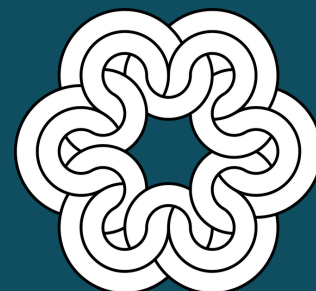


COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE REPORTS



Social Connectedness Fellowship 2020



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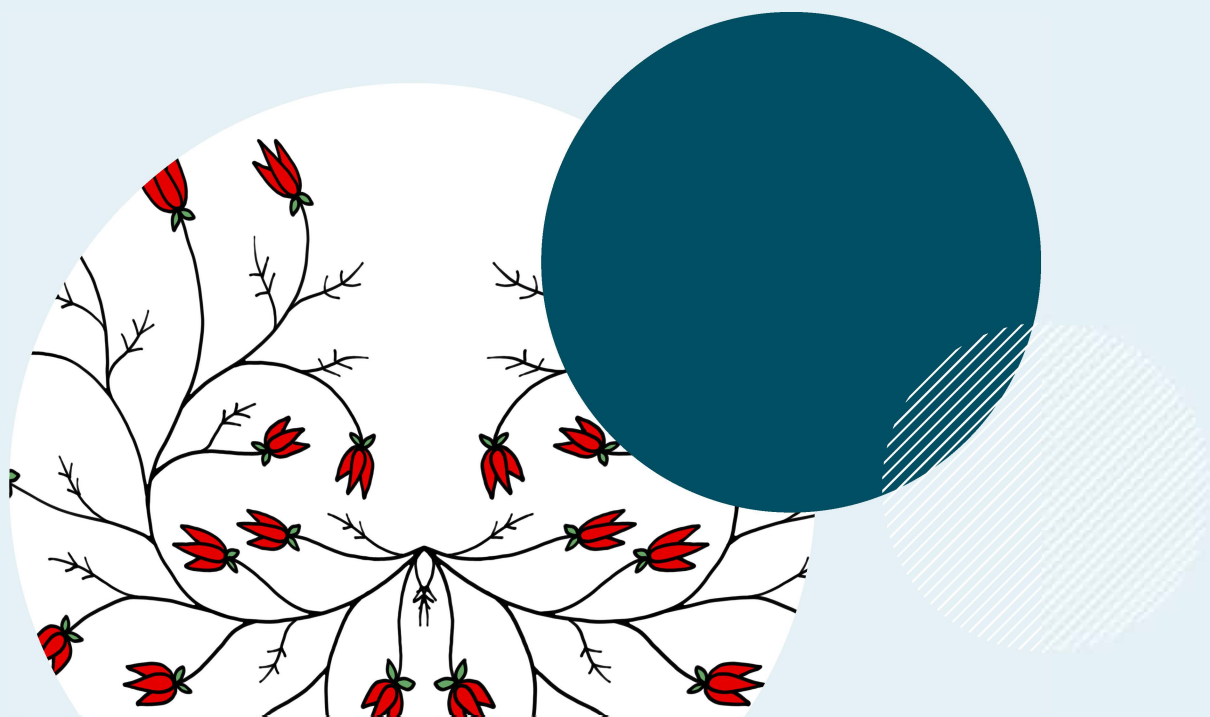
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Community Engagement Initiative Report:

*Community
Healing and
Youth Rights in
Jane and Finch*



SAMUEL CENTRE
FOR SOCIAL
CONNECTEDNESS

Fellow:
Bianca Braganza

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

Word cloud results for "What are you struggling with right now?":
anxiety, laziness, being consistent, financial problems, financial pressure, tired, using time wisely, overcoming fear, physical pain, building ambition, people and judgement, mental spiraling, studying, weight, sadness, self-growth, indecisive future, feeling helpless covid, being healthy exercise, finding a passion in life, maintaining friendships, eating healthy, sticking with plans, family ties breaking, procrastination, what to do after graduate, isolation no connections, life unknown future, boredom, motivation.

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 think we are alone in what we are

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"



HOUSEHOLD MODEL VISIONING

Hana Geadah, Social Connectedness Fellow 2020

Community Health Workers in Harper, Liberia gathered for a half day of presentations and discussions about the health of their community, their working patterns, and their goals. The goal of this event was to familiarize the Community Health Workers (CHWs) with new information about their own work and the burden of disease in their communities. This was a day meant to facilitate critical thinking about how their program can improve according to the health needs of the community and their own needs as CHWs.



I was not able to be in Liberia during the fellowship due to COVID-19, so for this event we had the CHWs gather at a distance at Tubman University while I facilitated the presentations over Zoom on July 22, 2020. A total of 48 CHWs and five CHW-supervisors gathered and the Community Health Nurse and other administrators were present.

This event could not have happened without the ground coordination from Bendu V. Sannoh, a Senior Social Protection Officer with Partners In Health (PIH)-Liberia, and Caroline Doe, the Community Nurse with PIH-Liberia. The realization of this event is owing to their time and effort. Additionally, the surveys could not have been conducted without the CHWs themselves, and the results could not have been analyzed without the work of Emmanuel Howe, one CHW who input the responses to a computer. Lastly, the global PIH-Liberia team, namely Miry Choi, Matthew Hing, Lee Hair, Lassana Jabate, and Daniel Palazuelos, contributed greatly to this project, in analyzing the data, helping in the preparation of the presentation and questions, and coordinating with the ground team.

