

# VOICES IN THE ART

EXPLORING INTERSECTING IDENTITIES AND  
EXPERIENCES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE  
AMONGST NEWCOMER 2SLGBTQIA+ YOUTH

## This report was produced by The Immigrant Education Society's (TIES) Centre for Immigrant Research

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**In Partnership with:**



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

## About The Immigrant Education Society (TIES)

The Immigrant Education Society (TIES) is a not-for-profit registered charitable organization that has been serving newcomers and Canadians since 1988. The primary goal of the organization is to provide immigrants and economically disadvantaged individuals with a solid foothold in Canada and afford them the opportunities to feel belonging in their new community. TIES is governed by a Board of Directors made up of devoted community-minded volunteers and operates through funding from both government and private organizations. Since 1992, TIES has been offering the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program, with over a thousand clients participating daily. In the early 2000s, TIES expanded its services to include employment and settlement programs and later introduced the Centre for Immigrant Research to further strengthen its research capabilities. More recently, TIES added childcare services, enhancing its ability to support the diverse needs of newcomers.

TIES now operates and fully owns two large facilities in Calgary's Northeast, Forest Lawn and Whitehorn neighbourhoods. In December 2021, TIES expanded its services to a new, larger facility in the Westwinds area of Northeast Calgary. Since its inception, TIES has assisted over 350,000 clients in strengthening their identities as members of Alberta society.

	<b>LEARN ENGLISH</b>
	<b>GET EMPLOYED</b>
	<b>LIVE IN CANADA</b>
	<b>CARE FOR CHILDREN</b>
	<b>CENTRE FOR IMMIGRANT RESEARCH</b>

## About TIES Centre for Immigrant Research

The Centre aims to use evidence-based knowledge, data, and best practices to inform services and programs and help newcomers settle in Canada. Research projects and programs emerge from and are driven by impacted communities and practitioners. The Centre focuses on three main areas: community-based research, program development, and providing evaluation services.



### **Community-based Research**

Ongoing research allows us to identify and address barriers to integration and share best practices. The Centre employs researchers experienced in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches.



### **Program Development**

We aim to determine and respond to community needs by designing both well-established and innovative solutions and testing pilot programs.



### **Evaluation**

We provide fee-for-service program evaluations, systems mapping, community engagement, staff satisfaction evaluation, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) evaluation, etc.

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# Executive Summary



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

**V**oices in the Art (VIA) was a 31-month project funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada that examined gender-based violence (GBV) among newcomer 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. The project addressed a significant gap in existing research and services by exploring how GBV was experienced at the intersection of newcomer status, youth, sexual orientation, and gender identity—an area that had been largely overlooked despite evidence that 2SLGBTQIA+ youth face disproportionately high rates of GBV (Wright et al., 2023).



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

VIA was an intervention-through-research project that used Arts-Based Engagement Ethnography (ABEE). Through this approach, the project engaged youth in creative processes that reflected lived experiences and perspectives. The resulting artwork and narratives illuminated four key areas: intersecting identities, social relationships, integration into Canadian society, and experiences of GBV.

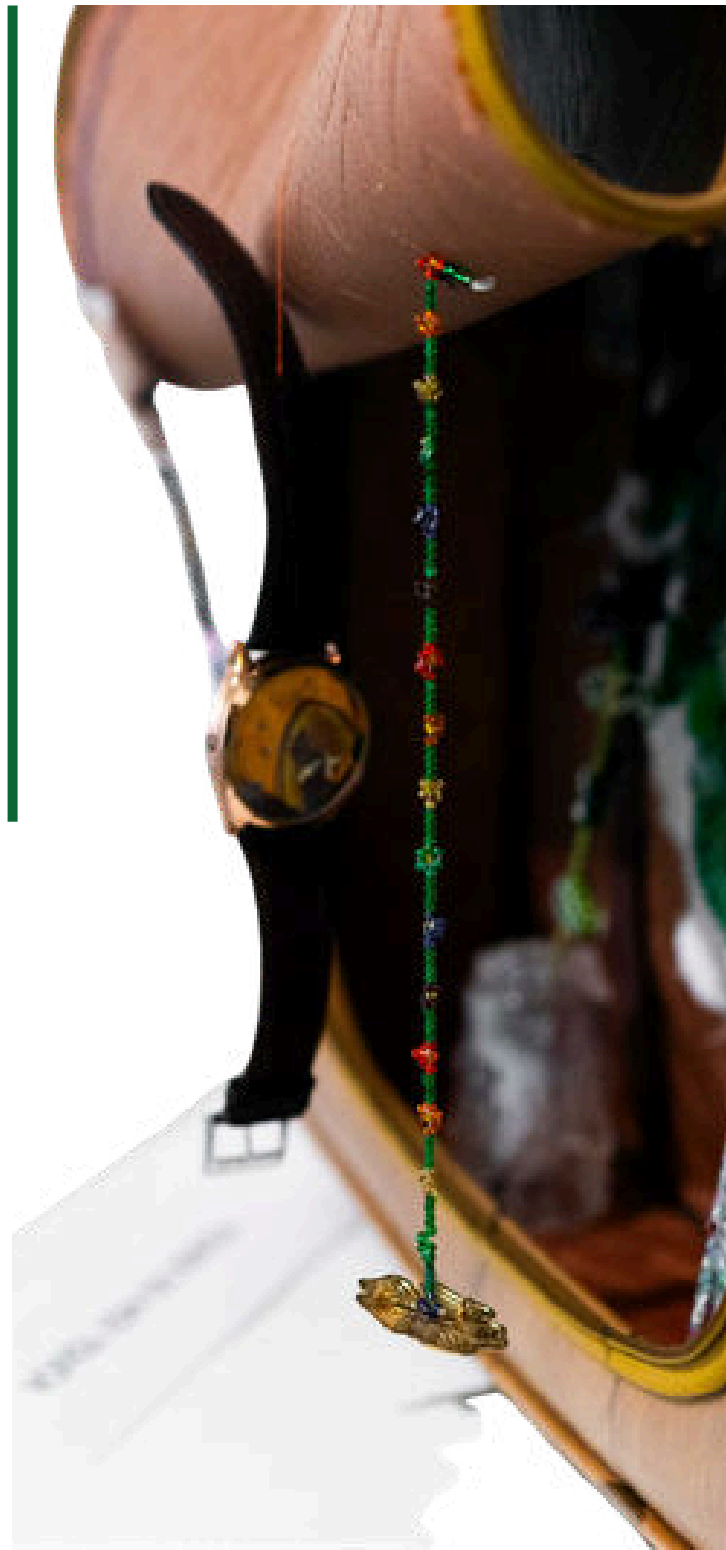
# Introduction

**V**IA created a space for newcomer 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in Calgary to share their lived experiences through art, storytelling, and conversation. This report outlines key findings gathered throughout the project, including insights from our scoping review, quantitative survey, and qualitative findings. The report also provides recommendations for policy and practice based on these insights. VIA ran from September 1, 2023 to March 31, 2026.

For more information about this project, please scan the QR code:



<https://ties-research-prod.webflow.io/research/voices-in-the-art>



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project



**01**  
**SCOPING REVIEW**

PROOF

# Scoping Review

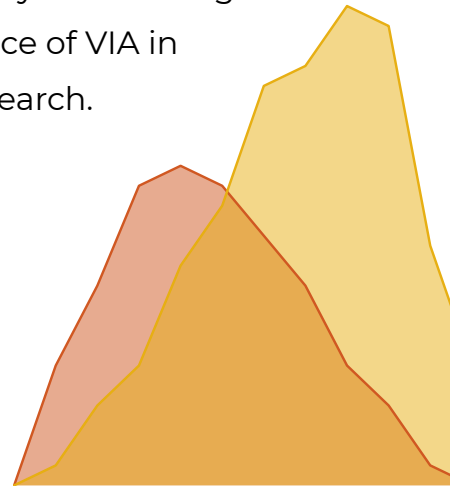
## SCHOLARSHIP ON LGBTQIA+ MIGRANTS IN THE SOCIAL WORK FIELD: A SCOPING REVIEW

This review used an intersectional lens to examine social work scholarship on LGBTQIA+ migrants to map trends and identify gaps. The findings show that the literature is concentrated in the Global North and skewed towards health and mental health as a topic. Economic migrants are studied more than vulnerable groups such as asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants. The literature also focused mainly on men who have sex with men, gay, lesbian, and bisexual identities. Although representation of diverse identities has grown, LGBTQIA+ migrant youth emerged as understudied. The findings from this review underscore the importance of VIA in giving voice to a group that has received little attention in existing research.

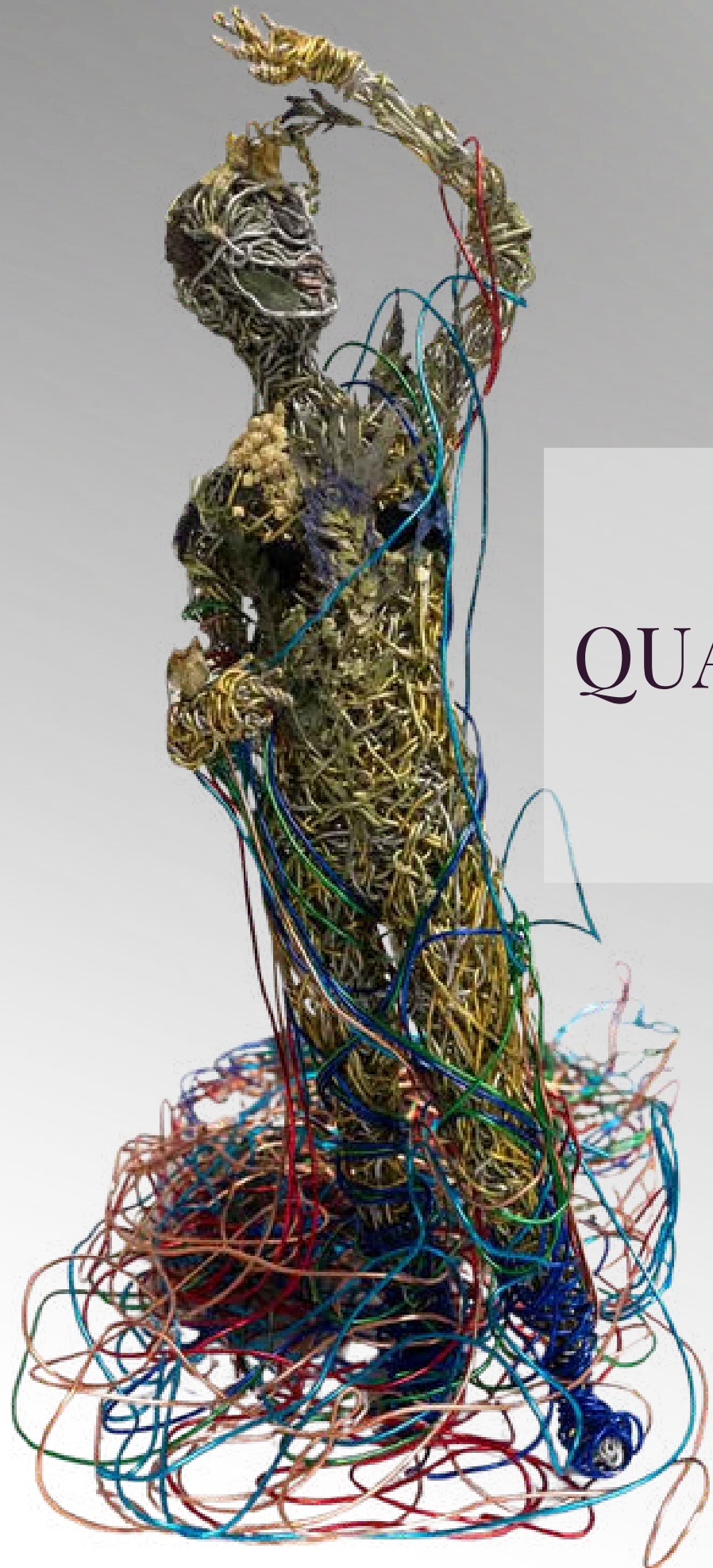
### MAIN FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The review included 94 articles in the final analysis, considering key aspects such as topic, population, methodology, geography, and time period.

