





MAGGIE SOFEA WITH HER COUSINS A. J. AND MERCEDES ON LOCATION FOR ORDINARY WOMEN, EXTRAORDINARY DREAMS

FRONT COVER (FROM LEFT TO RIGHT): ALISHA TALPUR, ADIBA HASNAT, JULIA SIMAC, CRYSTAL GAO AND JOANNA LIVADAS PARTICIPATE AT A REAL CHANGE GIRLS FACILITATION TRAINING SESSION.

“ I learned that I could honour and nourish my curiosity and my hopes for a more just and equitable world. ”

—LAURA SKY, Executive Director

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

My own experience at school taught me that I was incapable of learning – from text books, from teachers restricted by narrow and rigid rules, from the tedium of homework. I was classified as a ‘slow learner.’ I was seen as an underachiever – intelligent but lazy.

So I took my learning out of the classroom. At 13, I joined the peace movement and then the civil rights movement. We worked for disarmament in the newly nuclear age and for human rights nationally and globally. This informal but disciplined community of people, young and old, provided me with a *reason* for learning about history, politics, sociology, economics – all the issues that I could find no space for in formal education. Mostly I learned that I could honour and nourish my curiosity and my hopes for a more just and equitable world. I learned to express my thoughts, to work with other people who had similar goals. This experience gave me a reason to love learning – about ideas, about facts and about my capacity to engage with the world around me. I began to associate learning with the pleasure of becoming part of a community.

That pleasure has flourished in our work with young people who participate in our films and in our training and mentoring programs. We learn from each other. We work together, engaging with communities in the midst of a change process.

We work with teenagers who are speaking out for the first time about issues that they live with each day. They are learning to reach through their own silence and their previous shame and discomfort about issues that make them feel different, alone. We have worked with young people who have been isolated by their grief, those who have felt stigmatized because of their mental health difficulties, kids excluded by their peers at school because of the lonely limitations of poverty. Mostly they learn that they are not alone, that they can find safe spaces and relationships that will connect them with each other's experiences and thoughts. They are learning that they can have a vital role in their communities. Their learning gives other families, other young people an opportunity to learn and to contribute – to leave stigma and shame behind.

Our advisors, our partners and allies in this commitment are the young people themselves. Their teachers, student teachers, education support workers, advocates in family service agencies and community organizations, and our funders all believe in the capacities of young people to change the world.

Here are the thoughts of Delilah Brown, then 15, who has played such an important role in our learning about children's experiences of poverty and homelessness through her participation in *Home Safe Calgary*. As Delilah learned about poverty she also developed her own capacity to speak out, translating her learning into participation.

“I think that homelessness has changed the ways that I’ve seen people because before I was like the queen of everything, right? And so I would go down to the streets and look down on poverty. Now that I’ve experienced it, I don’t ever want to go back to that. I think it should be a right that everyone has their own place to call home.”

In the continuing process, we have all learned from Delilah and from the many young people who contribute to our work. We all learn with each other. That makes me happier than I could have imagined.



SPEAKING THROUGH SILENCE

THE VOICES OF CHILDREN IN MILITARY FAMILIES LIVING WITH POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Jessica Laconte, age 18 and her sister Patricia Laconte, age 15, decided to participate in this documentary project “to let other people know that it’s okay to talk about PTSD... that you’re not alone. You need other people, to hear their stories... people who can understand. Sometimes it’s hard not to feel alone.”

We have convened an advisory group of veterans, their children, a psychiatrist, an art therapist and a documentary film team to create a Participatory Documentary Project that will give Canadians the opportunity to better understand the children and their families who are living with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The group is very concerned about young people deeply affected by their parents’ experience of PTSD. We have made a commitment with them to produce a documentary project which will serve as a forum for participants to express themselves, engage in a healing process and reach out to others in the military, in their neighbourhoods, in their schools and in their circles of family and friends.

Our research reveals that the young and adult children of military veterans share a wall of silence, linking PTSD with shame and confusion. The stigma is so deep, so much a part of their fabric, that they not only hold their experiences and their feelings back from their friends, they often don’t even speak about the daily realities of PTSD within their families.

