REFLECTIVE CONVERSATION GUIDE

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge and respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territories the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and the WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

On this day of action and remembrance it is important to acknowledge the violent impacts—historical and current—of colonization on Indigenous women and girls, both as Indigenous people and because they are female. Intergenerational colonial violence is manifested through the high numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. Violence also impacts Two-Spirit people at disproportionate rates.

Indigenous women and girls disproportionately face life-threatening, gender-based violence because of hatred and racism. Across Canada, Indigenous women are three times more likely to experience violence than non-Indigenous women and are murdered at a rate seven times higher than non-Indigenous women. Indigenous women are reporting higher rates of physical and psychological violence as increased stress and anxiety impact people’s ability to live healthy, safe and secure lives.

While we reflect and commit to action to end gender-based and sexualized violence, we must do so with the understanding of our shared responsibility to transform harmful colonial systems to ensure justice and equality for all.

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1 [Fact_Sheet_Violence_Against_Aboriginal_Women.pdf (nwac.ca)]
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

In support of Canada’s National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women, UVic cancels all classes from 11:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m. on December 4 this year. Through this guide, we invite all members of the UVic community to take an hour—either during the scheduled time or elsewhere during the week—to reflect on gender-based violence as a way to engage with this important annual event and significant social need.

Ways to participate:
1. Engage in personal reflection
2. Facilitate or participate in a group reflective conversation, following COVID protocols
3. Review materials in this document to learn about the context for this day and about gender-based violence

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Personal reflection is highly individual. Every person approaches this topic from their own experiences and current levels of resilience. If this is a triggering topic for you and you want to reflect, we encourage you to find a way that feels safe and to seek the supports you need. If you are not triggered by this topic or have not considered it before, this is an opportunity to deepen your knowledge and commitment to a violence-free society.

Ways to reflect
• Take a walk
• Find a comfortable spot to sit or spend time
• Read or watch something on the topic (see Section 3: Context for this day)
• Write, draw, sing, dance or craft your reflections
• Write to or speak with someone on this topic if they would like to connect

Questions for reflection
• How does my gender affect my relationship with violence?
• How has violence impacted my life? My community?
• How do I contribute towards either violence or peaceful, respectful relationships?
• How do I practice consent in my interactions? How can I increase my practice of consent?
• What do I want to replace violence with?
REFLECTIVE CONVERSATION

WHAT DOES HOSTING A REFLECTIVE CONVERSATION INVOLVE?

Anyone can host a conversation and it can be as structured or as open as you want. The purpose is to encourage small groups of friends, co-workers or classmates to reflect on the impacts of gender-based violence and commit to taking individual action.

Consider the following elements to create a welcoming space:
- Ensure that the purpose of the conversation is clear
- Ensure that it is simple for people to either opt in or out of the conversation
- Review some version of the guidelines below yourself and with the group
- Based on the group, use your own wisdom and their feedback to identify what else will contribute towards a place where people can listen and learn together

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGING IN REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE

The topic of gender-based violence is serious and discussing it is impactful. It requires courage, compassion, humility and commitment to action. These conversations can be emotional, painful, and difficult. We recommend that you practice the following guiding principles in your reflective dialogue session:

Acknowledge and respect intersectionality
- Everyone is differently impacted by gender-based violence: each person comes from different social positions, rooted in interconnecting systems and structures of power that produce intersecting forms of privilege and oppression.

Approach listening with openness and respect
- Be open to receiving and processing information and ideas shared by others. Try to understand what they mean. Do your best to suspend judgment while listening. Be mindful of any judgments that do arise.

‘Move up/move back’
- Reflect on how you generally function in a group discussion. With that self-knowledge, consider how to contribute towards a balanced conversation. Do you need to listen more? Speak up? Wait before you speak? Let others take the lead?
Speak from your own position and experiences

- Speak from the ‘I’. Talking for someone else often comes from assumptions that could be insulting or harmful.

Witnessing is participation

- No one is required to do anything that does not feel right to them, including sharing their opinions or suggestions. Witnessing is a form of participation and is a way of contributing to the conversation.

Be mindful when asking questions

- Be mindful of the difference between asking questions about theory and practice, and asking questions of someone about their story or identity. Consider that some people are subjected to intrusive questions on a regular basis. This does not mean never asking, it just means being thoughtful and finding out if the other person truly wants to share. Consider if you are asking simply out of your own curiosity, or whether it is to inform the work that is being done.

Disagree with the idea, not the person

- Have a healthy respect for differences of opinion. Be open to receiving multiple perspectives. Recognize that each perspective offers something you can learn from.

Make space for people to come as they are

- No one can know more than they do at any given moment. All each of us can do is to try to move forward in a good way, seeking greater understanding and learning how to apply that understanding in tangible ways. Be responsible for your own learning and be mindful that not everyone will have the same level of understanding.

Maintain confidentiality

- Conversation participants should not share anyone else’s personal stories unless they have express permission from the other person. Why?
  - Because the stories shared belong only to the people involved
  - Because conversation participants may attend classes together, or be part of a team, or work together, it is especially important
  - Because participants should not feel like what they choose to share here, or their struggles as they engage in a good faith process of learning, be used against them outside of this space
PROCESS TO HOST AND FACILITATE A REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE

Preparation
1. Consider reviewing the [Leading Groups Online Guide](#). This is a great resource that provides concrete principles for inclusive online engagement. They include:
   i. Be you.
   ii. Practice the technology
   iii. Minimize people’s multitasking
   iv. Engage frequently and in varied ways
   v. Manage energy
   vi. Honor people’s emotional state in this crisis
   vii. Track participation
   viii. Let people know you “see” them
   ix. Oppression is compounded by technology
   x. Release yourself and your group of perfection

Getting started
1. Start with a territorial acknowledgement and connect to reflecting and committing to action to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence
2. Review technical tools (Zoom/Microsoft Teams/Google Meets/Etc., use of chat function, will there be a chat moderator, etc.)