I began the day with a presentation that focused on the results from the demographic health surveys of the Harper community and the Time in Motion surveys that the CHWs conducted about their working patterns during the past year. Following the lunch break, we instructed the CHWs to split into groups and discuss two questions that the team and I agreed would facilitate valuable conversations. These questions prompted the CHWs to reflect on what they found surprising in the presentation and how their colleagues and organizations can better support their work. After the discussions, each CHW was sent home with a form to fill out asking them to reflect on what goals they can set for themselves as individuals. The individual and group forms were then scanned back to me and I made infographics to be distributed among the CHWs in order for them to have concrete take-aways and reminders from the day.

This event was most successful in its ability to provide a forum for CHWs to air their concerns and goals for the program and reflect on their own work. The CHWs were able to see different analyses of their work metrics, including how much time they spend on different responsibilities. This information is particularly helpful to understand where more attention is needed and how to better structure the program to ensure best outcomes for patients and health workers.



The day was exciting for both me and the CHWs, as the data I presented was data that I had spent my summer analyzing and the CHWs had never gotten to see the outcomes of these surveys before. It was also especially exciting to get to meet the CHWs and administrators virtually, with whom I had been communicating with and learning lots about through very impersonal metrics. Ultimately, it was heartwarming to see firsthand the extreme care and dedication that the CHWs have for their patients and this program.

JULY
2020

STILL THRIVING

SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS
POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS
DURING COVID-19

PREPARED BY:
Emma Greenfield



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Connected North

THE ISSUE

Social distancing protocols have greatly impacted how staff and faculty of post-secondary institutions can meaningfully support Indigenous students.

As many colleges and universities closed their doors in response to COVID-19, supporting Indigenous students has been a challenge for many of those who play a vital role in fostering their well-being and success.

Despite the many challenges emerging from this unprecedented time, staff and faculty continue to creatively support Indigenous students in meaningful ways. Hopeful practices have emerged from the ability to adapt to meet the new demands of a more virtual world.

The changes in program delivery coupled with social distancing measures requires staff and faculty to rethink how Indigenous students will be supported in the future. It is important that universities and colleges across Canada understand how COVID-19 has impacted Indigenous students from application process to graduation.

In order to identify common challenges and find ways to overcome them, staff and faculty from across the country participated in a virtual knowledge sharing event. From this event emerged recommendations for how colleges and universities can support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students during COVID-19 and beyond.

THE VIRTUAL KNOWLEDGE SHARING EVENT



On July 28, 2020, 46 staff and faculty of colleges and universities from across Canada gathered online to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on supporting Indigenous students.

ROLES OF PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED:

**Counsellor/
Student
Support**

**Recruitment/
Transition**

**Educators/
Researchers**

**Knowledge
Holders**

**Programmers/
Planners**

**Directors/
Administration/
Coordinators**

THE FINDINGS

MAJOR CHALLENGES INDIGENOUS STUDENTS FACE

- Social isolation
- No access to devices or WIFI at home
- Housing and food insecurity
- Financial burden

MAJOR CHALLENGES STAFF AND FACULTY FACE

- Little to no flexibility in policy
- Unable to support the unique and personal needs of each student at a distance
- Difficulties with student engagement
- Financial restrictions

OTHER CHALLENGES

- Inability to collaborate with other departments
 - "Zoom fatigue"/ resistance to video calling
 - No face-to-face interaction
- Restrictions for cultural programming
 - Travel restrictions

Virtual teachings
(on Zoom,
YouTube, etc.)

Reaching out to
students via
phone/video calls

Mailing
beading/craft
kits to students
for online
workshops

Connecting
students with
mentors online

**HOPEFUL PRACTICES
STAFF AND FACULTY
ARE ENGAGING IN
NOW**

Laptop/wireless
hotspots for
rental to
students in need

Hosting
Webinars open
to the public

Enhanced online
presence and
regular use of
social media

Collaboration with
on- and off-
campus
partnerships

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

1. Ensure **every** Indigenous student has access to technology and WIFI capabilities to participate in online learning.
2. Help alleviate the heightened financial burden Indigenous students are facing at this time.
3. Be flexible with policies to ensure Indigenous students are being wholistically supported.
4. Continue to build stronger relationships with local Indigenous communities.
5. Continue to make Indigenization a priority.
6. Be creative in fostering collaboration and community with on-campus and off-campus partnerships.
7. Listen to Indigenous students and ensure their voices are centred in decision-making

RECOMMENDATION

EXAMPLES OF RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure **every**

Indigenous student has access to technology and WIFI capabilities to participate in online learning.

- offer device rental services
- provide financial assistance
- support staff and faculty who work with Indigenous students to find immediate technological solutions (this includes: laptops, wireless hotspots, and headphones w/ microphone)
- provide digital literacy opportunities to students

2. Help alleviate the heightened financial burden Indigenous students are facing at this time.

- provide additional bursaries and funding opportunities specifically for Indigenous students
- waive initial fees and deposits
- provide Indigenous students with grocery cards/UberEats gift cards
- pay Indigenous students to be virtual mentors/tutors
- provide additional funding necessary for cultural supports to continue (e.g. to mail out materials for virtual workshop or ensure students have sacred medicines at home)

3. Be flexible with policies to ensure Indigenous students are being wholistically supported.

- ensure policies are flexible in areas beyond academic and financial support to meet the needs of the individual mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually
- ensure policies are culturally responsive
- centre the voices of Indigenous student and staff/faculty in policy-making

