GIRLS LEAD

A Toolkit for Supporting Girls’ Leadership and Activism

www.womenscentrecalgary.org
The Women’s Centre of Calgary has created this toolkit to serve as a framework – not a script – for adults to support girls’ leadership and activism efforts across Alberta. It is provided under a Creative Commons license in the spirit of making it accessible for folks across our province and beyond, as well as to encourage creative use.

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In our ongoing efforts to promote reconciliation, we respect and honour the Treaty 7 Nations and their sustained connection to the land, which is grounded in their oral practices. Moh’kinsitsit is situated “where the Elbow River meets the Bow River,” the significant meeting point for trading and coming together in what we now know as Calgary.
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The Women’s Centre of Calgary is a street-front, drop-in resource and community centre for women that has been operating as an independent organization since 1997. The Centre has a mission of being every woman’s place for support, connections, and community, with a vision of communities supporting women and women supporting communities. Operating within the unique Community Capacity Building Peer Model (CCBPM), the Women’s Centre’s feminist, capacities, and systems approach to community development sees women as the experts in their own lives. Women have opportunities to get assistance to meet their basic needs, to connect with other women, and to work for change on social issues that impact them.

In addition to providing ongoing support for women, the Women’s Centre has been running unique gender-specific programs for girls since 2005. What initially began as summer camps for girls aged 10 to 12 has turned into free, year-round, youth-led programs for girls in grades 5 to 12. We have three programs for three separate age groups:

- **Girl Power** for girls in grades 5 & 6 or aged 10 to 12
- **Girl Force** for girls in grades 7 to 9 or aged 12 to 15
- **Girls Lead YYC** for girls in grades 10 to 12 or aged 15 to 18

We offer these programs in the form of ongoing after-school sessions and summer camps, with opportunities for girls to connect across age groups. In alignment with the Women’s Centre’s CCBPM, our programs aim to provide a safe space for girls to create community with each other, to discuss and explore issues and topics that are important to their lives, and to build upon their existing leadership and activism skills.

We acknowledge and understand that systemic changes need to happen in order for gender equity in leadership to be truly possible. Creating space for girls to develop and practice their leadership skills is a small part of this work, and we anticipate that the development and distribution of this toolkit will increase the number of these spaces in our province. Our vision is that someday we will see girls supporting their communities and communities supporting girls. We are so thrilled to share some of what we’ve learned; thank you for sharing in our vision with us.
INTRODUCTION

At the Women’s Centre, we’ve been working with girls to build upon their leadership and activism skills for 14 years. We run our girls programs with the following goals: 1) creating safe spaces for girls to build community with each other, 2) providing opportunities for girls to explore issues that are important to them, and 3) supporting the development of girls’ leadership and activism skills in relation to these issues. To ensure this development, we stress the importance of empathy, critical thinking, and the creation of a shared sense of belonging in the space. Girls have told us the following about the impact of our programs:

“[The programs] have taught me a lot about activism and feminism and allowed me to hear other perspectives about social issues. As well as showing me social issues I had not realized existed.”

“It has reminded me that my opinions are valid.”

“There is almost always someone who has been in the same situation.”

“I talk about equality issues and feel more confident to stand for what I believe in now.”

“Girl Programs are the only place that/where I have never once regretted being myself.”

The toolkit includes the following:

- Our approach to working with girls, including evidence of best practices for supporting their leadership development
- Workshop outlines that we have found to be successful in supporting girls’ leadership
- Tips for adults who are working with girls, written by girls who have attended our girls programs
- A glossary of terms that we use throughout this toolkit – if words are underlined in the text, you can find explanations of those words in the glossary
- Resources that we have found helpful in developing our girls programs

This toolkit provides alternative perspectives and ideas of what leadership is, confronting traditional and masculine ideas about what leaders are typically like. It encourages people to critique traditional notions of leadership that are contradictory to expectations of women and girls who enter into those roles – notions such as “be aggressive but not bossy,” “seek power at all costs,” and “be attractive.”

An expanded definition of leadership provides more space for girls with varying strengths and skills to take leadership positions. As you explore these pages, we hope that you will consider how you, your friends and family, or the agency that you work for can use the tools that we’ve developed to listen to and support the voices of girls.

“Girl Force helped me discover another side of myself that I didn’t know existed. I am a different person at Girl Force than I am with my other friends because I can be myself here. I didn’t know that I had all of these leadership skills, and I feel like I’m bragging at this point, but I never knew I could be such a leader.”

-Girls Program Participant

In this toolkit, you will find adaptable tools to support girls in the development of their leadership skills. Our dream is that community organizations, small agencies, and individuals who believe in girls, who are passionate about the future of Alberta, and who want to see the voices of girls and women represented in leadership in this province will use this toolkit to create or strengthen girls programs of their own.
It’s common to talk about helping youth or girls develop various skills – like public speaking, volunteerism, or group facilitation – with the hope that someday they will become leaders. We often speak about youth as being “our future leaders.” The Women’s Centre approach differs from this rhetoric. All of our work with girls is centred on the premise that girls are leaders now. They’re experts in their own lives and on girls’ issues, and they need the support of their communities and the adults around them to take the lead on meaningful social change. As you spend more time working with girls, we’re sure that you’ll start to see and know the same things!

Despite the strengths and brilliance of girls in Alberta, multiple barriers currently exist for girls to pursue and excel in leadership positions. We believe that providing opportunities for leadership development plays a vital role in ensuring a better future for girls and women in our province.

Before diving into how to support girls or start your own girls program, we need to understand what we’re up against. In the next section, we outline some of the main issues that girls in Alberta face. It’s likely that most – if not all – of these barriers are relevant to the girls that you’ll be working with wherever you are in the province.

**IT’S IMPORTANT FOR US, AS ALBERTANS, TO BELIEVE IN GIRLS AND ENGAGE IN THIS WORK FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS:**

- As girls increase their confidence and see themselves as leaders, they are more likely to pursue future leadership roles.
- When girls and women see other girls and women in leadership positions, it inspires them to pursue similar paths.²
- Engaging in social change work helps youth to reframe what is possible for them in their lives.³
- Research shows that women in decision-making positions are more likely to consider the impact that they have on their community.⁴

“I think we need girls’ programs like these because girls don’t speak up enough and when there is a safe place for them to go that’s when they speak up. I think we should have more because when girls are younger and they feel like their choices are heard they also grow up thinking their voices are heard and they will be a great active citizen then and maybe even an empowering girl leader.”

- Soraya Datoo, Girls Program Participant
It’s no secret that girls face issues unique to their gender. We hear it all the time – girls are frequently discriminated against based on gender, increasingly report mental health concerns, and experience disproportionate rates of gender-based violence when compared with their male counterparts.5

Since the focus of our programming is on girls, we hone in on the impacts that gender, specifically, has on their lived experiences. While being a young person in a society that primarily values the thoughts and opinions of adults – an idea that we’ll elaborate on later in this toolkit – is undoubtedly difficult, the experiences of girls are very different from those of their male counterparts. In our programs with girls, we speak openly and candidly about phenomena that girls experience and want to talk about. This often includes discussions about catcalling and street harassment, girl-fighting, school dress codes, menstrual justice, and gender stereotypes. Below, we expand on what girls have told us about the specific barriers to leadership that they experience.

Gender norms and expectations

Throughout their lives, girls are influenced by social stereotypes about girls and women being emotional, weak, and soft-spoken.6 In our programs, we start the conversation about stereotypes by asking girls what it means to “act like a lady”, a phrase that many of us have heard throughout our childhoods and early adolescence. Their answers are consistent every time. Here are some direct quotes from a grade 5 classroom in inner-city Calgary during the fall of 2018:

“Be polite”
“Sit there and look nice”
“Act proper”
“Have good manners”
“Stay ‘classy’”
“Can’t always do what you want”
“Wear proper clothes – dresses and heels”
“Stay at home”
“Can’t say what’s on your mind”
“Pretty and ‘flawless’”
“Don’t do what the boys are doing”
“Mild mannered”
“Don’t fart!”

These stereotypes are blatantly contradictory to masculine ideas that we typically associate with traditional notions of leadership such as strength, confidence, and being influential.7 Girls are led to believe that, by virtue of being a girl, they are not capable of being leaders or do not naturally possess leadership qualities.

Girls can’t be what they can’t see

When girls see other girls or women in positions of leadership, they are inspired to pursue similar roles.8 It’s beneficial for girls to see women in a variety of decision-making and leadership positions, because it helps them to know that they can do the same. Unfortunately, the current status of girls and women in Alberta makes this difficult.

When we examine leadership in Alberta today, we can see the gaps in girl’s and women’s leadership in virtually all sectors. In the corporate world, just 32% of business managers in each of Calgary and Edmonton are women.9 In the political sphere, only 30% of provincial MLAs are women.10 Only 26% of leadership positions in municipal politics are held by women throughout the province.11 This is evident even when looking at Calgary’s current city council in 2019 – of 14 sitting councillors, just three are women.

In addition to the lack of gender representation in decision-making positions, these numbers drop even more significantly for women who are Indigenous, living in poverty, racialized, or living with a disability. Of the three women who currently sit on Calgary’s city council, for
example, only one is racialized, despite Alberta being an incredibly
diverse province. Noting the lack of representation of women and
girls in positions of power is an important starting point, but it
does not tell the entire story.

This lack of diverse representation of women in decision-making
roles matters. One in four girls between the ages of 15 and 17
doesn’t know any women who have her dream job. When girls
don’t see women in leadership, they wonder if there’s a seat at
the table for them.

Confidence

In a world where girls are constantly told that they aren’t good
enough – they aren’t thin enough, they aren’t curvy enough,
they’re too smart or athletic to be “attractive,” they don’t dress
in the way that they’re supposed to, they’re not old enough,
and the list continues – it’s no wonder that girls don’t feel like
their thoughts or opinions matter. In our experiences with girls,
this shows up by girls constantly questioning themselves or not
speaking up at all.

Girls don’t lack confidence because of individual fault; girls lack
confidence because of the many systemic oppressions and societal
messages they receive that tell them their voices don’t matter. It’s
our role to encourage girls to participate in ways that feel safe for
them, to affirm them, and to let them know that they and their
voices do matter. They are more than good enough.

“Girls will always speak up
and say their thoughts and
then follow it up by saying ‘oh
but I don’t actually know...’”
- Medea Myers-Stewart
Program Volunteer

At the Women’s Centre, we wholeheartedly believe that the issues
outlined above are in no way the fault of individual girls. The many
social and emotional issues that girls face are rooted in larger
systems and often include multiple aspects of their identities.
While girls might share experiences based on their gender – for
example, catcalling when they’re walking home from school – their experiences may differ because of their race, class, or sexual
orientation. Girls who are living in poverty might be walking
home later at night because they had to work a shift at their job
after school, for example, and therefore might have a different
experience of catcalling then those who are home safely by that
time.

