

Elise Findlay

info@elisefindlay.ca

(403) 431-1794

P.O. Box 2809

Banff, AB

T1L 1C5

Self-Directed Research Project - Final Report

September 2021

Under The Mountain's Shadow



Fig. 1. *Under the Mountain's Shadow*. Found objects (trash) collage, matt medium, and acrylic on cradled birch boards, 24" x 60" (together) / 24" x 20" (each board).

Table of Contents:

- 1) List of Attachments (page 2)
- 2) Images, Artist Statement, and Individual Panel Images (page 2-6)
- 3) Alberta Sexualized Violence and Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence Statistics (page 7)
- 4) In Progress Images (page 8-10)
- 5) Summary of the Survey and Notes (page 10-14)
- 6) Detail Images (page 14-19)
- 7) Conclusion (page 20)

1) List of Attachments:

- Attachment 1: Images (Not Included)
- Attachment 2: The survey website PDF printout
- Attachment 3: The survey Results PDF Version - (please note that all results are anonymous and are to be used only for this research project and *Under the Mountain's Shadow* artwork)
- Attachment 4: The survey results Excel Version - (please note that all results are anonymous and are to be used only for this research project and *Under the Mountain's Shadow* artwork)

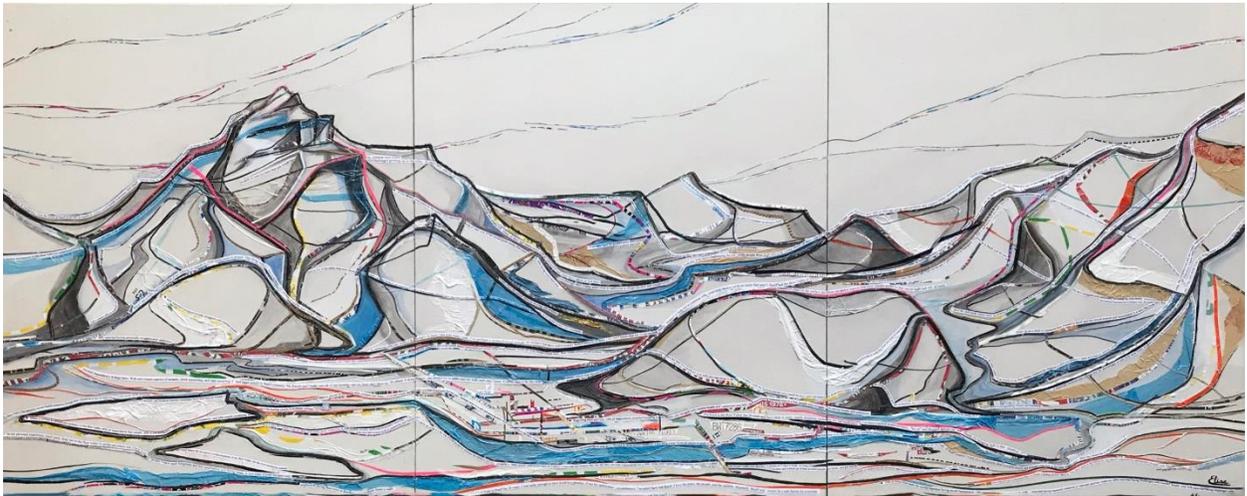


Fig. 2. *Under the Mountain's Shadow*. Found objects (trash) collage, matt medium, and acrylic on cradled birch boards, 24" x 60" (together) / 24" x 20" (each board).

2) ARTIST STATEMENT

The research project and artwork, *Under the Mountain's Shadow*, created through the AUArts Self-Directed Research Scholarship explores, and attempts to bring awareness to, the challenges that face residents of, and visitors to, resort towns. Issues that are rarely discussed and even more rarely publicly acknowledged. The beauty of the place and the 'Peter Pan' attitude towards life in a resort town has a shadow—a darker side that results in increased rates of sexualized violence, domestic and intimate partner violence, as well as challenges with addictions and mental health¹. These issues are even more challenging because along with the high turnover of people and the younger population, most business and employers in resort towns rely on the tourist industry and its accompanying pristine image of natural beauty—leaving little space to acknowledge, discuss, or improve the social issues facing resort towns.