- **Focus Areas** - Research is primarily on health and mental health; other topics remain underexplored.
- **Methods & Geography** - Most studies use qualitative methods and are conducted in the Global North.
- **Migrant Groups** - Economic migrants receive more attention than vulnerable groups such as asylum seekers and undocumented migrants.
- **Gender & Sexual Identities** - Literature mainly addresses men who have sex with men, followed by gay, lesbian, and bisexual identities; LGBTQIA+ migrant youth are largely understudied.
- **Trends Over Time** - The number of identities studied has increased, reflecting growing intersectional awareness in social work research.



The review highlights the need for more inclusive and intersectional research in social work that addresses the full diversity of LGBTQIA+ migrants, particularly youth and other underrepresented groups, and encourages broader methodological and topical approaches.



**02**  
**QUANTITATIVE**  
**SURVEY**

Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

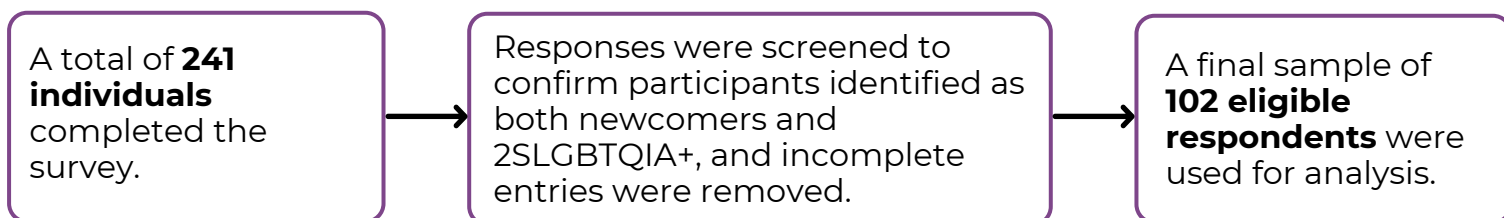
# Quantitative Survey

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of the survey was to understand the types and patterns of violence experienced within this population. By identifying variations in exposure, as well as the factors that may heighten vulnerability or shape risk, quantitative findings can provide further context into the narratives of newcomer 2SLGBTQIA+ youth.

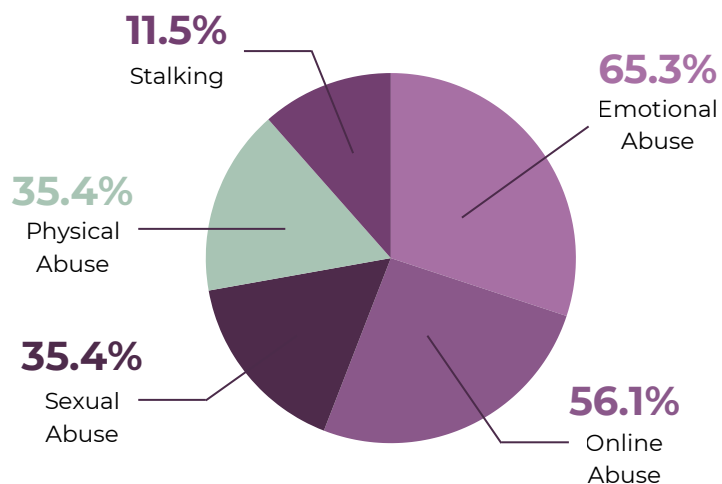
## METHODOLOGY

A nation-wide survey was distributed via Qualtrics to more than 300 organizations across Canada that serve newcomer and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. The survey was available in English and French to increase accessibility.



## MAIN FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

When asked about the types of gender-based violence respondents experienced:



- Roughly  $\frac{1}{4}$  of participants had experienced **4 or 5** forms of abuse

When asked about the respondents' responses to gender-based violence:

Avoid Public Spaces



Sought Formal Help (i.e. counsellors or teachers)

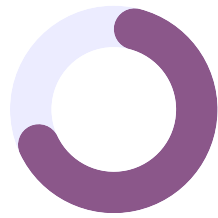


Sought Informal Help (i.e. friends or online platforms)



- On average, participants reported experiencing over **2** forms of abuse

## DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS



**72%**

Aged 22 or under



**71%**

Most commonly identified sexual orientation was gay, lesbian, and bisexual



**57.4%**

Partnered



**53.3%**

Temporary Residents



**42%**

Originally came from an Asian country

## PATTERNS ACROSS DEMOGRAPHICS

1 Partnered respondents were more likely to report sexual violence than single respondents



**51%**

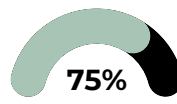
Partnered



**20%**

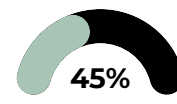
Single

2 Men reported higher rates of online harassment than women or non-binary and genderfluid respondents.



**75%**

Men



**45%**

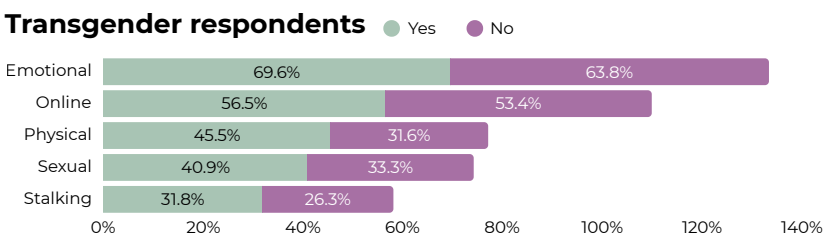
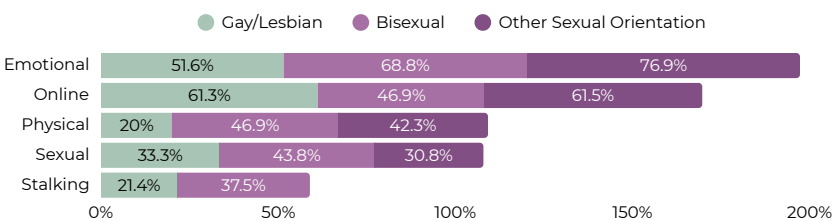
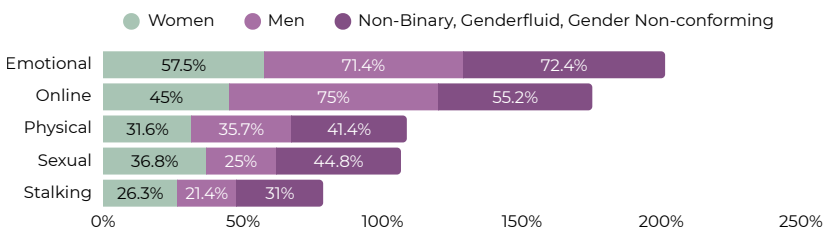
Women



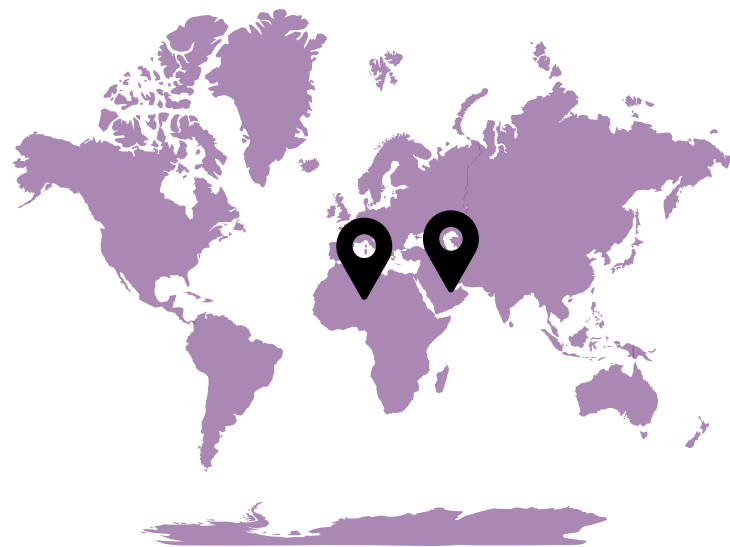
**55%**

Non-Binary and Genderfluid

3 Non-binary, genderfluid, and gender non-conforming, transgender, or bisexual individuals were often the ones reporting abuses most frequently.



4 Respondents from Southwest Asia and North Africa had higher levels of reported abuse.





Participant Artwork from the VIA Project



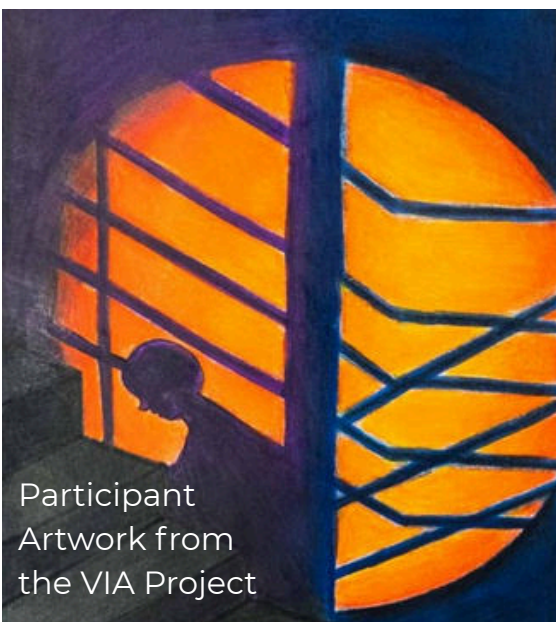
Participant  
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the VIA Project



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the VIA Project

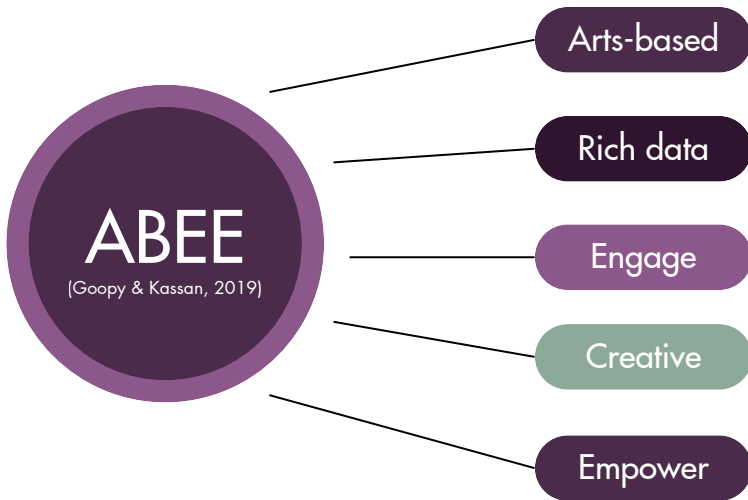


# 03 QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS

# Methodology

## Arts Based Engagement Ethnography (ABEE)

VIA used Arts Based Engagement Ethnography (ABEE) as a methodological approach to qualitatively understand the intersectional experiences of newcomer 2SLGBTQIA+ youth (Goopy & Kassan, 2019). This use of **arts-based** methods has numerous benefits, as it allowed participants to visually display how they navigate their intersecting identities and experiences of GBV through a creative and **participant-led** approach.

