

Setting the Stage for Girls and Young Women to Succeed



Photovoice Report

RECOGNIZE!

Prepared August 2013

By Immigrant and Multicultural
Services Society of Prince George



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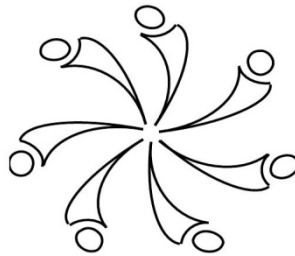
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Introduction

Setting the Stage for Girls and Young Women to Succeed is a two-year project funded by the Status of Women Canada. The project aims to become a platform for girls and young women in Prince George and surrounding areas who want to have their voices heard. Setting the Stage aims to address specific barriers and respond to the under-representation of girls and young women in the civic, political, business and community life. The young women welcome to take part in the project have many different identities and come from different backgrounds are between the ages of 15 and 26.

A Participatory Action Research (PAR) model was used to assess the barriers that young women in the north face. The benefit of PAR is that it emphasizes participation, capability building, ownership of knowledge and empowerment of participants; in this case girls and young women. Within the PAR model, Photovoice and a survey were the two data collection methods used.

The purpose of this Photovoice Report is to document the outcomes and process used to gather and seek the input of girls and young women in determining the barriers and challenges that they face in relation to civic, political and community life. The report will serve to inform the upcoming project planning activities.

The report discusses the project communities, community stakeholders and the research process. The photos taken during the Photovoice workshops are presented with descriptions from the young women and responses from their peers. The messages are then grouped together into 7 barriers and themes. The report concludes with a brief discussion of the next steps.

Facts about Girls and Young Women

In Canada, only **4%** of CEOs in Canada's Top 500 are women (*Catalyst, 2010*).

In Canada, **2/3** of minimum wage workers are women (*Statistics Canada, 2004*).

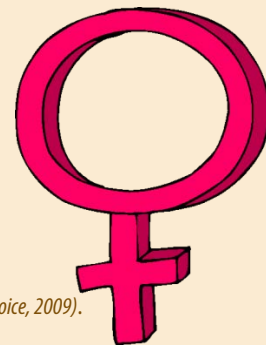
In Canada, men outnumber women **4 TO 1** among Canada's elected representatives (*Equal Voice, 2009*).

44% of young women report feeling constantly stressed in comparison to 28.7% of young men (*Girls Action Foundation, 2011*).

Girls and boys continue to learn through experience that girls have less status, less authority as decision-makers and participators in shaping their public or private lives, and that implicitly or explicitly society approves of

'GIRLS BEING GIRLS, AND BOYS BEING BOYS'

(*Girls Action Foundation, 2011*).



Girl Participants

The Setting the Stage project is focused directly on girls and young women in our Northern communities. The young women represent a diverse cross-section of demographics, traits of which include:



A note about Gender-Based Analysis

Gender-Based Analysis (GBA+) positions us to look at how gender and sex intersects with other identity factors. GBA+ is a tool created by the Status of Women Canada to help us understand how public policy impacts men and women. It is an important tool for removing biases and understanding the complexity of identities in Canada.

Setting the Stage for Girls and Young Women to Succeed is a project geared for girls and young women. Young women continue to experience the world differently than young men; there are different experiences, pressures, stereotypes, barriers and opportunities. Setting the Stage is girl-centered and girl-driven in order to create a safe place for peer discussion and support. Thus far in the project, events and workshops have been girl-only spaces; this combats the common problems of girls not speaking up when boys are present and that boys inadvertently overshadowing girls and diverting attention from project objectives. However, addressing the under-representation of girls is not simply a girl-issue but requires a wider community response. Setting the Stage will continue to follow and consider GBA+ principles when planning upcoming events and workshops.

Project Stakeholders

Stakeholders in the project are the service providers and community organizers who offer support to the young women in northern communities. In addition to the Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society, which is the project lead, eight other service providers have signed a Memorandum of Understanding and pledged support to the Setting the Stage project. Together these service providers make up Setting the Stage's Steering Committee.

Setting the Stage's Steering Committee provides support with their first-hand experience in dealing with women's issues in Northern BC. Committee members provide feedback on the methods used to make the project accessible to women in the demographic they serve, and offer connections to the wider community, creating a network of information about the project. Many of these service providers are also able to serve as mentors to the young women in the project, and provide a connection to other potential mentors and change-makers in their communities.

Additionally, a number of community members have become involved with the project as interested stakeholders. The first phase of the project was focused on the active recruitment of community stakeholders; however, interested individuals continue to come forward to join Setting the Stage. These community members may support the project in different capacities, which may include outreach, networking, mentoring, facilitation and research expertise.



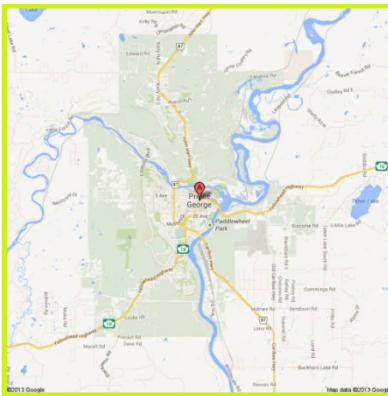
Project Communities

Living in northern and rural communities poses a set of unique challenges for all citizens (including youth and young women) compared to their urban counterparts:

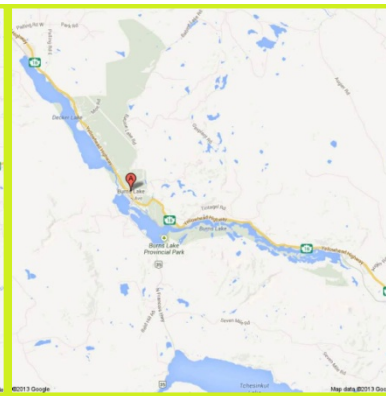
- Economic restructuring and business closures
- Boom and bust cycle of resource-based industries
- High youth unemployment
- Limited social resources
- Isolation
- Lack of urban information & practical steps to move on
- Need for information about and access to apprenticeships and educational programs
- Not optimistic about the future of their communities
- Lack of employment opportunities for young women in their communities
- Lack of educational capital for young women

(Shepard, 2011)

For these reasons, it is essential that attention and support is directed towards this underrepresented population in Northern BC. Setting the Stage's communities are Prince George, Burns Lake and Mackenzie.



