



## Grief Symposium to Highlight Yazidi Resilience and Community Healing at King's

September 16, 2024

**London, ON** - Dr. Lisa McLean and Dr. Carrie Traher, professors of Thanatology at King's University, will host a groundbreaking Grief Symposium titled "Grief, Loss, and Resiliency in our Community" on September 19th, 2024. The event will be held at the Student Life Center at King's University and will feature a poignant public photovoice exhibit, bringing to light the experiences of Yazidi refugees who have resettled in London.

This symposium seeks to address the often-stigmatized and misunderstood topics of death, dying, grief, and loss. The photovoice exhibit is a participatory arts-based research project designed to:

- **Elevate the Voices and Perspectives of Yazidi Women:** Showcase their personal stories and experiences to foster greater awareness and empathy.
- **Provide Historical Context and Accounts of Atrocities:** Offer insight into Yazidis' displacement from Northern Iraq through the sharing of Yazidis women's photography and narratives of their experiences of violence and loss.
- **Lend Complexity to Understanding Vulnerability, Victimhood, Survival, and Loss:** Enhance understanding of these intertwined experiences and their broader implications.
- **Support the Development of Grief Literacy:** Advocate for compassionate communities that are equipped to respond to diverse experiences of loss.

The symposium was made possible through a \$12,371 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Connection Grant received by Dr. McLean, Dr. Traher (co-applicants), and Dr. Adrienne Sauder, Lecturer of Thanatology.

### Background on the Yazidi Refugee Experience

The Yazidi community has endured unimaginable suffering since August 3, 2014, when ISIS launched a brutal assault on the Sinjar region of Northern Iraq. The invasion led to the displacement of over 400,000 Yazidis, and the commission of horrific acts amounting to the crime of genocide, including the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. In response, the Canadian government resettled 1,200 Yazidi refugees, with approximately 800 now residing in London.

The photovoice exhibit at the symposium will provide a powerful visual and narrative exploration of these experiences, highlighting both the grief and the strength of the Yazidi people as they rebuild their lives in Canada.

**Quotes:**

“Death, dying, grief, and loss are issues that affect every individual at some time in their lives, yet there is great stigma and misunderstanding surrounding these topics. This limits our ability to cope and to adequately support others. The photovoice exhibit stands as a testament to the survivorship of the Yazidi people and a call to action for the global community to support the healing and recovery of those affected by tragic events.” Dr. Lisa McLean, Assistant Professor of Thanatology.

**About King’s University**

King’s University College at Western University is a Canadian liberal arts university college with its roots in the Catholic intellectual tradition. As one of Canada's top university colleges, King's students benefit from a personalized experience, learning in small classes led by outstanding professors, and being part of a close community on a beautiful campus.

King’s is recognized, both nationally and internationally, for its excellent academic programs, commitment to research excellence, generous scholarships and comprehensive student services. Offering degree programs in the arts, social sciences, management and social work, King’s is home to approximately 3500 full- and part-time students from across Canada as well as 23 other countries. Institutionally autonomous, King’s is academically affiliated with Western University, and King’s graduates receive a Western University degree.

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