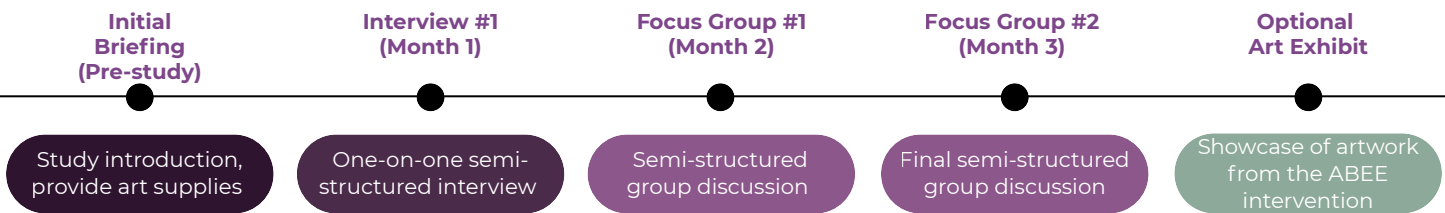


Key attributes of ABEE.

Participants were given a range of art supplies, such as polaroid cameras, film, sketchbooks, stationary, and maps of their city and the world. They were also provided with a package of prompts to help inspire and support them with creating art. As aforementioned, the artwork provided a **medium for discussing experiences** which can be difficult. The artwork that participants created was then used as a basis for their interview guide, meaning that participants had complete agency in how they wanted to portray and share their experiences. The artwork and interviews combined yielded **rich insights** in to their experiences.

ABEE encouraged **creativity** and self-expression, acting not only as a research methodology, but as an intervention, allowing participants to explore their identities and experiences in a safe and supportive environment. Many VIA participants highlighted how using the art supplies and creating artwork felt healing, as it provided them with a tool for personal development and empowerment. Highlighting participants' lived experiences through their artwork and their voices was central to ABEE and the VIA project.

### What was it like to participate?



**Initial Briefing:** Participants began with a detailed in-person briefing session, where they signed consent forms and completed a demographic survey. They also received the cultural probes (art supplies) and reviewed prompts to help spark reflection. **Interview #1:** Participants had about a month to begin creating artwork before coming to a one-on-one semi-structured interview where they provided context and explained the meaning behind their artwork. **Focus Groups #1 and #2:** Participants joined focus groups in their second and third months participating in VIA. These groups were organized by age, and were a place for participants to come together and build community while discussing emergent themes from the individual interviews. **Optional Art Exhibit:** Participants had the option to showcase their artwork in community spaces to raise awareness, foster empowerment, and further build connections with other participants.


# Participants

## Arts Based Engagement Ethnography (ABEE)

VIA engaged a total of 45 participants across four cohorts in the ABEE research intervention. Each cohort spanned approximately three months, with 10-12 participants in each cohort.

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

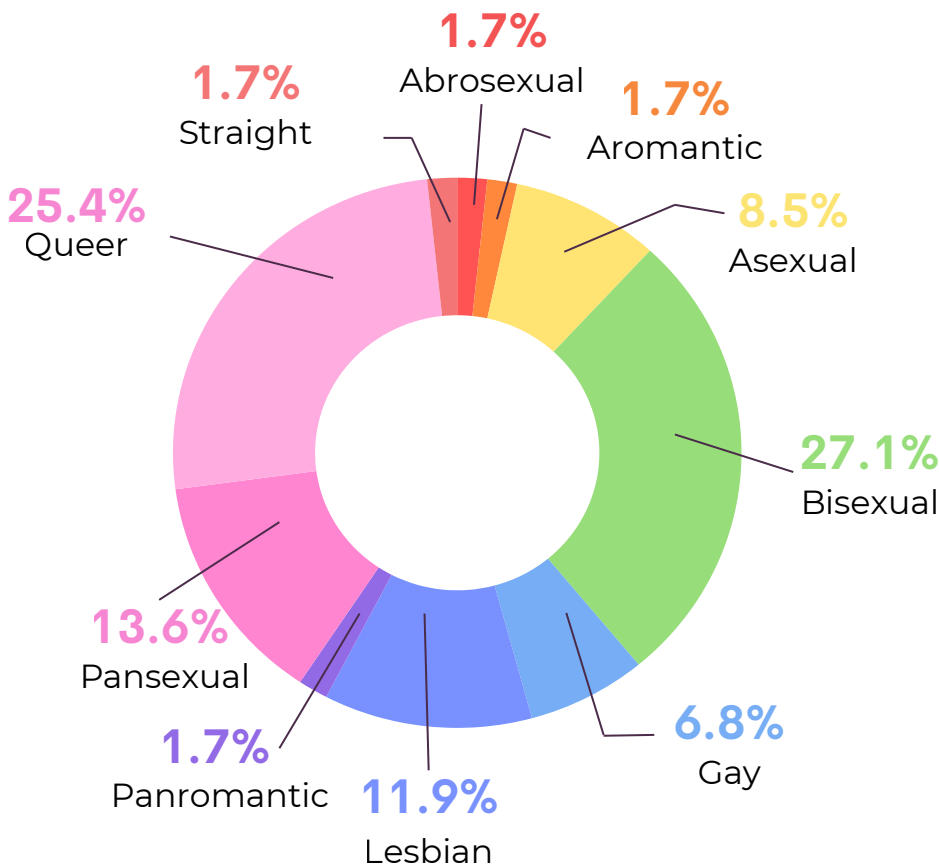
#### Participants had to:

-  Currently live in Calgary (AB)
-  Identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ or were exploring their gender identity and/or sexual orientation
-  Be between the ages of 14-24
-  Have arrived to Canada in less than 10 years with the intention to settle permanently
-  Have sufficient English language proficiency

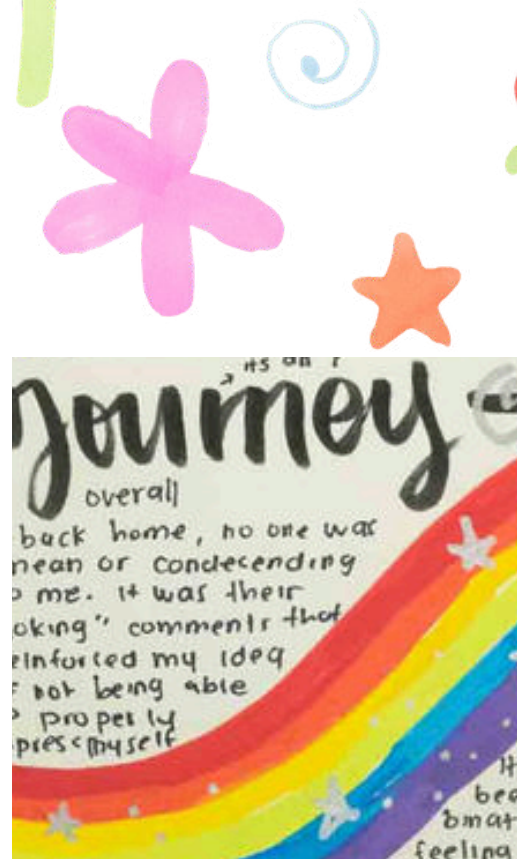
### DEMOGRAPHICS

40 participants met the above eligibility criteria. An additional 5 participants who fell outside of the eligibility criteria (due age and time in Canada) were also welcomed to participate in the ABEE intervention and were placed in separate focus groups within the cohorts. The data in this report is drawn from all 45 participants, including the demographics shown below.

#### Sexual Orientation



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

\*Many participants identified with multiple sexual orientations

# Participants

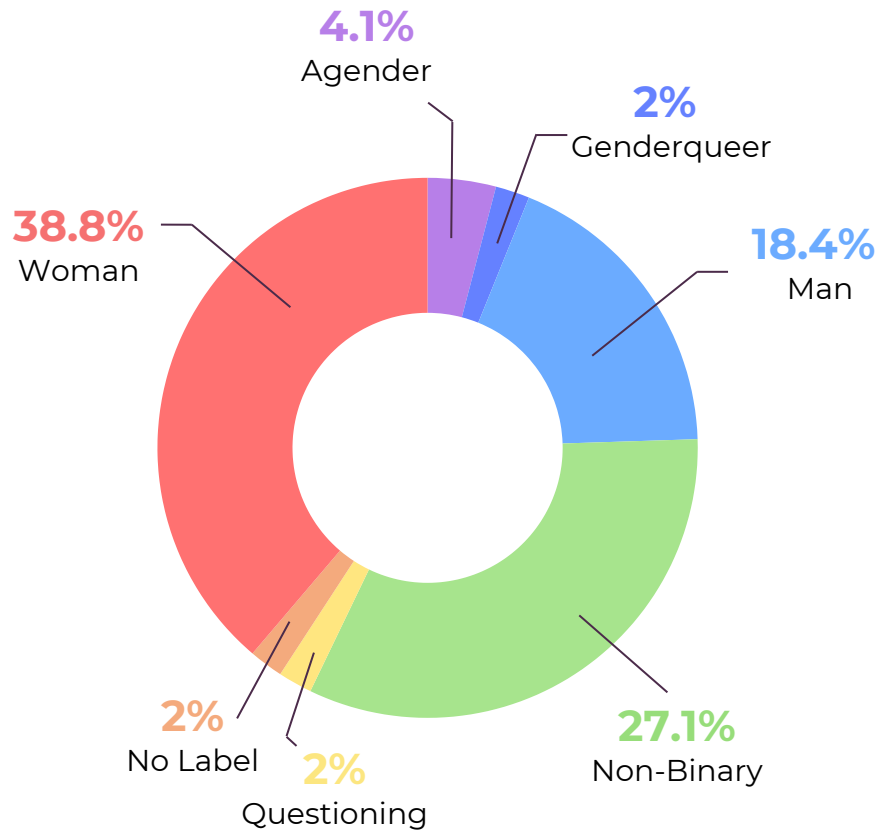
## Arts Based Engagement Ethnography (ABEE)