Prince George



Burns Lake



Mackenzie

Facts about Girls and Women in Northern BC



In BC, girls and young women between the ages of 15 and 25 represent **6%** of the Population (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Girls aged 5-19 living in rural areas have an overall mortality rate **2.5 TIMES HIGHER** than girls who live in cities (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2006).

In the Northern Interior Region, **30%** of 18 year old girls did not graduate (BC Stats, 2011).

29% of Aboriginal girls in BC report that they seriously consider suicide (McCreary Centre, 2005).

The rate of teen pregnancies in the Northern Interior Health Region is **3.7 TIMES HIGHER** than in the Vancouver Health Region (47.2 and 12.9) (BC Stats, 2011).

Prince George is a vibrant, active and diverse community and serves as the health, education, transportation, cultural, shopping and business centre in Northern BC.

► The population of Prince George is **71,974** of which **5,030** are young women between the ages of 15 and 24 years (7%) (*Statistics Canada, 2011*). In Prince George, **12%** of women are Aboriginal (*Statistics Canada, 2006*).

► Prince George is located at the confluence of the Fraser and Nechako Rivers and the cross-roads of Highway 97 and Highway 16.

► There is one First Nation community with traditional territory in Prince George, Lheidli T'enneh. Prince George is also a service centre for many First Nations, such as: Carrier Sekani Family Services, Prince George Native Friendship Centre; Prince George Métis Community Association; Prince George Métis Housing Association; Aboriginal Business Development Agency.

► There are 8 high schools in Prince George and two post-secondary institutions: the University of Northern British Columbia and the College of New Caledonia.

► There are many women in prominent positions in Prince George: the Mayor is Shari Green, the MLA for Prince George-Valemount is Shirley Bond. Two women serve as councillors for Lheidli T'enneh.

Burns Lake is a small town in the heart of Northern BC with a strong sense of culture and recreational, business, health and education services that serve a large surrounding population.

► The population of Burns Lake is **2,029** of which **165** are young women between the ages of 15 and 24 years (8%) (*Statistics Canada, 2011*). In Burns Lake, **36%** of women are Aboriginal (*Statistics Canada, 2006*).

► Burns Lake is located on the north-west side of Burns Lake and 228km from Prince George on Highway 16.

► There are seven First Nation communities with traditional territories in Burns Lake: Burns Lake Band, Cheslatta Band, Lake Babine Nation (Woyenne), Nee Tahi Buhn, Skin Tyee Nation, Tachet Band, Wet'suwet'en First Nation. There are also a number of service organizations for First Nation people in Burns Lake: Burns Lake Native Development Corporation, Carrier - Sekani Family Services (Burns Lake Services); Native Court Worker Counseling Association of BC.

► There is one high school and the College of New Caledonia has a campus in Burns Lake.

► The position of Chief Administrative Officer is currently held by a woman, and recently a woman served as councillor. Four women serve as councillors for Cheslatta Band.

Mackenzie is a small town nestled in the Rocky Mountain Trench with abundant recreational opportunities and many cultural, health and education services.

► The population of Mackenzie is **3,507** of which **195** are young women between the ages of 15 and 24 years (6%) (*Statistics Canada, 2011*). In Mackenzie, **8%** of women are Aboriginal (*Statistics Canada, 2006*).

► Mackenzie is located at the south end of the Williston Lake and 29km off Highway 97 on Highway 39.

► There are three First Nation communities with traditional territories in Mackenzie: Kwadacha, McLeod Lake, Tsay Keh.

► There is one high school and the College of New Caledonia has a campus in Mackenzie.

► The Mayor of Mackenzie is Stephanie Killam. Additionally, three women serve as councillors in Mackenzie. There are 5 women who serve as councillors for McLeod Lake First Nation and one female councillor serving in Kwadacha.

Facts about Girls and Women in the Workforce

In Prince George:

- Women make up **47%** of the working population.
- **15%** of women work in sales and service occupations and **13%** work in business, finance and administration occupations.
- **83%** of healthcare and social service workers are women.
- Only **1%** of working women work in the agriculture and other resource-based industries or construction, or wholesale trade industries.

In Mackenzie:

- Women make up **41%** of the workforce.
- **13%** of working women work in sales and services occupations.
- **90%** of healthcare and social services workers are women.
- Only **3%** of working women work in agriculture and other resource-based industries.

In Burns Lake:

- Women make up **46%** of the workforce.
- **18%** of working women work in education, government services occupations.
- **96%** of educational service workers are women.
- Only **2%** of working women work in business services.

Statistics Canada, 2006



Outreach

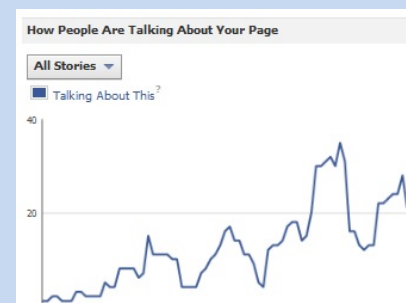
In order to make the project accessible to the widest possible range of young girls and young women, the project team employed a variety of outreach and advertising methods, listed below:

