

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE REPORTS

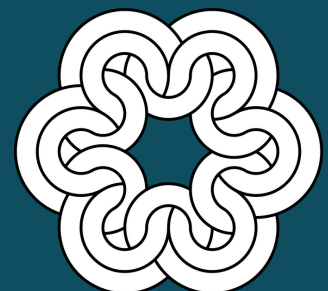




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Concerts & Confections



Community Engagement Initiative Report
Samuel McQuillen
2021 Social Connectedness Fellow

Introduction

As part of my fellowship, I undertook two weeks of fieldwork at Appalshop, an arts and community organization based in Whitesburg, KY. Though I had to cancel my original CEI due to unforeseen circumstances, I quickly learned that Whitesburg is brimming with cultural events through which I could organically engage the local community. In addition to attending these events, I facilitated connectedness by baking two pies for Appalshop employees and my interview partners. Over the next two pages, I candidly recount and reflect upon the various events I attended in my improvised journey to connect with the local community.



SAMUEL CENTRE
FOR SOCIAL
CONNECTEDNESS

Appalshop

OPHI

Oxford Poverty & Human
Development Initiative

1. Farmers' Market

Soon after arriving, I attended a farmer's market in Whitesburg filled with local farmers and artisans selling their goods. Although the event was lively and I *did* end up meeting a few folks, I struggled to genuinely connect with the community; after all, I was really just another customer to the vendors. This was my first brush with the community, inspiring me to rethink my approach

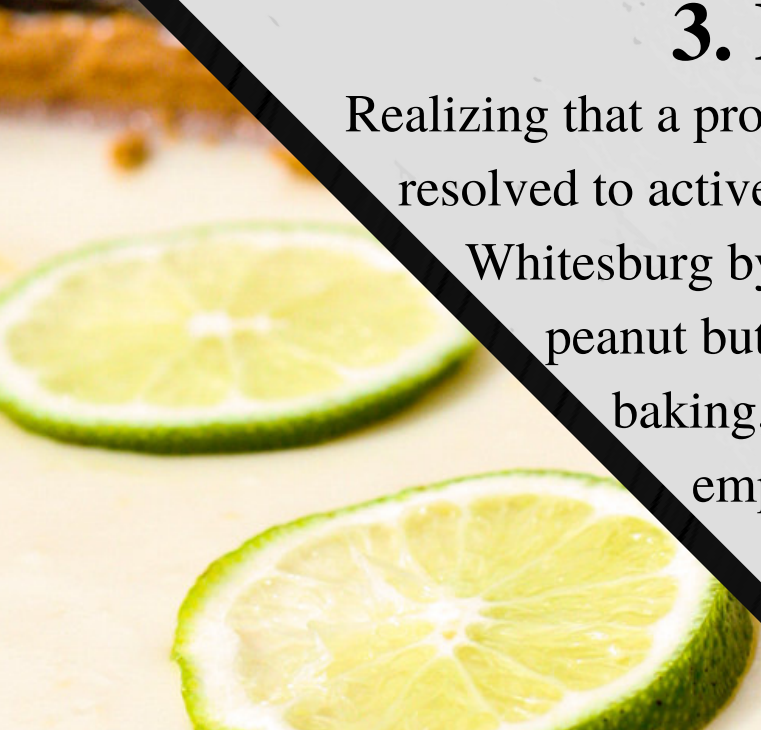


2. Live on Main

Sponsored by Appalshop, Live on Main is a free, bi-weekly concert series in Whitesburg. Here, I similarly struggled to connect with my fellow concert-goers, all of whom were there to listen to music rather than entertain some outside researcher. After the concert, I approached the organizers and offered the only thing I could: a helping hand. I assisted them in clearing the stage and actually made a few genuine connections, sensing that I had finally gotten somewhere

3. Baked-Goods Break

Realizing that a proactive approach worked best, I next resolved to actively share my passion for cooking with Whitesburg by baking my famous keylime and peanut butter cream pies. After a long night of baking, I shared the pies with Appalshop employees during their break and brought the leftovers to some of my following interviews. This led to some great chats between bites of pie





4. Summit City

Around the same time, I was invited to the Summit City Lounge, a nearby concert venue, to hear more live music by local bands.

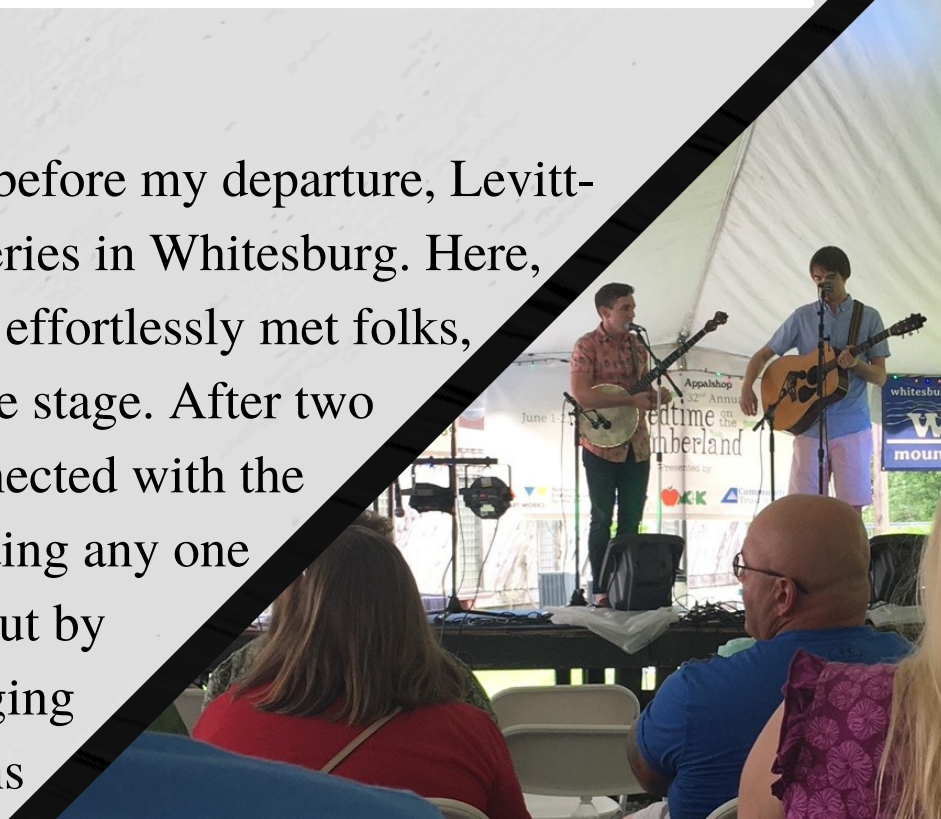
Since I attended with a group, it was far easier to meet new people and connect with the community in a meaningful, if unacademic, way. I would later return to the venue again later in the week, yet again listening to local musicians expanding my own network in Whitesburg.

