

Women's Woven Voices

Brecia Kralovic-Logan



The tapestry currently has over 700 story cloths from 10 different countries

All photos: Brecia Kralovic-Logan

How can weaving a story be a powerful act of compassion, and a catalyst for connection and change? The *Women's Woven Voices* project is an international, collaborative art project that supports women in claiming their personal power by inviting them to write, weave and share their stories. Each woven 'story cloth' is stitched together into an ongoing tapestry, creating a new collective story that shows the beauty, creativity, diversity, compassion and power of women in community. The tapestry raises awareness about solutions to challenge women's experience globally, including gender violence, abuse and inequity.

The idea for the project was conceived when I was at a turning point in my artistic life and was feeling a powerful urge to be making art that addressed the social issues meaningful to me. While I was at a women's conference listening to inspirational women sharing their life stories, I was shaken by hearing about the abusive experiences that they had had to overcome. Making the world a safer place for women and girls to thrive has long been a passion of mine. I founded the *Women's Woven Voices* project in 2018, with the goal of stitching together 1,000 woven story cloths from around the globe into an artful tapestry while supporting women in being catalysts for change.

Weaving a piece of cloth connects our hands to our hearts, and reminds us of our human resourcefulness. Over the years, I had used a simple, hand-held, weaving method done on soda (drinking) straws with various groups to create story tapestries, and it occurred to me that this would work on a larger scale. People could discover weaving in a way that would be simple and fun, and experience the healing power of a repetitive, mindful activity. Their story cloth would become an expression of their voice through art that connects them to a global vision.

I believe that storytelling and art are engaging, creative forces, so I included three elements into the project experience. First, people are invited to reflect on what made them the strong person that they are today. Then they can use writing as a way of accessing, processing and translating their life experiences into story. I've provided resources including a guided meditation, and writing prompts on the website (see p.41).

Not everyone shares a written story but some people have written about how they have overcome various challenges. These stories are filled with life experiences, insights, hope, courage, joy, strength and love. Many participants have shared that they had new and valued insights while writing.

The second element of the project is weaving a 'story cloth.' There is no one way to convey your story in the weaving. Some people like to weave different colours to represent various milestones, experiences, or people in their lives. Others approach the weaving in a more intuitive way, choosing colours and textures as they weave and allowing insights to bubble up through the process.

One participant shared: 'It was healing to weave this strip in my own way but with the knowledge that it would join hundreds of others in celebration of women's resilience and empowerment'.

The tapestry is a testament to creativity. People chose a wide variety of materials for weft including naturally dyed yarns, commercial yarns, leather, fabric, twine, ribbon, floss, paper and plastic. Many have also added embellishments to their woven cloth to create a personalised piece of artwork. Charms, shells, pins, metals, toys, photos, ribbons, jewellery, coins and poems have all been used on the weaving to help convey unique stories. The third element of the project is sharing your story. I encourage people to share their stories verbally with respectful friends and family, to write their story and submit it on my website, and to submit their story cloth to the *Women's Woven Voices* tapestry. Story cloths can be mailed to me at the address on my website.

When I receive each story cloth, I stitch it into the tapestry. As a part of my mission is to raise awareness, I add a red fringe to the bottom of three out of four of the strips to represent the worldwide statistic of women experiencing some kind of abuse. The red fringe fosters conversations promoting positive counterpoints including resilience, compassion, open communication, healing and peaceful interaction. I am honoured to hold each story cloth in my hands as I stitch; time spent working on the tapestry has become a kind of meditation for me as I focus on the intention of the work.

Anyone who would like to add their woven story is invited to participate. Yes, that means that men are welcome. The mission of the project promotes compassion for all. Currently the tapestry includes story cloths from across the United States, Canada, Australia, Bulgaria, Syria, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. The tapestry has been exhibited at international women's conferences, art events, museums, universities and community events in the USA. It's my intention to exhibit the tapestry internationally and I am looking for people who might be interested in sharing the project in their region.

I invite you to visit my website to find resources on how to participate. There are tutorial videos for setting up the loom, weaving and finishing the cloth, writing prompts, and links to organisations focused on the mission.

Your voice is vital to promoting compassion and creating a culture in which everyone can thrive.

It will be my honour to stitch your story into this global woven art tapestry.

What will you weave into your story cloth?
To learn more about participating, please visit www.womenswovenvoices.com

About the author: Brecia Kralovic-Logan is a fibre artist, women's advocate, and creativity coach. She founded the *Women's Woven Voices* project, and the *Pebble Rebel Award*, which honours women making a positive difference in their communities. She is the author of *The Spiral of Creativity – Mastering the Art of a Spirited Life*. She teaches and exhibits her art internationally. www.breciacreative.com
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Participants use colour, texture and embellishments to share their story



Weaving materials and embellishments make each piece unique