- Called and emailed community organizations; churches, youth groups, libraries, recreation centres, sports organizations, service providers, counselling centres and academic institutions.
- Emailed networks; Northern Fire Women's North Network, Social Workers' Network, GAIA Arts Club.
- Distributed promotional materials, project descriptions and contact info to above organizations.
- Placed promo materials in publicly accessible locations (community/local businesses).
- Partnered with Carrier-Sekani Family Services (CSFS) Walk Tall program to hold Photovoice sessions during their programming times.
- Offered presentations by the project team to active service providers
- Posted event posters at various Prince George secondary schools and in Burns Lake and Mackenzie secondary schools
- Gave project presentations at Prince George Secondary School (PGSS), Duchess Park Secondary School (DPSS), DPSS Visual Arts class and Lakes District Secondary School (Burns Lake)
- Created a Facebook page for project updates, outreach and resource posting:
 - As of July 18, the Facebook Page has 84 likes and a weekly total reach of 343 people.
 - 44 people (or 53% of our reach) are young women within the age demographic.
 - Remaining 47% (39 people) are community members/stakeholders.
- Visited Mackenzie and Burns Lake to promote project.
- Distributed promo materials and project descriptions to School District 91 facilities including traditional aboriginal education and the homeschooling program.
- Offered transportation funding to outlying communities.
- Created buttons with Facebook information on the back to attract interest to the project.
- Posted project information on the Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society website.



Setting the Stage's Facebook page uses the visual graphics used on all promotional materials. Since May, the number of people who are 'talking' about our Facebook page has continued to grow.

In the week of April 25 – May 1, one person posted on their page a story about a post on our page. Most recently, in the week of July 10 – July 16, 21 people created a story about Setting the Stage's page. Our highest reach was in the week of June 26 – July 2, when 35 people created a story about our page. In that week, Setting the Stage attended a community event at the Prince George Airport.



Research Process

Young women are at the centre of the Setting the Stage project. Using methodology such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) enables the young women to become decision-makers in the research process, researchers in community change and co-learners in the discussion and analysis of identified problems and solutions.

PAR requires fun, creative and young woman-directed and young woman-engaging activities. Photovoice, coupled with a survey, were the two methods used in the research.

Photovoice

Photovoice is a method that combines empowerment and documentary photography for social change. Participants capture their perceptions and stories about their communities and become empowered through the questioning of influences contributing to community conditions (Tanjisiri et al. 2011).

Setting the Stage hosted two Photovoice seminars in Prince George in July 2013. We engaged the help of local artist Cat Sivertsen to lead young women through the Photovoice journey. Cat's local work has been a display at Two Rivers Gallery in 2011, *Aesthetics of Grief* and a Storefront Studio in 2013, *Exhibit 365: a Relationship with Cancer*. Cat also has more than 20 years of experience in visual arts and experience as a lecturer at the Arts Institute Bournemouth in England which has made her an excellent fit for our Photovoice seminars. We also asked two social workers/counsellors to join the Photovoice seminars to support us through any emotional charged conversations.

Sixteen young women between the ages of 14 and 26 participated in the Photovoice seminars. There were 2 sessions with 2 weeks between sessions to allow for photo taking. Having the young women participants attend two sessions with the same group allowed them to connect and support each other in their learning. The sessions built on each other:

Session 1: Using the Camera to Find a Voice beyond Words.

- Discussion of how photography and visual arts can communicate a deeper message.
- Discovering personal connection to the themes: civic, political and community.
- Learning how to use the camera, setting the content and context of an image.

Session 2: Looking Beyond the Lens: Every Picture Tells a Story.

- Discovering our story, reflecting on the meaning in the photograph.
- Discussing the story we see in other's photos, blending and building our message.
- Connecting our story and message to the civic, political and community life.

Participatory: Participants traditionally excluded from power in our society are empowered as key players in the research

Action: Participants use the research to make concrete improvements in their lives and in their communities.

Research: Participants focus research on the issues and conditions that affect them directly, resulting in thorough, reliable and accurate data collection. (Van Wagner, Moody and Dumond, 2004)



Pros and Cons of Photovoice

+ Anyone can participate regardless of literacy levels

+ The research has tangible outcomes, photographs to display a message

+ Allows participants to think differently about how they view themselves and their community.

- Participants have different levels of knowledge about photography

- Getting young people to think of pictures as 'concepts' can be difficult

- Participants and community members must trust the process (Shimshock, 2008)

Survey

Surveys are an important way to collect information from a wide variety of people on a topic. Setting the Stage's surveys were designed to measure their perception of civic, political and community opportunities' influence on success, the perceived representation of young women in those areas of life, and the reasons young girls are not as involved as they should be (see survey questions below). Seeking the input and opinions of Setting the Stage's Steering Committee, community stakeholders in addition to young women was important. Many of the service providers and community members have a long history of experience with women's issues and with a number of girls that the Setting the Stage project has not yet been able to reach. A survey was created with young women being the audience, wording directed at them specifically; a slightly altered version was created with service providers and community members being the audience.

Survey Questions:

1. Do you think that getting involved in civic, political or community life can open up more chances for you to succeed?

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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2. How many groups do you know of where girls and young women like yourself are encouraged to be active in civic, political or community life? (Ex. Youth groups, Activist Groups)

0	1-3	4-6	7-9	10+
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3. Of those below, which ways have you seen news of girls and young women taking action in civic, political or community life? (Please circle all that apply)

Newspaper	Television	Facebook
Websites	Youth Awards	Word of Mouth
Other: Please explain		

4. When you think about getting involved in civic, political or community activities, what stops you from doing so? (open ended)

A note about Photovoice sessions in Mackenzie and Burns Lake

Photovoice sessions were also planned for Mackenzie and Burns Lake. Setting the Stage arranged with various local community partners to advertise and promote the sessions locally in addition to the efforts made by the project team in Prince George, for more information see 'Our Outreach' section. The Photovoice sessions were organized for a weekend format: with a session Saturday morning, free time Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning for photo taking with the second session being held Sunday afternoon.

In Mackenzie, no young women showed up to the Photovoice session. We were able to talk with some service providers while we were in town. In follow-up conversations with community partners in Mackenzie we were told that June was a camping month and not many townspeople are in town on the weekends; they suggested a September (but before hunting season) weekend.

In Burns Lake, the Photovoice session was cancelled last minute due to a lack of confirmed participants. In discussion with local service providers we were told of many cultural camps and trips that were taking the First Nation girls away from town and also some comments from young women that they did not want to give up their weekend for a session.

