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Canada Council  
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Conseil des arts  
du Canada

# Project Summary and Recommendations

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JUNE 14, 2024



# Land Acknowledgement & Welcome Practice

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*Before we begin, we wish to gratefully acknowledge that the WIDC program originates 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.*

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



# WIDC Safer Creative Spaces: *Building a Mental Health Toolkit Project*

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

# Why?

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Over 60% of Canadians  
have experienced trauma.

*Statistics Canada, 2023*

# Why?

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Over 60% of media artists surveyed experienced distress or witnessed a co-worker dealing with distress at work (during production).

*WIDC SCS Project*

# Our Leadership Team

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**Dr. Carol Whiteman, EdD**  
Women In the  
Director's Chair /  
Project Lead



**Ana de Lara**  
Stigma Free  
Productions /  
Leadership Team



**Charlene Hickey, MA, CCC**  
Songhees Nations  
Family Counselling /  
Leadership Team



**Jane Taylor Lee, MA, CCC**  
Family Services  
Greater Victoria /  
Leadership Team



**Dawn Schell, MA, CCC**  
**CCCDP**  
University of Victoria /  
Lead Researcher

# Our Leadership Team

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**Dr. Carol Whiteman** (she/her), Producer / Adult Educator  
Women In the Directors Chair (WIDC)

Best known for facilitating creative collaboration, mentoring, and producing Canada's acclaimed Women In the Director's Chair (WIDC) initiative, since 1996, Dr. Carol Whiteman has helped advance the careers and screen projects of a generation of screen writers and directors across Canada and internationally. An executive producer on ten award-winning feature films, including *With Love and a Major Organ* (2023), *Dawn*, *Her Dad & the Tractor*, (2021), *Rustic Oracle* (2019), *Red Snow* (2019), Whiteman's passion for creating space for authentic creative voice to thrive has been recognized by two Governor General's award nominations, multiple awards for promoting gender equity and inclusion in Canada's media arts sector.



# Our Leadership Team

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**Ana de Lara** (she/her), Media Artist  
Stigma Free Productions

Ana de Lara is a **Filipina-Canadian director, producer, and screenwriter** who has earned over 30 accolades for her films and screenplays in North America and Europe. Ana is a Women In the Director's Chair alumna, a BC Arts Council and NFB Grant recipient, and was a finalist for the 2010 Lindalee Tracey Award. Her first feature script, a dark comedy entitled *The Virgin Mary Had a Little Lamb*, based on her popular one-woman play was developed at WIDC Story & Leadership and was a finalist in WIFT Vancouver's 2017 screenplay competition. In 2016, she won the MPPIA Short Film Award for her concept short *Good Girls Don't*, due in no small part to her stand-up performance in the pitch competition at the Whistler Film Festival. In 2019, Ana produced the Telefilm Talent to Watch feature film *All In Madonna* which world premiered at the Whistler Film Festival. A Talent to Watch Award recipient herself, Ana is the director of the comedy web series *Best Friend Me* which she co-wrote with series creator Andy Marie and is being produced by Arnold Lim.



# Our Leadership Team

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## **Charlene Hickey, MA, CCC**

Songhees Nation Family Counselling, (SNFC)

Charlene Hickey is a [Canadian Certified Counsellor](#) offering in-person and online counselling sessions for adults and couples and in-person only sessions for youth and teens as young as 11. Her areas of specialty include relationship issues, anxiety and stress, parenting and [trauma](#), to name a few. Charlene has a wealth of knowledge and experience working in Indigenous communities on both a personal and professional level. Charlene is a First Nations woman from Saddle Lake Cree Nation in northern Alberta where her mother was born. Charlene's grandparents on her mother's side were both residential school survivors and her mother is a survivor of the Sixties Scoop. Charlene possesses firsthand knowledge on the negative effects intergenerational trauma can cause, which allows her to come from a place of compassion and understanding when sitting with clients. Charlene has been working in Indigenous communities and organizations in the Victoria area since 2019.