The finished piece, depicting a semi-abstract landscape of the town of Banff, is built up of trash collected from around the townsite, printed statistics and comments from a survey and research conducted during the project. The trash reflects the less picturesque as well as the disappointing behaviour of visitors and locals alike in the National Park. While the statistics from the survey which address sexualized violence, domestic and intimate partner violence, addictions, and mental health are not perhaps surprising given provincial statistics (see below) they are hard to face personally and as a community. Yet, there is hope to be found in the Bow Valley. There are shifts in attitude, access to good mental health and addictions services,² and the emergence of new programs to educate and support the community. While there is a shadow that hangs over this beautiful place we love and I am lucky to call home, there is also light in the increasing willingness to discuss these issues and in the strength of our community. *Under the Mountain's Shadow* expresses both the darkness and the light and is part of a larger ongoing community building project.

¹ Hoffart, Irene. "Finding the Higher Ground: Exploring the Need to Establish Secure Shelter, Transition Housing and Support Services for Women and Children who are Escaping Domestic Violence in the Bow Valley." Synergy Research Group Submitted to the YWCA Banff, https://ywcabanff.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/YWCA-Higher-Ground_Needs-Assessment-Report_May10_16.pdf, March 2nd, 2016. Page 5.

² Hoffart, Irene. "Finding the Higher Ground: Exploring the Need to Establish Secure Shelter, Transition Housing and Support Services for Women and Children who are Escaping Domestic Violence in the Bow Valley." Synergy Research Group Submitted to the YWCA Banff, https://ywcabanff.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/YWCA-Higher-Ground_Needs-Assessment-Report_May10_16.pdf, March 2nd, 2016. Page 5.



Fig. 3A. *Under the Mountain's Shadow* (Panel I). Found objects (trash) collage, matt medium, and acrylic on cradled birch boards, 24" x 60" (together) / 24" x 20" (each board).



Fig. 3B. *Under the Mountain's Shadow* (Panel I). Found objects (trash) collage, matt medium, and acrylic on cradled birch boards, 24" x 60" (together) / 24" x 20" (each board).