Setting the Stage has committed to re-schedule Photovoice events in Burns Lake and Mackenzie; taking into consideration the feedback we received.

Our Voice

Photovoice Results

The photos taken by the girls and young women speak the reality of living in the North; everyone who sees the photos will see different messages in the photos. In order to spread the voice of the young women each photo is coupled with a description from the photographer and some responses and thoughts raised by other young women during the discussions we had at the Photovoice seminars.



Title: A Fine Line

I have no idea what was in this bottle. The contents could have saved a life, or destroyed one. It's a fine, and very blurry line.

Participant Responses

- This makes me think of how sometimes prescriptions require you to have an address- what if you're homeless?
- This shows the effect of pharmaceuticals, discarded in a line of continuous use; is anyone exploring the alternative, or is it just easier to medicate people?

Photographer: Aili

Title: Transient
It really is the bus line that gives me access to this city. So I wait and wander until I once again join the transient, transit community.

Participant Responses

- [Prince George] is a city designed, laid out, for cars
- You see things differently [When you take the bus]; you don't just go from one location to the other, you have times between buses that you just end up wandering and getting to know the city on foot.

Photographer: Aili



Title: **Obscure**

When the siren blares and the lights flash, I think a lot of us experience different reactions, eh? Hope, fear, relief, suspicion. And honestly, this seems reasonable to me, considering what has taken place in this town

Participant Responses

- I have mixed opinions about the RCMP

- For police the changes and investigations aren't done by the city, so it seems hard to make any changes

Photographer: **Aili**



Title: **Business**

As a small business owner myself, I know how much harder it is for a women to succeed than a man. It makes no sense to me, and it is not right. But, never stop doing something that you love just because it might also be hard.

Participant Responses

- Women don't seem to start their own businesses

- Even though it's hard, you'd be so proud after you do it [start a business]

Photographer: **Amanda** (A.J.T Photography)

Title: **Be yourself!**

As a young women in our society today, there is a lot of pressure to be just like everyone else. In this photo, that is symbolized by the cracked mask on the one side of her face. She is breaking free from her mask and showing her true self and while doing so she is much happier. Being just like everyone else is scary, always be yourself.

Participant Responses

- If you always wear a mask, how can you tell when other people are wearing one?

- When you're a girl there's a lot of conflict in how you present yourself; people don't like to see a sad face so you always show a happy mask

Photographer: **Amanda** (A.J.T Photography)





Title: **Depression glass**

Just because something looks good on the outside doesn't mean it is on the inside. This is an antique dish made out of a material known as depression glass. It has adapted to this name because it was made during the depression era. I believe that this symbolizes that sometimes beautiful things can come out of something so terrible. Never give up

Participant Responses

- We see it as beautiful, we don't see the hurt on the inside
- Beauty can come out of something terrible

Photographer: **Amanda** (A.J.T Photography)

Title: **Boxtown, BC**
My grandma took this photo when she first moved to Prince George in the 1960s. Oh wait, this was taken last week.

Participant Responses

- Where the buildings are there are no trees, I don't want to go there.
- Looks like a ghost town

Photographer: **Erin**



Title: **Help Line**

When I see these emergency boxes I wonder what would happen if you pressed the button. How could they ever make it in time? So why is it here then?

Participant Responses

- I know the first question I'll be asked is if I tried to deal with the problem myself-should I have to?
- This isn't a city helpline, so if I call this, do I still call 911?
- Am I going to be raped here?

Photographer: **Erin**

Title: **Old Boys' Club**

I watch these strong men as they ride their strong horses out of the gate and swiftly throw a rope around a calf's neck, flip it on its back, and tie its legs together. Six seconds! Impressive. The calf is let loose and saunters away, appearing joyful that it has been spared. And all I can think is "A woman would never do that to someone else's baby."

I see the pride, the sense of community, the money that this event brings to this town. I guess it's okay, then.

Participant Responses

- The segregation here is obvious- [the rodeo community] is all men
- I feel like a lot of women intentionally exclude themselves from this because it's one big pissing contest

Photographer: **Erin**



Title: **Untitled**

Participant Responses

- I feel like to be strong, we need to be genderless
- Don't mess with me

Photographer: **Helga**



Title: **Untitled**

Participant Responses

- A while back, BC Hydro came in and just cut down a bunch of our trees. It hurt.
- Growing up in Prince George, I am used to always being able to see trees, wherever I am. I'm afraid of losing that.

Photographer: **Helga**

Title: *This is my neighbourhood*

There should be a fence down the center line of this picture, because this center line that I took this picture from the angle of is the division between my house's backyard and my neighbour's backyard. It's one of the few in my neighbourhood that still have no fence dividing backyards. It touches me that our neighbours on this side never put up a fence to divide us. I understand that people like their privacy. But to *me*, this lack of fence means a lot - over the past 10 years we have mowed our lawns, tended to our gardens, hosted barbeques, and always said a hello to our neighbours. If there was a fence we would not know our neighbours as well as we do. And, I would lose a TON of badminton birdies over it! It reminds me of a big problem in our world, that it's not always socially acceptable to meet new people and be open with others. In my mind, that's the only way we can solve substantial problems in the long run- working together, without barriers. We need more openness in our communities, more people waving to random strangers, and far less fences between us—at least, in the figurative sense.



Photographer: **Jesmeen**

Title: *Building Cities*

This is a construction site near where I live, as you can see this beautiful Portapotty is enhancing the otherwise dull looking tree :P. When I see these construction projects going on I feel helpless to do anything about them, especially those I feel strongly about. I understand that building new residences and buildings is an important part of our city. But sometimes I feel like it goes too far, like they don't know when to stop. I want to help build a balance between environmental preservation and economic growth. I want my voice not just to be heard, but actually to be listened to and taken seriously.

Participant Responses

- Build houses, but keep the big old trees in place rather than replanting afterwards.
- The trees belong to the city, but that also means they **do** belong to me and I would like some say into what happens to them.