5. Carcassonne Community Center

During my second week of fieldwork, I was invited to tour the nearby Carcassonne Community Center and interview the organization's founder during one of the center's weekly meetings. Nestled deep in the mountains, the center was a hidden oasis of communal jubilation; my tour was interrupted by gangs of rowdy children playing, and soon enough my interview dissolved into stories and jokes. I left the center with a bag of melon slices and an offer to go hiking if I returned

6. Levitt-Amp

Taking place just a few days before my departure, Levitt-Amp is yet another concert series in Whitesburg. Here, I enjoyed music with friends, effortlessly met folks, and even helped tear down the stage. After two weeks of effort, I finally connected with the community not by implementing any one profound program or event, but by earnestly and gradually engaging with their own, local traditions



12 August 2021

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY GLOBAL COMMUNITY CALL

**YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS
COMMUNITY WELL-BEING
& CONNECTEDNESS**



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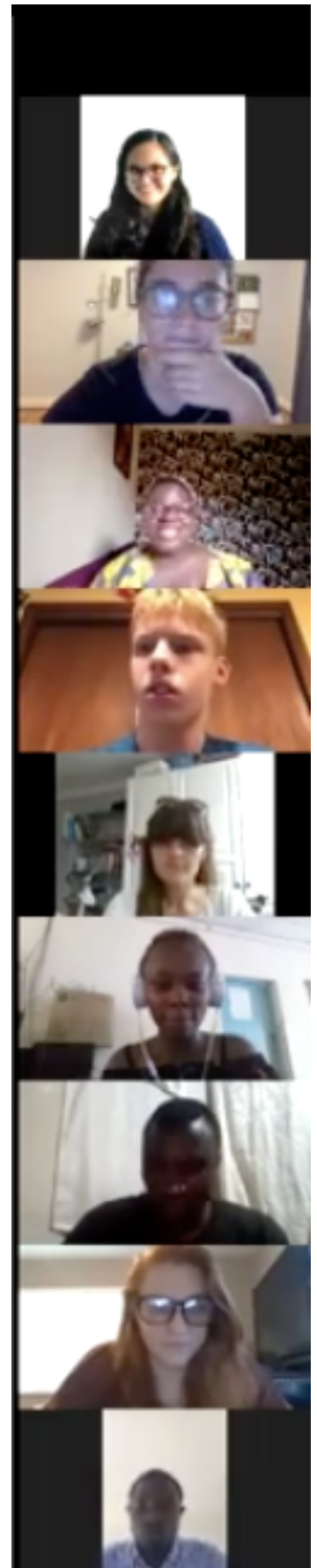
Olaoluwa Abagun
Social Connectedness Fellow 2021

ABOUT THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY CALL

To commemorate International Youth Day, 50 young leaders within the global Peace First community participated in a 1-hour virtual global call via Zoom. The objective of the call was to create a space for the Peace First global community to share and reflect on the key findings from the research project around the collective community impact of youth-led initiatives, with particular emphasis on social connectedness and belonging. To increase accessibility of the virtual event, SCSC provided mobile data vouchers to 20 youth attendees who would have been unable to participate without this support.

THE FORMAT

The global community call began with my presentation of the research questions, methodology and key learning from the qualitative study. This was followed by 5 breakout discussions facilitated by Peace First staff, where young leaders reflected on the research findings. All participants returned to the main room to wrap up the call with brief highlights from the discussions in each breakout room.



THE IMPACT

The research findings deeply resonated with participants. In particular, the participants appreciated the nuanced findings on young leaders' challenges based on cultural diversity and nuances within their respective regions.

Participants affirmed the recommendation to invest in young people's capacity building around impact measurement. They also acknowledged the need for youth-led initiatives to express impact in non-quantitative terms such as attitudinal changes.



This report really speaks volumes to the unique struggles that youth face...whether bureaucratic governments or internet connectivity, and it took into consideration their geographic location.

- Young Leader





AUGUST 2021

AGE-FRIENDLY TRANSPORTATION: INTERVIEWS WITH INNOVATORS

Community Engagement Initiative Report

TAMMY BUI
RESEARCH FELLOW

HelpAge
Canada



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By 2030, the number of people aged 60 years and over is projected to grow by 56 percent, from 901 million to 1.4 billion globally.