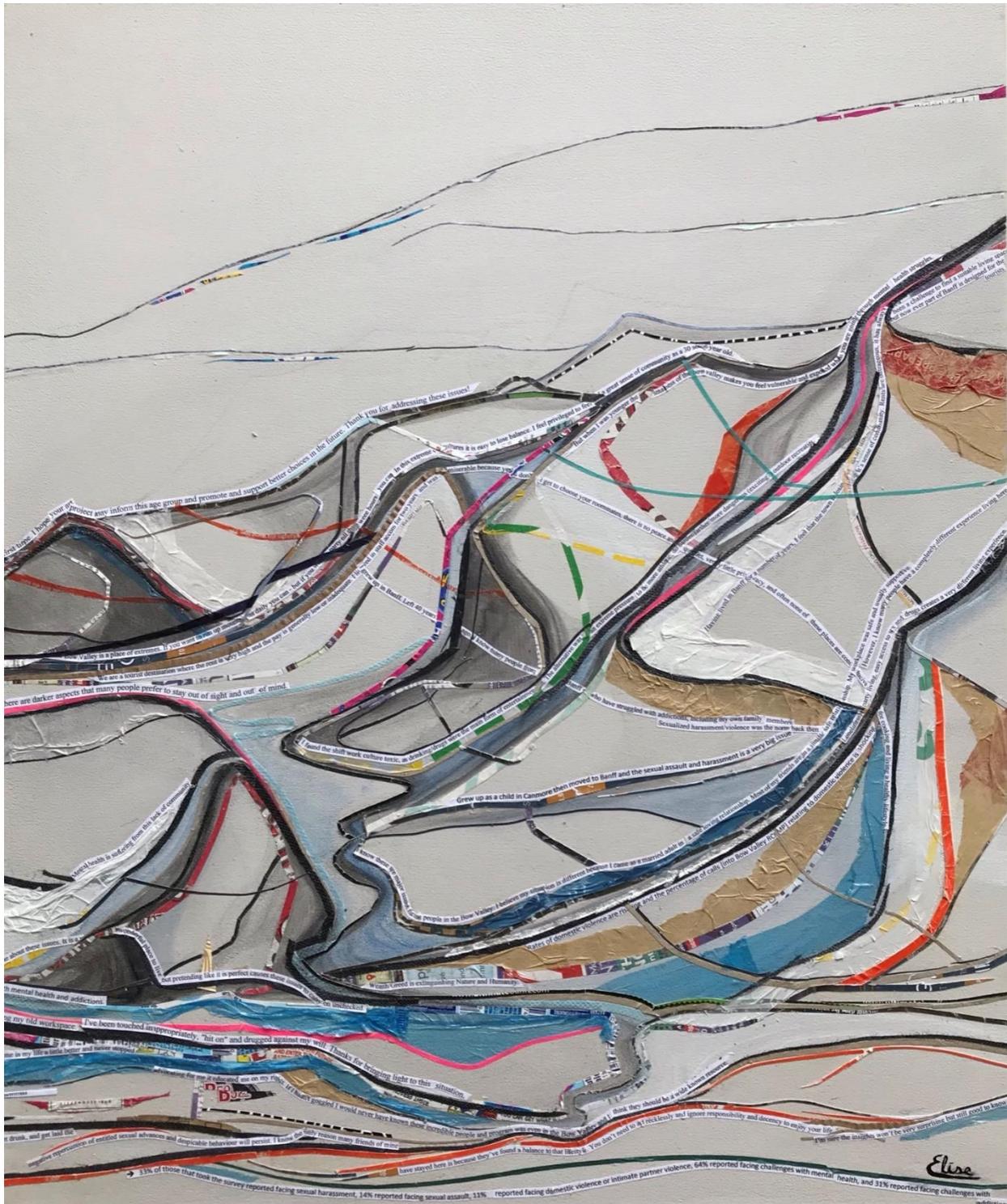


Fig. 3C. *Under the Mountain's Shadow* (Panel I). Found objects (trash) collage, matt medium, and acrylic on cradled birch boards, 24" x 60" (together) / 24" x 20" (each board).

3A) Alberta Sexualized Violence Statistics:

- 45% “of adult Albertans have experienced some type of sexual abuse in their lifetime. That’s almost one in every two.”³
- “In 82% of sexual assaults the victim knew their perpetrator.”³
- Up to 97% of sexual assaults are never reported to police.³
- “1 in 3 girls and 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused by the time they reach age 18.”³
- “29% of child sexual abuse victims are boys.”³
- “40-70% of female children and 15-30% of male children with developmental disabilities experiences childhood sexual abuse.”³
- “Most (88%) of the time children are sexually abused by someone they know and trust”³

3B) Alberta Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence Statistics

- “Alberta has the second highest rate of self-reported spousal violence in the country [...] A 2012 Alberta study determined that in every hour of every day, a woman is a victim of some form of violence by an ex-spouse or ex-partner.”⁴
- “Spousal victims were more likely than other victims to be first victimized as children with 48 per cent reporting they were physically assaulted before the age of 15 and 75 per cent reporting that they were first sexually victimized as a child.”⁴
- “Between 2000 and 2010 there were 121 deaths of intimate partner victims in Alberta.”⁴
- Domestic violence statistics underestimate the real scope of the issue because they only address reported instances. “Only 25% of all physical assaults, 20% of all rapes, and 50% of all stalking perpetrated against females by their partners are reported to the police. For the small number of cases that do get reported, on average, a woman will be assaulted by her partner or ex-partner 35 times before reporting it to the police.”⁵
- “Women and children fleeing domestic violence represent a large proportion of the homeless population. Canadian research indicated that 29% of the absolutely homeless women and 37% of the relatively homeless women were fleeing abusive partners.”⁶ (Higher Ground Needs Assessment, 18)

³ Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services. AASAS Website, aasas.ca, Accessed August 2021.

⁴ Hoffart, Irene. “Finding the Higher Ground: Exploring the Need to Establish Secure Shelter, Transition Housing and Support Services for Women and Children who are Escaping Domestic Violence in the Bow Valley.” Synergy Research Group Submitted to the YWCA Banff, https://ywcabanff.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/YWCA-Higher-Ground_Needs-Assessment-Report_May10_16.pdf, March 2nd, 2016. Page 11.

⁵ Hoffart, Irene. “Finding the Higher Ground: Exploring the Need to Establish Secure Shelter, Transition Housing and Support Services for Women and Children who are Escaping Domestic Violence in the Bow Valley.” Synergy Research Group Submitted to the YWCA Banff, https://ywcabanff.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/YWCA-Higher-Ground_Needs-Assessment-Report_May10_16.pdf, March 2nd, 2016. Page 14.

⁶ Hoffart, Irene. “Finding the Higher Ground: Exploring the Need to Establish Secure Shelter, Transition Housing and Support Services for Women and Children who are Escaping Domestic Violence in the Bow Valley.” Synergy

4) IN PROGRESS IMAGES:



Fig. 4. *Under the Mountain's Shadow* (In Progress I). Found objects (trash) collage, matt medium, and acrylic on cradled birch boards, 24" x 60" (together) / 24" x 20" (each board).



Fig. 6. *Under the Mountain's Shadow (In Progress III)*. Found objects (trash) collage, matt medium, and acrylic on cradled birch boards, 24" x 60" (together) / 24" x 20" (each board).