Photographer: **Jesmeen**



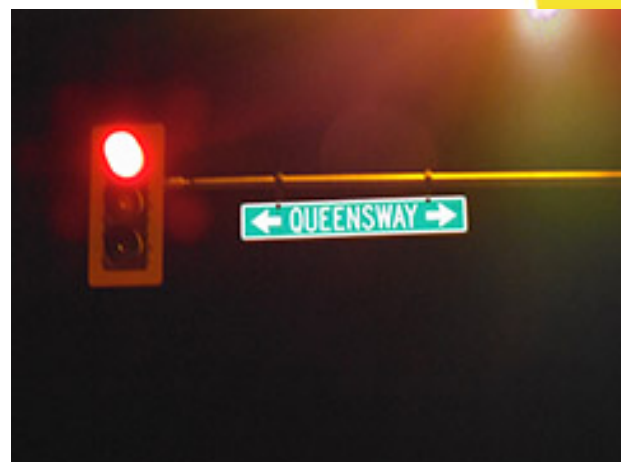
Title: *Queensway Stoplight*

One of my best friends used to live on Queensway, and people would tell us not to walk home there at night - what were we supposed to do, though, none of us had cars. It's not so bad there are nice houses and stuff if you really take a look; it's just that the people who live in those houses don't seem to walk around that much at night. I've always known people who live in the area, though the City doesn't seem to take care of the sidewalks and grass and stuff as much as other places. Why? Isn't this still part of our community?

Participant Responses

- This makes me think that people living here hit stoplights in their lives; that there aren't as many options open to you
- I automatically picture the area deserted, uncared for

Photographer: **Participant**



Title: **Pride Day**

The Prince George community acknowledges the Pride community officially, by the City, once a year. I always wonder if any talks go on between times, like about protecting queer youth. I don't hear of any, and I see adults, Prince George community members, treat LGBTQ youth like they don't matter. When it isn't Pride week. When it goes back to being about whether you're clean cut, and look like their definition of a good kid.

Participant Responses

- This community is officially acknowledged by the City once a year
- For youth in the LGBTQ community, City Hall means empty words and polite nods

Photographer: **Participant**



Title: **Should I feel Safe?**

When I was younger, my mum wouldn't let me go walk around downtown by myself. I particularly remember this area, because this is where I was on the one day I was walking around by myself downtown, and a person was following me on their bike and wouldn't leave me alone. I was 14 then. I feel more comfortable downtown now, but is that because I am older? Because downtown has changed? Because I have a car and can leave whenever I want to?

Participant Responses

- This picture is only around 5pm, but already downtown seems deserted as businesses close up
- There is nobody around to help out if someone were bothering you

Photographer: **Participant**

Title: **From the Outside Looking In**

There are many areas of work that it has never occurred to me to pursue- welding, mill work, plumbing, electrician, anything where I'd get my hands dirty really. Trades communities hold a lot of economic power in Prince George, and though they are open to women they are mainly comprised of men. I feel like it gives a very different cast to the possibilities and power of girls coming up in this city- that it is high paying groups who will naturally drive change in services and how the city is shaped, and girls are not often among these.

Participant Responses

- If you are down in this area, the only women you see are in administrative positions
- I feel like this is a whole community of coveralls and big trucks and jokes that I can't get into

Photographer: **Participant**





Title: **Bus Stop**

I feel that this photo belongs to all three categories: civic, political, and community. The public transportation system is an important part of the community, especially for those with lower incomes. It is administrated by the civic government for the most part, and my using it affects my ability to attend civic and community events. It takes me a lot of time to get where I am going, between waiting for the bus and riding it and working my activities around the bus taking me home. Plus the routes don't go everywhere so there is a lot of walking. This is a political issue, because only a certain demographic is affected by how well or badly the bus system works.

Photographer: **Participant**

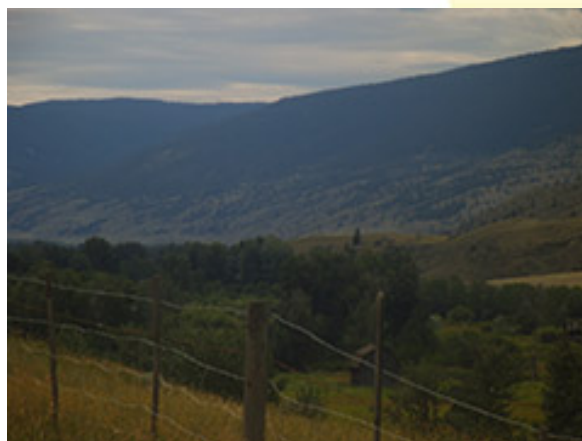
Title: **Summer Valley**

I took this picture on July 15, 2013. The picture reminds me of when I was in grade one and my family and I had a farm by Cluculz Lake. I was about eight or nine years old when my family had the farm but now my mom, two little brothers, and I have lived here in Prince George for four years now.

Participant Responses

- There is so much space looking out past this fence- I think knowing what it is like to go exploring past a fence is an essential experience of Northern BC
- Living out of town, there's so few people, you get a much stronger sense of community because everyone knows each other

Photographer: **Maria**



Title: **Road**

When I look at this picture it reminds me to keep going forward and never looking back at your mistakes.

Participant Responses

- What is our role in changing this landscape?
- Highways are dangerous in our area, the people in this photo are far away from me, will they provide the help I need, or will they hurt me?

Photographer: **Maria**

Title: **Mill**

Participant Responses

- I see this space as wasted, thinking of the ancestral First Nations groups who lived along the banks of this river... and yet for many people this is a positive picture representing income and employment.
- The mill posed against the blue sky like this makes me think of the pollution pouring out every day over PG- when I was a kid I used to think it was clouds.