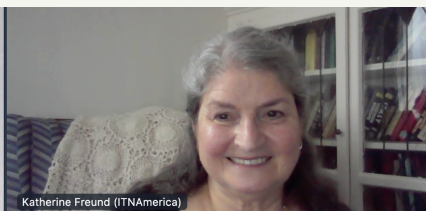
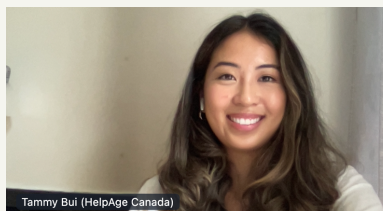
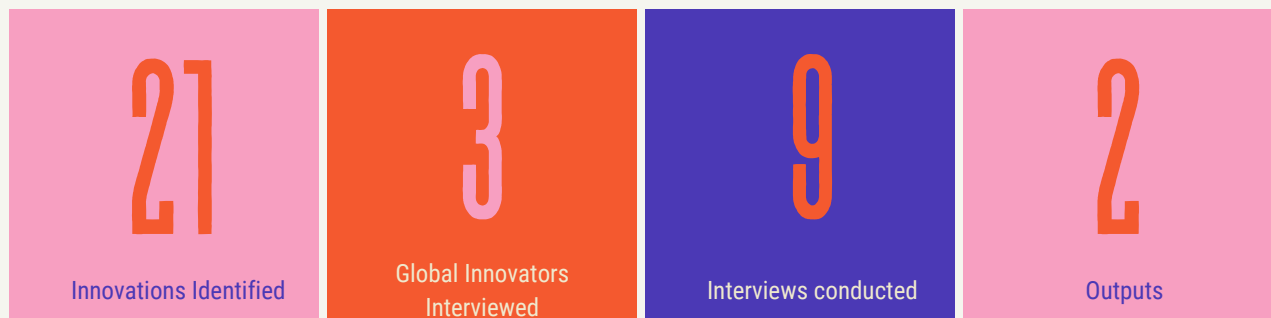
ISSUE

With this shift in demography comes additional challenges to aging, such as mobility, poor health, and social isolation. Canada's transportation system will not meet the demands of the aging population, hence, we need to seek advice and international guidance from global stakeholders in age-friendly transportation.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Community Engagement Initiative was to identify leading examples of international innovative transportation solutions and to understand why these solutions were innovative to ultimately shape and inspire Canada's age-friendly transportation landscape.

OUR PROCESS



INTERNATIONAL FINDINGS

Our interviews with international transportation stakeholders revealed several key considerations for age-friendly Canadian transportation.



iTNAmerica, USA



“Government, industry and philanthropy need to work together.”

– Katherine Freund,
iTNAmerica

Ride@50+, USA



“We are community-led transportation solution – we believe that you need to have the community behind you from the beginning.”

– Kate Schramm, Feonix
Mobility Rising

PlusBus, Netherlands



“Our mission is to get older people out and about, reduce loneliness and isolation across older people, especially frail older people.”

– Eva Siderakis, PlusBus

INTERNATIONAL FINDINGS

The Independent Transportation Network (ITN) of America, USA

ITN is the first national, non-profit transportation model that utilizes a network of volunteer drivers and partnerships, which are affiliated non-profits nationwide. Operating in 10 states, their innovative program features include: 1) Ride Credits where older adult volunteer drivers can bank credits by volunteering as a driver to be used for their own transportation in the future, or donate to a friend or family member 2) a CarTrade Program where older adults can trade their vehicles for ride credits 3) a 50 State Policy Project which provides a database for transportation policy in all 50 states 4) a Rides in Sight database which connects seniors with transportation options in their area. They are presently launching ITNCountry, which is a pilot for rural communities in the US. To this date, ITNAmerica has provided 1,300,00 total trips, gained 3,548 Active members and has 437 active volunteers.

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Feonix Mobility Rising Ride@50+ Program, Dallas TX, USA

Ride@50+ is a one-stop shop for accessing transportation for older adults. The program encompasses three major partners: Toyota, AARP and Feonix Mobility Rising. Through this three-way partnership, Toyota plays a role in funding through a social innovation grant, AARP supports the service delivery, and Feonix Mobility Rising powers the MaaS (Mobility as a Service) technology operations. The MaaS framework, which is an emerging type of service that enables older adults to review, compare, pay and book local transportation options including public transit, rideshare, volunteer drivers, specialty services and taxis, all in one spot. Ride@50+ also provides Virtual Training for older adults to learn more about local transportation options which means Ride@50+ promotes and supports digital literacy. Notably, Ride@50+ provides free rides for COVID-19 vaccine appointments.

.....

PlusBus, Netherlands

PlusBus is a national program established by the National Foundation for the Elderly (NFE) in the Netherlands. The NFE leases accessible buses for local communities which are then operated by volunteer drivers. PlusBuses are now operating in over 90 municipalities in the Netherlands. PlusBus' mission is to get older people out of their home, into the community, and to enable social opportunities - especially for those who have reduced mobility. Therefore, PlusBus will support older adults who need to go to any destination (for example a coffee shop, family visits, or a garden center). In fact, PlusBus tends to pair an essential outing with a social outing (for example, they may schedule a trip to get groceries followed by lunch at a café for all clients joining that morning's trip). As a result, their program has reduced social isolation and loneliness for many older adults across their country. To ensure long-term sustainability within communities, NFE provides communities with funding for the first year of operation, a tool kit for sponsorships, and helps communities not only build a customer base, but also to build multi-year and diversified funding from a variety of sources within the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from this international research highlights several possibilities for Canada to consider adopting in our own transportation networks. To ensure that transportation is age-friendly, there are several key recommendations that would encourage sustainable change for older adults:



01 — Older Adult Transportation Policy

Establish a national overarching entity to provide ongoing support and governance to transportation programs, while allowing for implementation to occur at the local level.



02 — Multisectoral Partnerships

To ensure long-term success and sustainability, older adults transportation initiatives should involve multiple partnerships including government, non-profit, and local private sector businesses. Multisector partnerships should provide the opportunity for multiple streams of funding from large scale corporate sponsors to government grants and contribution from local businesses.



03 — Adapting Technology

Technology solutions must be affordable for all communities, from large, urban metropolises to small rural townships. Both the overarching national governance structures and multisectoral partnerships help to ensure affordable technology solutions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Nicole Perry and Aislin O'Hara for their support on this report.

A multi-media video and an interactive map infographic showcasing each capstone innovation were the outputs for this community engagement initiative.

The video will be shown at the 2022 National Conference of Seniors Transportation.

These outputs will serve to inspire the Canadian transportation sector and communicate the importance of Age-Friendly transportation for the wellbeing of older persons.