We also wish to stress that while we use the term “girls” frequently
throughout this document, there is no single girlhood in Canada.
This has been poignantly and eloquently stated by the Girls Action
Foundation, which clearly shows that in addition to sexism, girls
often also face racism, ableism, colonialism, heterosexism, and
poverty.
In our years of experience of working with girls, we have found that what most effectively shapes the development of girls’ leadership is not what we program but how we execute that programming. It is for this reason that we are providing such extensive information about our approach to working with girls. We understand that the content, topics, and context of girls programming across the province will differ. While we provide programming specifically about exploring and acting on girls’ issues, you might provide programming about outdoor exploration or dance – and that’s okay. Alberta is immensely diverse and is home to a wide demographic of girls with varying needs and interests. With information about what we have found to be best practices for program delivery, we believe that organizations and individuals will be equipped to support girls to revolutionize their communities across Alberta and beyond, regardless of specific program content.

We would be remiss if we presented our approach to supporting girls’ leadership as one that has developed overnight or in a vacuum. Our work builds on existing bodies of research that focus on girlhood and gender-specific programming. We are greatly inspired by the works of Lyn Mikel Brown, an academic from Maine who has done extensive research on girls’ activism, and we often reference her perspectives on “hardiness zones,” on the role of adults in supporting girl activists, and on the necessity of viewing girls’ issues through a systems lens. Brown has also founded an organization, Hardy Girls Healthy Women, which has provided us with practical tools for creating spaces where girls can think critically about the systems around them. Additionally, we believe in and utilize Paolo Freire’s popular education approach as contextualized by the Girls Action Foundation. The Girls Action Foundation has been an invaluable resource for us in understanding how to apply a popular education approach to the development of our program curriculum.

Our approach continues to evolve with consistent evaluation and the ongoing input of girls and our community. We are committed to reflective practice as a way of work. Continuous debriefing and reflecting is key in maintaining relevance to our specific demographic community here in Calgary, and we encourage those who use this toolkit to reflect and amend in similar ways. Girls will always be the experts on their own lives and communities, and it’s our role to listen to their voices and provide contextually safe spaces and programs that respond to what they need.

In the following section, you will find information about what we have found to be best practices – the how – for supporting girls’ leadership. We hope that you find some, if not all, of these components to be useful and applicable to your work.
The Women’s Centre, as an agency, operates within a unique model that informs all of the work that we do – the Community Capacity Building Peer Model (CCBPM). While the name of the CCBPM makes it sound complex, it’s actually quite simple. In its application to our work with girls, we recognize that the lives of girls are complex and that they have varying needs. For this reason, we operate within three distinct, though overlapping, areas:

**GET ASSISTANCE**
- Our programs are completely free, making them accessible for girls of all income levels.
- We provide bus tickets to girls who may take public transit to the Women’s Centre.
- We provide snacks for girls who attend.
- We supply menstrual products in the bathrooms of our program space.
- We structure time for girls to talk about their days and how they’re doing.

**CONNECT WITH OTHERS**
- We support girls to develop program Group Agreements so that they can create a safe environment to speak openly about their experiences.
- We allow free time for girls to connect with each other informally.
- We have large group and small group activities for girls to connect with each other in a more structured way.

**WORK FOR CHANGE**
- We include a social justice lens in all of our programs, encouraging girls to take action on issues that they are passionate about.
- We develop curriculum about different activism strategies and methods.
- We support girls to plan activism projects.

The CCBPM was developed in accordance with what research has told us creates a good society. For people to feel that they are satisfied with the community and society in which they live, they need to 1) have their basic needs met, 2) have opportunities to connect with other people and experience social inclusion, and 3) have a say in the way their society operates. To the right you will find examples of how these three areas are addressed in our girls programs. We understand that programs across Alberta will be different and that they will have different resources available, but we encourage you to think about how all three of these components can be integrated into your programming.

I think often of a girl who attended one of our summer camps a few years ago. She would come to camp, which had about 14 other girls her age, and she would bring her own blanket to the Women’s Centre and she would sleep. The program volunteers would start doing one of the activities, look around for her to ask her to join us, and would find her sleeping under a table or in the corner of our craft room. We started the week by waking her up often, asking her to join us – which she would usually refuse to do. It was super frustrating to try to encourage a young person to do activities that we have planned to be, and were supposed to be, fun for them.

It took a little investigating to learn that this girl was living in foster care, had limited contact with her mother who she spoke about all the time, and was driven to the program each day by a professional care worker. We realized that she might not be sleeping well at her own home – maybe she was adjusting to a new bed, maybe she was up at night worrying – so if getting some sleep was what she was going to get out of camp, who were we to tell her that it was wrong? If her basic need of sleep wasn’t being met, how could she connect with other girls or think passionately about creating change in her community?

- Sarah Winstanley, Former Girls Programs Staff
Our programs for girls operate within our peer model. We believe that girls can support each other just as well (if not better) than an adult could, and we work to provide the space for them to be able to do so. The Peer Model part of the CCBPM eliminates the need for labels like “professionals” and “clients” and the power that comes with them. All of the work that we do within the CCBPM is made possible because we place the voices of girls at the centre of everything that we do. We do this by respecting girls as experts, by listening to what they’re telling us, and by taking them seriously.

THE ROLE OF ADULTS

We are able to heavily involve volunteers in our programs because we believe that one doesn’t have to be a professional to be able to provide support to youth. We look for women who believe that girls are capable, that they have important ideas to contribute, and that they should be heard. This is, after all, how we can reach our dream of communities supporting girls. If a larger pool of women can step into these roles because they aren’t reserved for “experts,” then girls will have adults throughout their communities and province who they can turn to for support.

This is not to say that the women who support the girls in our programs are untrained. Prior to engaging women as volunteers, we conduct interviews to ensure that we share our values and beliefs about what girls are experiencing and what they’re capable of. We have an extensive three-session training process during which volunteers learn about the CCBPM, our approach to working with girls, and tools for how to support them. Our team of volunteers is highly competent and passionate about seeing girls succeed.

Although our programs operate in a peer model, we know that there are still specific roles that adults need to play. We acknowledge the responsibility to keep girls safe and hold girls accountable to themselves and each other. There is a very specific and fine line that program volunteers need to walk when facilitating programs from this perspective.
At the centre of everything we do at the Women’s Centre is the premise that women and girls have different lived experiences from those of men and boys simply because of their gender. This analysis, the idea that gender impacts the way girls move through the world, is what we refer to as our feminist approach. As mentioned earlier in this toolkit, we view these differences in lived experiences as being the result of large, structural inequities, including economic inequality, exclusion based on gender, gender roles, and gender stereotypes.

It is this feminist approach that provides the framework for how we choose to structure our girls programs. We wholeheartedly believe that girls are the experts on their own lives, and our programs are driven by what they say they need. For these reasons, we have learned that success in our programs comes when we provide a girls-only space for girls to share their stories and bond over their lived experiences, encourage critical thinking surrounding adult-youth power dynamics, and work from the perspective that girls may have experienced trauma because of their gender at some point in their lives.

**Gender-specific spaces**

Research on gender-specific spaces – spaces and programs exclusively for girls and women – is overwhelmingly positive. When there is a room full of girls and women, the conversations change. We have noticed that in such spaces, girls feel more comfortable expressing themselves, being silly, being loud, and taking up space that they might not have elsewhere.

Conversations about sensitive topics are only possible in our programs because girls feel safe enough to share their experiences. When there are no boys present, girls:

- feel more comfortable expressing themselves;
- speak up and share their experiences more candidly; and
- are more comfortable discussing difficult topics like sexuality, menstruation, and body-image.\(^\text{18}\)

In addition to the safety that girls feel when they are surrounded by other girls, the support that they find in hearing about shared experiences is invaluable. When girls share their stories, they realize not only that they are not alone but also that the issues that impact their lives are bigger than them. It’s easier to understand that their experiences are rooted in systems rather than individual faults when they have opportunities to connect with each other. The most notable benefit of sharing experiences is reflected in this feedback provided by some of the girls in our program in response to the question “What is one thing that you learned about yourself in this girl program?”

> I see girls being vulnerable and I really appreciate that just because like, girls especially, we don’t have those spaces as often as men or other people and so that inspires me to share my own experiences and just kind of be vulnerable as well.”
> - Elliot Douglas, Girls Programs Participant

> There’s something special that happens in gender specific spaces. There’s lots of research that shows that girls don’t speak in mixed gender settings, so girls might not see themselves as leaders in mixed gender spaces. Girls are socialized around not talking too much, or not being too knowledgeable, or too outspoken. It’s a really powerful thing … [and] this plays into ‘space’ and how much space girls can take up.”
> - Sarah Winstanley, Former Girls Programs Staff

> There is almost always someone who has been in the same situation.
> I’m not alone.
**Questioning Power**

How often have you said, or heard other people say, things like this to youth?

- “You’re so smart for your age!”
- “Oh, it’s just puppy love, nothing serious.”
- “It’s cute that you care so much!”
- “It’s just a phase. You’ll grow out of it.”
- “You’re too young to understand.”

The idea that youth know less, that their opinions and thoughts are less valuable, and that their experiences aren’t real or valid is what we at the Women’s Centre refer to as adultism. **Adultism** is harmful because it discourages girls from telling us what’s happening in their lives and reinforces the belief that they aren’t important members of society until they are 18.

You can actively work to address adultism by asking girls what they think about certain issues and then taking a genuine interest in their answers. When they make suggestions for the programs, take them seriously and work to implement these suggestions if it’s possible. If they’re telling you a story about their lives, feel proud of the space that you’ve created for them to feel safe enough to do so, and then engage in a conversation with them about that story that validates their experiences and feelings just like you would with another adult.

One of our program volunteers confronted her own adultist bias when she was listening to the story of one of the girls in our programs, and we think it’s an excellent demonstration of how to address one’s own biases:

> “A girl was saying how her biologically female friend wished to go by the pronouns he/him, and she was wanting to support her teachers to call her friend by these correct pronouns. It was difficult for me to take a step back from being so set on things like ‘How would the legal logistics of this work?’, ‘How would this work for school registration?’, and to then realize that I’m in the wrong here! This girl is being supportive of her friend. She is in the right and I need to listen to that.”

- Minnie Tian, Girls Programs Volunteer

It seems simple enough, but adultism is deeply engrained! We are given relentless messages to discredit thoughts and opinions if they are coming from a young person. It’s our job to flip that narrative on its head.

**Trauma-informed care**

At the Women’s Centre, our work is **trauma-informed**. This means that we work to make our programs safe for those who have been impacted by trauma, and we approach situations with the understanding that we don’t know the entirety of people’s stories. We do not believe that girls need to disclose trauma for trauma-informed care to take place. To ensure that we practice from a trauma-informed perspective, we exercise three key principles:

1. **Creating safety and trust.** We understand that trust takes time to build, so we remain honest, compassionate, and consistent. The volunteers in our programs commit to being involved for the full length of the program, and we work to build strong relationships with individual girls. Creating a predictable and structured environment is also an important piece of creating safety. We include key components in every session, such as check-in and check-out questions (which we elaborate on later in this toolkit) and remaining on schedule.

2. **Working from a strength-based perspective.** When people experience trauma, their coping behaviours are often seen as weaknesses. We work to reframe various behaviours as strengths, recognizing the resiliency of girls to cope with trauma. For example, if a girl is withdrawn and shy, we might instead reframe this as a strength in being observant and intentional.