Photographer: **Melva**



Title: **Lonely**

Two fish hang in Lheidli T'enneh Elders Eddie and Robert Fredrick's smoke house not because the family only wants two fish but because this was all they caught before the fishing ban this July. When only 20 years ago catching 60 fish was the norm but since then, federal legislation and provincial infrastructure have completely changed the salmon run. These changes include building the Kenny Dam in 1952 changing water flow and temperature along the Nechako and Fraser rivers. As well, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) support of building and keeping salmon farms on major wild salmon spawning routes resulting in major population health problems. To make matters worse, the DFO treatment and respect for First Nations, and their right to live a traditional life style, is despicable. I personally watched as a University Professor and First Nations Elder were accused of illegal fishing while teaching a UNBC course. But there is hope; we can see communities rebounding, despite all the setbacks. As you can see this smoke house is new and we are all proud to learn how to smoke salmon in a traditional

Photographer: **Minetta**

Title: **Front Steps**

The PG court house frames the downtown farmers market. The grandeur and looming court house is a place I barely feel comfortable on the steps of, while at the bottom of those steps one of PG's most vibrant communities spring up. Just look at the juxtaposition of "welcomeness", inclusiveness and warmth! If the political system truly wanted to engage with the Prince George Community all they have to do is walk out their front step. Or better yet, encourage us to walk up!

Participant Responses

- These are the people who drive a community
- I feel like the whole downtown should look like this

Photographer: **Minnetta**





Title: Work Together, Learn Together, Build Community

Communities do not spring out of legislation; communities are built by people for people. This is a celebratory photo of a healthy community of people of diverse backgrounds coming together to learn from Lheidli T'enneh Elder's Robert and Eddie Frederick on the end of the Nechako River (top right). In the background you can see the cottonwood logs we will turn into two dugout canoes. Growing communities is a very important part of my life but it does not happen as often as it should for many young women today. To be part of a community, gain support, friendship, a sense of self and awareness of others you need to work at it and you need to be adaptable; just look at how busy this place is!

Photographer: **Minetta**

Title: Trust

This is a government building, my elected government. But I don't know my politicians, I know they don't work here, but who does? This building doesn't make me feel welcomed by my government, I feel criminalized, watched, mistrusted and under suspicion. I thought this was Canada.

Participant Responses

- They want us to know we are being watched- it's intimidating
- I don't really know what they do... it's such a big building

Photographer: **Sophia**



Title: A table with no people

This photo represents my lack of connections with my peers, young working professionals. Sure, I moved away for a while but now I am back. I seem to have lost my high school, my university friends. I have a job in the 'real' world, but I don't have connections with other professional young people, people like me.

Participant Responses

- It's lonely; I hope I'm not lonely after I finish school.
- Why is this cafe empty? It used to be so busy? Where are the people?

Photographer: **Sophia**

Title: **So many choices**

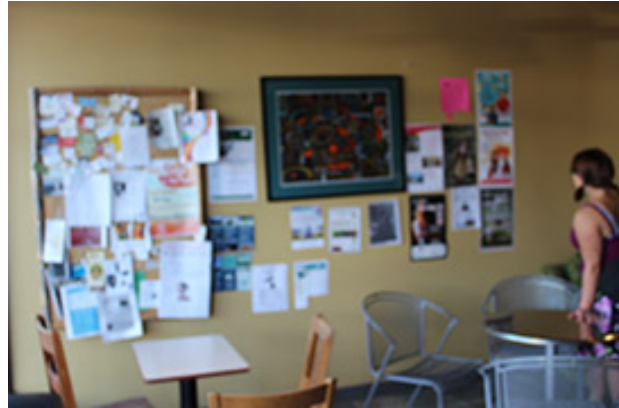
There are so many things to do in PG. So, so many, they spill off the notice board. But what do I notice, what do I choose? How do I know what would be a fun thing to do, how do I know what will be meaningful, impactful and rewarding? I don't really know and plus I am already kind of busy.

Participant Responses

- There are lot of things happening that you don't necessarily see unless you dig deeper.

- If there was one by itself it might catch my eye, but there are so many options that they all blend together

Photographer: **Sophia**



Title: **McMillan Creek Regional Park**

Whenever I got up there it always seem so deserted, yet it's such a peaceful park. I wonder why more people not know about its beauty; although maybe its beauty is more preserved because not many people go up there. I would like to see it spruced up again with picnic tables. What role do I play as a citizen who wants to help make a region park a better place?

Participant Responses

- Where is this place? How come I don't know about it?

- It seems well-maintained, and safe

Photographer: **Stephanie**

Title: **Prince George View**

Our city, Prince George, ranked worst city to live in by MacLean's Magazine. But really it's not that bad at all. I feel like it has a lot of offer if you are open enough to get out in the community and seek it. There are all sorts of seminars, help services, and community activities. Perhaps the people who say there's nothing to do in this small town need to get involved, and help grow our city into something they wish to see. The big question on my mind, I'm just an individual, how do you get involved and where to even start?

Participant Responses

- The city looks large, but doesn't feel large

- I don't see anything that relevant to me in this; what does that mean for my place in this community?

Photographer: **Stephanie**





Title: **Community Garden**

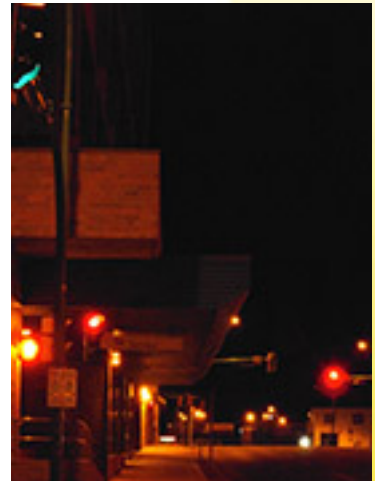
It's all in the name, 'community garden'; but am I not a part of the community. I have so many questions about it, and there seems to be no info regarding it. What part of the community is involved? Who gets to plant in there? Who reaps the benefits? How do I get involved in the community to be a proud member of the community?

Participant Responses

- This shows a good side of PG
- Who gets to use this garden? Who do the vegetables go to?