5) SUMMARY OF THE SURVEY AND NOTES:

Statistics Summary:

- ➔ Of the 98 people surveyed 44 people (45.4%) responded that they felt unsafe regarding sexualized violence in at least one situation while living in the Bow Valley, with 20.4% responding they felt unsafe in their workspace, 13.3% feeling unsafe in their home or residence, and 33.7% responding that they feel unsafe socializing. 17.34% responded that they felt unsafe in multiple settings.
- ➔ Of the 98 respondents 32.7% reported facing sexual harassment, 14.3% reported facing sexual assault, 11.2% reported facing domestic violence or intimate partner violence. 64.3% reported facing challenges with mental health and 30.6% reported facing challenges with

addictions. Of the 98 respondents 72.4% reported facing at least one of these issues with 59.2% of these facing more than one issue.

- ➔ Of the 71 respondents who indicated that they faced the challenges listed in question two 22.5% did not reach out for support from available resources. 63.4% reached out to family/friends, 40.8% reached out to counselling services, 8.5% reached out to victim services, and 11.3% reached out to other available resources. Of those who reached out to available resources 46.5% used more than one source of support.
- ➔ Regarding sexualized violence in the Bow Valley, 12.3% reported either feeling unsafe or very unsafe, with 61.2% reporting feeling either safe or very safe, and 26.5% reported feeling neither safe nor unsafe.
- ➔ Regarding domestic or intimate partner violence in the Bow Valley, 82.7% reported feeling either safe or very safe, while 11.2% reported feeling neither safe nor unsafe, and 6.2% reported feeling either unsafe or very unsafe.
- ➔ Regarding individual mental health, 10.2% reported not struggling at all, 24.5% reported not having struggled much, 49% reported struggling somewhat, and 16.3% reported struggling greatly.
- ➔ Regarding individual challenges with addictions, 49% reported not struggling at all, 21.4% reported not having struggled much, 22.4% reported struggling somewhat, and 7.1% reported struggling greatly.
- ➔ Regarding the number of their peers who struggle with mental health and addictions 43.9% of respondents reported knowing many people who struggle, 36.7% reported knowing a few people who struggle, 11.2% reported knowing one or two people who struggle, and 8.1% reported not knowing anyone who struggles with mental health and addictions.

Survey Results:

1. # of surveys received: 98

- Current residents: 78
- Previous residents: 19
- Visitors to the Bow Valley: 1

2. With regard to sexualized violence / harassment while living in/visiting the Bow Valley

- # of people who felt unsafe in their workspace: 20
- # of people who felt unsafe in their home or residence: 13
- # of people who felt unsafe socializing: 33
- # of people who responded none of the above: 57
- # of people who felt unsafe in two or more settings 17
- # of people who felt unsafe in all three settings: 8
- # of people who felt unsafe in any situation: 41

3. Challenges faced while living in the Bow Valley:

- # of people who faced sexual harassment: 32
- # of people who faced sexual assault: 14
- # of people who faced domestic violence or intimate partner violence: 11
- # of people who faced challenges with mental health: 63
- # of people who faced challenges with addictions: 30
- # of people who did not face these challenges: 27
- # of people who responded facing challenges with only one issue: 29
- # of people who responded facing challenges with two or more issues: 42
- # of people who responded facing challenges with three or more issues: 22
- # of people who responded facing challenges with four or more issues: 10
- # of people who responded facing challenges with all five issues: 4

4. Of those who responded that they had faced the challenges listed in question #2, the resources the respondents had indicated they reached out to:

- Total # of respondents indicating they faced the challenges listed in question #2: 71
- # of people who reached out to family/friends: 45 (63.4%)
- # of people who reached out to counselling services: 29 (40.8%)
- # of people who reached out to victim services: 6 (8.5%)
- # of people who reached out to other: 8 (11.3%)
- # of people who did not reach out to the available resources: 16 (22.5%)
- # of people who reached out to two or more resources: 33 (46.5%)

5. Regarding to sexualized violence the respondents ranked their feelings of personal safety:

- # of people who felt very unsafe: 3 (3.1%)
- # of people who felt unsafe: 9 (9.2%)
- # of people who felt neither safe nor unsafe: 26 (26.5%)
- # of people who felt safe: 36 (36.7%)
- # of people who felt very safe: 24 (24.5%)

6. Regarding domestic or intimate partner violence, respondents ranked their feelings of personal safety:

- # of people who felt very unsafe: 3 (3.1%)
- # of people who felt unsafe: 3 (3.1%)
- # of people who felt neither safe nor unsafe: 11 (11.2%)
- # of people who felt safe: 24 (24.5%)
- # of people who felt very safe: 57 (58.2%)

