. So I feel like I don't know how to say it more eloquently than that. But it's sort of the life blood, I feel, of the work and just life in general, is about. The good stuff is connecting to people, and moving together and creating a better world is -- it's just so inspiring. Words are failing me with this answer. I just know that the work that I've done with community and community building has been so life sustaining for me. Yeah. I'll leave it there.

>> Aubrianna Snow: I completely get that. Sometimes it seems like when something is so integral, especially with community in this work, it's hard to separate that as kind of an abstract concept. But thank you for sharing. I'll pass it to Chenthoori.

>> Chenthoori: Yeah, similar to Jessica. I think that is such a big question, because there is so much power. What is the power? There is so much power in being a part of a community. It

has been, as well, like Jessica mentioned, my lifeline. My ability to heal and be a part of a community where people have vested interest and values and principles that they're working towards. And I think when you're fighting these forms of systems and violence on an ongoing basis, I think burnout and the ability to lose track of what is ahead of us can sometimes look really blurry. And so I think sometimes for me, I think of this analogy going back to the book I was speaking about earlier, is this analogy of dandelions.

Dandelions have the power of actually dropping their weeds everywhere and making a community around themselves. And consistently doing, no matter how many times somebody mows their lawn and the dandelions die, they just continuously get back up and they keep creating that sense of community. That really inspires me, because everyday, like Carina mentioned about the news cycle, we are hearing day in and day out the violence that is happening in our communities. The violence being inflicted upon so many of our loving communities. So just like that I think it's important for us, the power in communities that have had a place to mourn and grieve those atrocities, right. Because I think it's easy to sit here and talk about the future, but I think one thing that has been integral to my healing and the power in it is having a community to mourn and grieve with and really sit with that pain when these forms of violence are inflicted upon us. And then get back up. Just like the dandelions do, and create that community, and continuously create it. Even when in the face of, like when no one wants us to continuously create it. I think that's something that really resonates with me, and that's the example that I think of when I think about the power in communities. We will not give up. We will not stop. No matter what anybody says we will not stop for anyone. And I think that's something that I'm sitting with deeply today.

>> Aubrianna Snow: That is an amazingly beautiful visual. I have never thought of community through that lens. So thank you so much for sharing with us. Nell, would you like to contribute?

>> Nell Perry: Yeah, that was very beautiful. And, again, I couldn't agree more with what both of my fellow panelists said. I really just think, yeah, being in community with other students is empowering. I remember in January 2020 when we first met with everyone there was just this feeling in the room like - wait, we've all been through the same things? But we, you know, didn't know each other? Like we just had so many similar experiences in trying to organize and having success and failures within that. Being able to come together in community is powerful healing. I also think there's just so much to learn from community and from other student organizers. I've been so grateful to have had the opportunity to learn so much from other folks, and even today I just feel like I'm going to leave this webinar with my brain full of notes as well.

>> Aubrianna Snow: I definitely feel the same. This has been such a good conversation. I think we've got time for maybe, like one more speed round question. So maybe if we could just keep it super brief. What, in maybe one sentence, has been the impact of your work with Courage to Act on the way you approach activism? Jessica?

>> Jessica Wright: Can one of you folks take this first? I need to think about it for a second. Would that be okay?

>> Aubrianna Snow: Sure, I'll pass it to Chenthoori then.

>> Chenthoori Malankov: Could you repeat the question, kindly?

>> Aubrianna Snow: Yeah. In about one sentence, how has your work with Courage to Act contributed to the way you see activism?

>> Chenthoori: I feel like there's so many sentences. I see why Jessica passed it. [Laughs] I truly think the impact is endless. I think we're creating -- I see this as a wave effect. Like we're creating change in so many ways where we actually have tangible resources for communities to be able to flip through and address their own concerns on their community campuses, but also to take what they need from the toolkit. And also maybe some things could be like - this doesn't actually resonate with me in my context of the campus and I'm not going to use it, but I'll flip to another tool. So I think that's something we're leaving behind courage. And that's the impact, is to be brave and courageous.

>> Aubrianna Snow: Love that, Chenthoori. Thank you. Nell?

>> Nell Perry: Yeah, I think kind of going back to the name, I think courage is a great answer, and I think really just being a part of this project has helped me understand the community that exists really across the country. Knowing where to go to learn and where to reach out when needed, and about all of the incredible people who are behind this work everywhere just has been really impactful, courageous and empowering for myself.

>> Aubrianna Snow: Thank you. And last but not least, Jessica.

>> Jessica Wright: Thanks. Yeah I resonate with the other panelists deeply as well. I think for me this project has allowed me to dream a little bit bigger. Or maybe a lot bigger. I didn't even realize, you know, think we're all sort of in silos at our universities, and this project has been amazing in just building this network of folks across Canada. So I think it's shown me that, you know, I can dream even bigger and think about possibilities. Because we just need courage. I think that's the word that's staying with me too, yeah.

>> Aubrianna Snow: Well I really couldn't have said it better. This has been such an incredible privilege. Thank you all. I'll pass it back to Carina.

>> Carina Gabriele: Thank you so much to our panelists. Chenthoori, when you were talking about the dandelions I was smiling at the idea of the resilience of dandelions and popping back up. That is an image that will stay with me. And Jessica, to talk about dreaming bigger is so important. And Nell your point about -- even just knowing this community exists. All I have to

say is: wow. Like I've got these incredible goose bumps because of how absolutely powerful this conversation was. I'm just so incredibly thankful for the four of you for talking about not only the Student Organizer toolkit, but also your individual work within the community. I mean, this conversation and the upcoming toolkit for all those watching, it's a show of how students don't just have the expertise, but they are the experts, so i'm very excited to have been here alongside all of you. Thank you so much to all of the members of the Student Organizers Community of Practice for sharing your knowledge and expertise with us today.

I'm so excited for this toolkit to be released as part of the courage to act project. We are deeply appreciative of the discussion today. So to wrap up, we also want to take a moment to thank all of the members of the community of practice for their contributions to this tool. our deepest thanks to Sarah Boesveld for her journalistic talents to bring stories of student activism to life. annalee from drawing change has been creating a beautiful illustration to represent the conversation that we've had today. That final graphic, along with the video recording and a transcript will be available on your website in the coming days.

If you are interested in learning more about this tool, and I saw a couple questions in the chat about this, or learning more about the opportunity to pilot some of these tools, at your post-secondary institution, please continue to follow the Courage to Act project. You can sign up for piloting opportunities via the Courage to Act Knowledge Centre in Fall, 2021. So mark it on your calendars!

Please don't forget that registration is open to sign up for all of our remaining sessions that are part of our National Skillshare Series running through to August 18th, 2021. This Skillshare Series will highlight the work being done across Canada to address gender-based violence on campus. It will showcase all of our tools and toolkits being developed by our 150-person plus project partners, including our Communities of Practice. You can sign up on the Courage to Act website.

I also want to thank you, our attendees, for joining us today and sharing. We appreciate and take inspiration from your commitment to addressing and preventing gender-based violence on your campus. We're lucky to be able to work alongside each and every one of you. Thank you so much for joining us, and a kind reminder to please complete the evaluation forms. Take care, everyone.