4. Continue to build stronger relationships with local Indigenous communities.

- be creative in recruitment strategies in Indigenous communities for the next cycle of students
- continue to create and support initiatives that foster collaboration with local Indigenous communities

5. Continue to make Indigenization a priority.

- create, fund, and promote online opportunities for students, staff, faculty, and community members to engage in a wide range of Indigenous knowledges (through Webinars, Zoom meetings, online resources, etc.)
- hire more Indigenous staff and faculty to support Indigenization initiatives

6. Be creative in fostering collaboration and community with on-campus and off-campus partnerships.

- strengthen partnerships with off-campus community organizations and agencies
- provide opportunities to support the relationships between colleagues and different on-campus departments

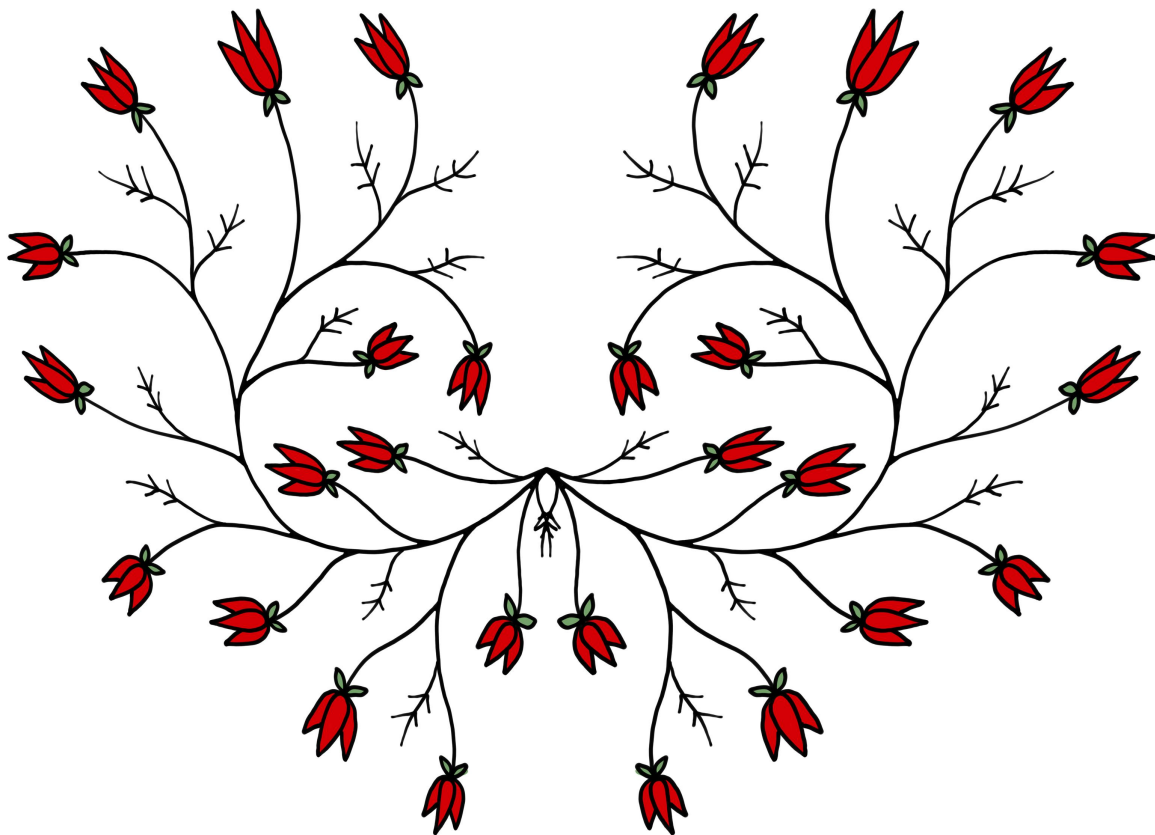
7. Listen to Indigenous students and ensure their voices are centred in decision-making.

- Indigenous students know what they need to be supported along their journey from application to graduation...listen to what they say
- ensure Indigenous students are always compensated for their involvement in any policy- or decision-making process

Final reflection:

It is very important that staff and faculty who work with Indigenous students are also offered supports at this time. They are the very foundation of Indigenous student success and wellbeing at every college and university. Listen for their suggestions and, most importantly, follow their recommendations.

Thank you to all those who participated.



Artwork created by: Monique Aura

📷 [monique.aura](#)



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THE ROUNDTABLES

Ji Yoon Han, Social Connectedness Fellow

The Roundtables following the Policy Hackathon were a platform for Fellows to receive further detailed feedback about their Policy Hackathon outputs. The Roundtables were held on July 31st, August 6th and August 7th. There were three roundtables discussing the intersection of Covid-19 and three different themes: disability rights, domestic violence and older people's rights. Fellows were joined by the Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness's (SCSC) external partners and network for a series of hour-long discussions on the policy output and the human rights issue in general. Overall, there were 52 participants across the three roundtable discussions.

THE OBJECTIVE

The goal was to hear feedback on the policy output from individuals who worked in that area or who were a part of the target community and embody the sense of "with, not for". Moreover, it was an opportunity for Fellows to hear about initiatives and programs that were ongoing and think about how their work could complement these supports.