7. Regarding individual mental health, respondents ranked their personal level of struggle:

- # of people who have struggled greatly: 16 (16.3%)
- # of people who have struggled somewhat: 48 (49%)
- # of people who have not struggled much: 24 (24.5%)
- # of people who have not struggled at all: 10 (10.2%)

8. Regarding individual challenges with addictions, respondents ranked their personal level of struggle:

- # of people who have struggled greatly: 7 (7.1%)
- # of people who have struggled somewhat: 22 (22.4%)
- # of people who have not struggled much: 21 (21.4%)
- # of people who have not struggled at all: 48 (49%)

9. Regarding their peers, respondents indicated the approximate number of peers who struggle with mental health and addictions.

- # of respondents who know many people who struggle: 43 (43.9%)
- # of respondents who know a few people who struggle: 36 (36.7%)
- # of respondents who know one or two people who struggle: 11 (11.2%)
- # of respondents who know so not know anyone who struggles: 8 (8.1%)

10. Comments:

- See attached survey results.

Notes On the Survey and Its Results:

- ➔ Firstly, I did not include several questions that I would have liked to include such as a question about whether people knew of sexualized violence/domestic and intimate partner violence in their peers. Partly this was limited by the number of questions I was able to include (my website limited my questions to 10) and partly it was not something I had thought to include at the start of the survey. While I think the results to this question would have been interesting, I think that the tendency to under-report sexualized and domestic violence might have led to skewed results in asking respondents questions about their peers. In contrast, issues with mental health and addictions are becoming more socially acceptable to discuss and they tend to be more visibly present.
- ➔ Secondly, I did not include a question about the gender of the respondents. This was an intentional omission as I wanted to report on our community as a whole. Sometimes I feel as though when we gender certain issues then they are easier to dismiss as a ‘their’ problem rather than a societal issue. This being said it would have been nice to know the gendered statistics even if I did not include them in the final report.

- Thirdly the respondents to my survey were limited by those that would have seen my requests for responses on my social media platforms or in the social Facebook groups ‘Overheard in Banff’ and ‘Banff & Canmore Community,’ it would have been great to get a wider variety of respondents but given the limited scope of this project I am thrilled with the number of responses I was able to get – 98 respondents from a population of approximately 8,000 feels like a success.
- Lastly, while I was not surprised by the majority of the results the number of respondents who reported sexual assault and domestic and intimate partner violence is frightening given the rates are probably (and shown from research sources) to be much higher. It is also clear to me from the survey, again not coming as a surprise, that there are serious issues with mental health and addictions within the Bow Valley.

6) Detail Images:

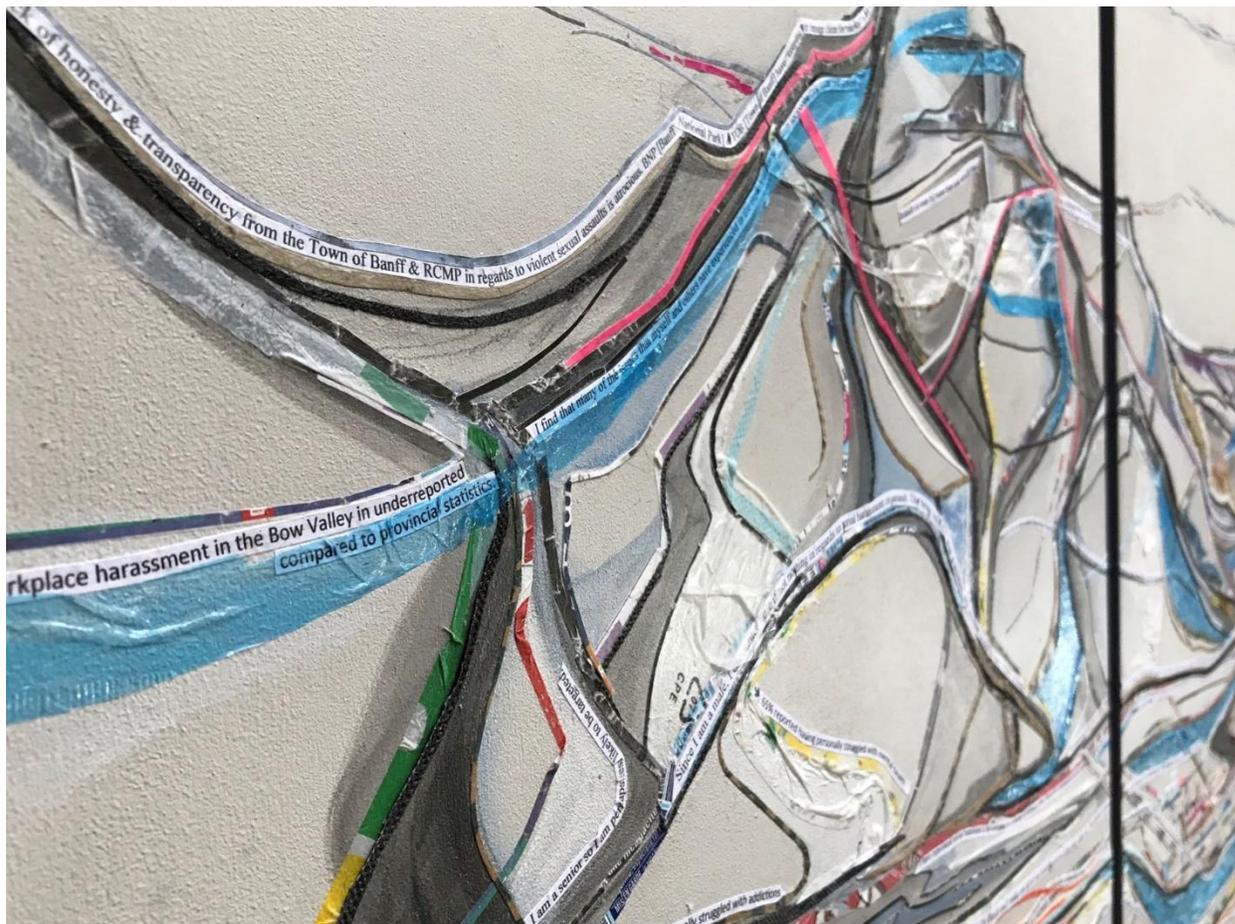


Fig. 7. *Under the Mountain's Shadow* (Detail Image I). Found object (trash) collage, matt medium, and acrylic on cradled birch boards, 24" x 60" (together) / 24" x 20" (each board).