Photographer: **Stephanie**

Title: **Untitled**
 Beautiful downtown streets at night. I think politics are important. It might not be visible for lots of people, but it reveals in this photo: clean streets, stop lights, lightning, good government services.
 Photographer: **Yeyetzi**



Title: **Untitled**

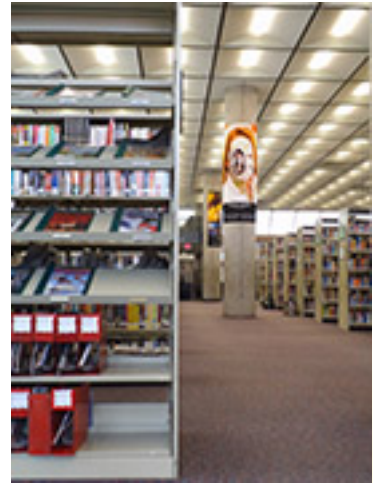
This photo is important to me because it shows that recycling can make the difference to make our world and our homes a little better.

Participant Responses

- This place would have been better off without us humans
- There is a 'piece of sand' left in a place by each person who comes through

Photographer: **Yeyetzi**

Title: **Untitled**
Read, it's the answer to fight ignorance. This is a good place to make our minds shine :)
Photographer: **Yeyetzi**



Title: **We are Able**

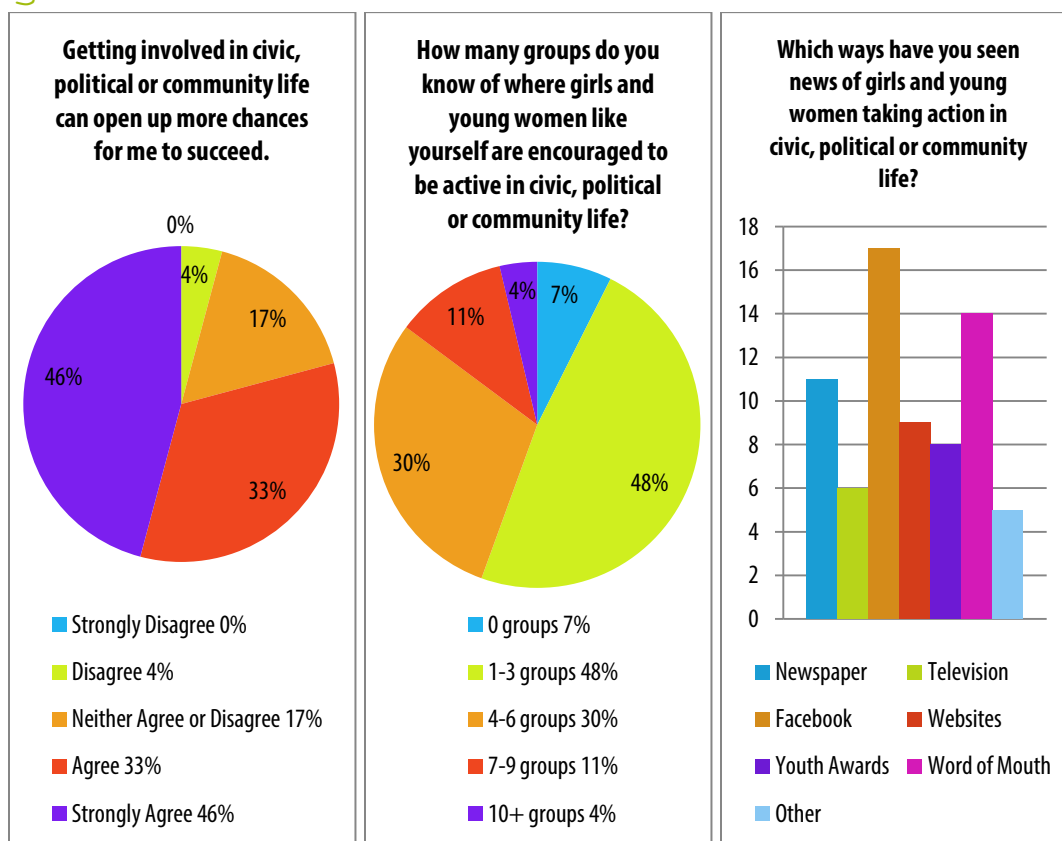
When I picture someone creating graffiti, it's not an adult. I think that certain groups of young people lack a canvas, a space for their words to be heard, and an outlet. This says to me 'you can't forget us'. That the writer feels overlooked when they have all the abilities and drive needed for participation.

Participant Responses

- Graffiti expression is important for people who don't have a space; it's their canvas
- We are human and we can do things; the message was what spoke to me rather than the act of graffiti

Photographer: **Participant**

Survey Results



The open-ended question on the survey asked the respondents what stopped them when they considered becoming involved in civic, political and community life. The responses to this question were prolific and varied, indicating that girls and service providers both believe that there are specific reasons outside apathy which prevent young women's full involvement in civic, political and community life.

- Only **2** individuals (8%) indicated that they did not know what kept young girls from being involved.
- **13** respondents (54%) indicated that they did not get involved because of how they felt they would be perceived; they expected to experience racism or sexism, among other forms of discrimination.
- **10** respondents (42%) said that they did not see information/opportunities to get involved
- **8** respondents (32%) said that they did not feel informed or educated about the issues. *This response could also mean that they believe only educated or informed individuals would be accepted in civic, political and community involvement.*
- **7** respondents (29%) indicated that the lack of time or other, more pressing responsibilities kept them from getting involved.
- **5** respondents (21%) said that there were social problems such as shyness, anxiety, and not fitting in that kept them from involvement.
- **4** respondents (16%) said that they would not join groups that focused on political, civic, and/or community involvement because they felt that they would not have an impact. One (young woman) respondent stating flatly that she felt "[young women's] views aren't listened to."

Our Message

A key part of the Photovoice process is discussing the photos. From these discussions and further reflection, the Setting the Stage team, with the help of the Steering Committee and Young Women's Advisory Committee, synthesized the following topics and barriers.