3. **Emphasizing choice and collaboration.** It’s common for people who have experienced trauma to feel powerless, without power or choice about what’s happened to them in their lives. It is for this reason that we place emphasis on collaborating with girls on the direction of our programs, creating space for them to provide feedback and to tell us what they’d like to see. We share power. Girls are also always reminded that they are welcome to participate in ways that feel safe for them, which allows room for them to choose when and how to engage with the program content.
We believe that the most important relationships that girls can build are with each other. This is consistent with the Natural Supports Framework, developed by the Change Collective in Calgary, which states that youth require “reciprocal, ‘real world’ relationships” that will exist outside of and last beyond professional supports. Girls have told us time and time again that one of the most valuable things they get out of being at the Women’s Centre is the friendships that they build with other girls. If we are constantly intervening in their relationships with each other, it does the girls a disservice. It’s vital that the adults in the room take a step back and provide space for girls to connect with each other so that they build community and a support network of their own.

Taking a step back and providing space for girls to connect with each other is additionally important for the sake of promoting mutual support and community. In a world where girls are constantly pitted against each other – this can be easily seen in those ridiculous “Who Wore It Better?” segments in tabloid magazines – girls rarely have the space to connect with each other free of the pressures to compete. When girls build relationships with each other, with minimal intervention from adult program volunteers, they develop empathy and genuine connection, and they learn that there are seats at the table for everyone.

“Peer accountability and peer to peer knowledge sharing is super helpful. We kind of want to be talking as little as possible. Always respond to girls who ask questions: ‘Does anybody else have the answer to this?’ instead of jumping in and answering it ourselves.”

- Jasdeep Rajan, Girls Programs Volunteer

Involvement in social change work can have an immensely positive impact on the lives of young people. Involving and engaging young people in activist work is an important part of increasing the number of women and girls in leadership. Research shows that the involvement of marginalized youth in activism can lead to higher incomes and higher-status careers as adults. For girls, specifically, activism encourages them to defy gender stereotypes of girls being passive and polite. Activism offers girls a way of challenging these expectations by speaking out, asserting themselves, approaching conflict directly, and becoming active participants in the world around them instead of passive consumers.

Activist work can help youth reframe what they believe is possible for their lives, and the skills they gain from organizing often benefit them professionally. In addition, research shows that when girls conform to gender expectations, they experience negative mental health outcomes. These are some of the reasons why engaging girls in activism is a central part of our programs.

Girls often have little control over their lives. They receive constant messages from every angle about what they should look like, how they should behave, who they should engage in relationships with, and what they should or shouldn’t be interested in. They live in a world dictated by adults who make decisions for them about their present and their future. Activism is a way to take back some of this control.

When we engage with girls about issues that affect their lives – messages from the media about body image and beauty standards, for example – we end every session with a conversation about what we can do to make change. Our favourite question is “What
are you going to do about it?” We encourage girls to believe that together, we can improve the state of the world for girls. We don’t need to accept things as they are – we can make a difference.

Here are some examples of activism projects that girls in our programs have taken on:

- Hosting a bake sale to raise funds for a local organization that addresses violence against Indigenous women and girls
- Creating a zine (a self-made magazine) full of love letters to our different body parts, challenging information that we typically get from magazines
- Writing letters to Mattel asking for a greater variety of body representation in Barbie dolls
- Crafting “boomerang bags” (reusable cloth bags out of old t-shirts) to reduce our plastic use and environmental impact
- Acting out skits for commercials and advertisements that defy gender stereotypes that we typically see in the media
- Making a banner with a message about gendered dress codes and then hanging it on a school fence in our local community
- Doing research about information that girls wished they had learned in school about LGBTQ+ identities, and then creating a zine to share with other girls
- Hosting an all-sizes clothing swap while engaging in a discussion about the environmental impact of the clothing industry

INTRODUCTION • THE HOW

POPULAR EDUCATION

The idea of popular education as an approach to teaching and learning was developed by Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and philosopher. Popular education is a unique way of thinking about the learner-teacher relationship – in our case, the relationship between girls and the women who facilitate our programs. It is an approach that inspires community action and social change work. Freire encourages us to learn from each other, regardless of which role we’re in, and to eliminate the power that comes from believing that only those in a “teaching role” have knowledge. Applying this approach in girls programs means listening to girls’ voices and taking them seriously. We can learn a lot from them if we create the spaces to do so!

Another beautiful thing about popular education is that it implies that we don’t need to teach girls things about the world around them – their experiences are the curriculum. This leaves space for flexibility and fluidity.

Our interpretation of Freire’s work is largely inspired by the Girls Action Foundation, which has adapted the popular education framework to fit specifically within girls programming. While there is no step-by-step guide to popular education, it includes particular components. To work from a popular education approach is to do the following:

1. Centre the experiences and knowledge of the girls in your program
2. Learn from girls and encourage them to learn from each other
3. Work with girls to identify patterns in their experiences
4. Apply theory and information that are relevant to these experiences
5. Support girls to take action on the issues they’ve identified

You can think about popular education as a spiral, as illustrated below.
Encourage the sharing of stories, knowledge, and experiences.

During snack break, you might hear a girl refusing to eat certain things because she’s on a diet. You overhear another girl relate to this by talking about how her mom has told her that she won’t have to worry about getting fat if she exercises enough. You hear another girl say that she doesn’t believe in diets.

Identify patterns in their experiences.

As the adult in the room, pose questions that will encourage critical thinking. Ask things like "Why do you think girls are always told to go on diets?", or "What’s wrong with being fat?" Try not to bring your own beliefs or ideas about these topics into the conversation. Leave space for girls to connect over these questions and discuss their thoughts.

Apply theory and information relevant to their experiences.

Once girls are relating to each other about something, you can bring a systems analysis into the conversation. This could include formally planning a session about the topic that they’re talking about. You might, for example, schedule a session about body image and the messages from the media. This provides girls with the language and knowledge to express that what they’re experiencing is something bigger than themselves.

Support girls to take action on the issues they’ve identified.

If the girls are feeling passionate about the issue, ask if they’d like to do something about it. Maybe they want to create their own media by recording a commercial, “culture-jamming,” or having a photoshoot where they celebrate every type of body. Maybe they want to write letters to Mattel about the lack of representation of diverse bodies in their Barbie dolls. There are lots of ways in which girls can take action! Whether or not to take action, however, is their choice: if they don’t want to take action, then that’s okay too.

Debrief!

Facilitate a process for girls to reflect on actions that they have taken. What would they change? What went amazingly well? Be sure to provide just as many affirmations, if not more, than pieces of constructive criticism. It’s important to celebrate our successes.
INTRODUCTION

THE WHERE

PHYSICAL SPACE

When we ran focus groups with girls in the development of this toolkit and asked them what helps them to feel safe in a space, a surprising number spoke about the physical space and how people interacted with that space. They made it clear that they felt safe when a space was welcoming and had the following features:

- Enough space for girls to opt in or opt out of various parts of programming
- Nice quotes posted around the walls
- Stuffed animals or books for girls to engage with
- Comfortable furniture
- Food!

In addition to the physical space, girls told us that they feel safe when they work in collaboration with the adults in the room. This included having everybody sit on an equal level, whether on the floor or at a table. It made a huge difference to girls that the adults in the room weren’t sitting or standing above them, thus placing themselves in a physical position of power.

We have also noticed the importance of informal community-building time, as well as intentional scheduled breaks. Creating time and making space for girls to connect with each other free of adult intervention builds upon the “less us, more them” principle that helps girls to build a network of natural supports. In our programs, we typically schedule 30 minutes at the beginning of each two-hour session for girls to catch up about their weeks, as well as a 15-minute break during the session so that they can connect with each other by sharing their thoughts.

Along with key features of the physical space, girls need to feel that the space is theirs. We understand that this might be difficult if you don’t have consistent access to a physical space, or if you share your space with other programs. In whatever form you can, try to make the space feel as much as possible like it belongs to the girls. This might be as simple as placing the Group Agreement (explained later) in the same place on the walls every session, or asking the girls to help decorate the room each day with items that help them feel safe and comfortable.
In our programs at the Women’s Centre, we work with a diverse range of girls. In the 2018–19 school year, for example, 60% of girls in our programs self-identified as being from diverse backgrounds. Many of the girls at the Women’s Centre are immigrants or refugees, Indigenous, living in poverty, and/or visible minorities.

Since most of the girls in our programs are facing additional barriers to accessing programs – which may be the case in your programs as well – we need to work to ensure that our programs are accessible. For girls who are living in poverty, for example, a program that costs money to attend is not an accessible option. Here are some ways in which we work to break down these barriers to ensure that as many girls can attend our programs as possible:

**THE BARRIER**

- **Family income**
- **Transportation**
- **Scheduling**
- **Varying abilities**
- **Unstable housing**

**THE SOLUTION**

- Our programs are free of cost so that all girls can attend regardless of family income.
- We provide bus tickets to girls who ask for them so that they can get to and from the Women’s Centre on their own.
- Girls know that they can drop in to the program whenever it works for their schedule. If they are late, that’s okay! We welcome them the same way if they were one hour late as if they were on time.
- We work to develop curriculum that is accessible for girls of varying learning abilities. If an activity requires writing reflections on a piece of paper, for example, we will also state that girls are welcome to draw if they don’t want to write.
- Some of the girls that attend our programs do not live in stable housing situations. We make it clear that they are welcome to attend whenever they’re able to, and that they don’t have to worry about missing sessions. They are always welcome.

The girls in your programs will likely face barriers of their own, and we encourage you to create ways to ensure that your program is accessible to all girls, regardless of what’s happening in their lives.
REFERENCES


7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.


20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.


27. Ibid.

GETTING STARTED

The workshop outlines in this section contain topics that you should ideally cover in the first few sessions of your girls’ program. Becoming familiar with the routine of check-in and check-out questions, establishing group norms in the form of a group agreement, and including girls in the program planning process are all essential steps in ensuring that girls feel safe and that the program belongs to them.

At the beginning of each workshop outline, you will see headings with recommendations for age group, group size, and amount of time that each workshop will take.

AGE GROUP:
This is the age range in which we have found these activities to be successful. However, if we state that an activity is appropriate for ages 10 to 18, for example, this does not mean that it would be best to run a single workshop for all girls within this age range. We recommend splitting groups of girls up into smaller age ranges; in our programs, for example, we work with girls in grades 5 and 6, grades 7 to 9, and grades 10 to 12.

GROUP SIZE:
This is the number of program participants necessary to run the activities in each workshop successfully.

TIME:
This is the estimated amount of time that it takes to run each workshop or activity. We would like to stress that these time estimates are simply guidelines – if girls are more interested or less interested in spending time on a particular point of conversation or activity, let them guide the workshop in this way! It is better to read the energy in the room and to listen to what girls are telling you than to stick to strict time lines.

CHECK-INS & CHECK-OUTS

We start each session with a check-in and end each session with a check-out. These consist of questions or prompting sentences addressed to every girl and program facilitator. We start by sitting in a circle, with the program facilitator asking each person to respond. We repeat this process during the check-out. Check-ins and check-outs are a vital part of our sessions for a number of reasons:

1. They create an opportunity for girls to practice speaking in front of a group. This is especially important for girls who might not feel comfortable jumping in during group conversations. As girls practice these skills, they slowly develop the confidence to bring these skills out into the world with them.
2. All of the people in the room start and end on a similar note, which contributes significantly to the sense of community within the group.
3. The girls are provided with opportunities to reflect on their days, articulate their feelings, and relate to other girls, all of which are important parts of learning to manage emotions and develop skills related to empathy.