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THE FORMAT

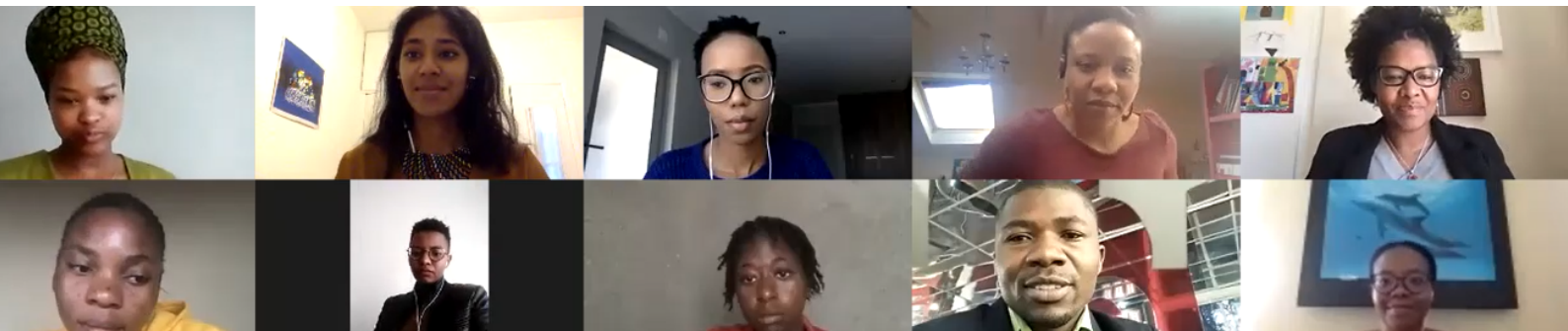
The roundtable format was particularly helpful in facilitating these discussions because it allowed for some back and forth between Fellows and the other participants. While the Fellows had already received some feedback at the end of the Policy Hackathon, there wasn't much time to receive extensive advice on how to actually implement some policy outputs. The Roundtable gave judges and other partners ample time to expand on and ask for more details from the Fellows (and vice versa).



THE IMPACT

The Roundtables benefitted the community by amplifying and integrating their voices into the policy output process. Additionally, the feedback from SCSC's partners helped Fellows hone the output to be a better suited for the needs and wants of the target community. Fellows were also able to network with partners, and some partners expressed interest in helping implement some of the policy outputs. The Roundtables also informed research on how community programs work and what factors improved the accessibility and efficacy of the projects.

BRIDGING LEADERSHIP AND SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS WITHIN YOUTH-LED & STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS



Within the youth and student leadership space, there is a need for increased trust building, collaboration and empowerment. The event brought together various youth institutions and organizations, and a key government body to reflect and engage with one another. The objective of the event was to foster partnerships and collaboration between organizations, as a practice in Bridging Leadership. Alongside this, it was to educate participants on the importance of embedding practices of Social Connectedness and Bridging Leadership in their work, as well as in strengthening leaders.

"WHEN WE ENABLE AN ENVIRONMENT OF BELONGING AND SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS - YOUTH ARE BETTER ABLE TO ROOT THEMSELVES IN THESE ENVIRONMENTS. THIS MAKES THEM MORE RESILIENT AND EMPOWERED TO EFFECT CHANGE."

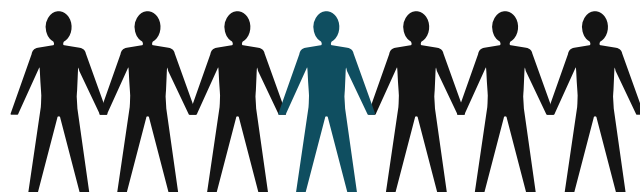
- CELINE THOMAS

The beneficiaries of the event included various student based and youth organizations – with a particular focus on: Organizations focusing on food insecurity and poverty alleviation; Organizations focusing on education, mentorship, literacy, and tutoring of disadvantaged students; Organizations focusing on gendered inequities: period poverty, gender-based violence, and women empowerment; Organisations focusing on rights and recognition of marginalized students, LGBTQIA* students, Students with physical and mental disabilities, as well as mental health organizations

"WHAT CAME OUT FOR US WAS THE IMPORTANCE OF REFLECTING YOUTH IN LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES: WHETHER ITS IN THE RUNNING OF THE ORGANIZATION OR A BROAD LEVEL ... AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RELEVANCE OF SOLUTIONS YOU COME UP WITH AS AN ORGANIZATION TO ANSWER TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S CHALLENGES."

- SIBONGILE KHUMALO

The format of the event was a panel discussion, with breakout sessions and was facilitated through Zoom. This format was appropriate given the need to have a live discussion in order to foster deepened connection and collaboration, whilst taking into consideration the Lockdown level 3 restrictions, and cost considerations. The event took place on the 05 August between 13:30-15:30, and intends to catalyze further dialogue and collaboration into the future.

