

International Women’s Day

The transformative power of photography



“I’ve been on a journey these past two years, finding myself and I wanted to take a picture with my mom.” Jasmin Lefort. Photo by Annie Sakkab

**Story and photos
by Annie Sakkab**

In the midst of current protests which called for an inquiry into missing aboriginal women, a local group of women from Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory gathered at the Community Wellbeing Centre to support the women and engage in conversation through having their portrait taken by a professional photographer.

Betty Carr-Braint, the director of the wellness centre, first thought of the idea when a Loyalist photojournalism student approached her at the beginning of February of this year.

“I came up with the idea when I was thinking about all the missing and murdered aboriginal women across Canada. I was thinking, would they have ended up there if they had somebody to help support them?”

Carr-Braint felt that women and girls of all ages often feel critical of their own beauty and feel they have to conform to certain ideals regarding body image. In most cases, this often leads to struggles with self-esteem. The transformative power of the arts such as photography can have an incredible value in supporting mental well-being and rediscovery of inner beauty.

“Photography tells its own story and

when we get engaged with women engaging them seeing their own beauty, it shines through. You can see the light in their eyes,” Carr-Braint added.

“We live in a society where looks, thinness and body is in the forefront rather than the depth of a person. And so we need to shift some of that and to recognize that there is beauty in all kinds of ways. There is not just one marker for beauty, there are all of these other markers that are important as well,” Carr-Braint explained.

Talking to Carr-Braint about how she feels how images can affect women, she explained images of ourselves are often an experiment and reflection on who we are and how we see ourselves. They tell us who we have been and who we want to become. As we grow older, we tend to focus more on our age and forget to look for our inner beauty.

“Often, we hold only beautiful women as young, so we don’t embrace older women and the experience that comes with their age. And so I really think it’s important we start to break down ageism a little bit”, Carr-Braint explained.

“It’s really important for us to recognize beauty in every aspect.”

The event was an opportunity for women of all ages to engage in the conversation and talk about issues that nor-

mally would be ignored. Taking the initiative to come to this photo shoot, for some women was about confronting their fears of self-image. For others, it was for fun, a snapshot in time.

“I just wanted to get past my fear of having my picture taken, because the camera tells the truth and I don’t like looking at the truth. I grew up in an abusive family and a lot of that not wanting my picture to be taken I think stems back to that,” said Carol Loft.

Joy Brant, wanted her picture taken because she was surprised she has lived this long and wanted to document it. The atmosphere was positive and energizing. To see the women embrace who they are is a beautiful thing to watch.

“That’s what we want. That’s what’s going to light up the world again,” Carr-Braint said.

“We are our worst critics when it comes to how we look, or how we show up in pictures. Having my picture taken was a reminder to me how important it is just to know that we’re enough, just the way we are and that we don’t have to change anything,” said Carr-Braint.

With International Women’s Day approaching this Saturday, it is a reminder for all of us to celebrate who we are as women.



“I did this for lots of reasons. As women, we’re really critical about our looks and about how we present, and we think we have to live up to image that isn’t real, so I thought this was really important to get pictures that can capture each woman’s beauty.” Betty Carr-Braint.



“its not something I would normally do, I think at times I could be very self conscious about my looks, it was something I needed to do for myself to give me self confidence and self awareness that I am beautiful.” Jessie Hill.



“I just wanted to get passed my fear of having my picture taken, because the camera tells the truth and I don’t like looking at the truth.. I grew up in an abusive family somewhat, emotionally abusive and things like that, and a lot of that not wanting my picture to be taken I think stems back to that.” Carol Loft (left). “I’m surprised I lived this long and I just wanted to document that.” Joy Brant. (Right).



(Left): Because I’m very proud of who I am.” Daphne Brant

Right: “I never had a photo shoot done, and I’ve been having a rough time with school and everything like that, so just a little fun thing to do.” Amber Loft