# Our Leadership Team

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**Jane Taylor Lee** (she/her), MA, CCC  
Family Services Greater Victoria (FSGV)

Jane has worked with civilian and military individuals and families for over 22 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 our 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 Master's 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. Jane held the position of Executive Director from May 2018 to June 2024.

# Our Lead Researcher

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**Dawn Schell** (she/her), MA, CCC  
University of Victoria, BC.

Dawn is a settler and as a visitor here, she acknowledges with gratitude and respect that she lives, works and plays on the traditional territory of the ləkʷəŋən peoples and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. She has a master's degree in counselling psychology and is certified with the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association and the BC Career Development Association. She is also a certified Career Development Practitioner with the BC Career Development Association. She specializes in career counselling with youth and young adults. She enjoys assisting people in discovering what's possible and to develop meaningful career action plans. Her aim is to work with clients to achieve your goals, whether it's exploring career or learning ways to better manage personal or academic concerns.



# Acknowledgments

## Our Key Consultant

**Bridget McCarthy**, Mental Health Coordinator, Co-founder  
Association Mental Health Coordinators (AMHC), Georgia, USA

The AMHC is doing ground-breaking work in preparing Artistic Mental Health Practitioners, and Mental Health Coordinators to support the media arts.





# Acknowledgments

## Our Practioner Consultants

**Andy Marie**, Actor, Writer (*Best Friend Me*)

**JJ Neepin**, Independent Filmmaker, JJ Neepin Films

**Heather Allin**, Actor, Filmmaker, ACTRA Onset Liaison Officer

**Jen Viens**, Actor, Intimacy Coordinator

**Megan Wong**, Intimacy Coordinator, Principal Intimacy Professionals

and

**Zed Loseth**, WIDC SCS Project Coordinator



# Acknowledgments

## Our Elder Consultants

**Dr. Dorothy Cucw-la7 Christian**, Indigenous Studies,  
Simon Fraser University, BC, Canada

**Dr. Carolyn Mamchur**, Writer In residence,  
Simon Fraser University, BC, Canada

**Dr. Rita Shelton Deverell, C.M.**, Chancellor,  
Lakehead University, ON, Canada





# Acknowledgements

## Our Participants

45 cast and crew, *Best Friend Me* (ULB media arts production, Victoria, BC)

7 cast and crew, *Songhees Nation* (youth music video, Victoria, BC)

33 women and non-binary screen directors (WIDC alumni, living across Canada and the USA)

# What we did

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Over 15,000 hours x Consulting, Researching Proto-typing  
& Beta-testing best practices for mental health and  
wellness in media arts spaces:

to create a free Wellness Starter Toolkit and Resources





# What's in the Starter Toolkit

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## ✓ Self-care:

1. Wellness Spectrum
2. Self-regulation
3. Access Needs

## ✓ Team Care:

1. Community Agreements
2. Concern Navigation Pathways

## ✓ Conflict Resolution Tools:

1. OARS
2. AFISH
3. Conversation Starter Tips

# ✓ Starter Toolkit Workshop

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- 2-hour interactive instruction
- 2-hour practicum
- Via Zoom

Designed by the Safer Creative Spaces Team, the workshop may be customized to a team's specific needs. Groups may commission WIDC to deliver the workshop and practicum.

