

YEAR I: Adaptation & Intervention Planning MILESTONE REPORT

On October 19, 2022, The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, **Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health**, visited Access Alliance to announce funding of \$3.5 million to prevent and address family violence including \$800,000 for Access Alliance's innovative Hubs of Expressive Arts for Life – HEAL Project, see [social media campaign](#).

On the same day, the Public Health Agency of Canada published a **news release** of project recipients in the greater Toronto area [click here](#). In addition, the HEAL Project flyer was created as a tool for building new partnerships and strengthening existing ones, [click here](#).



“Improving the mental health and wellbeing of newcomers at risk of, or experiencing, gender-based domestic violence is the focus of the Hubs of Expressive Arts for Life (HEAL) project. This unique and participatory expressive arts intervention will increase the capacity of participants and the public health sector to effect systemic changes to address and prevent domestic violence.”

Axelle Janczur
Executive Director, Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services

Image of Carolyn Bennett, Axelle Janczur and Cliff Ledwos, Associate Executive Director.

During the announcement Akm Alamgir, Director of Organizational Knowledge and Learning, and Christen Kong, HEAL Project Coordinator, along side, MABELLEarts, partner organization presented at **The 5th Metropolis Identities Summit** in Winnipeg, MB. The presentation aimed to promote the HEAL Project and gain attention in the sectors of settlement, mental health, research & policy. The team incorporated co-design as part of the session resulting in this report, [click here](#), showcasing themes, inquires, and perspectives of audience members across Canada.

“Beautiful work. Your charisma, passion, and the amazing program was my favourite at Metropolis. I’m inspired with hope and positive energy. Let’s connect.”
Session participant

“Made me rethink new possibilities of the GBV program and ideas. Art can bring happiness to the community “let’s do this”.”
Session participant



Image of Akm Alamgir, Christen Kong and Karen Kew at The 5th Metropolis Identities Conference 2023.

University of Toronto, Health in Community placement students wrote “Re-Imagining Home: Improving Newcomer Mental Wellbeing through Art” to raise awareness for domestic violence month. The **blog post** outlines the definition of domestic violence, its effects, resources available for survivors, and the many benefits of expressive arts programs to help heal trauma and reclaim a sense of home, [click here](#).

Artwork drawn by a newcomer woman in Access Alliance’s Virtual Expressive Arts for Women Group “New Beginnings: Our Stories”.



Shortly after, Access Alliance published the **public facing research initiative** on their webpage, [click here](#), titled “Addressing and Preventing Family Violence Through Hubs of Expressive Arts for Life – HEAL Project” to further the exposure of the HEAL Project.

On November 8-9, 2023, Akm and Christen attended the first **Knowledge Hub Exchange** as an initial steps in creating and assembling a Community of Practice that focused on gender-based violence and trauma-informed health promotion. Along with 21 project recipients of PHAC, the HEAL project is featured on their webpage [click here](#).



On December 14, 2022 the **HEAL Co-Create Session** was hosted at Access Alliance College site. Attendees included experts in the field of expressive art therapy, community based participatory research, social workers, and those working alongside domestic violence survivors to support the development of the 12-session HEAL program. Participants were guided through a series of co-design activities and discussions, data collected informed the development of the HEAL Arc, [click here](#).

On February 28, 2023 Access Alliance presented a **virtual guest lecture** for the University of Toronto’s HLTC55: Methods in Arts-Based Health Research course taught by Dr. Andrea Charise. The course examines arts-based health research (ABHR) and discusses current theories, modalities, methods and the conceptual foundations of arts-based approaches to health research with unique primary populations. Summary report of student responses, [click here](#).

Overall, YEAR I: Intervention and Adaption Planning of the HEAL Project has been a success. Attention gained in the field of settlement, mental health, and women against violence has connected us with new partnerships, led us to meet expressive art therapists and helped to gain momentum for years to come.