Guiding principles
1. Review guiding principles
2. Discuss if anything should be added, clarified, removed
3. Invite the group to support one another to hold the space for the dialogue and keep each other accountable to the guiding principles

Engage in reflective dialogue
1. Begin/facilitate the dialogue using any/all of the following questions:
   - Start with individual/personal reflection questions:
     o What brought you to this dialogue today?
     o What comes to mind when you hear the term gender-based violence?
     o The research and media tells us that there is an increase in gender-based violence under the COVID-19 pandemic. What factors might have contributed to this? What interventions could reduce the incidence of violence?
   - Collective/group:
     o What are the factors that contribute to gender-based violence?
     o What are some of the risk factors on campus for violence?
     o What changes—educational, structural, organizational or other—could reduce violence and increase safety?
What are the impacts of gender-based violence on: Victims and survivors; witnesses; marginalized communities; perpetrators; UVic

- Systemic:
  - How do we see gender-based and sexualized violence reinforced in our everyday lives?
  - What more could/should UVic be doing to prevent and eliminate gender-based and sexualized violence on campus?

- Action:
  - What are the game changers to ensure that gender-based violence prevention and response is prioritized?

Commit to action
1. Conclude the session with a discussion on commitments to action.
2. Share the commitments with us by emailing: ravaw@uvic.ca

Feedback on the process
1. If you can, tell us how it went. We do not need to hear about the content of the discussion, but feedback on what worked well in the process, what was helpful in the guide and what else we could do to improve it would be greatly appreciated. Feel free to email any comments, question or suggestions to equitymanager@uvic.ca or eqhr@uvic.ca.

CONTEXT FOR THIS DAY

BACKGROUND:

It has been over 30 years since the murder of 14 young women at École Polytechnique de Montréal (December 6, 1989). This act of violent misogyny shook our country and led Parliament to designate December 6 as The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women.

As we mourn the loss and honour the memory of these students, we reaffirm our commitment to fight the hatred that led to this tragedy, and the misogyny that still exists today. In Canada and around the world, women, girls, LGBTQ2S+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two spirit) and gender diverse individuals face unacceptable violence and discrimination. Gender-based violence in Canada has been magnified and amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been reports from police services, shelters and local organization of an increase in calls related to gender-based violence across Canada during the pandemic.
The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women is about remembering those who have experienced gender-based violence and those who we have lost to it. It is also a time to take action. Working together, we can help prevent and address gender-based violence by remembering and learning from our past, listening to survivors, and speaking up against harmful behaviours and systems that reinforce and perpetuate all forms of gender-based and sexualized violence.

CURRENT CONTEXT:

The Shadow Pandemic: COVID-19 and the rise of violence against women and girls
Within the context of the current pandemic, the rates of violence against women are rising. According to the UN Women (2020), “since the outbreak of COVID-19, emerging data and reports from those on the front lines, have shown that all types of violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence, has intensified.” This is being called the Shadow Pandemic that is growing as the pandemic continues to put significant pressure and strain on health services, shelters and essential services.

Furthermore, an intersectional perspective shows that people with intersectional marginalized identities such as race, ethnicity, disability, class, migration status, gender identity including non-binary genders, sexual orientation, and faith, face an increased risk of violence. The combination of other forms of identity with gender further reduces access to support services. These services were grossly underfunded prior to the pandemic and are more so now.

Read Home is not safe for everyone: COVID-19 pandemic impacts on gender-based violence in Canada.

Watch this video on the rise of domestic violence during COVID-19

Freedom from gender-based violence is a human right
According to the Minister if the Status of Women Canada, The Honourable Maryam Monsef, “Gender-based violence is one of the most pervasive, deadly and deeply-rooted human rights violation of our time.”

Women have the right to live free from violence. This right is upheld by international agreements which Canada has signed on to including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

5 https://discoversociety.org/2020/05/15/race-intersectionality-and-covid-19/
According to this Declaration, violence against women is “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

As we reflect and commit to action to end gender-based and sexualized violence, it is important to remember that women, girls, Indigenous Peoples, LGBTQ2S+ and gender non-binary people, racialized, those living in northern, rural and remote communities, person with disabilities, newcomers to Canada, children, youth and seniors are more at risk of experiencing gender-based violence. As such, our commitment to prevent and eliminate all forms of gender-based and sexualized violence must include a human rights approach and an intersectional lens.


**UVic recognizes the ongoing imperative to address gender based violence by taking strong action and supporting those who have experienced harm.** See [https://www.uvic.ca/equity/sexualized-violence/index.php](https://www.uvic.ca/equity/sexualized-violence/index.php)

**UVic Engineering** is deeply committed to equity, diversity and inclusivity at all levels; including a strong commitment to increasing the number and improving the experience of women, trans and gender nonconforming students pursuing an engineering degree. It is critical that our all students, including women, trans, and gender nonconforming feel welcome, supported and able to see themselves as a vital part of the profession.