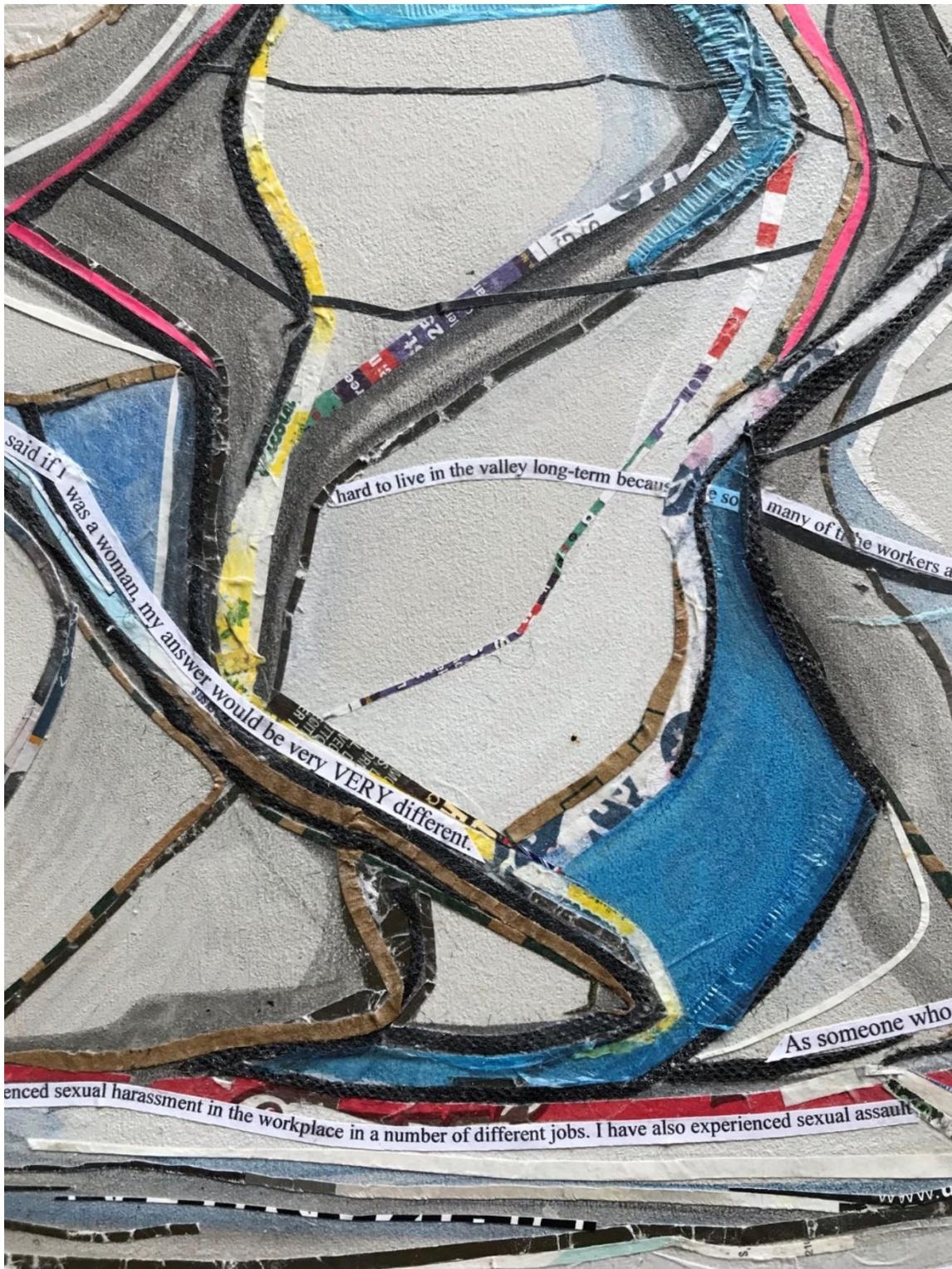


Fig. 9. *Under the Mountain's Shadow* (Detail Image). Found object (trash) collage, matt medium, and acrylic on cradled birch boards, 24" x 60" (together) / 24" x 20" (each board).