Interactive Map:

<https://my.visme.co/view/z4pqdq3v-global-age-friendly-transportation>



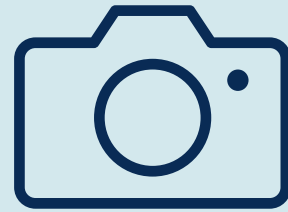
Community Engagement Initiative Report

Alice Finta | 2021 Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness Fellow

The Goal

The goal of this project was to highlight the experiences and learnings of young people and older people during the COVID-19 pandemic. The project aimed to provide a platform for SeeChange Initiative's partner communities to take part in an intergenerational dialogue, sharing their experiences and learning from the experiences of others by taking photos and sharing their reflections.

PHOTOVOICE PROJECT



PROYECTO FOTOVOZ

The Project

This bilingual PhotoVoice-style project was inspired by the work of the health promotion researchers Wang and Burris (1997), who first developed PhotoVoice as a visual participatory action research methodology. PhotoVoice is a process designed so that people can 'identify, represent, and enhance their community' through photography (Wang, 1999).

For the SeeChange PhotoVoice Project, community members were invited to share a photograph and caption, in English or Spanish, reflecting their answer to the

question: What have you learned over the past year of the pandemic?

Youth participants were asked to share one photo and a caption reflecting their own answer to the question, and one for an older relative or community member reflecting their answer to the question. In this way, intergenerational dialogue and knowledge-sharing was fostered.

After submissions had closed, participants were invited to discuss their images and their takeaways in an online group call.



The Results

This project ran for **6 weeks**, from the beginning of **July 2021**. In total, **16** photo submissions were made. SeeChange community members from **Guatemala, Peru, and Canada** participated. Several of these were showcased on the dedicated [Instagram page](#).

The overarching theme of responses was that living through the COVID-19 pandemic had reminded participants of the importance of human connection, particularly the importance of connecting with family members. Spending time physically with family and friends, talking online, and sharing in one's culture were shown to be important to respondents. Doing so helped many of the respondents to cope with the anxieties and loneliness they associated with isolation measures during the pandemic.

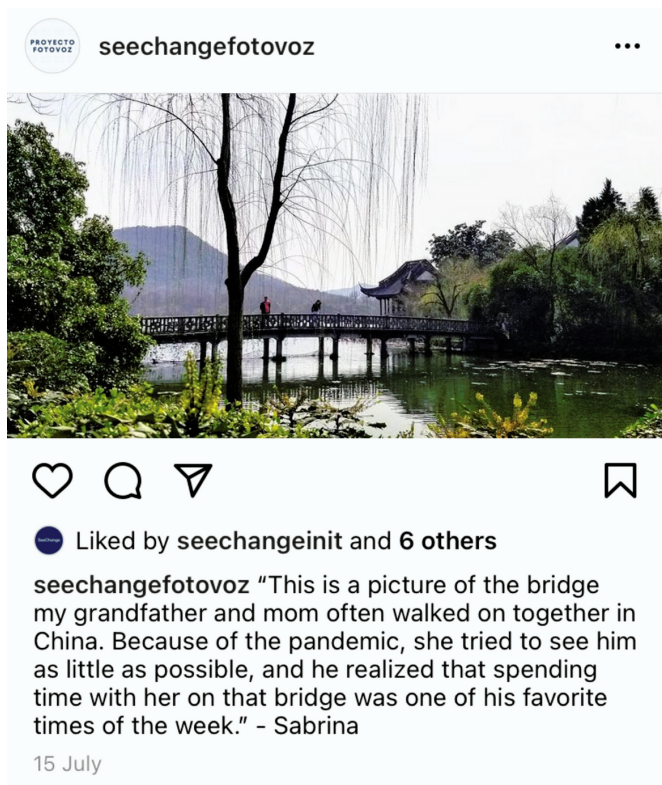


The Impact

This initiative helped SeeChange to further understand the experiences of their partner communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, the impacts of social isolation were understood.

The results informed my research on community-based responses to COVID-19 by highlighting how important connecting with other people - both in person and online - was for participants during the pandemic.

As a participatory research method, PhotoVoice serves as a useful tool for communities to identify their needs and their assets. It is hoped that SeeChange and their partners can scale up similar participatory research projects in the future, to aid them in putting communities first in responses to health crises like COVID-19.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE REPORT

OUR CONCRETE GARDEN PODCAST

Rossen Lee | Fellow for Cohort SU2021



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THE PROJECT



Our Concrete Garden is a 4-part audio podcast series exploring how public green and growing spaces can lead to improved community wellbeing and social connection, following the brutally isolating COVID-19 stay at home orders in Toronto. The objective was to educate, entertain, advocate for civic engagement, spark an interest with nature, and encourage others to participate in their own local community gardens or park events. This podcast was created with the average Torontonians in mind, or other urban dwellers who are interested in Toronto-based stories. Because of the variety of topics being covered, the podcast is suitable for anyone, ranging from people already familiar with the topics, local stakeholders, or for people just curious to learn.

Listeners can access Our Concrete Garden on multiple platforms and devices, making it easy to listen to while commuting, doing chores, working out, or just relaxing. Audio can also be easier to understand for those with difficulty in reading English. The format of an audio podcast was chosen to therefore appeal to a variety of audiences, especially since podcasts are currently a very popular form of entertainment overall.



EPISODE GUIDE

1: INCLUDE

(feat. a local community gardener)

Exploring the science behind our positive but strangely unclear relationship with plants

2: CONNECT

(feat. a community garden coordinator at a local non-profit)

History and overview of community gardens. Looking into the benefits and setbacks that come with community organizing

3: EXPAND

(feat. an urban planning assistant & inclusive communities intern)

Explaining the benefits of parks, Toronto's Parkland Strategy report, and the Rail Deck Park project

4: IMPROVE

(feat. Francisco (Director of Programs) and Hilda (Urban Agriculture Manager) of The Stop Community Food Centre)

Reflecting on the previous episodes, where do we go from here?

The idea was developed at the beginning of June, consent forms and guest outreach was conducted mid-June, and the recording process took place in early July. Editing occurred mid-July, and finally the series was released across platforms on July 30, 2021.