Below, you will find a list of check-in and check-out prompts that have worked well for us. Often we let girls pick the prompt, and sometimes they choose to create their own.

- One thing I’m really good at is …
- Give one compliment to the person on your right without mentioning their physical appearance.
- One woman in my life who I admire is …
- Smiles and frowns – one thing that went well about your day (your smile), one thing that you wish was better about your day (your frown)
- Describe your mood as a weather pattern.
- Something that I really like about myself is …
- One thing that I’m looking forward to today is …
- One thing I’m leaving with today is …
- One wish I have for girls around the world is …
- If I had to describe my day using three words, they would be …
- A person who I have a good relationship with is …
- Describe your mood as an emoji.
- A woman in my life who I would consider to be a leader is …
Each time we begin a program with a new group, we create a new Group Agreement. Group Agreements are essential in creating shared safety and accountability. We use two ways of creating group agreements: the first involves starting with a blank slate and allowing the girls to define a safe space on their own, and the second is guided by the Seven Sacred Teachings of Indigenous peoples. We almost always guide the Group Agreement process through the Seven Sacred Teachings, but the choice belongs to you and your group.

OUTLINE - BLANK SLATE

• Start by sitting in a circle. Begin by explaining the importance of the program being a safe space for everybody. Sometimes participants might talk about things that are sensitive, things that are close to home, and it’s everybody’s responsibility to help the girls feel safe enough to share their experiences. All participants need to support each other in this! To do this, it’s important to create some guidelines for the group. This will help to keep everyone accountable.

• Ask the girls if they understand what “accountable” means; see if a girl in the group can explain it to the others.

• Ask the girls to break into groups of two or three. Provide each group with paper and pens.

• Ask the girls to chat with the others in their small group about what helps them feel safe enough to speak up and share their experiences with others. Give them 5 to 10 minutes to discuss this among themselves. Encourage them to write ideas on the paper provided.

• Invite the girls to join back together in the circle. Place the poster paper in a place where everyone can see it.

• Ask the girls to share what their group discussed about creating a safe space. Write these points on the poster – in their words – creating a list of items that they all agree to.

  * Invite the girls to write these points on the poster! Is there somebody who wants to volunteer, or maybe a few of them who want to work as a team?
  * Confidentiality should always be included in the group agreement. If this is missed by the girls, suggest that they include it. In our programs, we usually explain confidentiality like this:

  “We want you girls to feel safe sharing your stories and experiences. To do that, it’s easier if we all follow this thing called confidentiality. Basically, confidentiality means that what happens and what is said in this space stays in this space. This is especially helpful if you know girls in here who also go to your school, or who you know from your community. We want you to know that you can share your thoughts here without worrying about them being shared in other places. That being said, there are a few scenarios in which we might need to break confidentiality. We will need to notify the right people if you talk about harming yourself or harming others, or if we hear that there is abuse happening to a child in your home. Does anybody have any questions?”

• Once the Group Agreement is created, invite the girls to decorate it with drawings or stickers. Allow them to choose where to hang it in the room.

• Make it clear to the girls that this is a living document. If there is something that needs to be changed or added in your time working together, they are welcome to do so. It belongs to everybody!
OUTLINE - SEVEN SACRED TEACHINGS

- Start by preparing a poster paper with the Seven Sacred Teachings written on it. The Seven Sacred Teachings are as follows:
  * Respect  * Wisdom  * Truth
  * Love  * Humility
  * Courage  * Honesty

- Ask the girls to gather in a circle. Begin by explaining the importance of the program being a safe space for everybody. Sometimes you might talk about things that are sensitive, things that are close to home, and it's the responsibility of everybody to help girls feel safe enough to share their experiences. All participants need to support each other in this! To do this, it's important to create some guidelines for the group. This will help to make this space feel safe for everyone, and also keep us accountable.
- Ask the girls if they understand what “accountable” means; see if a girl in the group can explain it to the others!
- Ask the girls to break into groups of two or three and talk about a time they were in a group that worked well or didn’t work well. What makes a group work well? Use those experiences to come up with a couple of group guidelines.
- Gather back together in a large group and invite the girls to share what they discussed in their small groups. Tell them that we will use these experiences to create guidelines to hold each other accountable and to support each other to feel safe, included, and welcomed.
- In order to do this, we will follow the Seven Sacred Teachings of Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island. These are also known as the Teachings of the Seven Grandfathers. The Seven Sacred Teachings are a set of teachings on human conduct towards others. They were traditionally used, and are still used today, to guide Indigenous communities.¹

- Have the girls read each of the seven words and then, going through each word, engage the girls in a discussion about what each word means and how the teaching can apply to your program. Create a group agreement based on those teachings.
  - RESPECT is the condition of being honoured. It includes respect for others, the earth, and oneself.
  - LOVE must be unconditional, non-judgemental, and kind. It is the basis for good relationships and for creating a safe space in which to build friendships.
  - COURAGE is the ability to face danger, fear, and change with confidence and bravery. Courage is needed to stand up for yourself, for others, and for what you believe in.
  - WISDOM is the ability to make decisions based on personal knowledge and experience. It is the foundation for good leadership, for independence, and for taking care of the meeting space.
  - HUMILITY involves having a strong sense of self while also recognizing our own limitations, practising attentive listening, learning from others, and reflecting on our own ideas and actions.
  - HONESTY is speaking and acting truthfully. When we are honest, we avoid judging others and we take responsibility for our own decisions.
  - TRUTH involves knowing and understanding all of the seven teachings.
  - Be sure that the concept of confidentiality (see box above) is included in the discussion, even if it doesn’t present itself naturally.
  - Make it clear to the girls that this is a living document. If there is something that needs to be changed or added in your time working together, they are welcome to do so. It belongs to everybody!

¹ You can find more information about the Seven Sacred Teachings at: http://www.abegweithealth.ca/carousel/carousel.asp and http://empoweringthespirit.ca/cultures-of-belonging/seven-grandfathers-teachings/
COLLECTIVE PROGRAM PLANNING

We start each programming year with a session designed for girls to provide their input into what topics they would like to explore throughout the program. Every program will be different depending on the focus of your curriculum and your program outcomes, but remember: it’s not the what, but the how of running your program that is most important. Ensuring that the curriculum planning process is collaborative is an essential part of this.

OUTLINE

- Start the program with everybody sitting in a circle.
- Explain the focus of your program to the girls. Also state that, since they are the ones who the program is for, they will have a say in what you’re going to be doing.
- Tape a flipchart paper on the wall that has a variety of different categories and topics that you might cover throughout your program. See the example below.
- Explain the different categories and topics to ensure that the girls understand everything. Ask the girls if they would like to add anything.
- Give the girls 7 to 10 stickers each (make sure that each girl gets the same number of stickers).
- Ask the girls to place stickers beside the topics that they are most interested in discussing throughout the year. They can place more than one sticker by a topic if they are really interested in it.
- When the girls are finished, explain that you will be looking at this document and then planning the year around what they have identified as being the most important to them.

SUPPLIES

- Flipchart paper
- Markers
- Stickers

GOALS

- Girls think critically about what they’d like to learn while in the program
- Girls contribute to the program planning process
- Girls feel that their voices and opinions are heard

OUTLINE

- Start the program with everybody sitting in a circle.
- Explain the focus of your program to the girls. Also state that, since they are the ones who the program is for, they will have a say in what you’re going to be doing.
- Tape a flipchart paper on the wall that has a variety of different categories and topics that you might cover throughout your program. See the example below.
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EXAMPLES OF CATEGORIES & TOPICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BODY IMAGE</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIPS</th>
<th>INDIGENOUS ISSUES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beauty in different cultures</td>
<td>Healthy communication</td>
<td>Reconciliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty and media</td>
<td>Friendships</td>
<td>Story telling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body positivity</td>
<td>Crushes</td>
<td>Issues that Indigenous girls face (including MMIWG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRONMENT</td>
<td>Dating</td>
<td>HUMAN RIGHTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community gardening</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomerang bags – making our own reusable bags</td>
<td>Consent</td>
<td>Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local food movement</td>
<td></td>
<td>LGBTQ+ issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting your environment</td>
<td></td>
<td>GLOBAL ISSUES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Girl activists around the world</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IDENTITY

- The “isms”
- Gender stereotypes
- Pink and blue toys and clothes
- School dress codes
- Black History Month

LEADERSHIP & CHANGING THE WORLD

- Girls influencing the government
- Learning about other women and girl leaders
- STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics

INDIGENOUS ISSUES

- Reconciliation
- Story telling
- Issues that Indigenous girls face (including MMIWG)

HUMAN RIGHTS

- Poverty
- Disabilities
- LGBTQ+ issues

GLOBAL ISSUES

- Girl activists around the world
- Issues that girls are facing in other countries
While you can explore leadership in programs focused on experiences like outdoor exploration or dance, creating opportunities for girls to speak exclusively about leadership is important and valuable. In our programs, we speak explicitly about leadership to set a foundation for how girls think about it moving forward. In the following section, you will find workshops dedicated to exploring girls’ leadership. These workshops include identifying and articulating girls’ specific leadership skills and offering tools that support girls in thinking critically about traditional definitions of leadership.
LEADERSHIP AFFIRMATIONS

AGE GROUP: 10-18
GROUP SIZE: 4-15
TIME: 30 MINUTES

OUTLINE

- Start by asking the girls to sit in a circle or around a table. Ask each girl to choose a piece of paper and write their names on their sheets.
- Explain the importance of validating the skills and strengths that we see in each other. Tell the girls that we are going to take some time to describe the leadership qualities that we’ve seen in each other during our time in the program.
- Ask each girl to write her name at the top of her paper and then pass the paper to the person on her right. Instruct them to write a strength that they see, related to leadership, in the girl whose paper has landed in front of them.
- Continue passing the papers around the circle until each girl has her own piece of paper back in front of her.
- When their paper comes back to them, ask them to write an affirmation to themselves.
- Ask the girls to share one thing from their piece of paper that surprised them or made them feel great.

SUPPLIES

- Pens
- Colourful paper
- Markers

GOALS

- Girls think about their own leadership style
- Girls identify some of their own strengths
- Girls affirm the strengths of other girls and practice supporting each other
**STRENGTH MAPPING**

**AGE GROUP:** 10-18  
**GROUP SIZE:** 4-15  
**TIME:** 20-30 MINUTES

---

**OUTLINE**

- Start the session by explaining to the group that we are going to spend some time learning more about ourselves and our strengths.
- Ask the girls to choose a piece of paper, and put the markers out for everybody to access. Explain that we are going to create strength maps.
- Have each girl start her strength map by writing her name in the middle of her page.
- Branching out from their names, have them create categories by answering the following prompts:
  - Things I do (hobbies, activities)
  - Things I’m a part of (communities, sports teams, clubs)
  - Roles I play (friend, daughter, sibling)
- After the girls have created their categories, ask them to brainstorm some of their personal qualities that are associated with those aspects of their lives. For example, if they identify as being LGBTQ+, they might then say that they are “courageous.” Below is an example of a completed strength map.
- Once girls have completed their maps, ask them to present their maps to the larger group.

