



REPORT

From the office of the...
WGEN Coordinator

TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Padmaja Sreeram
SUBJECT: Women and Gender Equity Network Report #3
DATE: November 14, 2017

UPDATE

Dear Executive Board,

WGEN has been fully operational for about 6 weeks now and we're still seeing high service usage. In the past four weeks, our Space has been accessed about 600 times which includes students seeking support, engaging in discussions in our space, students receiving a chest binder, and signing out books from our resource library.

Our first event of the year 'Spooptacular' ran successfully on October 25th with a great turnout and it was a great opportunity for our executive team to get to know one another and create their first event together.

We've seen a drastic increase in security threats to our Space in MUSC 204 and in our events (so far: Spooptacular). As such I have reached out to Preethi and Victoria to brainstorm some solutions which we have discussed. One of the actions taken from that meeting was to move forward with purchasing panic buttons for the WGEN Space. As of now we are waiting to hear from Daniel (Tuba) about the best way to navigate funding for this necessary infrastructural investment.

I am also in the process of proposing an MSU/WGEN/Student Peer Support Sexual Violence Response Strategy which I am hoping to create with Meaghan Ross and consult all necessary stakeholders. My motivation for this stems from conversations I've shared with community stakeholders (SACHA) and Meaghan Ross around areas for improvement.

Next week we'll be launching Black and Gendered, a healing group for Black students who experience violence at the intersection of race and gender. All our planning seems to be well on track and we are expecting a smooth and exciting launch.

Next week we will also be involved with the MacPride Campaign at the Rally and we will be running an educational interactive workshop about race, class and pride to introduce an intersectional perspective into queer activism at Mac.

Please find more details in the following report.

Thank you,

Padmaja Sreeram

SERVICE USAGE

Consultations

MacPride - QSCC Executives have been in contact with our Social and Political Advocacy Executives for the past few days to coordinate some form of collaboration for MacPride. This has proved a bit challenging for all parties given the short timelines but WGEN will be leading an educational workshop on the intersection of race, class, gender and queerness in the origins of Pride. I will also be speaking at the MacPride Rally to reposition the experiences of racialized and gender-oppressed queer students at the forefront of Pride celebrations.

Conference on Diversity in Engineering - We have been asked to provide a chill zone at a conference run by Engineering McMaster students, however based on our experience offering a chill zone for the Homecoming Concerts this year, another strategy may be more appropriate. It is not standard practice (currently) for us to offer our volunteers for peer support for other events/conferences but the event organizers plan to discuss more sensitive topics around rape culture. As of now we are hoping to lend our help specifically for the hour or two relating to triggering material or to work with event leads to make another form of support available.

Physical Space

Our safe(r) space has been running for 6 weeks and fully staffed with 2-3 volunteers per hour shift on Monday-Thursday from 9:30 am - 5:30 pm, and Friday from 10:30-3:30 pm. Our physical space has been accessed around **600 times** since my last EB report. This number is derived from our safe(r) space volunteers filling out an intake form after each shift to indicate how many students accessed the space (for one-on-one peer support, group peer support, to sign out a book, to ask for other resources, to receive a gc2b binder, or another reason that isn't prespecified on the form).

Approximately **15 referrals** were made to the Student Wellness Centre, the Equity and Inclusion Office, SACHA, Student Accessibility Services, and Good2Talk. One referral was made to Christine Jackiw, our wonderful trauma counsellor in the Student Wellness Centre. We have **donated 2 gc2b binders** to students. In combination with our Monday-Friday standard operation and our one-on-one peer support booking service, we have received **2 sexual violence disclosures** since the last report making it 8 so far this year.

Social Media

At present our **Facebook page has 1,732 followers**, which is 33 more FB likes than the previous report! On Twitter, the WGEN account has **627 followers**, which is 10 more followers than the previous report! We've made 16 new tweets and 4 new Facebook posts since the last EB report. **Our top Facebook post gained 48 reactions with 2967 post interactions and 21 shares, and our top Tweet had 28 likes and 13 retweets!**

Here are some additional highlights:

Spooptacular



MSU WGEN @MSU_WGEN · Oct 18

~Spooky sights from last year's Spooptacular!! Tune in to this year's event in 7 DAYS to see what could be scarier than Chad the meninist 🤩



1 7 36

annual Spooptacular Night!!

Check out the event page below for more details and be sure to invite your friends, can't wait to see you there 💜💜

WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY NETWORK PRESENTS

SPOOPTACULAR NIGHT!