Gathering the research and developing an episode guide was a very fun experience. The scientific, city-published, or journalistic web articles could be long or dry in content, but the idea of trying to convey it in an entertaining narrative required strategy and curation. Developing a "mood" for the series and trying to make the episodes cohesive together was also a fun creative consideration. Each episode is named after one of the four core objectives in Toronto's Parkland Strategy (which is revealed in Episode 3). I made the artwork myself in Photoshop, and found all audio/music assets from royalty-free websites.



THE TITLE: OUR CONCRETE GARDEN

US, TOGETHER,
COMMUNITY



CITY, URBAN,
METROPOLITAN



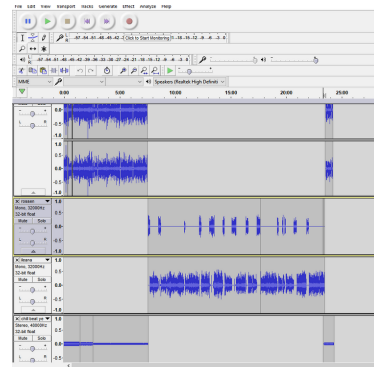
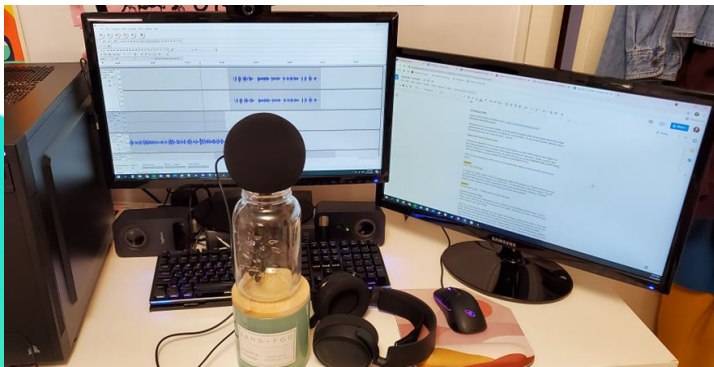
GROWING, PLANTS, NATURE,
CONTRAST WITH CONCRETE

Overall, I found this experience to be very rewarding. In choosing a very local focus of Toronto, I also felt more engaged with what is happening in my own city, which also emboldened me to want to share the same information to others as well. I felt that oral storytelling also helped to remove some of the barriers associated with academia, which is often full of jargon or behind journal paywalls.

IMPACT

88 total streams across 4 episodes | 22 streams per episode average | 20 unique listeners on Spotify

The audience analytics I used for the above figures are from Soundcloud and Spotify at the time of writing. The feedback that I received has been very positive, mostly highlighting the audio production of the series. I believe that while the series is centered in the ongoing status of the pandemic, the research and case studies being shared will still hold up in relevancy over time.



My recording set up (left) consisted of my desktop computer with two monitors, my headset, and the SCSC provided Snowball mic stacked on top of a large jar and a candle.

I used the program Audacity to edit the audio (right), many hours were spent editing out "like's", "um's", and "uh's"

LISTENER FEEDBACK

"I'm so impressed by your production/sound quality/music and how you put it all together overall!! Great work :) !!!"

"Your podcast voice is unmatched ! Love it, great job"

"You did a FABULOUS job, seriously sounded so natural for you."

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE REPORT

COMIC

«L'EXPÉRIENCE DES GRAND-MÈRES:
POURQUOI FAUT-IL DEMANDER CONSEIL
AUX GRAND-MÈRES ? »

"THE GRANDMOTHERS' EXPERIENCE: WHY
SHOULD WE SEEK ADVICE FROM
GRANDMOTHERS?"

By: Maude Jodoin Léveillé, Social Connectedness Fellow, 2021

THE PROJECT

The Grandmother Project was already working with educational booklets that are used by teachers in the commune of Vélingara, to educate children and adolescents about the role of grandmothers in Senegalese societies. This short comic book is intended to be a fun and educational tool that complements the booklets and can be used by teachers with whom GMP already works. Its main purpose is to illustrate that grandmothers have accumulated many life experiences and are therefore an important source of advice for young people.

Making young people aware of the importance of grandmothers and especially inviting youth to confide in them not only benefits the children, but also contributes to develop positive relationships with grandmothers, value them and ultimately increase their social connectedness with youth and the community at large. In rural communities with limited access to the internet, comic books are a way to reach more children and adolescent through the school system.

THE IMPACT

Nearly 10,000 public school children in the commune of Vélingara, with whom the Grandmother project is already working, will have access to a printed version of the comic book in their school.



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GRANDMOTHER
PROJECT CHANGE THROUGH CULTURE

THE CREATION PROCESS

1

READING ABOUT THE WORK ALREADY DONE BY THE GRANDMOTHER PROJECT

As part of my fellowship, I first had to read several reports produced by or in collaboration with the Grandmother Project (GMP). This gave me a better understanding of GMP's activities, their impact on communities, and the issues of greatest concern to the organization. In particular, I read a booklet entitled "Le rôle des aînés dans les sociétés africaines" [The Role of Elders in African Societies], which is one of a series of five booklets developed by the GMP in collaboration with communities, teachers, and the Vélingara Education and Training Inspectorate (IEF).



From May to July

2

WRITING THE SCRIPT AND DIRECTIONS TO THE ILLUSTRATOR

After meeting with two members of GMP on skype, I wrote a story to demonstrate that 1) grandmothers have many experiences that enable them to better advise young people who are going through the same stages of life and 2) grandmothers have many roles in Senegalese society that need to be recognized by children and adolescents.



During the month of July



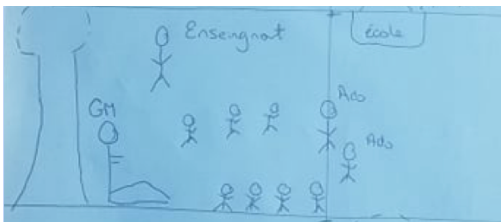
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ILLUSTRATOR'S WORK

From the indications I gave him, Daona Deonta, a very talented Togolese illustrator with whom I worked several times during my stay in Togo, drew and finalized the comic.