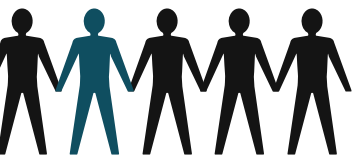


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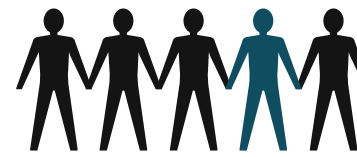


SYNERGOS

The Roundtable panel discussion consisted of speakers from various organizations including: The National Youth Development Agency; The Learning Trust; Democracy Works Foundation; Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator; as well as Ikamva Youth. The speakers contributed towards discussion of the programme's which they are currently running that potentially built Social Connectedness within their organizations as well as beneficiaries. Furthermore the speakers also reflected on some of the persistent challenges facing the nations youth; the importance of youth leadership development; as well as fostering Social Connectedness and Bridging Leadership within youth spaces



"EVEN IF YOU ARE AN OLDER LEADER WHO HAS BEEN
THROUGH A JOURNEY ... A LOT OF THE WORK WE
[ULTIMATELY] HAVE TO DO IS AROUND OURSELVES."
— MARLENE OGAWA



Some of the notable learnings from the event was seeing how easily adaptable principles of Social Connectedness and Bridging Leadership could be applicable to many youth organizations, and demonstrating a strong case for collaboration for the Social Connectedness Programme with these organizations. A notable success was the panel participants who participated, as the panel consisted of all the major organizations within the youth space in South Africa. Another notable learning is how the event significantly contributed towards many of the policy recommendations for the research report. Another success is that the event facilitated and encouraged reported collaborations between some of the participating organizations.

The impact which the event had on the community is firstly, giving the participating organizations a more deepened understanding of the importance of Social Connectedness, building institutions of belonging and Bridging Leadership. Furthermore, it served the community in strengthening leadership institutions and cultivating collaborations which can potentially be instrumental in uniting efforts to eradicate urgent issues within youth, and student communities. As the breakout sessions were focused on building connection and community through reflections on individual journeys – the event also acted as a space of healing, resilience building, and reflection for participants. The individuals impacted by the event were approximately 30 leaders of youth and student-based organizations.



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**"Bridging Leadership and Social Connectedness
within
Youth-led & Student Organisations"**



Speakers:



UAE AIR QUALITY INFORMATION CAMPAIGN

AIM

This project aimed to promote air quality awareness in the UAE, where populations most exposed to poor air quality are often workers employed outdoors or on construction sites. These people often face language and technical barriers to accessing public health information. For this reason, this engagement consisted of examining the needs of UAE residents in regards to air quality information to develop an inclusive communication campaign.

RESEARCH

The content of the information campaign was informed by interviews with local air quality experts and from a multi-lingual community survey. By examining the gaps that exist in air quality communication and what residents want to learn more about, I was able to develop a research-based air quality communication campaign.

OUTREACH

Based on residents' preferences in the survey, the social media content took the form of infographics and videos. The survey also showed that residents prefer to receive air quality information from the government. Therefore, the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi will lead the dissemination of the content created and take on board the research when considering their long-term communication strategy ahead.



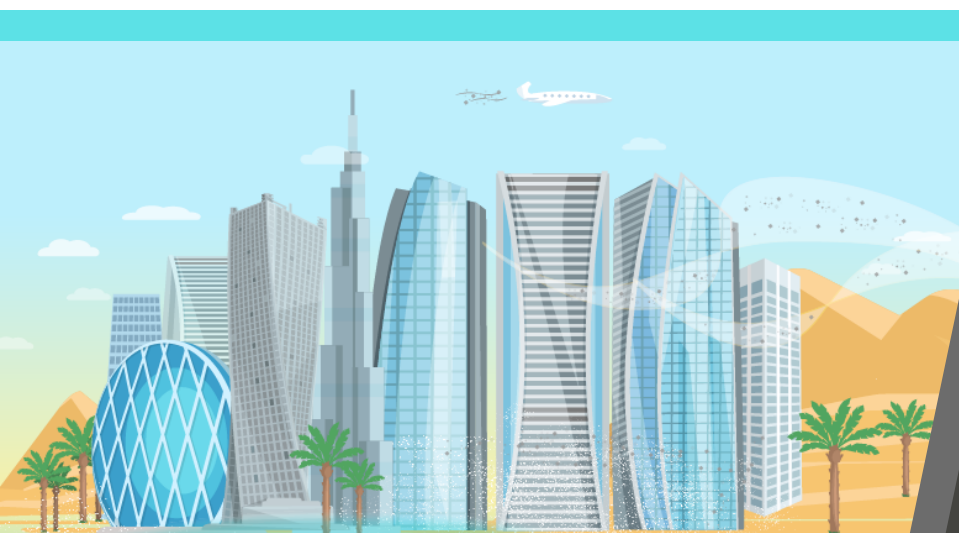
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**DATA
DRIVEN
ENVIROLAB**



هيئة البيئة - أبوظبي
Environment Agency - ABU DHABI

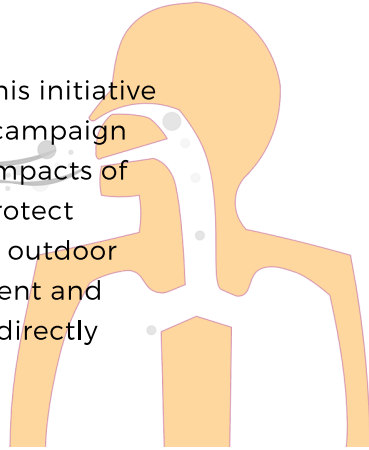


"Be a part of the solution, not part of the pollution" - Survey respondent

"Less than a handful of people that I've met really understand and can talk about the air quality challenges in the region" - Dubai urban planner

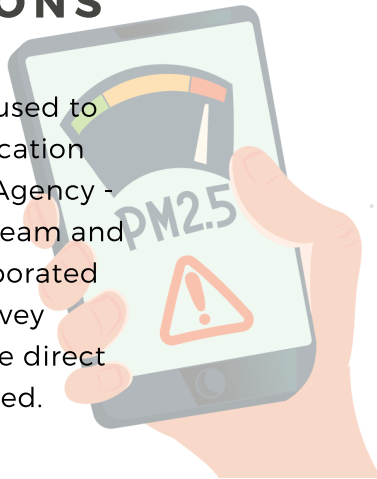
SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

The immediate output of this initiative was a social media toolkit campaign that illustrates the health impacts of air pollution and ways to protect yourself against indoor and outdoor pollution sources. The content and form of the campaign was directly informed by the survey.