After working with the Laconte family for a number of months, we recently filmed teenage sisters Jessica, 18, and Patricia, 15 and their father, military veteran Louis Leconte. Louis served for 17 years, deployed to Eritrea, Afghanistan and Haiti. Their participation in the filming reflects their strength and their courage. The sisters acknowledge that they hadn’t talked to each other or to their friends about their experiences of their father’s PTSD. As Patricia told us during our research:

“Because people keep this to themselves... maybe there is someone else on your street who is going through the same thing, but you just don’t know. It makes you feel different than other people, and you don’t want to seem different.”

Both young women acknowledge that their father has mood swings and can be emotionally volatile. It is clear that the young women have empathy for their father’s struggles.

“A couple of my friends know but they just don’t get it. I don’t want them to think that my Dad is a bad person. It’s not his fault. He doesn’t mean it.”

While filming, Louis acknowledged his struggle and his reason for reaching through his own silence and deciding to participate in the documentary:

“I wish...people were not afraid to talk about PTSD....As soon as something doesn’t feel right, I hope that they’re strong enough to go and talk to [a] professional and get some help. Because if they wait too long, you’ll be divorced, separations, you know, alcohol, drugs, all kind of stuff....I don’t know how many times I’ve been thinking about suicide...But because of the kids... they give me life as of now. And I thank God for that!”



“ A couple of my friends know but they just don’t get it. I don’t want them to think that my Dad is a bad person. It’s not his fault. He doesn’t mean it. ”

JESSICA AND PATRICIA,
PARTICIPANTS OF SPEAKING
THROUGH SILENCE

When asked about the qualities that make their father a good Dad, Jessica smiles, *“He really watches over us. Sometimes we don’t like it but sometimes it’s a good thing. And he cares a lot about us. He’d do anything for us.”*

This documentary project is already promoting a healing process among participants. Kingston psychiatrist Dr. Janet McCulloch, our primary partner on this project, has seen remarkable changes in the families who have been working on this documentary. In each of the families that include children young or old, there have been significant breakthroughs in the way that they relate to each other and a new optimism

about the possibilities of healing and recovery. One of our veteran advisors has reconnected with his son and held his grandson for the first time. Another group member renewed long stalled conversations with his adult children. Louis, Jessica and Patricia have understood more about each other, and are sharing the pride in each other’s courage to speak out.

With the help of The Dunkley Charitable Foundation, this film is currently in the final stages of research and will be in production once further funding is confirmed. For more information or to discuss funding opportunities, please contact us.

GIRLS MAKE REAL CHANGE

11 GIRLS CREATE 4 DOCUMENTARY FILMS

SkyWorks' Real Change Girls Filmmaking Project was launched in January this year. Eleven teenage girls created four short documentaries which premiered June 14th to a packed house at the Toronto Reference Library. As the filmmakers prepare for more community screenings scheduled for this fall and winter, we asked them their thoughts about the program so far.



DA: Why did you want to participate in this project, and what did you learn along the way?

CRYSTAL GAO (co-director, *Beauty Bites*): We're all very passionate about women's rights and women's issues and the big thing we try to do is spread awareness. Through this project we've picked up a new way of spreading the message. It's really powerful, to be able to show provocative images, to be able to tell people the reality that's behind these issues. After all these hours of filming and editing, you are able to create something beautiful.

ALISHA TALPUR (co-director, *Beauty Bites*): I wanted to be part of this project because I really like photography and this is sort of an expansion of that. And also I really liked the idea of talking about issues I'm passionate about, through a different medium.

JULIA SIMAC (co-director, *Wasichana*): I learned not only technical skills and how to work with equipment but also the best way to work with situations and how to structure a film in a way that the audience will get the most out of it, doing justice to the people who are participating in it.

STILL FROM
WASICHANA:
GIRLS IN KIBERA,
KENYA GO TO
SCHOOL.



DA: What do you want youth and adults to take away from your films at the upcoming screenings?

JULIA SIMAC: *Wasichana* was an attempt to show that the problems faced by girls in the developing world, particularly in Kenya, and the developed world in Toronto, are fundamentally the same. They obviously manifest themselves in different ways in different living conditions, but no matter where girls live in the world they have similar struggles.

JOANNA LIVADAS (co-director, *Boys Will Be Boys*): Although society doesn't necessarily justify violence against women, there's still a definite de-sensitization towards the issue – "Oh, things are never going to change" – even though it's totally possible for people to change these things. Also, gender stereotypes, like boys have to be strong and take power, and girls have to be weak and submissive... There isn't a certain way that people have to be.