---

**SUPPLIES**

- Whiteboard or flipchart paper
- Whiteboard markers
- Pens
- Markers
- Colourful paper

---

**GOALS**

- Girls think about leadership in relation to their own strengths
- Girls encourage and support each other
- Girls think about the diversity of leadership qualities

---

**EXAMPLE**

**NADIA**

- FRIEND
  - non-judgemental
  - thoughtful
  - supportive

- PIANO PLAYER
  - creative
  - determined
  - expressive

- ATHLETE
  - hardworking
  - team player
  - resilient

- STUDENT
  - focussed
  - patient
  - motivated

- DAUGHTER
  - empathetic
  - caring
  - responsible
W O R K S H O P

U N D E R S T A N D I N G
G I R L S’ L E A D E R S H I P

OUTLINE

• Draw an outline of a tree on a poster board, including the roots and the trunk. Do not include leaves.
• Ask the girls to gather in a circle, either sitting on the floor or at a table.
• Explain to the group that barriers to leadership are not “women’s and girls’ issues”—that is, they do not happen because women and girls are flawed. Rather, they are “society’s issues”—they are a result of the way things have been set up and power has been distributed.
• State that we can compare this process to a tree. Refer to the example in Appendix A to help illustrate this.
  * The roots are the systems that shape the institutions.
  * The trunk represents the institutions within which girls and women interact.
  * The leaves are the ways in which the trunk and the roots influence the lives of individual women and girls.
• Start with the leaves. Hand out post-it notes to participants. Ask them to write examples of ways in which girls have been excluded or banned from leadership positions and/or the impacts of that exclusion on girls and society.
• Next, move on to the trunk, which represents institutions that shape those experiences. Ask the girls to write on their post-it notes institutions and policies that erect barriers to girls’ and women’s leadership.
• Finish by doing the same thing for the roots. What are some of the systems that shape both institutions and individual experiences?
• Debrief with the girls by asking questions such as the following:
  * Have we missed anything?
  * What do you think about this?
  * How do you see the systems of oppression influencing institutions?
  * How do you see institutions influencing our individual experiences?
• Finish the conversation by explaining the importance of thinking about women’s and girl’s leadership within the bigger context of institutions and systems, since our experiences are shaped by forces that are often beyond our immediate control. It’s our role to change this context!

SUPPLIES

• Pens
• Poster paper
• Markers
• Post-it notes

GOALS

• Girls feel comfortable sharing their knowledge with a group
• Girls practice breaking down complex social issues
• Girls start to think critically about women’s and girl’s leadership
• Girls understand that issues around women’s and girl’s leadership have systemic roots and are socially constructed

AGE GROUP: 15-18
GROUP SIZE: 4-15
TIME: 30-40 MINUTES
Before the girls arrive, photocopy or print out the Scavenger Hunt Cards from Appendix B, or create your own with information about inspiring women and girls.

If you are anticipating enough girls to create two teams of four or more, photocopy or print two copies of the cards.

Before the girls arrive, hide the Scavenger Hunt Cards around your physical space.

When the girls arrive, either divide them into groups or have them all work together, depending on the group size.

Explain that there are eight cards hidden all around them and that they need to work together to find them.

Once they find a card and complete the challenge on that card, they are welcome to move on and look for the next one.

When the girls return from their scavenger hunt, debrief the experience with them. Which of the women and girls is their favourite, and why? Had they heard of any of them before? If they were to create their own scavenger hunt, which women and girls would they add to these eight?
TAKING UP SPACE

GOALS
- Girls think about the concept of taking up space, the impact that gender has on the idea of taking up space, and what taking up space could look like for them
- Girls practice taking up space

SUPPLIES
- Paper
- Pens
- Markers
- Laptop and/or TV screen with HDMI cable
- Cue cards or cardstock
- Scissors

OUTLINE
- Explain to the girls that you are going to spend the session exploring the idea of "taking up space".
- Ask the group what it means to "take up space" and write their answers down for everyone to see. Facilitate a discussion with them based on questions like the following:
  * What does it look like for us to take up space?
  * Why do people tell girls they shouldn’t take up space?
  * What does it feel like when we deliberately take up space?
- You may find the following videos useful in getting girls to think about the concept of “taking up space”:
  * When Girls Take Up Space – TEDxReykjavik
    - Una Torfadóttir and Margrét Snorradóttir
    - Newly graduated sixteen-year-old students at Hagaskóli (Reykjavik, Iceland) middle school, who have been friends since kindergarten, are both active feminists who explore creative ways to get their message across.
    - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lndQwtzVvto
  * We Should All Be Feminists - TEDxEuston
    - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
    - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc
    - Start this video at minute 12:15 and watch a clip of this classic talk that started a worldwide conversation about feminism.
- Debrief the videos with the girls. What stood out for them? What do they agree or disagree with? Do they have any examples from their own lives about taking up space?

“Girls are afraid to take up space, even if it's just their voice.”
Simone Graw
Girls Programs Volunteer

AGE GROUP: 10-18
GROUP SIZE: 4-15
TIME: 60-75 MINUTES

CONTINUED...
TAKING UP SPACE - SKITS

- Write the four scenarios below on cards.
- Ask the girls to get in pairs or small groups, and hand out one card to each group.
- Ask the girls to create skits in which they act out the scenario on their card.
- Once they have created their skits, ask them to share them with the entire group.

not fat shaming or encouraging others to be thin

being okay with making a mistake

not apologizing for not wearing make-up or being dressed up

being tough & competitive while playing sports

TAKING UP SPACE - PHOTO PROJECT

- Ask the girls to gather in a group by a whiteboard or a large piece of paper that everybody can see.
- Brainstorm together ways in which girls can and do take up space. Have one of the girls write them on the whiteboard or paper while you talk.
- Give each girl a piece of paper and ask them to make a poster that finishes the sentence “I take up space by…”
- Ask the girls if they would like to pose for a group picture with their posters and share it on social media so that other people can start to think critically about taking up space.
WORKSHOP

QUESTIONING “BOSSY”

OUTLINE

- Start the conversation by asking who has ever been called “bossy.”
- Ask the girls what it means to be called bossy.
- Is bossy a word that we would use to describe boys who are behaving the same way? Why or why not?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Oftentimes, “bossy” is how people describe girls who are simply being assertive or speaking their mind, or who are exerting leadership skills! Why do we have a special word for girls who are doing these things, and why is that word negative?

- Watch the following 45-second video with the girls. Learn about the campaign called “Ban Bossy”!
  - [Change the Story – Ban Bossy](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=31&v=B1q1CiuCET8)
  - Words like bossy, pushy and know-it-all have an impact on girls. This video by BBDO New York highlights the price we pay for discouraging girls from leading and calls on all of us to ban bossy.

- Debrief this video with the girls. Which descriptive words did the girls hear in this video? Have they ever been called assertive, stubborn, or bossy? How did they feel about it? What did they hear as the main message of the video?
- Write the four scenarios below on cards.
- Ask the girls to get into pairs or small groups, and hand out a card to each group.
- Ask the girls to create a skit in which they act out the scenario on their card.
- Ask them to share their skits with the entire group.

GOALS

- Girls think critically about messages they’ve received about women’s leadership
- Girls start to question and challenge what it means to be called “bossy”
- Girls practice taking the lead

SUPPLIES

- Pens
- Paper
- Markers
- Laptop and/or TV screen with HDMI cable
- Cue cards or cardstock
- Scissors

AGE GROUP: 10-14
GROUP SIZE: 4-15
TIME: 60 MINUTES

- Girls think critically about messages they’ve received about women’s leadership
- Girls start to question and challenge what it means to be called “bossy”
- Girls practice taking the lead

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- Following the presentation of all the skits, debrief with the girls by asking how this felt for them.
- Encourage them to reflect on other scenarios in their lives where they can work on being critical of the term “bossy.”
A vital part of our girls programming is girl-led sessions: entire sessions planned and led by the girls themselves. We encourage girls to think about their existing strengths and skills, and we support them in sharing these skills with the group. We have had girls facilitate sessions on making slime, learning to salsa dance, baking muffins, learning about each other’s cultures, challenging gender stereotypes, and so much more.

Stepping back to let the girls take the lead takes a lot of practice: almost all of the adult volunteer facilitators in our programs have told us that it’s incredibly challenging to keep their opinions and ideas to themselves, since girls often lead differently then they would and sometimes make mistakes. (We’ve had a few slime disasters in our years of doing this!) A beautiful feature of the space that we create in our girl programs is that it’s a zone for “safe failure” – girls can make mistakes and know that we’ll all still be there to support them and to provide them with feedback for next time. Girl-led sessions are challenging and rewarding for both girls and adults in the room, and they are a great way to build community, leadership, and personal growth.

**PART 1**

**BEFORE THE GIRL-LED SESSION**

- Start the conversation with the girls by explaining that you’d like to learn from them. They all have a lot of knowledge and skills to share, and you’d like to give them the space to do so.
- Ask the girls about their skills. What are they good at? What types of things do they wish they did more of in your girls program? You might need to prompt them by providing some basic ideas:
  * Crafts
  * Sports or dance
  * Baking or cooking
  * Cultural practices
- Once the girls have thought of some ideas, ask if any of them would like to lead sessions. If they are more comfortable leading a session with another girl, that’s fine.
- If a girl states that she would like to lead a session, ask her to create a list of supplies for you to organize before her session. Encourage her to think this through and to do some research before she hands you her list.
- Schedule the girl in for her session, gather the supplies, and get excited!

**SUPPLIES**

- Pens
- Paper
- Supplies that girls request, within reason!

**GOALS**

- Girls identify something that they are skilled in
- Girls are able to plan and coordinate a project of their choosing
- Girls feel comfortable sharing their knowledge with a group
- Girls learn from other girls
- Girls practice taking the lead
PART 2
THE GIRL-LED SESSION

- Before the girl leads her session, let her know that you are there to support her and to act as her assistant. Does she need you to help her set up supplies? To help get the attention of the other girls? Allow her space to delegate and ask for help, both before and during the session.
- Once she starts leading her session, participate like you’re one of the girls! Enjoy.

PART 3
AFTER THE GIRL-LED SESSION

- After the girl is finished leading her session, ask her and all of the other girls to gather in a circle.
- Explain to the girls that after girl-led sessions, we provide feedback to the facilitator so that she knows what she did well and what she can improve on for next time. An important part of doing a girl-led session is learning and growing.
- Ask each girl to provide the following feedback to the girl facilitator:
  * One thing she did really well
  * One thing she could improve on next time
- As the adult facilitator, be sure to provide feedback to the girl yourself and affirm how brave she was for leading a session all on her own!
As stated earlier, girls often have little control over their lives. They receive constant messages from every angle about what they should look like, how they should behave, who they should engage in relationships with, and what they should or shouldn’t be interested in. When we engage in conversations with them about their experiences, we see that it’s easy for them to feel as though there’s nothing they can do – this is just the way their lives are.