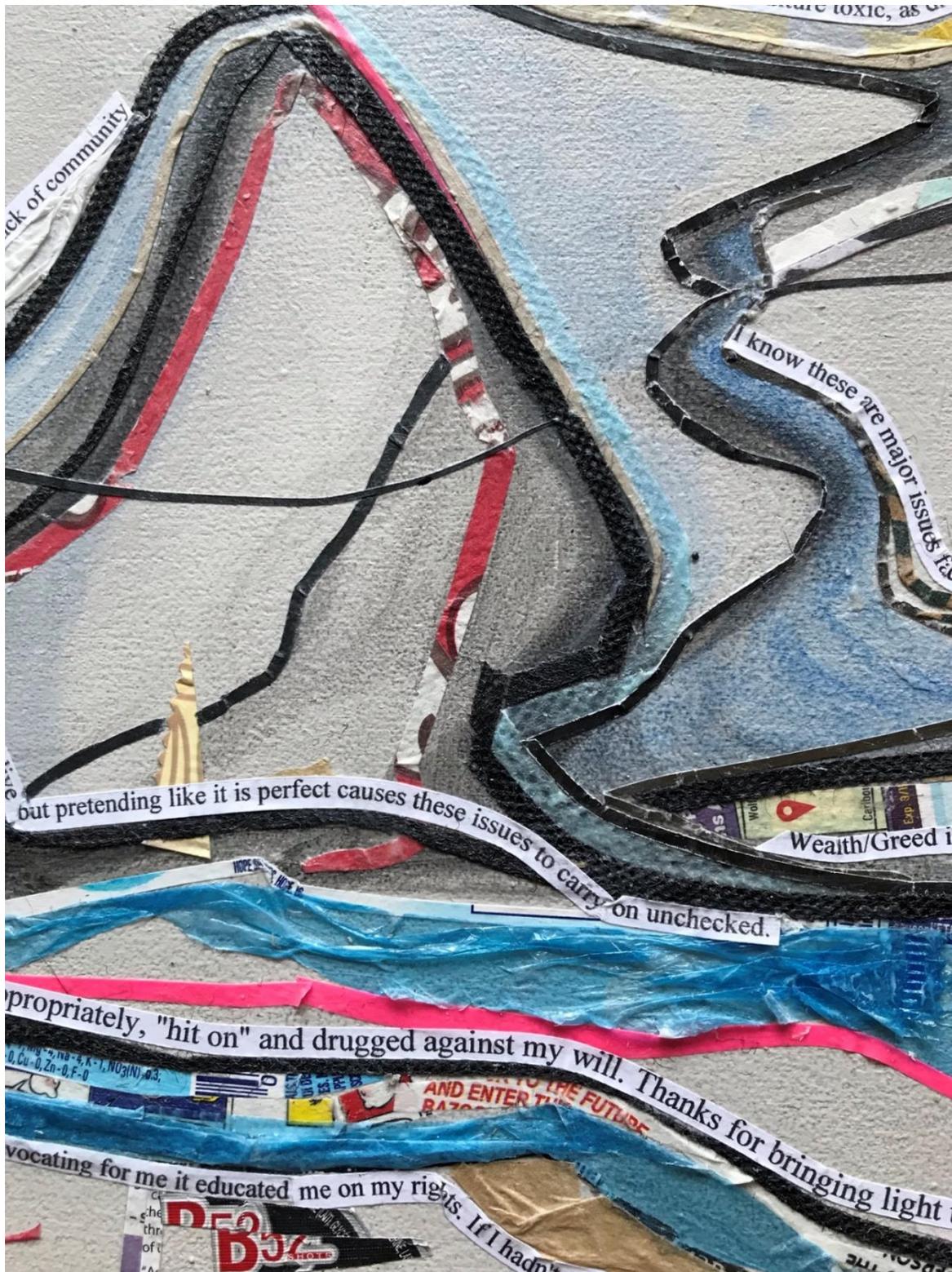


Fig. 10. *Under the Mountain's Shadow* (Detail Image I). Found object (trash) collage, matt medium, and acrylic on cradled birch boards, 24" x 60" (together) / 24" x 20" (each board).



Fig. 11. *Under the Mountain's Shadow* (Detail Image I). Found object (trash) collage, matt medium, and acrylic on cradled birch boards, 24" x 60" (together) / 24" x 20" (each board).



Fig. 12. *Under the Mountain's Shadow* (Detail Image I). Found object (trash) collage, matt medium, and acrylic on cradled birch boards, 24" x 60" (together) / 24" x 20" (each board).

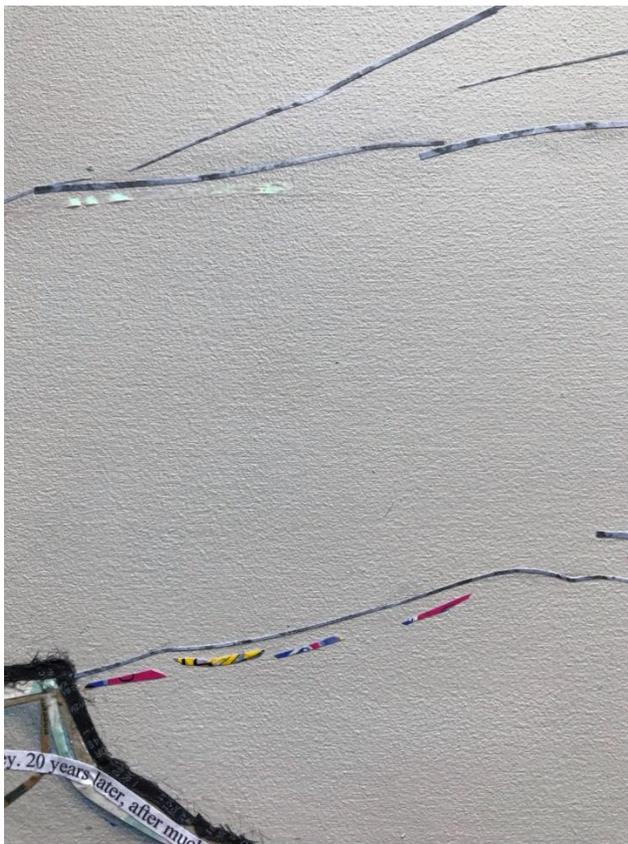


Fig. 13. *Under the Mountain's Shadow* (Detail Image I). Found object (trash) collage, matt medium, and acrylic on cradled birch boards, 24" x 60" (together) / 24" x 20" (each board).

7) CONCLUSION

Going into this project I knew it would be challenging artistically and emotionally. Overall, I am thrilled with the final piece and the results of the research and survey. There were surprises along the way such as how disappointingly quickly I was able to collect the trash, how challenging it was to get some of the collage pieces to adhere to the surface, and the disturbing and increasing rates of domestic and intimate partner violence in the Bow Valley. I was also surprised by hope, by how many resources are available to residents, by how many were willing to share their experiences, and by how engaged a large number of people in the community are when it comes to tackling these social issues. My passion for this project and my community has grown throughout. In discussions with the Banff YWCA and also because of the response of the community to the idea, research, and to the artwork itself, *Under the Mountain's Shadow* and this project has become a starting point for community engagement and for a larger and continuing artistic series.



Fig. 14. *Under the Mountain's Shadow*. Found object (trash) collage, matt medium, and acrylic on cradled birch boards, 24" x 60" (together) / 24" x 20" (each board).