ADIBA HASNAT (co-director, *Girls Between Two Worlds*): Film is a way of bringing stories to life, showing that these stories have a face, that they come from people around you in your community who are just like you. The fact that

you can replicate a documentary and share it with people across the internet or elsewhere makes it a really important tool because you not only have an opinion and an issue you want to highlight, but you have a vehicle that you can present it with, and you can impact a lot more people. We really want the audience to find something in the films that resonates for them, so they will be able to take that away with them and learn something from it.

The Real Change Girls Project was created in partnership with Plan Canada's Because I am a Girl Speakers Bureau, Charles Street Video, Toronto Public Library, and Ontario Institute for Studies in Education Centre for Urban Schooling. The project was made possible with the support of the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, the Massey Stodgell Voices of Children Fund, The Jackman Foundation, and The Lawson Foundation. For a list of upcoming screenings or to watch the documentaries online, please visit www.skyworksfoundation.org.

SKYWORKS NORTH REPORT

JIM HYDER LIVES AND WORKS JUST OUTSIDE OF THUNDER BAY AND IS THE COORDINATOR FOR OUR ORGANIZATION IN THE NORTH

I first met Laura Sky back in the early seventies when we were part of a youthful group assembled by The National Film Board's *Challenge for Change* Studio. There were seven of us originating from different parts of the country but we all had two things in common. First, we were experimenting in one way or another with a new piece of video technology, the portable video tape recorder. This new method of video recording brought the technology out of the studio and into the street, out of the hands of a few producers and into the hands of just about anybody. The second was our youthful idealism and a dream that we could change the world.

About six years ago I re-united with Laura, who has managed to keep the basic tenants of our little band of *Challenge for Change* idealists alive through SkyWorks Charitable Foundation. Now, some forty odd years later, it is a privilege to enter the world of other young idealists who also hold similar dreams to change the world. I have had the honour of working with young people in Kashechewan on the coast of James Bay and here, in Thunder Bay, helping them express themselves through video production. Albeit the technology is much more sophisticated, the messages of needing to be heard and wanting to change things for the better, is the same.

That brings me to our latest project, *Ordinary Woman, Extraordinary Dreams* with Maggie Sofea. Maggie is a young woman from Nibinamik First Nation (Summer Beaver) here in Northwestern Ontario. Maggie has had to live in Thunder Bay since she was 11 years old because of a swimming accident which left her paralyzed. Like most remote communities in the north, hers was ill equipped to take care of someone with her disabilities. The accident, however, did not stop Maggie from having dreams of one day returning to her childhood home to reconnect with the family she had left behind,

to reconnect with her school friends and the community who also miss her. She also wanted to revisit the place of her accident, a camping spot an hours boat ride north of Summer Beaver. The camping trip was a family tradition from her childhood and she was determined to make the trip to reconnect with nature and in a way with herself as a young First Nations woman.

Maggie has another dream, to be a filmmaker. It was important to Maggie that her trip be documented so she could communicate a message of encouragement and hope to those who are disabled, to the young people in the north who may have lost their dreams and to others who could also be inspired by her story.

Well Maggie's dream in fact did come true. With great determination and more than a little help from her friends, Maggie returned to Nibinamik on August the 18th and stayed until August the 23rd. She was accompanied by a team of support people and a film crew all under the banner of SkyWorks. Maggie did accomplish everything she wanted and everything we had set out to do. There are touching moments with her grandmother and other family members; with young people crowded around her wheelchair asking uninhibited questions about her life; a visit to the grave site of her cousin and dear friend who took her own life; and a community that celebrated Maggie's return with warmth and kindness.

And yes, Maggie did go back to the camp site. It was not an easy exercise for her and her support team. Like all dreams, there is the task of overcoming obstacles and meeting challenges to bring a dream into reality. In truth, it is the overcoming of these obstacles and challenges which become the elixir for the dreamer. It was a privilege to be a fellow



MAGGIE WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY
TRAVEL TO REMOTE CAMP SITE BY BOAT

traveler in Maggie's journey. It reminds me of forty some odd years ago as a young dreamer in a merry band of other young dreamers, and to quote an old dreamer of the past who left her mark:

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams. In the long run we shape our lives, and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die."
—Eleanor Roosevelt

JIM HYDER
SkyWorks North Coordinator
Co-Director, with Maggie Sofea, of *Ordinary Woman, Extraordinary Dreams* (available Spring 2013)

Ordinary Woman, Extraordinary Dreams is a partnership with Thunder Bay's Handicapped Action Group Incorporated.