The barriers identified below are from the participant's perspectives: these are the issues they have identified as the biggest challenges to being successful in the North. As a girl-driven project, Setting the Stage gives preference to these opinions and ideas over ones that others identify on behalf of girls and young women.

Communities within communities: what are the gender biases?

There are many communities within our community, groups of people who you associate with: A rural community, a First Nation community, the Pride community, a community of workers or transportation riders. As a woman we have membership within many of these communities but often feel that our ideas and opinions are judged or given merit based on the fact that we are a woman.

"Being a girl is the biggest stone in the way."

Barrier: Gendered perceptions of our roles and ability.

This is a political and community issue.



Natural environment and our community mentality: where is the environment positioned within our community?

Prince George and the North are surrounded by beautiful natural environments; however, these spaces are also the backbone of industry. The pro-industry ideology is perceived to be at odds with the preservation of desired green spaces and sense of community. Young women feel helpless to affect community change: left without a space for input into decisions made between industry and politicians.

"Improving my community can be slow and frustrating, but [is] still worthwhile"

Barrier: A lack of space for input in to community decisions.

This is a civic and political issue.



Youth without a cause: what role do we have?

There are so many issues in the North: poverty, depression, pipeline debates, First Nation empowerment, Young Women empowerment. It is a challenge to be motivated, to choose a cause and find your role within it. Big results and successes are difficult to see and no single issue is polarizing enough to demand action. The message that 'we are alive, we are able' stands true, but is overwhelmed by the array of options communicated and the lack of understanding of how we can be effective.

"[I] feel I have to be "superwoman" to balance it all; All-or-nothing."

Barrier: A lack of effective and relevant communication about opportunities.

This is a civic and political issue.



Women role models: how do we connect with them?

There are many strong women in the Prince George and northern communities; they are politicians, businesswomen, healthcare and education professionals, mothers, aunts, sisters and community leaders. There are lots of things that we can learn from empowered women that are not taught in school. It takes strength, courage and support to be a professional woman and to ask for an experienced perspective. Young women are looking to make the connections, to build their strength and to tell others that it is okay and good to be strong.

"lots of mentors + success stories but maybe not enough connections personally"

Barrier: A lack of organized connection between young women and with mentors in our community.

This is a community issue.



Damning perceptions: which communities are we discounting?

There are some communities or groups of people that are perceived to be dangerous, illegal, or helpless. Individuals may or may not have chosen to fit into these communities but inevitably their level of importance is decreased by association: girls known to the police, girls in the wrong place at the wrong time are stigmatized. The stereotypes placed on people and neighbourhoods, the hidden crimes and the disregarded illnesses discount these communities of people and alter their voices in the North.

"Our views aren't listened to"

Barrier: The silencing effect of discrimination, stigmatization and racism.

This is a civic and political issue.



Safety: Should I feel safe?

The downtown core in Prince George is a hub for business, politics, services, restaurants and community events, but it is also wrought with safety concerns, some of which are hyped and some true. The downtown has a split sense of community: for some it is home and help but for others there has to be a reason to come downtown. It can be an isolating place, the buses run infrequently, the business and services close early, leaving many with the question "would anyone help me if I was given unwanted attention?"

"I think my dad is tired of driving me around"

Barrier: The lack of community spirit and feeling of safety.

This is a civic and community issue.



Connected and Isolated: How does UNBC connect?

Undoubtedly there are many benefits of having a university in town; however the University on the Hill creates a disconnect: security issues felt dealt with internally, limited transportation, duplicate initiatives created on the hill. A university builds skills and knowledge needed to affect change, but many students lack the local connections needed to understand community realities.

*"I see lots of young women's engagement in all sorts of aspects of life **at the university**" (emphasis added)*

Barrier: The self-contained campus makes it difficult for students to fully participate in the wider-community.

This is a civic and community issue.



Next Steps

Setting the Stage's objectives are to develop the capacity of girls and young women and to support measures to respond to the underrepresentation of girls and young women in civic, political and community life. The following phases of the Setting the Stage project will be girl and young women driven; they will act on innovative strategies to overcome these barriers and positively impact their communities. This girl-driven change will be most effective if coupled with community action. The next two Setting the Stage events will begin a conversation with the community and between young women on the strategies and actions possible.

Public Display of the Photovoice Results

Setting the Stage's Photovoice Exhibit is entitled **Inspire Action**. The photos taken by the young women at Photovoice will be on display at the Prince George Public Library for a week and the public will be invited to view and feedback the young women's message. The opening of the exhibit will be a larger event to which community leaders and members will be invited to participate in a facilitated dialogue with the young women. Everyone will be asked to speak about how they relate to the photo, to reflect on the message the young women captured in the photo, and to brainstorm ideas for action.

Project Planning Workshop.

In September, Setting the Stage will hold a Project Planning Workshop to continue the dialogue started at the Photovoice Exhibit. The girls and young women, with the help of facilitators, will prioritize the needs identified, choose two or three projects that would address the barriers and begin to identify the skills required to see the project through to success. Based on the ideas generated at the Project Planning Workshop, the Setting the Stage team will work with the Steering Committee and the Young Women's Advisory Committee to organize and host young women empowering activities.



Please join us at the opening of

INSPIRE ACTION

SETTING THE STAGE'S PHOTOVOICE EXHIBIT

This event is a showcase of photos taken by young women aged 14-26 about the barriers holding them back from active participation in our community. You are invited to see their messages, hear their voices and share in a dialog about making our young women and our community stronger.

Date
Wednesday August 21, 2013

Location
Prince George Public Library (Bob Harkins Branch)
Keith Gordon Room

Time
10:00 Open Gallery
10:30 Opening Remarks
11:00 Young Woman + Community Dialogue
12:30 Light Lunch
1:00 - 4:30 Open Gallery

Please confirm your attendance

For more information please contact us:
tonianne@imss.ca OR ley@imss.ca 250.562.2900
www.facebook.com/SettingTheStage.pg



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- 3 CONNECTIONS
- 4 VOICE

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