



Program Overview

Hello Friends! 2024: May 13-15 Toronto, Ontario

Making a Difference - Embracing Our Grandmother Power!

Monday, May 13

Evening

Once you've checked in, join us for a reception at our Toronto Metropolitan University venue to catch up with GRAN friends and to meet new ones. The reception will be followed by a sit-down dinner and a keynote address.

Keynote Speaker: Sally Armstrong

[Sally Armstrong](#), award-winning author, journalist, and human rights activist will be our keynote speaker for the evening. She was the 2019 Massey Lecturer and is a four-time winner of the Amnesty International Canada Media Award. Sally was the first journalist to bring the story of the women of Afghanistan to the world and is relentless when it comes to exposing the abuse of women whether on an American university campus or a village in a war zone.

Tuesday, May 14

Morning

Welcome Plenary – We'll go over our agenda for the next two days, reflect on what we heard from Sally Armstrong and introduce you to building the GRAN "House" – Where does your "brick" fit?

Plenary – We will look at the highlights of GRAN's recent campaigns and initiatives with our Co-Chairs and have a quick overview of how GRAN is organized. We'll also spend some time with early GRAN leaders, celebrating our past and recognizing that the creation and ongoing work of GRAN is truly an inspiring story of grassroots advocacy and grandmother power.

We'll wrap up our morning by awarding the [Order of GRAN](#) to two worthy recipients. The award is given to honour a person (or organization) outside of GRAN who has made an outstanding contribution to our development and advocacy. The Order of GRAN is one small way in which we say a sincere and public "thank you".

Afternoon

Plenary: Learning about Our Issues I

What African Grandmothers are saying about their priorities – In the fall of 2023, African Grandmothers who attended the Stephen Lewis Foundation’s International Grandmothers Gathering issued a statement identifying their priorities for improving their lives. We’ll share a summary of this international statement.

Review of GRAN’s Right to Food Campaign – This past year’s campaign engaged many GRANs in learning and action about the global hunger crisis. As we know, this crisis is directly related to poverty and inequality, climate change, conflict, and food system failure. What have we learned? What have we achieved? Who are we working with? Do you have thoughts and questions about how it has gone so far?

Breakout Session: Learning about Our Issues II

Move around the room during our “speed dating” session to learn about GRAN’s different Watch Groups. You’ll have a chance to get a quick “briefing” on Education, Climate, Access to Medicines, Mining, and Ending Violence against Women – What’s happening on these issues? What key advocacy moments are coming up? Find out why those involved have such passion for their work.

Evening

For those who are interested, we’ll arrange to meet for dinner at a restaurant close by.

Wednesday, May 15

Morning

Plenary – We’ll start by spending a few minutes reflecting on Days 1 and 2 before going into our breakout sessions for the morning.

Breakouts: Big Ideas for the Future & Skill Building Sessions

- Join fellow GRANs to talk about our unique niche as an advocacy organization of older women with a focus on grassroots action. We want to hear from you. Where do you think we can be most effective? What ideas do you have for future campaigns?
- Improve your skills in two sessions led by fellow GRANs: 1. Meeting with your MP; and 2. Planning a Local Event.

Afternoon

Guest Speaker – Following lunch, [Ama Deawuo](#), Executive Director of [SeedChange](#) will introduce us to her Ghanaian Grandmother (via a short video) and will speak about how older women in sub-Saharan Africa are leading the way on agroecology with their knowledge, experience, and skills. Before joining SeedChange as Executive Director in 2021, Ama spent fifteen years as a leading activist for food sovereignty and food justice, and four years as the

Executive Director of Black Creek Community Farm. Thoughts and questions will be welcome as part of the presentation.

Interactive Plenary – We'll start wrapping up our time together by inviting your reflections on our Hello Friends gathering. What are your takeaways? What are your ideas for future campaigns? What gives you hope and revitalizes your activism?

Closing – Thank-yous, farewells, music, and dancing!

Celebrate Our Grandmother Power!



Photo credit: Maureen Murphy