SkyWorks would like to thank the following organizations and individuals who, without which, the filming in Summer Beaver would not have been possible:

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HOME SAFE IN SCHOOLS



“My daughter was in Grade 9. That year our family’s Christmas budget was \$50.00. Just about that time Josie came home from school devastated because she had been told she was going to be suspended for not having all black shoes. I called the principal because I wanted her to know that if she’d looked carefully at Josie’s shoes, she’d have noticed that her baby toes were peeking out of the shoes. That’s because we didn’t have the money to buy new ones because we’d spent everything we had on her uniform. We ended up using a black Sharpie to cover up the offending white parts.

I tell this story because I want people to look a little deeper. Just because kids don’t have proper shoes doesn’t mean that the parents are neglectful or that rules are being disobeyed.

My kids, when they were young, went to an inner city school. Our family was not the only family that had financial challenges, or benefitted from the way this school was run. We were connected to programs and resources in the community so that when we needed something we knew where to turn. Since we weren’t being judged, we were empowered to help others as well as ourselves.

People often say that “it takes a village to raise a child”, but it also takes a village to raise a family. My family now has an amazing village and in that village there are teachers, principals, secretaries, child and youth workers, psychologists, caretakers and cafeteria staff. Because of this village I can proudly say that all three of my children are following their dreams because they were taught that they could, and my family is living life in abundance because we were taught that we could.” – Colleen Richards, SkyWorks Co-Chair

For information about the Home Safe Education Resource and to download the Educators Guide go to “Teacher Resources” at www.skyworksfoundation.org.

HOME SAFE

As the gap widens between the affluent and those living at the lowest margins of our economy, more families experience homelessness on a daily basis in communities across Canada. SkyWorks’ *HOME SAFE Education Resource* offers a toolkit for students, teachers, and education support workers to talk about these issues. In the preface to the Educators Guide, HOME SAFE film participant Colleen Richards, now co-chair of SkyWorks’ board of directors, has this to say about how schools can make a difference in the lives of kids and their families.

SKYWORKS ON THE ROAD

2012 has been a banner year for screenings! As of September, we had 40 screenings scheduled this year, with requests for eight different SkyWorks film projects.

We've toured older documentaries such as *Right to Care* (1991), *Until Someone Listens* (1998) and *Crisis Call* (2003). Laura, David and the volunteer facilitators have also screened more recent films: *Recovering Love*, *Home Safe Toronto*, *This Film is About Compassion*, *Working Life* and the short docs from the *Real Change Girls Filmmaking Project*. We received screening invitations from international conferences, small-town social service agencies, The Children's Aid Society, branches of The Canadian Mental Health Association, Canadian Auto Workers locals, university faculties of education, medicine, social work and humanities, film festivals and the Toronto Public Library.

SOME SCREENING HIGHLIGHTS

WORKING LIFE LAUNCH

The TIFF Bell Lightbox, home of the Toronto International Film Festival, provided a spectacular setting for the April 17 premiere of this film, part of a documentary toolkit for mental health accommodation in the workplace. Helping us celebrate were our project partners from Oolagen Youth Mental Health and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities – Ontario Labour Market Partnership Program.

REAL CHANGE GIRLS FILMMAKING PROJECT

Screening requests have been pouring in since the June 14 launch of *Real Change Girls Filmmaking Project*, featuring short docs made by girls aged 14 to 19 about contemporary issues affecting them. For starters, this fall, four Toronto Public Library branches will host public screenings of the docs. For more information on these and other screenings, visit www.skyworksfoundation.org. The project was created by SkyWorks Charitable Foundation in partnership with Plan Canada's Because I am a Girl Speakers Bureau, the Toronto Public Library, The Centre for Urban Schooling at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, and Charles Street Video.

CRISIS CALL – SEPTEMBER 2012 COMMUNITY SCREENING

This 2003 SkyWorks production, which looks at how police deal with people in psychiatric crisis, illustrates the long shelf life of SkyWorks films. This public screening, held in support of East York residents advocating for funding of a mobile crisis intervention team at a local hospital, is also a good example of community development in action. There was a full house at the neighbourhood library, with plenty of thoughtful discussion. About 20 people signed up to support the activities of 'Never Again' the local group working for alternative approaches for people with mental health needs.