25 OCT ... A SPOOKY NIGHT OF FEMINIST FUN! ... 8:00-10:00 PM BRIDGES CAFE

MOVIE SCREENING: CORPSE BRIDE

OCT 25 **Spooptacular Night!**
Wed 8 PM · Bridges Cafe · Hamilton, ON
Emile Shen invited you

★ Interested

1,396 people reached

Boost Unavailable

Like Comment

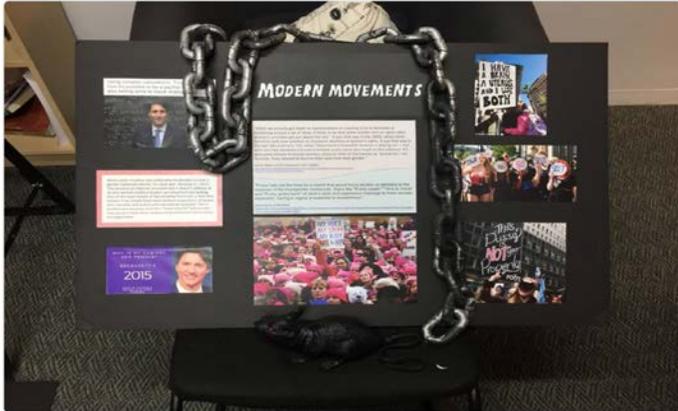
Biranavi Kumarasamy, Prarthna Sakhuja and 43 others

Top Comments



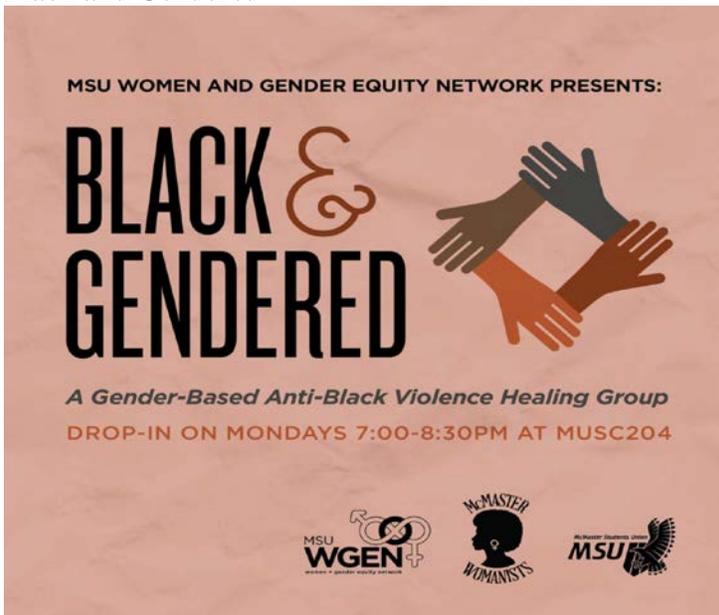
MSU WGEN @MSU_WGEN · Oct 24

A little sneak peek to our White Feminism Tunnel of Horrors 📸 Catch this and the rest of our scary sights TOMORROW NIGHT at Spooptacular 🎃👻🦋



1 comment 6 retweets 28 likes

Black and Gendered



2,967 people reached

Boost Post

Like Comment Share

Anna Lindsher, Dalecia Davis and 46 others

21 Shares

Write a comment...



13 retweets 28 likes

PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

- **Spooptacular**
 - Ran our event in Bridges, showed Corpse Bride and displayed our creative critique of suffragette movements in an art gallery style
 - We had a strong turnout - at least 40 students (apart from WGEN staff) attended.
 - An incident was reported by our WGEN executives to Security at one of these events. For privacy reasons I can't share more (the necessary details have been discussed with Preethi and Victoria) in the report. The incident has since been resolved.
- **Binder donations**
 - gc2b will be donating 75 more chest binders to us to sustain our collection thanks to our Resources exec, Anastasia.
 - These are quite expensive to purchase on their own so our binder program is really popular among trans students at McMaster and in the broader Hamilton community.
- **Breast form and Bra donations**
 - My execs have been putting a lot of thought into creating a sister project for the binder program to cater to transfeminine students.
 - We have already contacted Gender Gear (gendergear.ca) who have agreed to donate some breast forms. While we may not receive a quantity which makes it feasible for us to donate, even having it as resource for students to learn more about their existence and functionality can be really useful (which we know from community consultations).
- **Survivors Peer Support Group Promotions Launch**
 - Our peer support group for survivors of sexual violence and gender based violence will begin in January but often it takes a long time to promote to give students ample time to ask questions/gain interest in the group (since it can involve talking about or sharing personal aspects of their lived experience).
 - The promotional materials have been completed and we are deploying our Survivors promotions strategy.

UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

- **MacPride** - We are running an event called Repoliticizing Pride in QSCC's MacPride Campaign. The interactive discussion will touch on the origins of Pride by trans women of colour and the evolution of Pride to present day where we see a corporatization of Pride. We will also be speaking at the Pride Rally and to promote WGEN as a service given that gender based violence is higher in queer and trans communities.
- **Black and Gendered:** A Gender-based Anti-Black Violence Healing Group starting Monday!! It will run on Mondays from 7-8:30 pm and will be piloted for term 1.
- **Transforming Mac Campaign:** We are currently discussing how to do justice to a week of trans focussed programming which we are aiming to run in late November but may have to push until early January.
- **Survivors Support Group:** We have already consulted context experts to ensure we're adhering to the best standards of a peer support group but we are looking to other evidence to cover our bases. Our launch is planned for the beginning of January.
- **Training:** To follow up on our September training, WGEN will be checking in with our volunteers on their comfort level and preparedness. We plan to hold an additional training

day to support them in their role on November 19 where Meaghan Ross will also be introducing herself.

