



# Community Engagement Initiative Report:

*Community  
Healing and  
Youth Rights in  
Jane and Finch*



SAMUEL CENTRE  
FOR SOCIAL  
CONNECTEDNESS

Fellow:  
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# The Vision

The goal of my Community Engagement Initiative was to share knowledge with youth from the Jane and Finch Community in the following three areas i) the social determinants of health, holistic approaches to healing, systemic racism and oppression, structural violence and the multiple facets of wellbeing and mental health; ii) to empower youth with a section on youth rights – from sources of youth rights to rights with police; and finally iii) I closed my session with teaching the youth a mindfulness and mediation practice that they could take with them in future experiences of stress, anxiety and depression. This segment of the session included a body scan, a loving kindness meditation, breathing tutorial, and daily practices of mindfulness.

My goal was also to engage the youth, and create an interactive session that allowed me to learn what challenges in mental and physical health the youth were facing, and what changes they could foresee in their community to make better, lasting change in community violence and trauma.

**"WE NEED TO LET THE COMMUNITY DEFINE THE ISSUE SO THAT THEY CAN SOLVE IT THEMSELVES"**

# The Outcome

My initiative targeted 24 youth, from the Jane and Finch community, ranging from ages 15 to 29 years old. I chose the format of an online 2 hour Zoom session as Covid 19 precluded any physical gathering in a community space. For the interactive components that required youth to give feedback, suggestions or responses, I chose the online format of submission response of menti.com in order to preserve anonymity of the participants that would allow for a group dynamic to be created, without youth feeling hesitant to participate due to identifying information shared about them and their responses.

The Community Engagement Initiative was conducted August 12th, 2020. The main partner I collaborated with was the Community Healing Project team through the City of Toronto programming.

# Community Engagement Initiative



What are you struggling with right now?

Mentimeter



What changes in your community would promote healing, joy and peace?

More jobs and more youth employment

Normalizing mental health and providing more access to mental health facilities

More jobs and mentorship for youth, more positive community role models should be showcased so youth can

In my community we share when it comes to celebration workload culture etc but not so much for mental health or violence. It is still considered taboo so educating others that it's their there fault or issue to overcome rather than of the community.

Getting rid of internalized shame and making other resources available. Often times we fear sharing bc we

Creating spaces for young children and youth promoting education and physical activity

more upstream thinking meaning more things to help with prevention rather than treatment

more homeless shelters

**"WE NEED TO CREATE SPACES WHERE YOUTH FEEL SAFE TO SOCIALIZE AND BE THEMSELVES"**

## The Impact

The initiative benefitted my research as it allowed for a more robust understanding from the source being the youth themselves, of what challenges youth were facing in the various facets of their lives and furthermore, what recommendations they saw as being meaningful to impact long term lasting change in mental health promotion, stigma eradication, and transformative healing and recovery.

Themes that emerged included safe spaces, community agency and autonomy, increased jobs and opportunities for youth, getting rid of stigma and shame around mental health, more housing and homeless shelters, more resources (money), normalizing mental health and increasing access to resources for supports and help and putting the emphasis on violence prevention.

**"WE NEED MORE UPSTREAM THINKING... MEANING MORE THINGS TO HELP WITH PREVENTION RATHER THAN TREATMENT"**