DONOR PROFILE: JENNIFER LEE CALGARY, AB

Jennifer Lee is a mother of two, and grandmother of one. She is a nurse and manages a 15 bed Hospice in Calgary, looking after people who are at the end of their lives. Jennifer has been a supporter and donor to SkyWorks for 10 years. We spoke to her about her relationship with SkyWorks and why she continues to support our work, after all these years.



How did you first hear about SkyWorks?

My beautiful sister in law, Mary Sue Douglas, was in *How Can We Love You* and her children in *Kids Care*. I had the honour of seeing the troupe present their play and *How Can We Love You* in Calgary and was amazed. Seeing the drama and the documentary, I learned to be more present and ask the questions I needed answers to.

What was your first impression of SkyWorks?

I was impressed by the content and the professional way they presented very difficult situations.

How does the work of SkyWorks fit in to your work and/or interests?

I have used information from the presentations in my work in Hospice. I am able to ask more direct questions instead of skirting issues. Just today I was asked for advice by a fellow regarding a friend of his who recently became palliative. He wondered if he should call her. I could respond without hesitation – “yes! If she is not ready, she can say ‘no’ but she’ll know you are thinking of her.” He was grateful for the advice. It was directly out of the performance and the documentary – don’t avoid people who are gravely ill.

What motivated you to give to our organization?

Mary Sue was my spark. I loved and respected her so much and admired her strength and determination. She loved her work with SkyWorks and I wanted to honour her and what I learned from her work.

What differentiates SkyWorks from other organizations you are involved with?

I have a personal connection. Mary Sue’s family, hence my family, remain involved with SkyWorks along with some of her special friends. In supporting SkyWorks, I feel connected to her and the values that were so important to her.

What method have you chosen to give to SkyWorks?

I don’t have a lot of money to make a large donation but want to make a difference. I thought a regular monthly donation would ensure a consistent amount of money regularly which, along with regular donations from others, would allow SkyWorks to plan programs and the next great project.

What would you tell someone who is thinking about getting involved with SkyWorks?

That it is rewarding. Knowing you have contributed to something that can make a difference in someone’s life is very rewarding.

YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS HELP US CHANGE THE WORLD, ONE DOCUMENTARY AT A TIME...

With your help, we will be able to expand our reach and amplify the voices of more individuals and communities than ever before through our documentaries and community development work.

With numerous ways to give and a broad range of priorities available to support, your personal and meaningful donation to SkyWorks Charitable Foundation, in any amount, will make a difference.

Your gift is a crucial part of our core fundraising efforts. This supports the SkyWorks mission, our community development work and infrastructure costs in our four program areas:

- Working with Children and Families as a force for social change
- Promoting recovery by challenging stereotypes and systemic barriers with people experiencing Mental Health issues
- Informing and supporting Community Engagement in Health Care policies and practices
- Exploring and documenting alternative approaches in perception, practice and policies in the Criminal Justice System

For More Information about the many ways to support SkyWorks Charitable Foundation, please contact Nevine Sedki, Resource Development Manager at 416 536 6581 or at nevinesedki@skyworksfoundation.org

WAYS TO SUPPORT SKYWORKS CHARITABLE FOUNDATION:

ANNUAL GIVING: make a one time annual gift to support our mission, programs and core operational costs.

MONTHLY/QUARTERLY GIVING: a convenient and automated way to support our work in installments.

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HONORARY GIFT: make a gift to SkyWorks on behalf of a friend or family member in lieu of birthday or Holiday gifts.

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By phone: 416 536 6581

By mail: SkyWorks Charitable Foundation
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THANK YOU!

Thank you to the following individuals, corporations, organizations and foundations who gave generously to our organization in the past year. Your donation sustains us, allows our projects to succeed and to carry through our mandate of changing the world – one documentary at a time.

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SkyWorks is truth telling. It is curious, concerned, investigative and assertive. SkyWorks is about reaching out into the community and connecting people and their experiences. It is witnessing and it is advocacy. It is courageous and honouring. SkyWorks is how we feel about community and people, about change and transformation. SkyWorks is a belief that we are all capable of expressing our needs and that our own experiences are truthful and reliable. SkyWorks is active, declarative, and is about taking risks together. SkyWorks is both very strong and very soft. It is reflective and visceral. SkyWorks is a conduit between the people in the films and the audience. SkyWorks is a space that people can come into, exchange feelings and ideas, and where something new can emerge.



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