- **Pride is full of Colour Support Group:** We have received a lot of demand for this project and we are now exploring which stakeholder should be involved and what this community group should look like and the role WGEN will be taking in it. Specifically this group would provide a space for students of colour with queer/trans experience given that mainstream queer representation typically excludes or fails to capture the intersections of race, culture and queer identity.
- **Bodies are Dope Discussion Group:** This is another group we are considering providing as an extension of our Bodies are Dope campaign last year. We have since received lots of excellent feedback from students and staff - and also demand for a space for students of colour to discuss body perception, body politics, and coping mechanisms for dealing with racism. We are planning to discuss the need for such a group with a similar initiative already running by the Equity and Inclusion Office (Let's talk race) to see whether this initiative should take a different shape.

BUDGET

Since our last report, WGEN has purchased food, decorations, and other logistical equipment for our Spooptacular event. We have also purchased a few promotional packages for Spooptacular, Black and Gendered, and our Survivors Peer Support Group since our last report.

WGEN also needs panic buttons installed in our space to ensure the safety of students so I have submitted a capital request to the VP Finance to see from where the funds will be drawn.

I had also brought up purchasing an electronic tablet for our Space for which I will browse the market to come up with a few low cost options but this will be pulled from my Special Projects Funds.

I am still anticipating WGEN needing a larger appreciation budget for execs and volunteers. My executives and volunteers have also been doing a phenomenal job completing their tasks which have increased in quantity and complexity for which I really want to appreciate them. While MSU volunteer appreciations are great for overall appreciation I plan to be using my current funds to appreciate the volunteers who came out to HOCO concerts, our events committee, our Safe(r) space volunteers and my wonderful execs this end of term and early January. I will report back regarding how my funds are looking once I approximate which activities I'd like to choose for appreciation and how much money will be required for each.

VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers have been doing a great job - the events committee really helped our CEP team create the Spooptacular display and our Safe(r) space volunteers have been fully staffing our space for 6-8 hours from Monday to Friday. We will be holding an additional training day for volunteers on November 19 to check in and offer additional supports.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

(Carried forward from last report, this has yet to be resolved, but I am hoping the recommendations I am working on will launch the process to improvement) Dissatisfaction around WW Sexual Violence Response and Prevention Programming

Our on- and off-campus partners and many students have reached out to WGEN to express their disappointment in the planning and execution of Sexual Violence related programming during Welcome Week. A part of this has settled down after the immediate changes made for the Homecoming weekend, but there is a strong need for a WW debrief so we can plan better for

future years. This concern is not new to this WW, but a consistent culture that isn't conducive for effective long-term sexual violence prevention, and requires changing in consultation with Sexual Violence content experts.

Threat to Safety

WGEN has seen an unprecedented number of disruptions and perceived threats to safety in our physical space and at our Events. In October alone we have encountered three separate incidents where it was either necessary to call Security or a volunteer/user felt unsafe. This is very different from the more common inflammatory responses we are used to which are centered around disagreeing with gender equity or a survivor centric point of view. We have been maintaining a catalogue of incident reports that describe what happened, who was involved, what actions were taken and if it is resolved. Since EB reports are a matter of public record I cannot describe them in detail here but I have spoken to Preethi and Victoria about these challenges. One of the solutions we are pushing forward is a panic button for our space. Although these are expensive, it is an important investment to secure the safety of our student volunteers, and users. It is important for us to be thinking of long term infrastructural changes (such as implementing these panic buttons and developing a protocol around when it can be used, by whom, and where they should be situated) and to devote time to understanding why these incidents are occurring, why it is WGEN that is targeted and if there are other solutions that need to be implemented as well.

Intake Forms, Library Sign-outs, and more

In my last EB Report I had mentioned I would re-evaluate whether there is a need for requesting special project funds to invest in a long term infrastructural product to sustain our monitoring/evaluation of the service. Based on our operations over the last month or so and from previous years feedback I am seriously considering purchasing an electronic tablet to keep track of our service usage, input and make available our library catalogue and to introduce more functionality. This functionality will include uploading our resource information, and tips for space facilitation, and apps that are built for supporting survivors, trans and gender nonconforming students and women.

SUCSESSES

Spooptacular

Our first event of the year ran really well and we're excited to develop some more projects! My execs have been working really hard to ensure our programming is inclusive and that we devoting time and resources to supporting survivors, trans and gender nonconforming students, and women on campus.

Service Usage

Our Space is still being accessed very often which indicates students feel comfortable accessing our space. Many new people are stopping by which is really cool because often as a service we run into the problem of the same students coming out to our educational workshops and spaces (which is still great!!) without reaching new students who may not be aware about the work we do.

Promotions

My promotions executive is still doing a great job promoting our events and has continued increasing interactions with our posts and tweets. It's something I want to highlight again and again because it's through promotions that anyone who can benefit from our services finds out about the work we do and the potential for it to service them in any way.