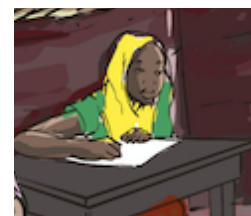
During the month of August



4

ADJUSTMENTS AND MODIFICATIONS OF THE COMIC

The first draft done by the illustrator was already excellent. However, I proposed to make changes to standardize the colors of the characters' clothes to facilitate the understanding of the story.



Mamadou Coulibaly, the program manager in Velingara, also proposed modifications to the script to better adapt it to the local Halpulaar culture.



In August



yassa poulet



maafe hako



5

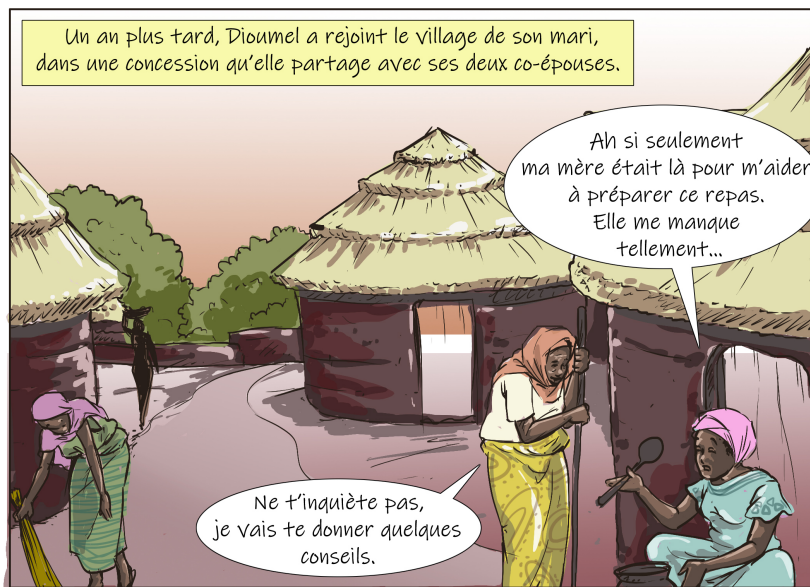
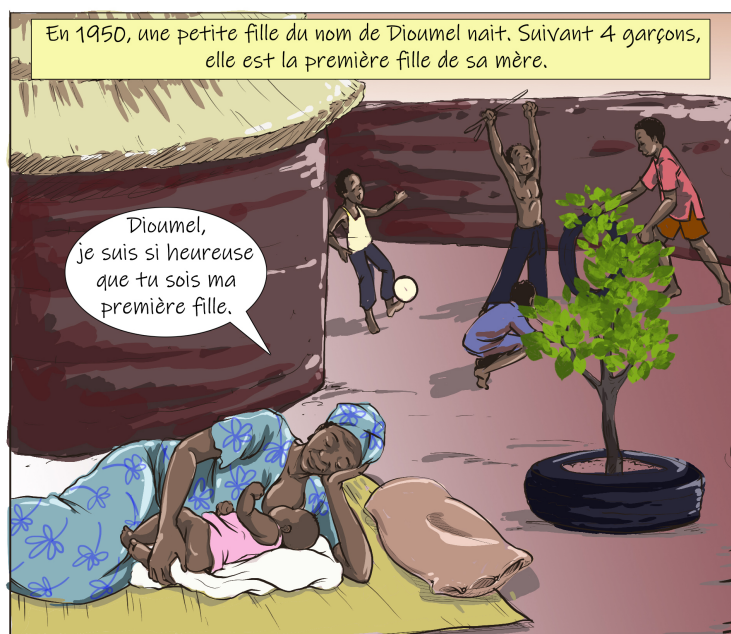
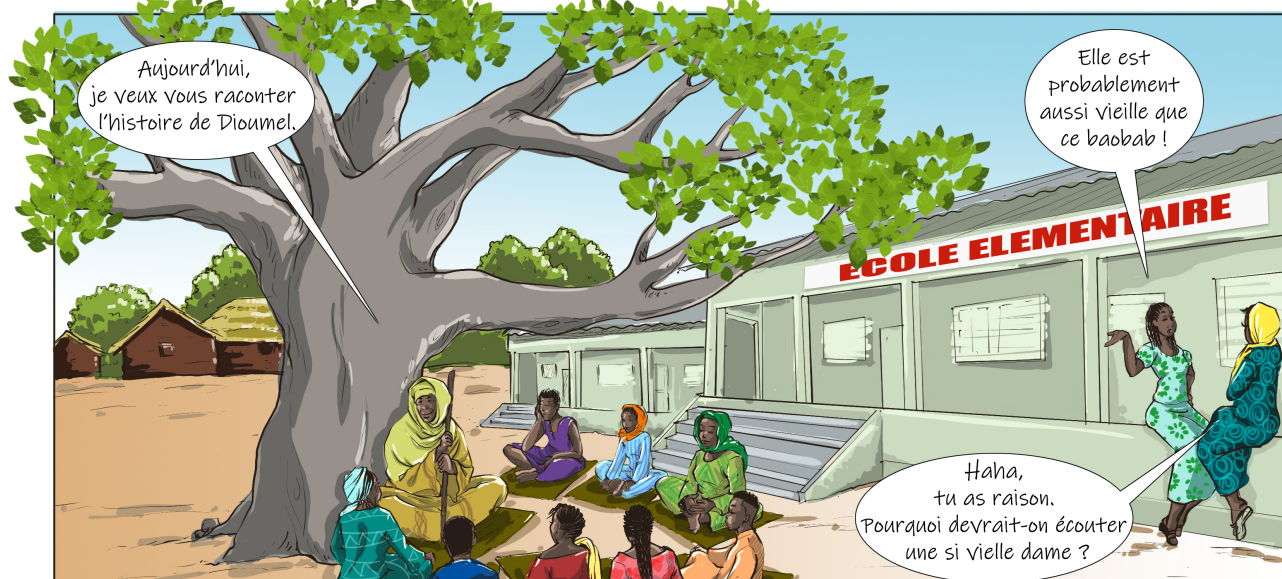
FINAL RESULT

Once the modifications are completed, the final version of the comic book will be printed in Dakar (Senegal's capital), laminated and distributed to teachers in the schools of Vélingara.