By engaging in activism, girls can reclaim a sense of agency and know that together, they can influence and change the systems that impact their lives. The workshops that follow address concepts associated with activism, such as the difference between charity and social justice, and thus help to break down large complex social issues. We include workshops that encourage girls to develop skills required for activist work, learn from women who have fought for equity in the past, and engage in conversations about issues that they care about with people they don’t know.
WHAT IS ACTIVISM?

OUTLINE

- Draw an outline of a tree on a poster board, including the roots and the trunk. Do not include leaves.
- Ask the girls to gather in a circle, either sitting on the floor or at a table.
- Ask them if they’ve ever heard of activism before. Leave the space open for ideas and conversation. If the girls have never heard of activism, you can summarize it as people taking action on issues that they care about.
- Explain that today, you are going to spend time exploring issues that girls identify as needing change to make the world a better place. Then, we’re going to talk about ways to make these changes.
- Continue this conversation by stating that we can see this process as a tree:
  
  - The leaves are the issues that girls experience.
  - The trunk represents the institutions and people who girls might interact with who perpetuate these issues.
  - The roots are the systems that shape the institutions.

- Ask the girls to get into pairs.
- Start with the leaves. Hand out post-it notes to participants. Ask them to write examples of issues that girls experience. This can be broad – give them lots of time to think about their lives and some things that they wish they could change.
- Next, move on to the trunk. Ask them to write on their post-it notes institutions and policies that shape the experiences they have identified.
- Finish by doing the same thing for the roots. What are some of the systems that shape the institutions and individual experiences?
- After the girls have finished creating their tree, ask them what they thought about this activity. Have they ever noticed these patterns before?
- Looking at this tree can seem discouraging. There are so many issues that are rooted in massive systems. That’s where activism comes in!

- Explain to the girls that we like to view this tree as a “sick tree.” If we see a sick tree, we don’t try to bring it back to health by treating the leaves; we look at the soil, we look at the air quality, we look at the surrounding trees. It’s the environment that is the issue, and not the individual tree. This same concept can be applied to the issues that girls face.
- Activism, therefore, is addressing the roots and the environment that the tree is in. We need to take action at the systems level to make meaningful change.

SUPPLIES

- Pens
- Poster paper
- Markers
- Post-it notes
- Laptop and/or TV screen with HDMI cable
- Whiteboard or flipchart paper
- Whiteboard markers

GOALS

- Girls articulate issues affecting girls
- Girls explore the root causes of the issues that affect girls
- Girls understand what activism is and that it exists on a spectrum
- Girls see themselves reflected in examples of girl leadership and see how leadership is connected to activism
- Girls begin to identify an issue they care about and how to begin to take action using their skills
WORKSHOP
CHARITY VERSUS JUSTICE

OUTLINE

• Ask the girls to gather around the whiteboard or flipchart paper.
• Write “Charity” and “Justice” on the whiteboard, and ask the group if they know the difference. If they come up with terms or examples, write these on the board as well.
• Draw a boat on water, big enough for everybody to see.
• Explain to the group that we can think of the differences between charity and justice by looking at this boat. Imagine that this boat has a hole in it, and water is getting into it. It is starting to sink. In this scenario, you have two options:
  * Get a bucket, and start bailing the water out of the boat.
  * Find something to patch the hole with, and then patch the hole.
• In this situation, bailing the water out might be the easiest and fastest way to get water out of the boat. The fact that your boat has a hole in it, however, is still a huge problem.
• This is how we see the differences between charity and justice.
  * Charity is bailing water out of the boat.
  * Justice is patching the boat.

Charity versus Justice: An example examining negative body image

CHARITY
• Attending a workshop on self-esteem
• Offering body-positive affirmations to friends and colleagues

JUSTICE
• Advocating for more accurate and diverse body representation in the media
• Lobbying lawmakers for a ban on the use of Photoshop in marketing

• Emphasize that both charity and justice are needed, but that it’s important to think about how you can end the issue by addressing the root causes.
• Draw one of the sick trees from Appendix A, or work with the girls to create a new one.
• Depending on the size of the group, split the group into smaller groups of three or four or work in a large group all together.
• Ask the girls, either in their small groups or in the large group, to pick one of the leaves from the tree. Use these questions to stimulate discussion:
  * What are the institutions that shape this problem?
  * What are the root causes?
• Ask the girls to think of some charity approaches and some justice approaches to address the issue that they have identified. Once they’ve had time to brainstorm individually or in their small group, ask them to share their ideas with the larger group.

GOALS
• Girls think about the differences between charity and justice
• Girls start to view issues through a systems-level lens
• Girls apply systems-level thinking to an issue that they’re passionate about

SUPPLIES
• Whiteboard or flipchart paper
• Whiteboard markers or markers
• Paper
• Pens

AGE GROUP: 13-18
GROUP SIZE: 4-20
TIME: 40-60 MINUTES
Print or write out the quotes from the following page. Cut them out and tape them around the room.

Ask the girls to start by sitting in a circle together.

Start the conversation by stating that there are lots of people who have been doing activist work for a long time. It is these people who have helped us to get the rights that we have now.

Ask the girls if they know which rights we’ve gained because of activists. Here are some examples if they’re stuck:

* The right to be considered people and not property
* The right to vote (although racialized and Indigenous people didn’t win the right to vote until long after white women did)
* The right to paid maternity leave

Explain to the girls that you’ve cut out some quotes and placed them around the room. The quotes are words spoken by strong women who have engaged in various forms of social change work.

Ask the girls to walk around the room and to take time reading each quote. Once they’ve found a quote that resonates with them, ask them to stand by it.

Have the girls share with the larger group which quote they chose and why they chose that quote.
“Feminism isn't simply about being a woman in a position of power. It's battling systemic inequities; it's a social justice movement that believes sexism, racism and classism exist and interconnect, and that they should be consistently challenged.”

- Jessica Valenti

“Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world.”

- Dolores Huerta

“Major social movements eventually fade into the landscape not because they have diminished but because they have become a permanent part of our perceptions and experience.”

- Freda Adler

“We just have to convince other people that they have power. This is what they can do by participating to make change, not only in their community, but many times changing in their own lives. Once they participate, they get their sense of power.”

- Dolores Huerta

“I am like a drop of water on a rock. After drip, drip, dripping in the same place, I begin to leave a mark, and I leave my mark in many people's hearts.”

- Rigoberta Menchu

“When you choose to give up your time and resources to participate in community work, that's what makes a leader.”

- Dolores Huerta

“Never depend upon institutions or government to solve any problem. All social movements are founded by, guided by, motivated and seen through by the passion of individuals.”

- Margaret Mead

“You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time.”

- Angela Davis

“I think the importance of doing activist work is precisely because it allows you to give back and to consider yourself not as a single individual who may have achieved whatever but to be a part of an ongoing historical movement.”

- Angela Davis

“Feminism, unlike almost every other social movement, is not a struggle against a distinct oppressor - it's not the ruling class or the occupiers or the colonizers - it's against a deeply held set of beliefs and assumptions that we women, far too often, hold ourselves.”

- Kavita Ramdas

“You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time.”

- Angela Davis

“I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own.”

- Audre Lorde

“Feminism has never been about getting a job for one woman. It's about making life more fair for women everywhere. It's not about a piece of the existing pie; there are too many of us for that. It's about baking a new pie.”

- Gloria Steinem

“The greatest movement for social justice our country has ever known is the civil rights movement and it was totally rooted in a love ethic.”

- bell hooks

“I am like a drop of water on a rock. After drip, drip, dripping in the same place, I begin to leave a mark, and I leave my mark in many people's hearts.”

- Rigoberta Menchu

“We just have to convince other people that they have power. This is what they can do by participating to make change, not only in their community, but many times changing in their own lives. Once they participate, they get their sense of power.”

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- bell hooks

“I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own.”

- Audre Lorde
**OUTLINE**

- Explain to the girls that you’re going to be playing Activism Bingo.
- Provide each girl in each group with a bingo card (below) and divide the girls into groups.
- Explain to the girls that as a team, they will work together to check off every box on their card. Ask them to make sure that every girl is included and that they’re all working together. It isn’t a race, so they can take their time.
- Depending on the age of the girls, assign an adult volunteer to each group to help them remain on task and ensure that they finish on time.
- Ask the girls to go out into the community to complete their bingo card.
- Once the girls return from playing Activism Bingo, you can debrief with them:
  - Which answers from community members surprised them?
  - What is one thing they learned that they’d like to share with the group?
  - What was their favourite part?

**SUPPLIES**

- Pens
- Paper
- Markers
- Activism Bingo printouts

**GOALS**

- Girls think about different ways to engage in activism
- Girls practice speaking to and engaging with members of their community about issues that are important to them
- Girls work together towards a shared goal
- Girls are supported by their community to reach a shared goal
- Girls learn about different concepts related to social and environmental justice
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ask one person what they are passionate about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find someone who knows what “fair trade” means. Ask them to describe it to you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create some notes of affirmation or encouragement to hand out to strangers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find one person who considers themselves an activist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit a store. Ask them what “shopping local” means to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find one place a big group of people could gather for a rally, protest or event. Where is it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find one Little Free Library.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask one person what they would change about their town/city if they could.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find one poster of a community event coming up. (Hint: Coffee shops are a great place to check!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FREE SPACE CHALLENGE! Freestyle dance with your group for one minute!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit a restaurant or cafe. Ask someone what “eating local” means to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find a playground. Swing on the monkey bars. Come up with one way to be an activist while playing at the park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell one person about your girls program. Invite them to tell other girls about the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FREE SPACE CHALLENGE Find a song everyone in your group knows and sing as much of it as you can.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell one person they are wonderful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask one person what they would change for girls if they could.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The River of Life is an activity that we typically do with our groups of girls when we are reflecting on multiple past sessions and trying to hone in on what the girls found most important or impactful for them. It is a useful tool, for example, if your group wants to develop a large group project and needs assistance narrowing down which issues or topics are most relevant for them. This is also a great process to see which topics and workshops resonated with the girls; it can be used as part of program evaluation, since it provides insight into which topics the girls found most interesting and might want to explore further.

**OUTLINE - PART 1**

- Start by asking the girls to sit facing the whiteboard or flipchart stand.
- Explain that you are going to map out your girl program experience together so that you can reflect upon the things that you’ve done and discussed. This will help you to narrow down if and what you’d like to do as a group project!
- Ask the girls to think about big themes that you’ve discussed this year. If they are stuck, suggest that they walk around your program space to look at crafts that they’ve done or things that might jog their memories.

> * In our programs, for example, some of the big topics that girls have mentioned are as follows:

- Human rights
- Stereotypes
- Climate change
- Love yourself
- Activism
- Black History Month
- Puberty

- As girls mention topics, write them on the whiteboard or flipchart paper for all the girls to see. It’s important to use their words – resist editing or finessing! Their exact words may mean something different to them than they do to you.
- Once the girls are done brainstorming, lay the long piece of paper on the floor or in a place where everybody can easily walk around it and contribute to it.
- Draw a river along the piece of paper. Make the river windy, small in some places, big in some places – just like your journey together!
- Explain to the girls that we will be placing these topics on our river to illustrate our journey together. Give girls time to write or draw on the river the “heading” for each topic that they’ve brainstormed.

