



Amy Munroe, Peer Support Program Lead

*Sagesse*

Theme: Wrap-Around Service Delivery

Sagesse programs and services include Direct Service, Capacity Building and Education and Advocacy. Its direct service programs include Moving on With Mentors (individual support to women by connecting them with a peer mentor); Finding Our Voices (support and opportunities to connect with peers while focusing on issues related to self-esteem over the course of 6 weeks); and Growth Circle (runs for 14 weeks and provides opportunities for women to connect with peers while working through topics related to experiences of domestic violence).

*Critical Elements*

- Value of peer support is the key underpinning of this agency. Linkages with someone who is not a professional and can empathise and relate to women's experiences, helps women know that they are not alone and can be very powerful in their journey.
- The programs are accessible to women at any stage in their journey – they can be just starting out or having been engaged in personal growth experiences for a number of years. They can also keep working with Sagesse for as long as they need, repeating both the group and the mentorship experiences.
- All of the peer support programs are delivered by volunteers who receive extensive training (e.g., a capacity training weekend) and support (volunteer wellness initiative) and participate in joint healing process with the women attending the programs. Once trained, the volunteers may co-facilitate a group, facilitate a group or provide mentorship supports.
- Empowerment is crucial in this work with women whose power and control is taken away through domestic violence. Sagesse works to alleviate power imbalances wherever possible, in structuring the group space, or discussion content the mentorship experience or opportunities for one-on-one supports.
- Sagesse staff provide some one-on-one support, focusing generally on ensuring that a safety plan is in place. They also work to connect women with other community resources when additional supports are needed.
- Sagesse works to "curate" not "create" the group environment using three core approaches: vulnerability (ability to share your story in a safe way), empathy (ability to connect with the feeling in ourselves) and curiosity (trauma-informed - not what's wrong with you but what happened to you).