Expected date: At the end of September, after the Senegalese team returns from vacation.

L'EXPERIENCE DES GRAND-MERES : POURQUOI FAUT-IL DEMANDER CONSEIL AUX GRAND-MERES ?





Un an après le rétablissement d'Awa, la fille aînée de Dioumel vient la voir avec un nouveau problème.

Mais maman, il m'avait dit qu'on ne pouvait pas tomber enceinte la première fois...



Oh, il est arrivé la même chose à ma sœur, je devrais peut-être écouter l'histoire de la vieille femme.

Quelques mois plus tard, Fatimata a donné naissance à une petite fille.

Fatimata, ça fait quelques mois déjà que ton bébé ne boit que du lait, il faut maintenant que je t'apprenne quels aliments il doit manger pour devenir encore plus fort.



Aujourd'hui Dioumel a bien grandi. Je suis maintenant une grand-mère qui rassemble les enfants du village pour leur raconter des histoires et les aider à résoudre leurs problèmes

Oh, c'est elle Dioumel ! Elle a déjà été une adolescente comme moi !



Wow, elle a vécu tout cela ! C'est presque une super-héro.

Après la séance de conte à l'école, un enseignant s'approche de Dioumel et des enfants.

Bonjour les enfants, comment s'est passée la séance de conte d'aujourd'hui ? Avez-vous appris de nouvelles choses ?

Oui, les grand-mères sont comme des super-héros, elles peuvent résoudre plein de problèmes.

C'est vrai, les grand-mères ont vécu les mêmes problèmes que nous, elles peuvent maintenant nous conseiller lorsque la même chose nous arrive.

Je comprends mieux pourquoi il faut respecter les grand-mères. Ce sont des sources de connaissances importantes et une aide précieuse pour les jeunes.

J'ai beaucoup apprécié notre collaboration d'aujourd'hui, vous rendez mon travail plus facile !

FIN

Community Engagement Report: *Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Development*

Tafadzwa Mhazo, Social Connectedness Fellow 2021

The research project

My research project focused on the link between social connectedness and Early Childhood Development (ECD) and how parental involvement in ECD can be strengthened, particularly in low-resource communities across South Africa. It was a collective study between The Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness and The Motheo Training Institute Trust.

The initiative

The community engagement consisted **of semi-structured interviews with eight participants, who consisted of four parents and four practitioners**, to reveal current barriers and best practices for parental involvement and social connectedness. The parents and practitioners were from Benoni , Johannesburg and its surrounding townships; Mogoba Village, Daveyton, Etwatwa, and Chief A. Luthuli. The interviews took place from the 25th to 27th of June 2021, and were conducted telephonically due to the COVID-19 restrictions which were in South Africa at the time of the study.

The Impact

The initiative revealed that the current barriers to parental engagement include: a lack of knowledge by the parents on the importance of ECD, challenges in nutritional participation by the parents and the ECD centres, and a lack of resources and partnership from the parents to the ECD centres.



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MOTHEO TRAINING
INSTITUTE TRUST
Unleashing Potential

MONTREAL HEAT WAVE SURVEY

GOAL

The goal of our Community Engagement Initiative was to gather information on the experiences of people in heat waves in Montreal by conducting a survey. We were especially interested in understanding how heat waves are impacting people with disabilities and older people, and how best practices for community resilience can be identified and strengthened. We also wanted to conduct a qualitative analysis of how individuals experience heat and if factors such as the structural make-up of neighbourhoods (demographics, income) have an influence on the comfortability of temperature.

PARTNERS

The survey was conducted in collaboration with fellows Tuvire Onookome-Okome and Ellen Spannagel from the Samuel Center for Social Connectedness, in collaboration with the Data-Driven lab at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. We also received support in our outreach from partners such as Selma Khoudiri from L'Institut National pour l'Équité, l'Égalité et l'Inclusion des personnes en situation de handicap (INÉÉI-PSH)

How do heat waves in
Montreal impact you?



Quel impact les canicules à
Montréal ont-elles sur vous ?



*"Ce serait magnifique
d'avoir des piscines
accessibles et des gyms
équipés pour les
personnes à mobilité
réduite dans l'Ouest de
l'île"*

- Survey Respondent

ENGAGEMENT

The target audience was residents of the Island of Montreal. We chose the medium of a survey for the Community Engagement Initiative given its ability to be easily shared and was disseminated with repeated and ongoing outreach over a period of one month between mid-July and mid-August, 2021. The survey was disseminated in both French and English. Overall, we received 38 responses to our survey, including 31 responses in English, and 7 responses in French. While we saw the value of the survey in its ability to be widely shared, surveys are 1) not accessible for people without internet access, and therefore represent a limited section of Montreal's population, and 2) Surveys are limited in their ability to collect detailed and personal responses about experiences with heat.



DATA
DRIVEN
ENVIROLAB



SAMUEL CENTRE
FOR SOCIAL
CONNECTEDNESS

HIGHLIGHTS

LACK OF CONSULTATION

No respondents were consulted by the City of Montreal or any other organization in developing heat responses.

PRODUCTIVITY

Most of the survey respondents also highlighted that their productivity was impacted during heat waves.

ACCESS TO AIR CONDITIONING

Most of the survey respondents indicated they did not have access to air conditioning.

RELIANCE ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

Most of the respondents indicated that if they needed to go somewhere cool during a heat wave, they typically went to a family member's home. This showcases how social connectedness, and vice versa, social isolation, play a key role in mitigating a person's experience during a heat wave.