CONTINUED...
OUTLINE - PART 2

- Ask the girls to return to the whiteboard or flipchart stand. Pass around post-it notes and pens.
- Explain that you will all be thinking about various questions in relation to the main topics that girls identified. Ask the girls to think about the following questions, in relation to each topic, and to write or draw their answers on post-it notes.
  * Which people did you learn from or about during this topic?
  * What skills did you learn?
  * What was your biggest take-away or learning?
- Encourage the girls to walk around the river and reflect upon each of the themes. If they have something to include that doesn’t answer one of the questions, they can write directly on the river.
- Once they’re done writing, they can stick their post-it notes beside the main heading on the river.

OUTLINE - PART 3

- If you are not planning on using the River to plan a project, you can end the process here. You can refer back to the completed River for program evaluations.
- If you are planning on using the River to support the girls in developing a project, ask them to gather together again.
- Provide the girls with three stickers each. Explain that you are all going to vote on what you’d like to move forward with as a group. Ask them to go around the River of Life and place their stickers next to the topics that interest them most or that they’re most passionate about. (In our girl programs, we call this a dot-mocracy!)
- Tally up the stickers beside each topic. The topic with the most votes is the one that your group will move forward with.
SOCIAL CHANGE STRATEGIZING

OUTLINE

• Ask the girls to gather around the laptop or TV. Play a selection of the following videos, depending on your time and the interest of the group. If you have some different videos that show girls engaging in activist work, share those as well.

• Girls recognize that there are multiple components to social change work
• Girls learn about different strategies for creating change
• Girls understand that social change work takes community support
• Girls are able to think about social change strategies in relation to issues that they care about

SUPPLIES

• Laptop and/or TV screen with HDMI cable
• Whiteboard or flipchart paper
• Whiteboard markers

GOALS

#1000BlackGirlBooks – Marley Dias
• Marley Dias, a 13-year-old girl, grew tired of reading books in school about characters that didn’t look like her. To address the issue, she started the campaign #1000BlackGirlBooks, which aimed to collect 1,000 books with black girls as the main character.
• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nfgcGbs4jvQ

Doodle Us! – Spark Movement
• A group of young activists noticed that there was very little representation of women and girls of colour in Google Doodles, the sketches that appear on Google homepages. They started a petition and asked Google for greater representation in their Doodles.
• http://www.sparkmovement.org/doodleus/

Petition for Recyclable Starbucks Cups – Two Calgary Sixth Graders
• Two girls from Calgary started a petition to share with Starbucks, urging the company to switch to recyclable coffee cups.
• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VgJh5oaM4jU

Taking a Stand Against School Dress Codes – Lauren Wiggins
• Lauren Wiggins, a teen from Moncton, New Brunswick, was sent home from school because her outfit violated the school dress code. Lauren took a stand against her school and the school board for their dress code policies.

CONTINUED...
· After watching all the videos, write the following headings on the whiteboard:

**ISSUE**

WHAT WERE THE GIRLS IN THE VIDEOS TRYING TO CHANGE?

POTENTIAL ANSWERS:
- The use of non-recyclable cups at Starbucks
- Sexist school dress code policies
- More accurate representation in Google Doodles
- The incorporation of more diverse stories into school curriculums

**PEOPLE**

WHO DID THEY TALK TO FOR THIS CHANGE TO HAPPEN?

POTENTIAL ANSWERS:
- Their parents
- People in charge – school principals, Google, news outlets and the media
- Friends
- Teachers

**ACTION**

WHAT ACTIONS DID THEY TAKE TO CREATE CHANGE?

POTENTIAL ANSWERS:
- Petitions
- Book drives
- Online campaigns/hashtags
- Protests

· After debriefing, ask the girls to get into small groups. If the number of program participants is small, have them work together in a larger group.

· Ask the girls to reflect on an issue that they care about with their groups. If necessary, you can help them to brainstorm about some issues that you may have discussed previously or refer to one of the sick trees in Appendix A.

· Provide the groups with paper and pens and ask them to reflect upon and answer the following questions in relation to the issue that they’ve chosen:

  * What are you going to try to change?
  * Who has the power to make that change happen? Who are you going to talk to?
  * Which actions are you going to take?
    - Share the list of different possible actions that they can take, which you can find in Appendix C.

· Once the groups of girls have answered each question, ask them to present their ideas to the larger group. They’ve just created strategies for mini social change campaigns!
Print out or draw the Power Map below.

Write the following words (which we call "power pieces") on separate cue cards. If you or the girls think of additional titles, feel free to add them.

- School receptionist
- Board of Education
- Me!
- Parents
- School janitor
- Sports coach
- Teachers
- Friends
- Schoolmates/students
- Politicians
- School counsellor
- Librarian

Using the Power Map, read aloud the following scenario:

* Imagine that your goal is to share a message about body image within your school. Who would you ask first? Who has the most power to help you achieve your goal? What would you be looking for in a good partner (e.g., someone who has a shared interest, or who agrees with your stance on the issue)?

With the girls, lay out each of the power pieces (the titles written on cue cards) onto the Power Map. Ask the girls to identify the power that each person may hold.

Once the girls have mapped the power of each person and are in agreement about their placement on the Power Map, challenge them by asking follow-up questions. These questions could consist of changing the issue in the scenario above, changing the system or institution in which to address the issue (for example, stating that you'd like to share a message about body image with the town you live in instead of the school), and/or deciding who to speak to if someone within the system says no.

Girls can strategize about engaging potential partners in creating change.

Girls are able to identify individuals with power, as well as appropriate avenues, to achieve change.

AGE GROUP: 10-18
GROUP SIZE: 4-20
TIME: 30-45 MINUTES

SUPPLIES
- Power Map (below)
- Markers
- Cue cards

GOALS
- Girls can strategize about engaging potential partners in creating change
- Girls are able to identify individuals with power, as well as appropriate avenues, to achieve change

OUTLINE

AGREES WITH YOUR STANCE

LESS POWERFUL

DISAGREES WITH YOUR STANCE

MORE POWERFUL
WORKSHOP
EVALUATING YOUR PROGRAM

We place high value on the feedback of girls about all aspects of our programs. Through quantitative and qualitative evaluations conducted multiple times throughout the year, we hear from girls about what’s going well, what isn’t, and how they think we could improve. We frame these evaluation sessions by telling girls that the girls programs are for them – not for us – so their feedback is the most important piece in ensuring that what we’re doing is what they need and want.

Below, you will find some creative data collection methods that we use to make evaluation feel a bit more like fun. Feel free to use whatever materials are available to you! The most important thing is that girls feel safe enough to provide honest and constructive feedback.

OUTLINE - QUALITATIVE EVALUATION

- Ask the girls to gather together in a circle.
- Explain that because the Girls Programs are for them and because they are the experts in what’s going on here, we want to hear from them about what they think. Their feedback is critical to the success of these programs.
- Write the following questions on the whiteboard:
  * What is going well for you in this program?
  * What would you like to be improved about this program?
  * Is there anything else you want to tell us about your experience with this program?
- Hand out post-it notes and pens to the girls.
- Read the questions aloud. Ask if the girls have any questions about them. If not, ask them to answer each question on a post-it note and then stick their answer underneath the question.

OUTLINE - QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION

- Depending on which quantitative method you choose to use, you may need different materials. In the graphics below, we outline three interactive methods that we use to measure quantitative outcomes for our programs.

Emoji Evaluations

- Print a questionnaire with each of your quantitative evaluation questions, similar to the one below.
- Ask the girls to colour in the emoji that best represents how they feel about the question.

1. I feel safe in this program.

TRUE | NOT TRUE | NOT SURE

Sticker Evaluations

- Print your quantitative evaluation questions in table format, as shown below.
- Provide the girls with the same number of stickers as there are questions.
- Ask the girls to place a sticker in the part of the table that best represents how they feel about the question.

1. I feel safe in this program.

TRUE | NOT TRUE | NOT SURE

Voting Evaluations

- Label cups or jars with each of your quantitative evaluation questions. Make sure to label which question that set of cups or jars is for.
- Provide girls with the correct number of some sort of trinket – beads, little toys, pompoms – that they can drop into the cups or jars.
- Ask the girls to place their trinkets into the cup or jar that best represents how they feel about the question.

1. I feel safe in this program.
THE WORD FROM GIRLS
“Sometimes a question to ask is ‘how can I support you through this?’”

“In the girl programs I find it important that the support comes in more of a friendly/older sister kind of way and not an adult way.”

“Being listened to and feeling like I am being heard.”

“To not feel judged and genuinely listened to and feel like you are valued.”

“Help when I need it and I’m struggling. Support us when we’re having issues.”

“A good volunteer should be empathetic on some level. Though they won’t always understand exactly what each girl may be going through, a volunteer for one of these programs should be supportive and possibly able to give advice if they can and when it is asked of them.”

“One of the most important things is open mindedness and that they know if someone is going through something. They [adults] should learn how to approach the girls if they are going through something.”

“It’s important that our small ideas are listened to – that when something is brought up it is met with passion and excitement instead of doubts.”

“I related when I am able to have genuine conversations without being made to feel like I’m a child in the scenario. There is so much all women and girls have in common and often just being open to having a connection is enough to feel like I can relate to adults and they can relate to me.”

“I like how casual it is, when you miss something you do not have to catch up on anything you missed – it’s a drop-in thing.”

“When there aren’t any expectations placed on me, I can choose when and how I participate and know that it’s fine if I’m having an off day.”

“When it doesn’t feel like school – I am free to just be and be creative in my own way.”

“We are not forced to participate in anything.”
CONCLUSION

Every time we work and collaborate with girls, we feel hopeful for the future of our province and regions beyond our borders. Being privy to conversations led by girls about issues in their lives, watching them support one another in ways that we couldn’t have imagined, and stepping back as they take direct action with the goal of creating a safer world for girls are only some of the inspiring things that we’ve experienced over our 14 years of engaging in this work. It is our hope that this toolkit will enable individuals and organizations to understand what girls are capable of when they are supported by adults in their lives and to celebrate and nurture those capabilities.