### DEMOGRAPHICS

#### Gender Identity

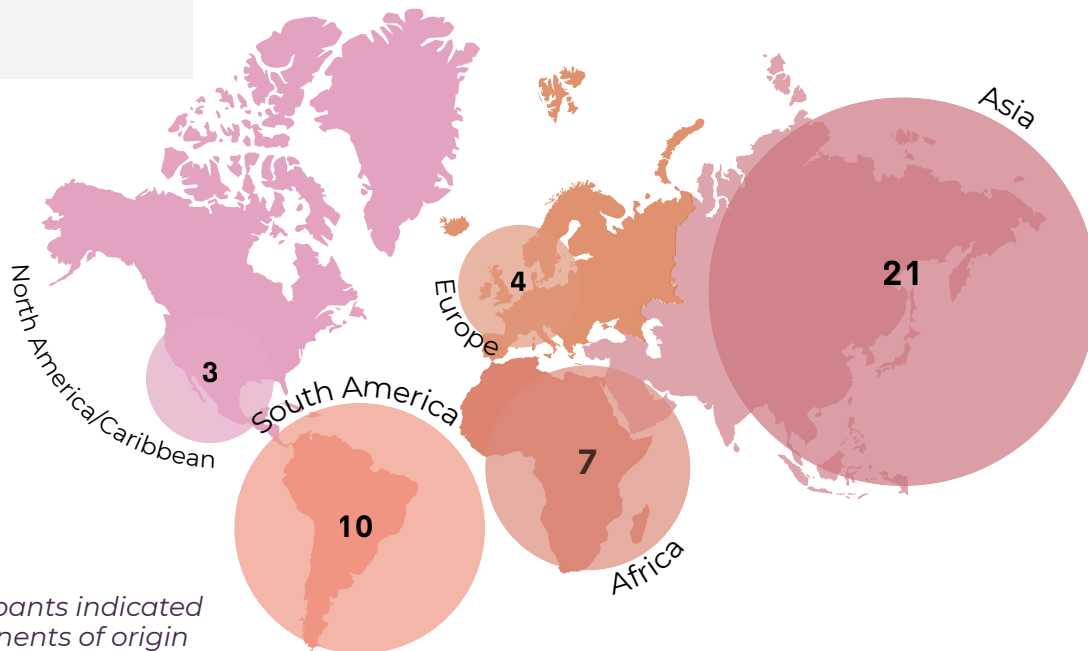


Participant Artwork from the VIA Project



*\*Many participants identified with multiple gender identities*

#### Continent of Origin (by number of participants)



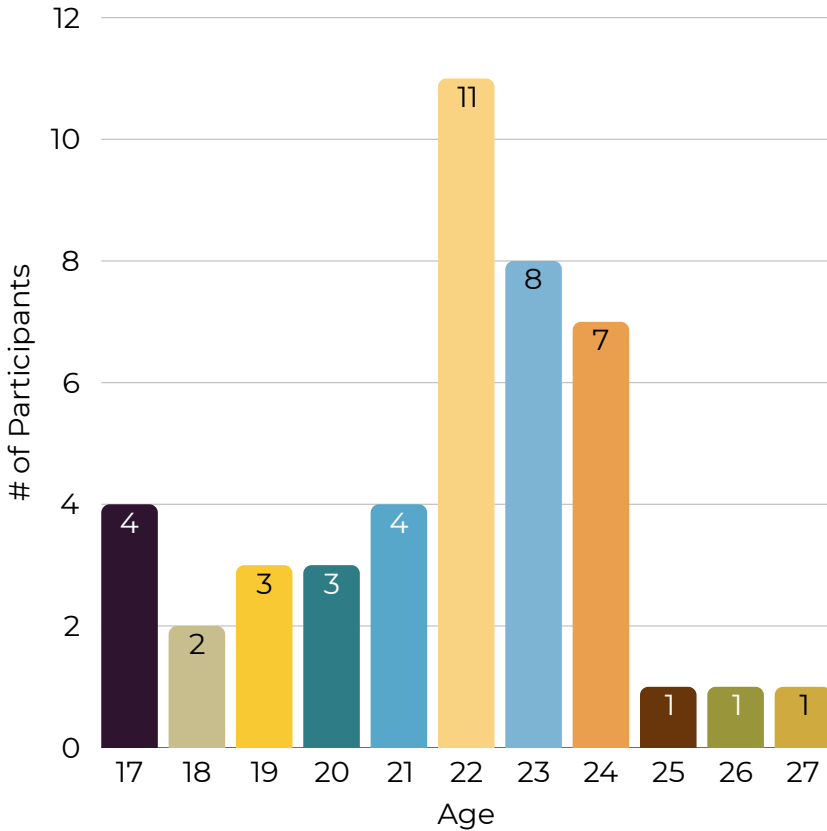
*\*Some participants indicated multiple continents of origin*

# Participants

## Arts Based Engagement Ethnography (ABEE)

### DEMOGRAPHICS

#### Age

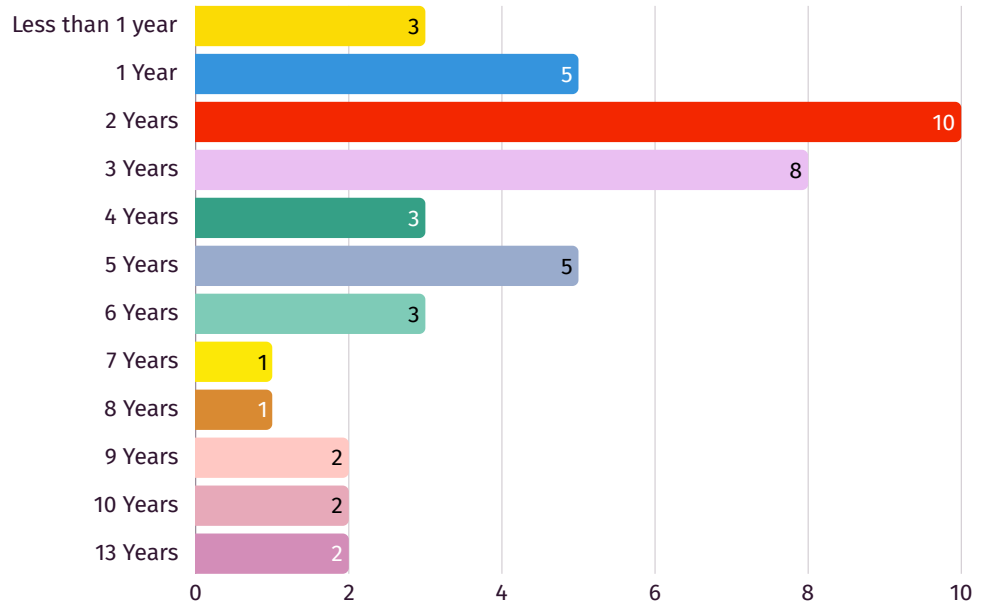


Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

#### Time in Canada



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project



# Methodology

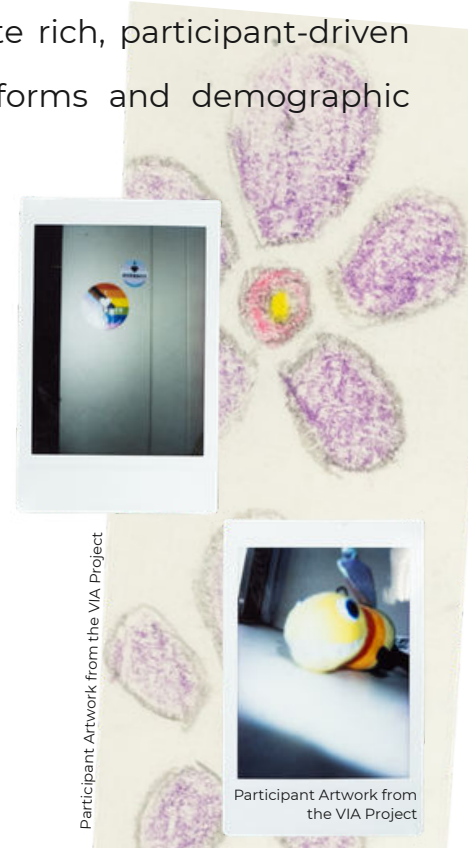
## Data Analysis Using ABEE

### Data Collection

Following the ABEE methodology (Goopy & Kassan, 2019; Kassan et al., 2020), data collection unfolded across three interconnected phases designed to generate rich, participant-driven insights. Before beginning, all participants completed consent forms and demographic questionnaires.

### Phase

**1** introduced cultural probes—such as Polaroid cameras, journals, stencils, and other art materials—to encourage participants to document their intersectional experiences over a two-week period. Participants could also use their own materials. The resulting artifacts were collected, sorted, and coded by the research team to inform Phase Two.

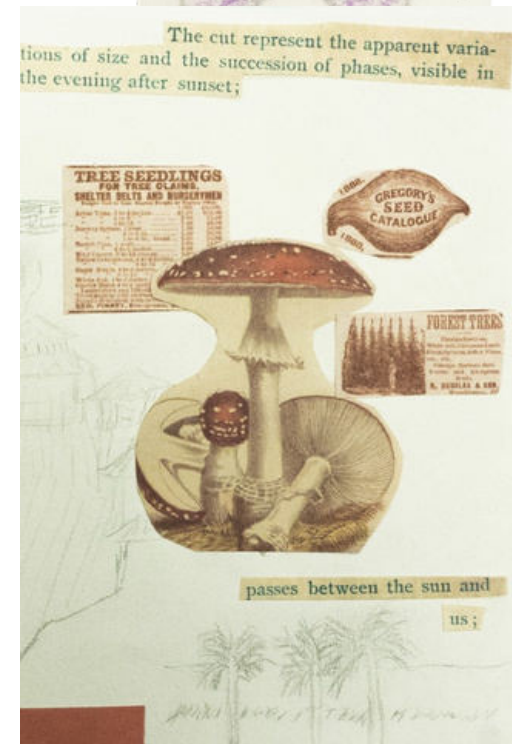


### Phase

**2** consisted of individualized qualitative interviews lasting 45–90 minutes. Each interview used the participant’s artifacts as anchor points for open-ended discussion. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and supplemented with observer notes from a research team member.

### Phase

**3** involved cohort-based group discussions (90–120 minutes), which explored emerging themes from the individual interviews and allowed participants to collectively reflect on shared experiences. These discussions were also recorded, transcribed, and supported by researcher field notes. A subset of participants later engaged in optional follow-up interviews and group discussions to deepen and clarify earlier interpretations. Participants received a \$50 honorarium for each interview or group session completed.



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

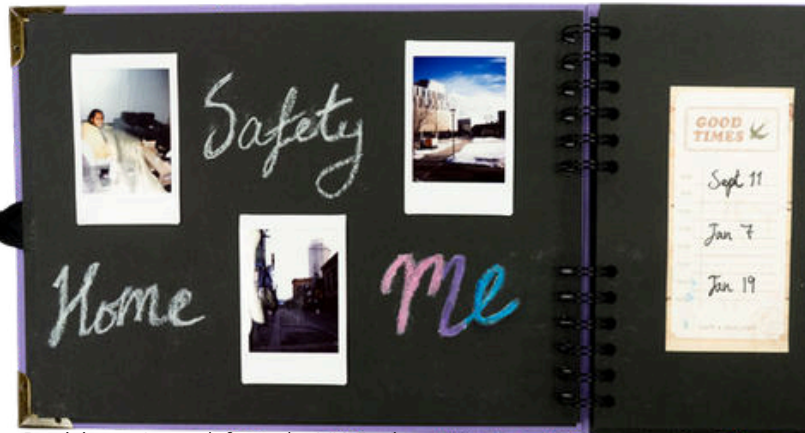
# Methodology

## Data Analysis Using ABEE

### Data Analysis

All transcripts and participant artifacts were imported into NVivo 14 for systematic qualitative analysis. The research team followed ABEE's three-step analytic framework (Mukred et al., 2024): **pre-analysis**, **analysis**, and **integration**.

**D**uring **pre-analysis**, participant artifacts were reviewed and preliminary codes were developed. These early codes helped shape questions and focus areas for the initial individual interviews.



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

The **analysis** stage involved detailed, iterative examination of interviews and group discussions. Researchers read and reread transcripts, recorded margin notes and initial codes, and extracted key meaning units. These steps supported the development of patterns, structures, and ultimately themes and sub-themes for each participant and discussion group. A second researcher verified emerging patterns to enhance credibility and provide alternative interpretations.



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

In the **integration** stage, findings were compared across participants and group discussions within each cohort. This process enabled the research team to synthesize themes into cohesive, representative accounts of participants' experiences, which form the basis of the findings presented in the subsequent section.



Participants Artwork from the VIA Project



04

# FINDINGS



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

# Experiences of Gender-Based Violence Among Newcomer 2SLGBTQIA+ Youth

The findings from VIA highlight the complex and deeply intersectional nature of gender-based violence (GBV) as experienced by newcomer 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. Participants described GBV not as a single or isolated phenomenon, but as something shaped by the convergence of multiple identities—including immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, and cultural background. As a result, the meaning of GBV varied considerably across participants, informed by their unique histories, migration journeys, and day-to-day realities.