LONG-TERM COMMUNICATIONS

The survey responses will be used to inform the general communication strategy of the Environment Agency - Abu Dhabi. Their Air Quality team and Communications team collaborated with forming many of the survey questions and are some of the direct recipients of the data collected.



CHALLENGES

One of the biggest learning moments for me was to recognise how challenging it was with my positionality to reach non-English speaking populations in the UAE to complete my survey, even after translating it. I think this illustrates why we need to put in extra effort to reach vulnerable populations when sharing health information.



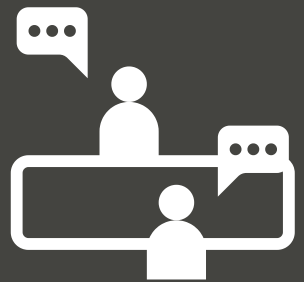
MILESTONES



5

SURVEY
TRANSLATIONS

16



INTERVIEWS
WITH EXPERTS



263

SURVEY
RESPONSES

15



GROCERY
VOUCHERS GIFTED

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN

View the research and informational video at: datadrivenlab.org/cities-air-pollution/

SIBLING SURVEY AND THE SPECIAL CHRONICLES PODCAST

OLIVIA NAJDOVSKI, SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS FELLOW

The Initiative

My community engagement initiative had two components. First, Ben Haack (Special Olympics International Board Member and Athlete Leader) and I administered a survey to Special Olympics athlete leaders to understand athletes' sibling relationships. This survey was also a component of our research project. After compiling the results, Ben and I joined the [Special Chronicles](#) podcast, hosted by Daniel Smrokowski (Special Olympics International Sargent Shriver International Global Messenger) to communicate our results to Special Olympics athletes and their families.

The goal of this community engagement initiative project was to gather insights directly from Special Olympics athletes and then communicate the findings back to them in an accessible and engaging format. As such, this community engagement initiative specifically targeted Special Olympics athletes. We chose the survey format because it was accessible to Special Olympics athlete leaders. Despite this, due to COVID-19 physical distancing restrictions, some athletes could not receive in-person assistance completing the survey like they would during typical Special Olympics programming. Despite this, some athletes did receive assistance virtually. We chose the Special Chronicles podcast to communicate the results of our sibling research because it is an established podcast hosted by a Special Olympics athlete leader that has a viewer base which includes many Special Olympics athletes. We also thought this format would be the most engaging way of communicating our research findings while simultaneously being educational and informative.

Our survey was launched on July 20, 2020 and concluded on August 7, 2020. The podcast was [livestreamed](#) on September 3, 2020 and was posted on podcast platforms including Apple Podcasts and Spotify on September 13, 2020.



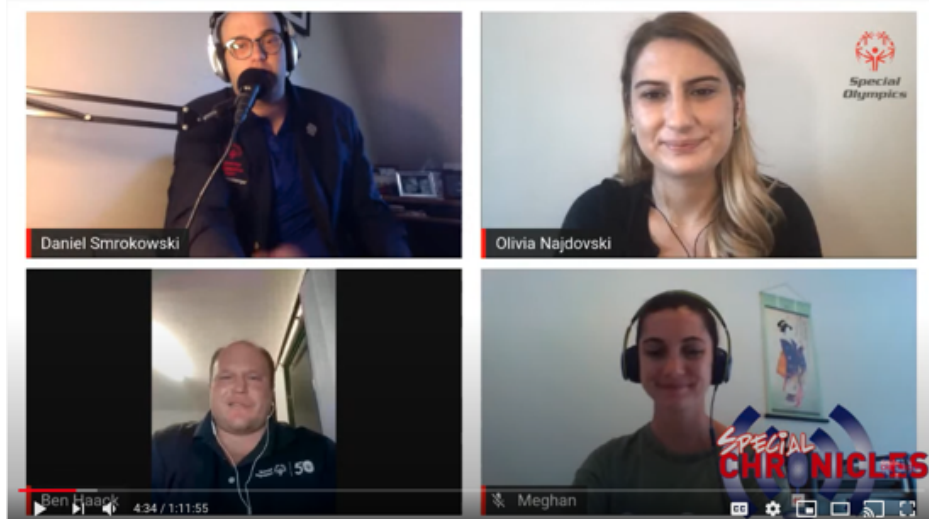
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Benefit to Research and the Community

Most research on this topic includes the perspectives of siblings without ID, parents, or teachers. The perspectives of individuals with ID are notably missing. Our survey contributed to the ID and sibling literature by highlighting the perspectives of individuals with ID. Additionally, most research on this topic is conducted in Western, English-speaking countries. Our survey contributed to the literature by including more diverse perspectives. The survey was also conducted across four regions (North America, Asia-Pacific, Latin America, and Africa) and was distributed in three languages (English, French, and Spanish). Despite our small sample size of 27 responses (70% of which were complete), this survey contributes to diversifying the research on ID and sibling experiences. Our survey was particularly successful in gathering statements on how Special Olympics has positively impacted sibling relationships. An athlete leader reports that Special Olympics has encouraged their sibling to “talk about inclusion and spread it to everyone around.” Another athlete leader highlights that Special Olympics has given their sibling the opportunity to “see [them] more confident” and this has “brought [them] closer to each other.” Statements like these highlight the ways in which Special Olympics contributes to sibling relationships and indicate the potential impact that more sibling programming could have on sibling relationships.