**Email:** [enquiries@widc.ca](mailto:enquiries@widc.ca)

**Subject:** Wellness Workshop

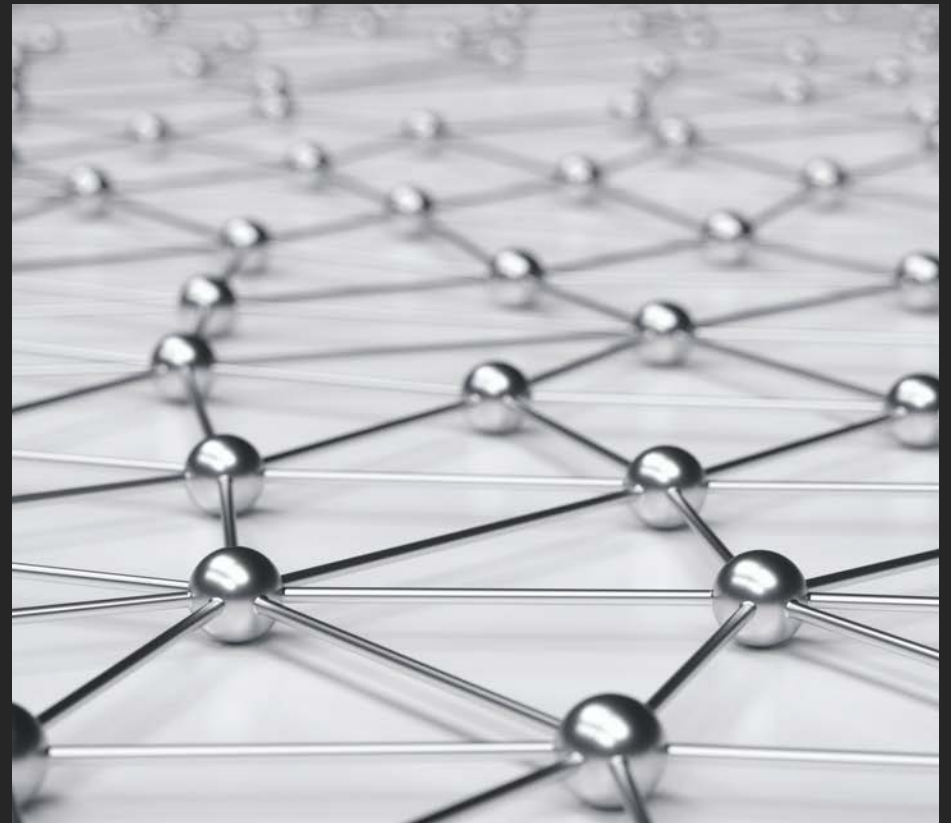


# ✓ Resource Network

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- Canada-wide
- by Province & Territory
- First Nations Resources

This online tool includes existing mental health and wellness supports and resources



What participants had to say about ...

## Safer Creative Spaces

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### **MEDIA ARTISTS (45 x *Best Friend Me*, Cast & Crew):**

*"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. Furthermore, if there was an issue, everyone felt comfortable enough that they could voice it without fear of any reprisal."*

*"[T]his could be an annual learning or bi-annual training that I would benefit from having a refresher on to ensure I don't forget anything and learn from new and different techniques moving forward."*

*"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."*

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

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What participants had to say about...

## Safer Creative Spaces

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### INDIGENOUS MEDIA ARTISTS (7 x Songhees Nation Music Video):

*"I would do everything I can to provide more accessibility to the world of creative employment [for Indigenous artists]."*

*"Representation - not just on screen but showing we can have full lives as members on set, too."*

*"There's major underrepresentation in all the arts."*

*"People don't really know about us so participating in film keeps our culture alive."*

*"It helps to give a person a minute when they need it."*

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What participants had to say about...

## Safer Creative Spaces

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### **MEDIA ARTS LEADERS (33 x WIDC Alumni Directors):**

*"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."*

*"All of the information shared was amazing"*

*"It would be great to have more examples to help us open up our minds to more types of negatives moments because we're used to this sort of negativity being the norm that we sometimes need examples and reminders to show us all the ways that could be adding to said behaviour to unpack it and make mental notes for the next time they happen."*

*"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."*

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# Recommendations

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1. Share the Starter Toolkit widely
2. Seek funding to expand and collaborate with more organizations, experts, and media artists
3. Develop a peer-to-peer practicum space
4. Advocate for inclusion of mental health and wellness practices in all media arts productions, and where possible as a line item in budgets



For more:  
<https://www.widc.ca/widc-safer-creative-spaces/>

**WIDC**

Women In the Director's Chair  
Safer Creative Spaces



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