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

*“Yeah, it was very much illegal to be queer in like both the places I grew up in and then every other place I've traveled to as well, like definitely cannot be gay in the [country in West Asia].” – Nour*

disconnect



even here / always aware

Transgender references removed from Stonewall monument website

LGBTQ+ activists 'something' after vandalized

Banning surrogacy activists say targets

White House declares son's gender can't be

Police hunt two people after hate crime before

Records will be key ban on female trans relations show

Ontario libraries be ready' after to ban hook

Toronto musical grassroots corporate s

Alberta legislation youth, student education s

Upstreet Craft Brewing devastating' for P.E.I.'s community

Supreme Court on LA immigr

Relations elders say they rarely consulted on new curriculum

LGBTQ+ activists call for 'something' after homes vandalized

White House declares son's gender can't be changed

Pride Toronto political grassroots after corporat



Participants Artwork from the VIA Project



Across interviews and group discussions, youth emphasized that managing personal safety was a persistent and often exhausting concern. GBV manifested along a spectrum from subtle to overt forms, including harassment, misgendering, exclusion, discrimination, and stereotyping. These experiences occurred in both public and private settings, and were influenced by power dynamics within families, schools, workplaces, and broader community contexts.



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

*“So, comes into the fact that when you try to apply for a job or just get somewhere. You can tell immediately that they're judging your appearance or how you look, or how you present or how you talk a certain way, but it feels harsher.”*

– Fran

*“It just always felt like you had to conform to the thing or what they perceive, what they think [you] might be or how you act based on how you look. It's a very heavy form of stereotyping.”*

– Luz

*“Even if you are supposed to be in what seems like a safe space, there is always the probing that happens without consent.”*

– Ren



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

*This piece represents my experience as a queer person. It's about **public harassment and a discussion about different types of gender expressions in different cultures and ethnicities.** The piece contains symbolism about transphobic rhetoric that believes that you will always be the gender you were assigned at birth. When an archeologist digs up your bones in a thousand years from now, they're only going to recognize the person's biological gender and **"what's in your pants."***

- Sky

# Violence Minimized or Misnamed

I've had a friend who told me [...] 'I got groped.' I'm like, girl? Being groped? Have you been at the train in [South American Country]? Impossible not to. I'd be offended if I didn't. But again, that's just because **I have that defense mechanism that it doesn't stick with me.** I guess I'm lucky, or it's my experience, or the way I was raised... But some people, anything, a weird look can be that feeling.

– Isidore



Participants Artwork from the VIA Project



I would get slightly sexually harassed every time I walk out of the house in [South Asian Country]?

**That's just nothing, you know. That doesn't happen as much in Canada,** so to speak. But it's still something that is prevalent, right? [...] And I feel it's so normalized. [...] I was like, 'oh yeah, the other day, I was at the club, and like, this man just came up to me and... and he was like, grinding on me.' And I was, like, telling [my friend] this, like **I was just joking. Like, I think that's so funny.** And she was like, 'girl, that's a little like... that's sexual harassment', And I was like, 'ohhh, is it?'

– Aboni

“I feel like that’s part of like, a lot of what being intersectional is, though. It’s a lot about **being graceful and grateful about what you have**, and where you have access to, especially compared to like, the countries where from where we’re from, where being out is a privilege, comparatively...

***I don't know how you're supposed to be grateful for that all the time.***”

– Kanak



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

“And that’s the part where they do not understand that my vision is different than yours because you are in a position in which you are able to do whatever you want without having to suffer repercussions in the long term. ***If I do it, I could be sent home in the next day.***” – Nico

Participant Artwork from the VIA Project





Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

***“People sometimes don't expect brown people to be queer.*** Yeah, I don't know why, so it's hard for me to have identifiers like my beard, some beards are usually associated with straight people.”

– Manu





Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

“ ...looking for someone that feels familiar, something that feels familiar, but there's nobody here. You're just alone. It's hard to come out of this place, but it takes time. But, little by little, things start being familiar. You start recognizing streets. You start trying foods that you like, even though they taste very different, yeah. And you create a new life from nothing. **It starts from nothing because you have nothing when you come here for the first time.**”

– Chaz

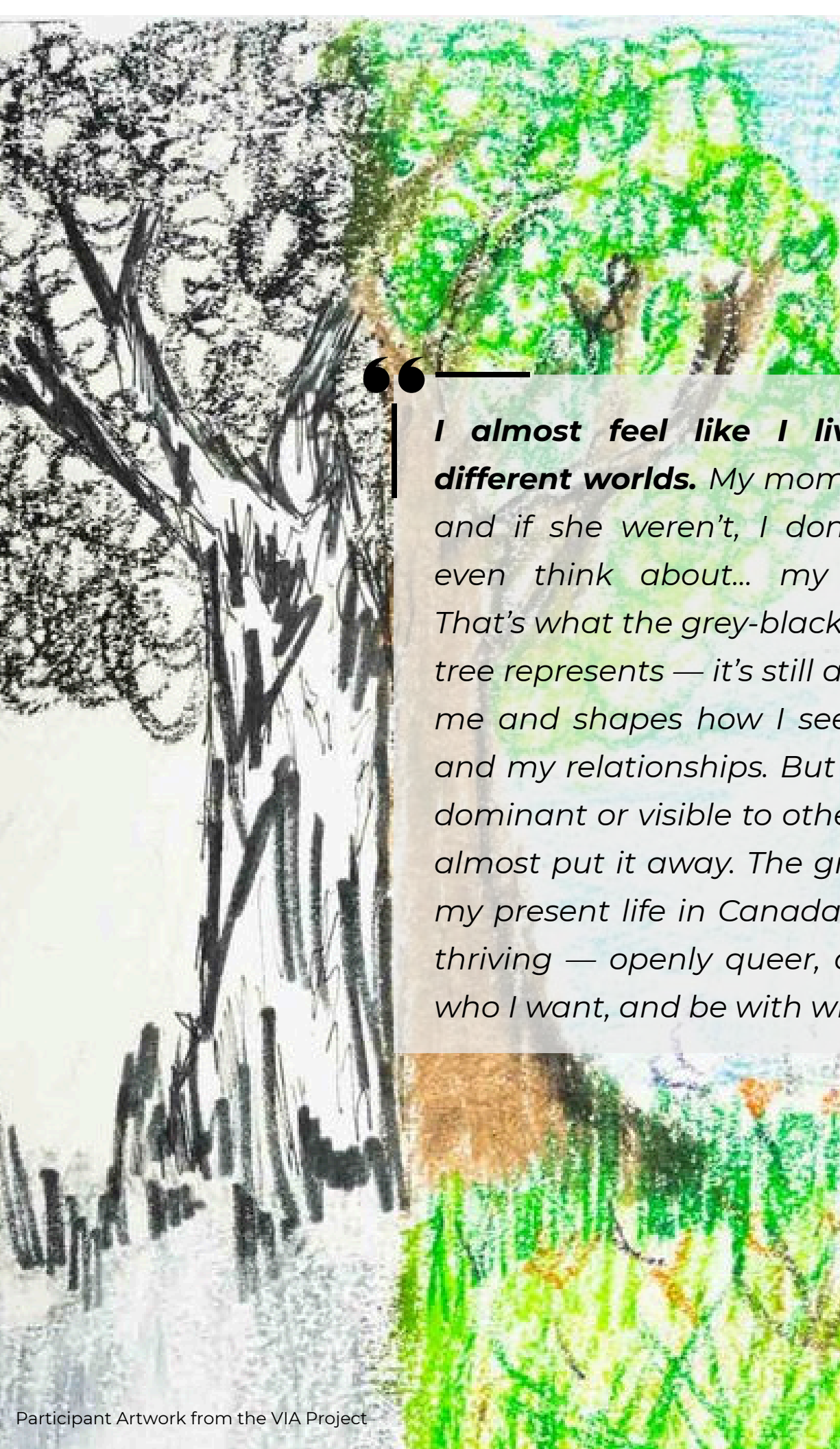


Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

# Between Homelands and New Beginnings

*“What's the cost of immigration?”*

Newcomer 2SLGBTQIA+ youth navigate settlement experiences shaped by both their migration journeys and their diverse identities. As they adjust to new cultural, social, and institutional environments, they often encounter unique challenges related to belonging, safety, and identity affirmation. These experiences are deeply influenced by intersecting factors such as immigration status, cultural expectations, family dynamics, and queer identity. Within this context, the findings below explore how these overlapping realities inform their experiences, including their encounters with gender-based violence.



“

***I almost feel like I live in two different worlds.*** My mom is in India, and if she weren't, I don't think I'd even think about... my life there. That's what the grey-black part of the tree represents — it's still a big part of me and shapes how I see the world and my relationships. But it's so... not dominant or visible to others that I've almost put it away. The green part is my present life in Canada, where I'm thriving — openly queer, able to kiss who I want, and be with who I want.

— Betty”

# “Where is Home?”

Participant Artwork from the VIA Project



## “Diaspora

- Dispersion of a group of people who leave their place of origin.

I'm not from here, nor from there  
But I'm also no longer from where I came from.

No soy de aquí ni de allá

Pero tampoco ya no soy de dónde venía.

Everything changes, and nothing stops.

Todo cambia y nada para.

I'm not from here, because I still feel like a stranger  
in what I have to call home.

No soy de aquí, pues sigo sintiéndome como una  
extraña en esto a lo que tengo que llamar hogar

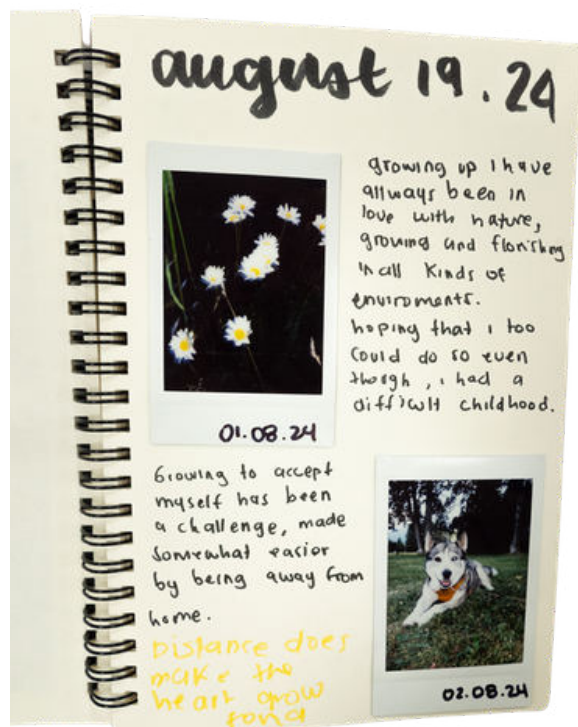
I'm not from there, because I romanticize the life I  
had there, but that life no longer exists.

No soy de allá, porque romantizo la vida que tenía  
allá, pero esa vida ya no existe más.”

– Cielo

# At the Crossroads: Coming of Age and Being Newcomer 2SLGBTQIA+

For newcomer 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, adolescence and early adulthood are shaped by the dual realities of growing independence and navigating the complexities of resettlement. Participants described this period as one of exploration, self-discovery, and increasing autonomy, while simultaneously facing the challenges of adapting to a new cultural, social, and institutional environment. This section highlights how participants navigated their independence and the challenges that come with settling in a new country.



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

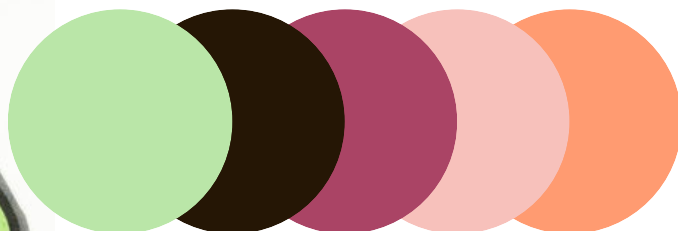
“  
...it wasn't until my father left that I finally went. You know what? **Maybe it's time to put a label on it, because labels aren't defining for me, but it was nice to kind of have some clarity.** That came after father left. Since then, I've been able to explore my queer identity more couple months after that...then I kind of realized I didn't want to associate myself with he/him pronouns anymore, so it went from he/they to they/he. Now, I'm slowly moving towards just transitioning to they/them pronouns.