Joining the Special Chronicles podcast to communicate our results and recommendations provided us with an opportunity to benefit the community. The Special Chronicles podcast is an established podcast in which many Special Olympics athletes are regular listeners. The livestream of the podcast recording received 52 views on YouTube, 28 views on Twitter Periscope, and 205 views on Facebook Live, totaling 285 live viewers. The podcast livestream received positive comments across social media platforms. One viewer commented “Outstanding podcast video. Siblings do accept us and give us encouragement. Thank you very much for sharing this positive message.”

Overall, our community engagement initiative benefits both research and the community by collecting the perspectives of Special Olympics athletes then communicating those findings and recommendations back to the population it pertains to.



community engagement initiative report

the postcard project

created by
sarah roberts

*Social Connectedness Fellow
Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness
<https://www.socialconnectedness.org/>
Summer 2020*



**SAMUEL CENTRE
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what was the project?

The Postcard Project was a **cross Canada storytelling initiative** that shared stories about forced migration to Canada and printed them on postcards alongside local artwork. The postcards were then distributed for free from public locations across the country. The mission of the project was to use storytelling postcards as a way to **educate** and **dispel myths** around forced migration, **reduce discrimination** and create a more welcoming Canada for all. The project was in partnership with **Common Threads**, an SCSC initiative, and served as a way to further their goal of creating a **positive narrative around forced migration**.

The project had a digital presence in the form of a website, which described the project in more detail and allowed for people to view stories of forced migration. Story collection also happened through the website, where the project received anecdotes from those that have been forced to migrate and those that have been directly affected by those that have been forced to migrate. Lastly, artists could apply to have their work featured on postcards and organizations could request to have postcards at their location on the website.



**500 postcards
to 10 locations**

**600+ website
views**

**1100+ people
reached in 16
countries**

why was the project created?

This project was created with the accompanying research on refugee integration in second tier cities in Canada in mind. The research identified **discrimination** as a challenge faced by refugees in second tier cities and recommended **awareness and education** as a **method for positive change**. Thus, this project addressed this weakness by sharing stories that educate, dispel myths around forced migration and ultimately foster empathy to **create a more positive narrative around forced migration**. The project was completed over the months of June-August 2020.



The stories were printed on the back of postcards with two initial designs by Halifax based artists. Above, "In Community We Thrive" by Elyse Moir and to the right, "1979: A family's journey after the fall of Saigon" by Kumi Henden.

*Sarah was interviewed
on CBC Yukon Morning
about the project.*

[Listen Here](#)

*An article about the
project was written on
the SCSC website.*

[Read Here](#)



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SOCIAL NETWORKING THROUGH SOCIAL JUSTICE

"I feel like ageism is invisible and that we need to change our attitudes towards ageing and older people so that our rights don't diminish as we age."

- Mentor (she/her), 34, from Australia

Finding common ground and mutual interest in social justice and activism is important in an increasingly interconnected society. Since COVID-19, many young people are experiencing unease around finding a job, securing financial stability, and finding companionship. Conversely, social justice and human rights organizations are lacking new, young, and fresh perspectives at a time when the need for intergenerational and international cooperation has seemingly reached a new apex. Thus, my community engagement initiative, Social Networking Through Social Justice, circumvented issues of physical and emotional isolation by simulating a knowledge exchange meetup in a digital space. With heightened attention to racism, classism, climate change, and health, this exchange offered an intergenerational, multicultural, and transnational space to convene individuals who are passionate about social justice and human rights.

The online exchange provided 3 separate options for participants to serve as a mentor, mentee, or collaborator, wherein participants were paired one-on-one based on their social justice interests. While participants came from diverse geographies, ages, religions, and races, they were united in their commitment to working in their communities and globally on issues of social justice, such as older peoples' rights, Indigenous rights, anti-racism, and climate action. I chose to do my initiative over a digital discussion after realizing that it carried the greatest potential to encourage transnational knowledge-sharing and interactive learning. Participants came from multiple sectors including a gender and diversity specialist for an international NGO (Thailand), a Ministry of Foreign Affairs worker mainstreaming LGBTQ+ rights (Mexico), an Indigenous activist (Canada), and a director of a UN agency (Japan), among many other participants across North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia. With the event taking place from late July to early August, my community engagement initiative created new intergenerational and multi-racial opportunities for community and solidarity building across countries through a common drive for greater social justice.



"I believe the climate crisis is a major social injustice in that it is disproportionately caused by Western countries and yet is most felt in the Global South. I also believe that, in the Western world, the notions that whiteness, maleness, or heterosexuality is synonymous with normal contribute to many systemic inequalities."

- Mentee (he/him), 24, from Scotland



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"My interest in gender equality is informed by experiences in my home country, which have confirmed the need for intersectional and localised feminism."

- Collaborator (she/her), 22, from Korea

Ultimately, 89 people participated, representing 27 countries, from Nepal to Guam to South Africa. After the event took place, I solicited feedback to see how participants learned from the experience, and produced a social justice calendar, reflecting the diverse days throughout the year that carry social significance to participants. Some participants asked for multiple pairings, and disclosed that they would continue to collaborate with their pairing for their organizing. Although there were several challenges in terms of matching people together based on interest and time zones, this event ran with high success. I learned that even when participants do not carry exactly similar politics or ideologies, having consistent, open, and honest dialogue is critically important. Ultimately, this initiative demonstrated that greater exposure to individuals who possess different worldviews and life experiences is important for validating and reshaping our ideas and theories of change to address pressing social justice issues.