Although girls face multiple and complex barriers, they continue to surprise the world with their empathy, courage, and tenacity. All over the country, girls are taking their communities by storm: Kaiya and Ayanna Leonard from Calgary, raising awareness about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; Rayne Fisher-Quann of Toronto, challenging the provincial government’s sexual health curriculum in public schools; Autumn Peltier from Wikwemikong First Nation, calling upon policy makers to protect water; and so many other girls who are advocating for changes to gendered school dress-code policies, creating apps for the reduction of food waste, and engaging in difficult conversations with their friends and families about a diverse range of other issues that matter to them. Girls of all ages are changing our social and political landscape locally, provincially, and nation-wide in significant ways. We feel immensely privileged to have been able to develop this toolkit alongside some of them.
The Leaves – Individual and Social Impacts

- Low self-esteem
- Sexual assault and rape, or threats of it
- Harassment of women and girls in leadership positions
- Outspoken girls being framed as “bossy”
- Being told that being angry or opinionated isn’t “lady-like”
- Girls fighting each other for power
  - Teachers treating boys and girls differently
  - No child care
  - Few women and racialized folks as business leaders or politicians
  - Fashion and make-up companies benefitting from girls feeling badly about themselves

The Trunk – Institutions

- Schools/school boards
- Families
- School policies
- Media and social media
- Fashion and make-up companies
- Corporations and corporate culture
- Political systems
- Athletics and athletic systems
- Government policy
- Workplaces

The Roots – Systems of Oppression

- Patriarchy
- Capitalism
- Colonialism
- White supremacy/Racism
- Colourism
- Misogyny
- Misogynoir
- Transphobia
- Ableism
APPENDIX A
SICK TREE - GIRLS’ ISSUES

The Leaves – Individual and Social Impacts
- Cat-calling
- Eating disorders
- Low self-esteem
- Sexual assault
- Relationship violence
- Sexualization in schools because of dress codes
  - Poor body image
  - Period poverty
  - Stigma surrounding puberty
  - Depression and anxiety
  - Self-harm
  - Gender stereotypes

The Trunk – Institutions
- Schools/school boards
- Families
- School policies
- Media and social media
- Fashion and make-up companies
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The Roots – Systems of Oppression
- Patriarchy
- Capitalism
- Colonialism
- White supremacy/Racism
- Colourism
- Misogyny
- Misogynoir
- Transphobia
- Ableism
- Climate Change
Marley Dias, born in 2005, launched the #1000BlackGirlBooks campaign when she was 11 years old. She launched the campaign because she was tired of only reading books about “white boys and their dogs” in school. She wanted to read about things that she could relate to! Her campaign has gathered thousands of books that feature black girls as the main characters.

Before searching for your next clue: Share with your group one thing that you wish you got to read about or learn about in school!

Frida Kahlo (July 6, 1907–July 13, 1954) was a Mexican artist who painted pictures of herself that were very personal. She was known for always being herself! She lived with a disability and wore clothes that showed off the back brace she had to wear, instead of hiding it.

Before searching for your next clue: Imagine you’re a famous artist like Frida. Go around and have each girl say what kind of art they would be famous for.
GRETA THUNBERG
- At the age of 15, Greta Thunberg (born in 2003) started skipping school on Fridays to demonstrate in front of the Swedish parliament building.
- She has stated that there is no point in attending school if there will be no planet to live on because of climate change.
- Her weekly demonstrations gained global attention and started the worldwide movement #FridaysForFuture.

Before searching for your next clue: Create a slogan with your group that you would use to get the attention of politicians and media about climate change. Shout it out loud!

ROSA PARKS
- Rosa Parks (February 4, 1913–October 24, 2005) was an activist who fought for equal rights for black people.
- She is sometimes called the “mother of the civil rights movement.”
- She is most famous for sitting at the front of a bus and refusing to move at a time when black people were told that they had to sit at the back.

Before searching for your next clue: Ask all members of your group to share a story about a time they stood up for their beliefs like Rosa did.

AUTUMN PELTIER
- Autumn Peltier, born in 2004, is Anishinaabe-kwe and a member of Wikwemikong First Nation. At the age of 15, she was named the chief water commissioner by the Anishinabek Nation.
- She has spoken to the prime minister of Canada and international leaders about water pollution and advocates for the rights of water to be protected like those of human rights.

Before searching for your next clue: Ask all members of your group: What would you be sad if you lost? What would you do to protect it?
SIMONE BILES

- Simone Biles, born in 1997, is a superstar gymnast.
- She won four gold medals at the 2016 Olympics, which is the most ever won by a female gymnast at a single Olympic games.
- She invented her own gravity-defying move, named “The Biles.”
- Simone is an advocate against sexual assault. Along with other sexual assault survivors, she was awarded the Arthur Ashe Courage Award.

Before searching for your next clue: Have each group member choose a stretch to lead the rest of your group members through. While you’re leading your stretch, discuss what your signature move would be called!

SALLY RIDE

- Sally Ride (May 26, 1951–July 23, 2012) was the first American woman in space.
- She went to space on June 18, 1983, on a shuttle called the Challenger.
- In addition to going to space, she loved helping young people learn about math and science.

Before searching for your next clue: Sally probably saw a lot of cool things in space. As a group, use your bodies to make something you think she might have seen.

MALALA YOUSAFZAI

- Malala Yousafzai, born in 1997, is an activist from Pakistan who is passionate about girls’ education.
- She was nearly killed when a group called the Taliban, who didn’t like the idea of girls getting an education, shot her while she was walking to school.
- She recovered and now uses her voice to make change for girls around the world!

Before searching for your next clue: Malala loves school. Have each group member say what their favourite subject at school is. Every time two girls have a favourite subject in common, cheer loudly!
## APPENDIX C

### ACTIONS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CRAFTIVISM</th>
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<tr>
<td>Creating art or crafts that work to raise awareness about a particular issue or cause is sometimes called a “gentle” form of activism. It can also be used as a form of self care.</td>
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<tr>
<th>STRIKES</th>
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<td>Unlike boycotts, where people who are consuming a good or service (such as cafeteria food or a particular class) refuse patronage, strikes occur when employees or student workers refuse to work due to a policy or action they deem unacceptable.</td>
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<tr>
<th>PETITIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Girls can collect signatures the old-fashioned way — walking around with a clipboard and paper — or do it online. In either form, petitions help girls coalesce around an issue and show leaders how many people believe in a cause. Petitions are often the first step for many different forms of activism.</td>
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<tr>
<th>BOYCOTTING</th>
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<td>Is the campus cafeteria using unsustainably grown products? Has there been a racial injustice in on-campus housing? In these instances, boycotting a space (and getting others to do it with you) might be an effective and quick method of garnering attention for your cause.</td>
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<tr>
<th>MEDIA</th>
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<td>Using media to raise awareness about a cause can quickly educate potential supporters about the issue and move them to your side. Campus radio shows, school newspapers, and departmental bulletin boards are all free advertising platforms. In addition, smartphones let users film, edit, and disseminate high-quality videos.</td>
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<th>LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGNS</th>
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<td>This is when you get a group of people to write letters to a company, specific politician, political party, etc urging them to create change. This is useful if you all share the same messaging and are asking the same thing. Examples of this are writing letters to Mattel, the company that creates Barbie, asking for more diverse representation in the company’s dolls.</td>
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<th>PROTESTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Protests come in many different forms and serve different functions, depending on how they are used. Common examples of protests include remembrance vigils, picket lines, rallies, and marches.</td>
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<tr>
<th>INTERNET ACTIVISM</th>
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<td>Facebook sharing, hashtag campaigns, mass-tweeting: The world of social media and blogs has opened several doors for making injustices known, and girls can share information across their accounts to maximize their reach. Social media can be used to advance nearly any cause.</td>
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<th>SIT-INS</th>
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<tr>
<td>This protest movement was popularized by students during the Civil Rights Movement. It involves occupying a space and refusing to vacate until requirements are met. This method could be used for a variety of causes, ranging from eliminating racial inequalities to advocating for longer library hours.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
GLOSSARY
ABLEISM refers to discrimination in favour of able-bodied people. When we make assumptions about what bodies can do without accounting for different ways in which bodies are able to participate in certain activities, this is considered to be ableist. For example, in Girls Programs, assuming that all girls can participate in an activity that relies on reading and writing might be considered ableist. To address this ableism, we could provide opportunities for girls to participate in whichever way works best for them, which could include a verbal discussion or using drawing and art.

CAPITALISM is an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of capital goods; by investments that are determined by private decision; and by prices, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined mainly by competition in a free market.¹

COLONIALISM refers to the control by one power over a dependent area or people. The Indigenous people living in the area that we now call Canada, for example, were colonized by Europeans.²

COLOURISM is prejudice or discrimination against individuals with a dark skin tone, favouring those who have lighter skin tones. An example of colourism can be seen in the popularization of skin-lightening creams in many areas of the world.

INTERSECTIONALITY, first coined by scholar and activist Kimberlé Crenshaw, refers to the complexity of identity and the privilege or oppression associated with those identities. For example, even though all girls experience sexism, not all girls experience sexism in the same way. Girls living with disabilities, for example, experience ableism in addition to sexism, which means they experience the world differently from girls who are able-bodied.

LEADERSHIP can be defined in many different ways. We often think of leadership as characterized by those who can delegate tasks, who are extroverted, and who are comfortable taking charge. This is a very narrow definition of leadership. Leadership can also be seen in people who are working to achieve any task, big or small, and can encompass a wide variety of skills and strengths related to making the world a better place.

MISOGYNY refers to the hatred of women.

MISOGYNOIR refers to the hatred of black women.

OPPRESSION is defined by the unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power. In the context of this toolkit, we refer to sexism, adultism, racism, poverty, ableism, transphobia, and homophobia as systems of oppression.

RACISM is discrimination based on the social construct of race, which typically refers to skin colour, culture, and/or country of origin. Racism is rooted in the belief that one race is superior to all others.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE is the process of consistent and intentional evaluation of your work. In our programs for girls, we exercise reflective practice by consulting with girls about what they think is going well and what they would like to see changed, and by continuing to adapt our programs based on what girls and program volunteers are telling us.

SEXISM is discrimination based on gender, which can be observed in everyday interactions. The idea that all girls only want to gossip and go to the mall, for example, is a sexist stereotype.

TRANSPHOBIA is discrimination against people who are transgender or transexual.

POVERTY in Canada is defined in a multitude of different ways, the most prominent of which is the Market Basket Measure (MBM). The MBM measures poverty as being below a certain financial threshold that allows for a “modest, basic standard of living.”³

PATRIARCHY is a system of oppression that builds and maintains the power of men. Patriarchal power structures – or, the patriarchy – result in misogyny and discrimination against women and girls.


**ADDITINAL RESOURCES**

**READINGS**


**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**GUIDEBOOKS**


GIRLS ACTION FOUNDATION
www.girlsactionfoundation.ca
The Girls Action Foundation website has lots of great information about the lives of Canadian girls, as well as resources for supporting girls in various capacities.

HARDY GIRLS HEALTHY WOMEN
www.hghw.org
Hardy Girls Healthy Women is an organization in Maine that works to challenge societal perceptions of girls and encourages communities to support girls and their brilliance.

KAZOO MAGAZINE
www.kazoomagazine.com
Kazoo is a quarterly print magazine for girls aged 2 to 12 that celebrates them for being strong, smart, fierce, and true to themselves.

SHAMELESS MAGAZINE
www.shamelessmag.com
Shameless is an independent Canadian voice for smart, strong, sassy young women and trans youth.

THE FEMINIST WORD
www.criaw-icref.ca/en/page/fword
The Feminist Word features the voices of young women across Canada by showcasing their thoughtful and creative words and art.

THE WOMEN’S CENTRE
www.womenscentrecalgary.org
In addition to doing work with girls specifically about leadership and activism, we also run workshops that allow space for girls to think critically about issues including: gender stereotypes, body image, the media, climate justice, healthy relationships, and more. We would be thrilled to share them with those who are interested.

YOUNG WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP NETWORK
www.ywln.ca
The Young Women’s Leadership Network is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to building civic and political leadership capacity among marginalized women and gender-diverse youth.