”

– Yuvan



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

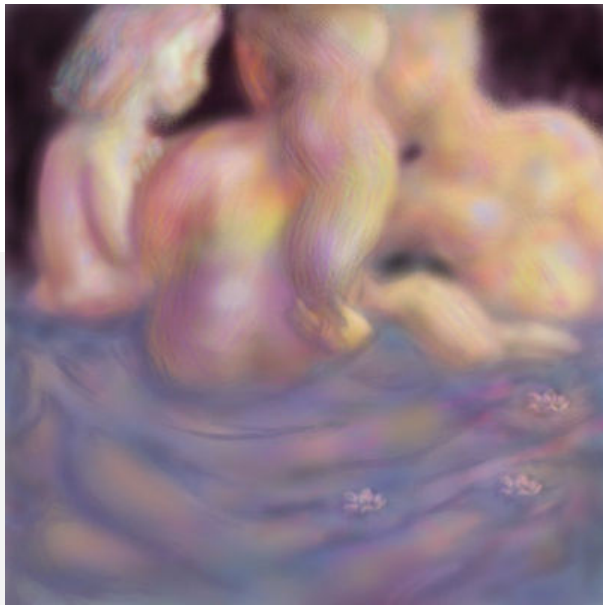




Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

“Through that journey in Canada itself, with all the experiences I have gained enough confidence to do that for myself, like to wear what I want to, to experiment or even like try different kind of clothes, take pictures and all that...I don't have individual pictures from my teenage years because I didn't have that confidence or I didn't think that I was good enough to do that. But given that I have so many solo shots right now, and most of them are taken by me, that just **shows that how I've evolved as a person and how I've accepted myself throughout this journey in Canada.**”

– Kiran



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

“**I'm also the most authentic version of that that I've ever been and also like being an immigrant and then being a brown immigrant.** It's like a lot of times you do rely on your parents for support, monetary or like life decisions. And I feel like I I don't do that with my mom. Like I'm very much in my own individual.”

– Betty

“Yeah. So that's about, let me say, Canada here. I came here, I didn't have any family or friend, I didn't know anyone here. I came as a, as a new person. And I also realized that lifestyle here is quite different from back home. Yeah, um. Like their foods, the way they relate with people. **So that's to show that I'm kind of like starting my life all over as a baby.** Having to learn how to walk, um, where they are [inaudible], how to adapt to their food, with uh. **That explains like having to start all over again.**”

– John



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

## MISSING PIECE (2024)

"Here I reside, a distant land.  
My very own castle, built from sand.  
I paint myself a façade untrue  
With tints of red, and hints of blue.  
Yet all comes to naught  
It falls apart.  
Forever looking  
For what is missing."



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

## CHROMATIC CHAOS (2025)

"For so long I was searching for something, something to make me feel complete and happy. What I was looking for does not exist, and nothing was ever missing. I accepted the mess my life turned out to be, every little imperfection, and smiled."

– Sam



Gay disaster

Nightmarish hellscape  
A life you can't escape  
A strife you'll always have  
unless you close your tab

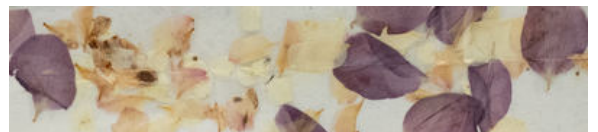
This piece reflects the challenges of arriving to a new country alone. Navigating independence without support and managing the emotions that come with it. Bryn shared their experiences of difficulty finding work and community.





# Navigating Intersecting Identities

Participant Artwork from  
the VIA Project



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

Participants described the process of navigating their intersecting identities as an ongoing journey that was marked by self-discovery, tension, resilience, and moments of profound possibility. Rather than experiencing identity as a set of discrete categories, many spoke about how gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, migration status, age, and other social locations constantly interact, shaping how they move through the world and how the world responds to them.



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

# “Gamble”

To try to understand the experience of a queer newcomer, you need to play Monopoly, a risky game, a gamble on a better life. [...]. This piece is aimed to highlight how **being a newcomer overshadows being queer**. It also shows how being queer as a newcomer unlocks further challenges, such as finding inclusive spaces that know how to protect POC [People of Colour].

This work shows a small portion of what I had to go through to come here, and then once I've arrived. Additionally, this piece highlights the need to go between homeland and newland, between coming out or not coming out, between settlement and unsettlement. The fears that I have as a newcomer lead me to leave things unsaid.

– Kai



# “compromise”

Compromise



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

“I will find myself often like kind of code switching between my um like my brown spaces versus my queer spaces, right? And it's not just about the way I act or the, or, you know, like the type of person that I am, but it's the topics that I feel comfortable talking about as well.” – Ollie

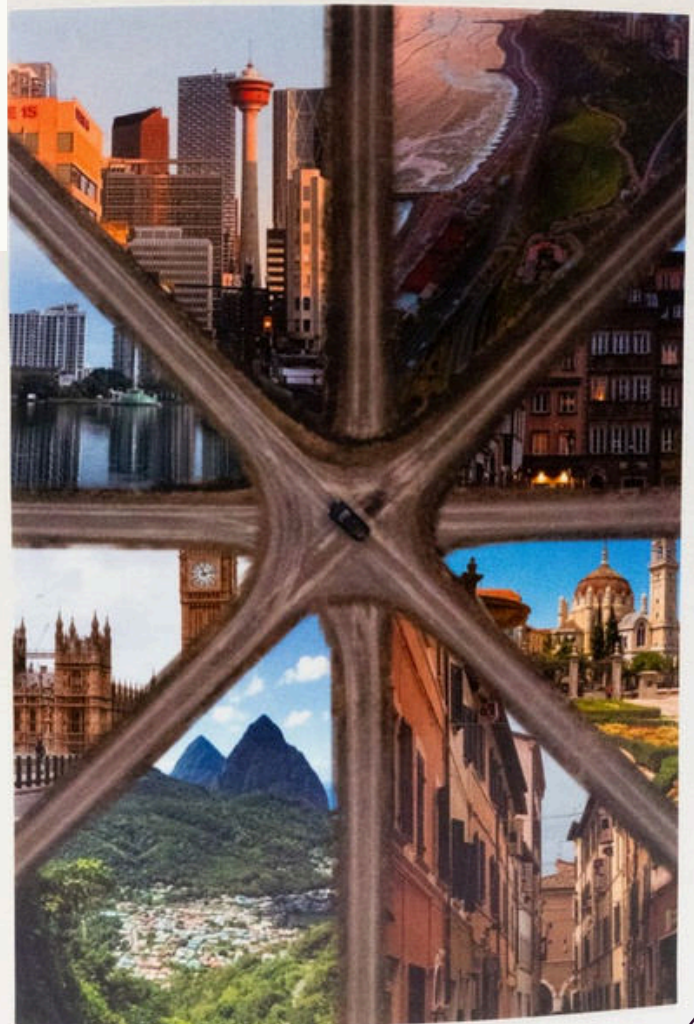


Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

“But you always have to kind of like put yourself in these labels and your experience kind of has to go inside these boxes and find a lot of the times, for example, if I don't have a stereotypically queer experience or like queer immigrant experience, then it's like, oh, you're not queer enough or you're not, I'm not immigrant enough or not person of color enough.” – Ari

# “intersections”

intersections







“

Let my colors shine into the darkness of others

Let my colors shine so it may inspire others

Let my colors shine so others will accept their true colors

Let my colors shine so they can see my unique beauty

And let my colors shine so others can see the path of pride

Because I've chosen the path of pride

”

– Anthony



05  
ART  
EXHIBITION

# Art Exhibition

Participants also had the opportunity to showcase their artwork in a public exhibition at the Little Gallery at the University of Calgary. The exhibition was well-received by participants and offered a meaningful space for them to share their creative work and personal stories with the broader community. Beyond celebrating their artistic contributions, the exhibition played an important role in raising awareness about gender-based violence and highlighting the experiences of newcomer 2SLGBTQIA+ youth.



Photo from the VIA Art Exhibition



# Opening Reception

Photo from the VIA Art Exhibition

**A**longside the exhibition, each cohort had an opening reception where participants invited friends, family, and guests to celebrate. These events created a warm and welcoming atmosphere that celebrated the experiences and creativity showcased by VIA's participants. The opening reception also provided valuable opportunities to continue building community, encouraging cross-cohort networking and strengthening connections among newcomer 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, their supporters, and project staff.

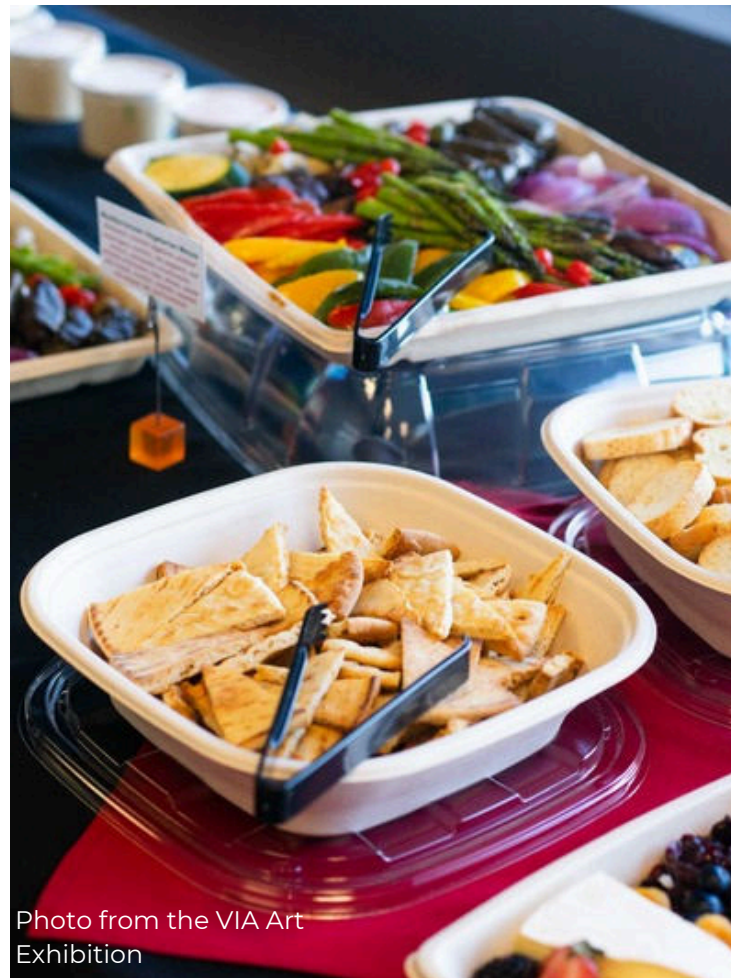
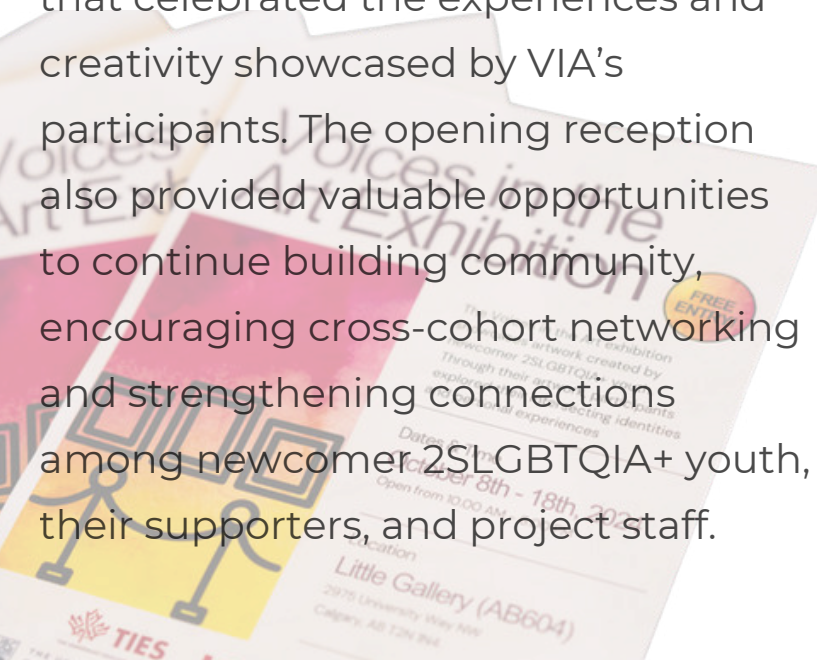


Photo from the VIA Art Exhibition





TIES Centre for Immigrant Research Team at VIA Opening Reception



Photos from the VIA Opening Reception

## WELCOME TO THE VOICES IN THE ART EXHIBITION

Explore the powerful narratives of 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomer youth (14 - 24) as they navigate the complex intersections of their identities and experiences with gender-based violence. This exhibition amplifies their voices, revealing a spectrum of lived experiences—from pain to joy—brought to life through the transformative power of art. Each piece illuminates the everyday realities of these courageous youth, offering a profound and moving reflection on their journeys.