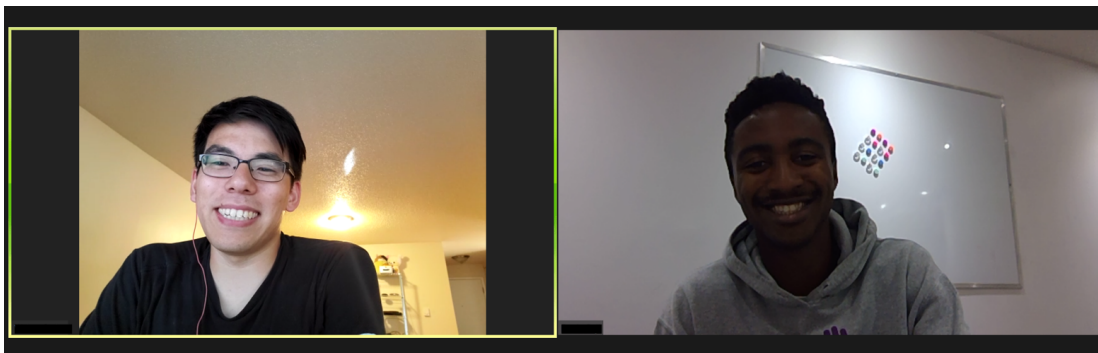


COUNTRIES
REPRESENTED



However, there were a few pertinent lessons learned from my initiative. First, if I were to coordinate this again, I would remove the 'mentor' and 'mentee' option to flatten power hierarchies between participants. I noticed that how participants perceived their ability to 'mentor' was contingent on cultural conceptions of how knowledge is produced (e.g. knowledge acquired based on professional work experience in anti-racist education versus knowledge acquired through lived experience of racism). I learned that social justice action involves a multi-directional process, where regardless of age, expertise, years of formal work experience, or lived experience, we can, and should be, **learning** from each other. Ultimately, participants disclosed that this virtual exchange opened up new possibilities for transnational learning opportunities and that they will continue their social justice vocation through global collaboration. This was my hope when organizing this event, and I hope to generate more knowledge-sharing opportunities like this in the future.

PARTICIPANTS



*A US-Canada
collaborator session
discussing
discrimination and social
injustice in the STEM
industry*

"There are people in developed countries fighting for the same social justice causes as me. That just because someone comes from a prestigious and privileged background, it does not make them entitled. Allies can come from all places."

- Mentee (he/him), 30, from Brazil



The Event: a small Roundtable Discussion was held over 2 hours via Zoom on Friday, August 7, 2020, with 8 out of the 14 Elders and Knowledge Holders who participated in interviews with me this summer to discuss Traditional Education and to envision a Indigenous-led Traditional learning space in Manitoba.

The Goal: The goal of this Roundtable Discussion was for me to share back the results of the interviews I had done with everyone, and to provide an opportunity for the interview participants to discuss some of the interview questions as a group, as well as to discuss the next steps of developing a Traditional learning space together. Over the course of the summer interviews were conducted with each person individually and this Roundtable was meant to be a space to both share back the major themes and ideas that came out of all of the interviews, as well as to foster continued group discussion surrounding some of the logistical concerns for developing a Traditional education space in Manitoba. This was also an opportunity for the Elders and Knowledge Holders to begin establishing an independent working group to continue working on this project going forward.

While the virtual Roundtable discussion was a good starting point for continued discussions on envisioning a Traditional learning space in Manitoba, the group members expressed the importance going forward of continuing these group discussions in person, and on the land. Some of the topics discussed at this virtual gathering included: ways to move away from the Western education system, ideas of what Traditional and land-based education can entail, the benefits of Traditional and land-based learning for Indigenous youth, and the different elements needed to teach an Indigenous way of learning.

By Lateisha Ugwuegbula, Social Connectedness Fellow 2020



SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS
FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE: TRADITIONAL EDUCATION ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Impact: The Roundtable Discussion was meant to benefit the interview participants: individuals working in traditional education schools/organizations, as well as Elders and Knowledge holders from different communities. Historically, information and knowledge has been extracted from Indigenous peoples and communities without sharing the outputs of that information afterwards, and this was an important opportunity for me to share back the information that came out the interviews.

The interviews done throughout the summer with Elders, Knowledge holders, and representatives from the Turtle Lodge Center of Excellence in Indigenous Education and Wellness, the Kaniyasihk Cree Immersion School, the Akwesasne Freedom School, and the Misipawistik Pimatisiḿeskanaw Program are a starting point of the development of a Traditional education space in Manitoba and will act as a base of knowledge that can be referred back to as the project develops further. As was said during the Roundtable Discussion, the interviews and this initial virtual meeting was the planting of the seed, and over time the seed will bloom and grow into something bigger.

The Traditional education Roundtable Discussion was meant to engage the interview participants directly and as a group, however as this group goes forward and continues to meet, discuss and create a plan to develop a Traditional learning space, it will ultimately benefit the youth of Manitoba, their family, friends, and community. A Traditional education learning space in Manitoba will offer Indigenous youth the opportunity to learn culturally relevant teachings and connect with their culture and land, as well as support positive identity formation, self-confidence and social connection.