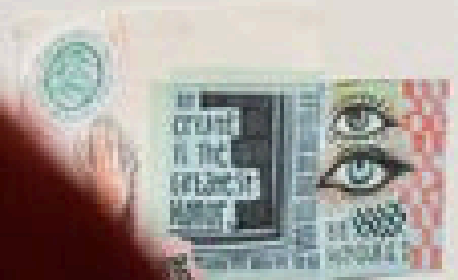
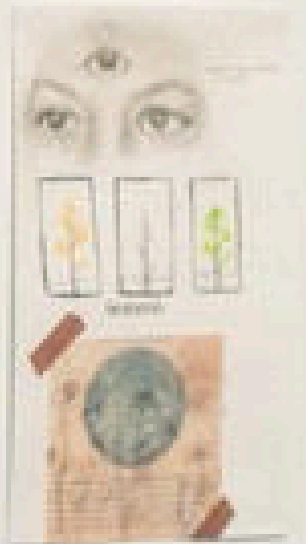
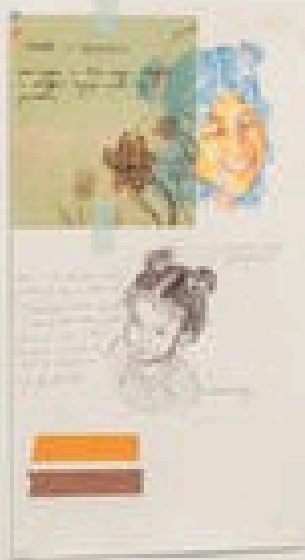
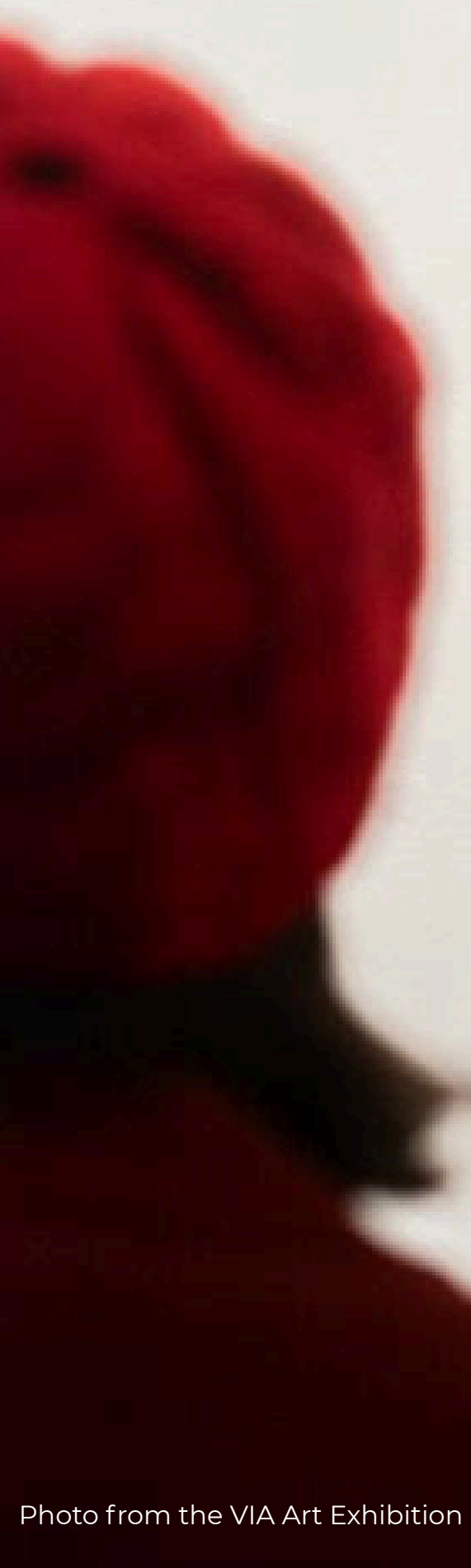
Photo from the VIA Art Exhibition



Photo from the VIA Opening Reception



TIES Centre for Immigrant Research Team at VIA Opening Reception





# Recommendations for Practice and Policy

The insights shared by newcomer 2SLGBTQIA+ youth point to clear opportunities for strengthening supports, services, and research in this area. As participants discussed navigating the intersecting challenges of resettlement, identity development, and personal safety, their experiences highlighted important gaps as well as areas for meaningful change. Building on these findings, the following recommendations and future directions outline ways to better support newcomer youth, enhance culturally and queer-affirming practices, and guide ongoing policy, program, and research development.

**Don't Make Assumptions.** Avoid assuming anything about a young person's gender identity, sexual orientation, or beliefs based on their gender presentation, race, ethnicity, or country of origin.

**Pronoun Usage.** Offer your names and pronouns; invite others to share their pronouns.

**Safety Through Visibility and Inclusion.** Diverse and representative staff, visible Pride symbols in the space, and—most importantly, respectful, non-judgmental interactions.

**Affirming Practice.** Use an intersectional, culturally humble, and trauma-informed approach—avoid assumptions, recognize diverse experiences shaped by culture and migration, and ask youth what feels safe and supportive.

**Relationship Building is Key.** Foster trust and comfort through intentional rapport-building, such as creating welcoming spaces and reducing participation barriers (e.g., snacks, drinks, transit support).



Safety

Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

# Advice for Service Providers

Participants shared valuable advice for service providers working with newcomer 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. Their recommendations emphasized the need for culturally responsive, queer-affirming practices and a deeper understanding of the unique challenges newcomer youth navigate.

*“I would say **don't** make **unfair assumptions** right away. **Ask before** you go ahead with a **cultural topic.**” – Kris*



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

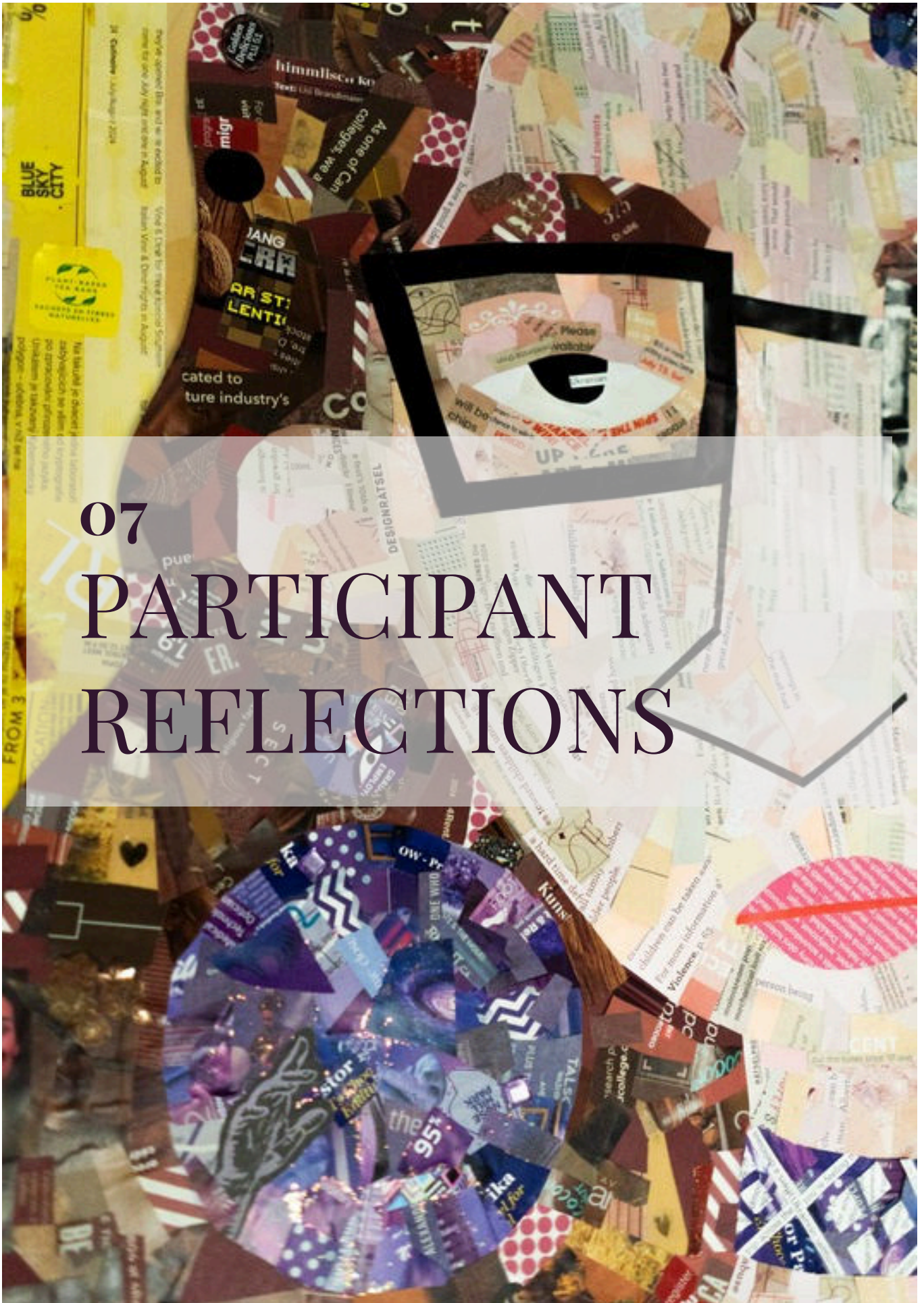
“Giving newcomer youth this **space** to kind of **figure it out** on their own little bit and then **just being there** and **whatever way you can** support them” – Min

“I would just say **involving** the **community** into it, kind of similar on the topic of, **“nothing about us, without us.”** Talking to the community and involving them into the **decision making** since **they understand** the experiences best, it’s **learning** from **each other** and learning how we could **do better.**” – Tala



Participant Artwork from the VIA Project





07  
PARTICIPANT  
REFLECTIONS

Participant Artwork from the VIA Project

# Participant Reflections

**P**articipants were invited to share their thoughts and experiences throughout the VIA project, as well as, through an end-of-cohort survey. Their feedback was overwhelmingly positive and offers meaningful insight into their journeys as newcomer 2SLGBTQIA+ youth.

Participant Artwork from the VIA Project



Everything! It was a fabulous way to share experiences, develop ourselves artistically, and create positive change.

– VIA Participant



# Participant Reflections

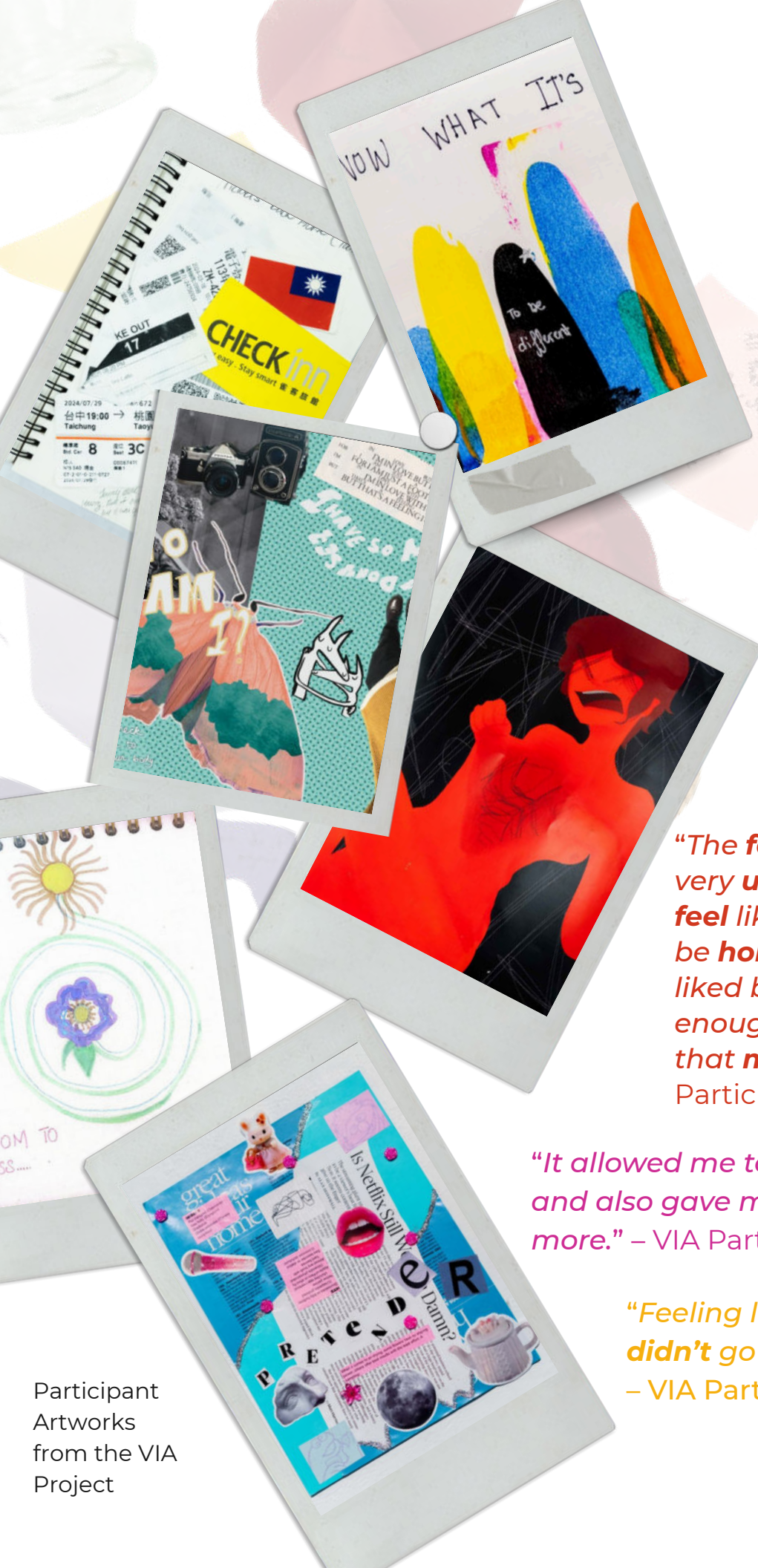
Participants reflected on their experiences in VIA and shared what they appreciated most about taking part in the project. The following quotes are drawn from an anonymous VIA survey and reflect participants' experiences in the project.

*"Having my **stories** been heard and be seen."*  
– VIA Participant

*"The **facilitators** were **friendly** and very **understanding** which made **feel** like it was a **space** I could truly be **honest** about my **experiences**. I liked being given the **tools** and enough **time** to **create** something that **means a lot to me**."* – VIA Participant

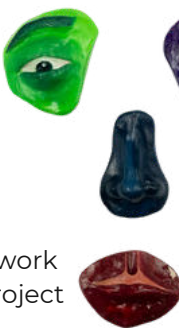
*"It allowed me to **explore** my own identity and also gave me the chance to practice art more."* – VIA Participant

*"Feeling like my **experience** didn't go to waste."*  
– VIA Participant



Participant Artworks from the VIA Project

Participant Artwork from the VIA Project



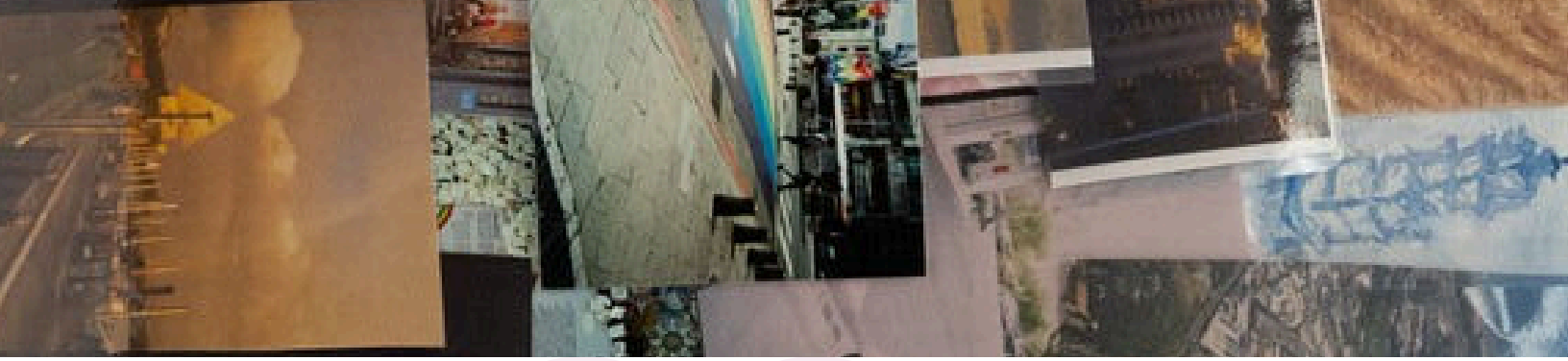
# QUEER JOY!

Queer joy was also a central theme throughout the project. Participants shared moments of joy that highlighted their resilience and strength in the face of adversity. Emphasizing queer joy offered an important counter-narrative to the deficit-focused perspective often associated with queer and trans communities. These expressions of joy emerged both within the project activities and in participants' everyday lives.

you're like Super man if  
he was black, s'g and a bisexual  
who listens to DoeChii to  
feel like a baddie.



Participant Artworks from the VIA Project



Participant Artwork from the VIA project

## We Became the Kind of Women by Jax

We became the kind of women we used to dream about. The ones who do not lower their voices when they say “my wife,” who kiss at crosswalks, who dance barefoot in the kitchen with no fear of who might see.

We became the kind of women who do not shrink. Who wear suits to weddings and dresses to protests, who do not apologize for the space they take up, for the way they live, for the way they love.

We became the kind of women we needed when we were girls. And isn't that a revolution?

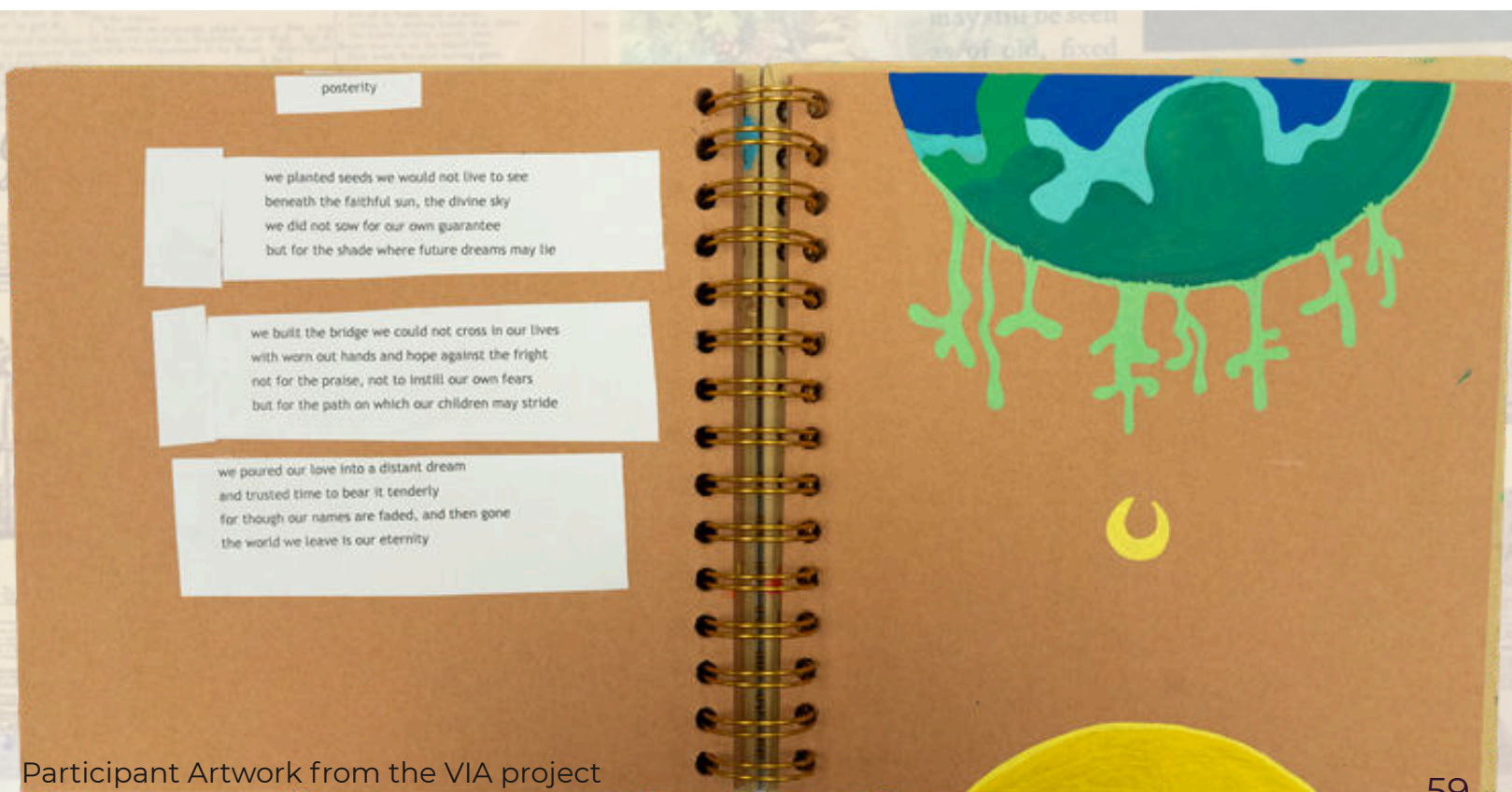
Participant Poem from the VIA Project



Participant Artwork from the VIA project

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