INFORMATION

Most of the survey respondents indicated they receive most of their information about heat waves via social media.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The City of Montreal should consult with groups such as older persons, people with disabilities, and their organizations in developing heat responses and strategies.
- Given the role of social isolation in mitigating the impacts of heat, the City of Montreal should prioritize in-person and telephone outreach in communicating information about heat waves especially for older adults. Social isolation is of particular percent in Canada where 1 in 3 seniors are at risk of becoming socially isolated. 24% of Canadian residents over the age of 65 feel isolated.
- The City of Montreal should prioritize the establishment of access to free air conditioned spaces. For example, ensuring there is proportionate access to mistating stations and public pools across neighbourhoods. One respondent stated, "ce serait magnifique d'avoir des piscines accessibles et des gyms équipés pour les personnes à mobilité réduite dans l'Ouest de l'Île." However, this should be done alongside ensuring there is accessible air conditioned transportation to such locations.
- The City of Montreal should invest in research in urban green spaces. Green spaces has been shown to mitigate the worst of heat events.



Downtown

"Habiter dans une zone avec des arbres matures fait une énorme différence"

- Survey Respondent



Outremont



Community Engagement Initiative Report:

SafeTO Roundtable Discussion

Youth Perspectives on a Public Health Approach to Gun Violence

Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness in partnership with the City of
Toronto, and the Toronto Youth Cabinet

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank all of the youth for openly sharing their insights from their own lived experiences and their hopes for what safety and well-being could look like in their communities.

A special thank you to the City of Toronto's Safety and Wellbeing Unit for their mentorship and guidance in hosting this roundtable discussion. And a huge thank you to the Toronto Youth Cabinet for partnering with me in planning, hosting, and facilitating this roundtable discussion.

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VISION

For my community engagement initiative, I partnered with the Toronto Youth Cabinet to host a roundtable community discussion on gun violence. The Toronto Youth Cabinet is a non-partisan organization that advocates on behalf of Toronto's youth. Working with the City of Toronto and other grassroots organizations, the Cabinet is dedicated to providing young people with a forum in which they are able to build an equitable, accessible, and youth-friendly Toronto.

Together, we invited young people ages 16-29 across different Toronto neighbourhoods to discuss SafeTO - Toronto's Community Safety & Well-being Plan.

The goal of our community engagement initiative was to engage young people and share knowledge amongst each other through interactive sessions and dialogue to gain insight on the youth's perspective to addressing community safety and applying a public health approach to gun violence.

The City of Toronto has recognized community and gun violence as a critical public health issue affecting the city. The municipal government is working towards collecting data and finding solutions alongside community members and agencies to build a public health,

A public health approach to gun violence focuses on a culture of prevention and social development. A public health approach collects, monitors and analyzes data on violence, who is affected, understands its consequences, and identifies risk factors and protective factors to develop coordinated evidence-based policy, practices, and program solutions with various sectors and community members.

OUTCOME

The roundtable gathered 25 young people throughout the city of Toronto ranging from ages 16–29. We chose the format of an online 1-hour Zoom session to account for accessibility and to adhere to COVID-19 safety guidelines that discourage large physical gatherings.

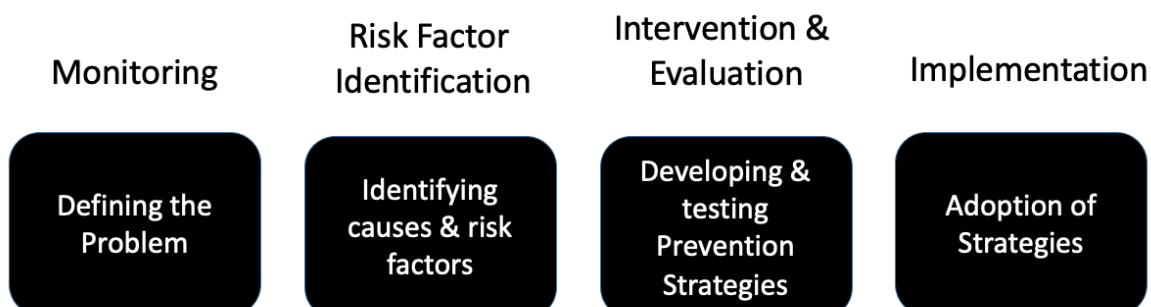
The roundtable discussion involved a presentation that provided context to the issue of gun violence in Toronto, summarized the SafeTO Community Safety and Well-being Plan for the City, and discussed different elements of a public health approach. We then went into smaller breakout rooms in Zoom to cultivate community and to have an open discussion on what a public health approach to gun violence could look like in implementation. For the interactive component, the online tool menti.com was used to anonymously submit responses to various questions and topics we were covering. This method allowed for inclusive participation as participants could feel comfortable submitting their responses and ideas, even if they were hesitant to participate vocally in the room.

The roundtable took place on August 23rd, 2021.

The questions asked focused on the 4 aspects of a public health approach:

- Defining the Problem
- Identifying Risks & Protective Factors
- Developing & Testing Prevention Strategies
- Widespread Adoption of Strategies & Evaluation

Public Health Approach to Gun Violence



KEY FINDINGS

Defining the Problem

How do you think the impact and prevention of gun violence should be defined and measured?

- Collect and analyze data that included socio-demographic information
- Data on the physical and mental health impacts of being exposed to violence
- Race-based data
- Measure the occurrence of gun violence by neighbourhood.
- Data on repeat offenders as opposed to first-time offenders and create resources and supports to help these individuals to exit the violent situations they are in.
- Look at what percentage of gun violence was attributed to gang involvement
- Measure how communities are being impacted by community violence. For example, whether gun violence made it less likely for people to engage in their community because they may not feel safe. Youth also thought it was important to consider how individuals, families, public spaces, and schools were impacted as well.
- To measure impact continue to measure injury and death. Also understand the aftermath and its impact, to measure trauma, physical, mental, and emotional impacts and in what ways the experience of violence affects other areas of one's life.
- Pay attention to inequities that are most prevalent in a community and to monitor how they have changed over time. and may contribute to the rise or fall in gun violence.

Identifying Causes and Risk Factors

What do you think are the causes of gun violence? What do you think contributes to the decision to pull a trigger?

- Gun violence is associated with a confluence of factors – individual, family, school, peers, community, and socioeconomic risk factors that interact over time.
- Social and economic conditions that place individuals in situations that cause them to feel helpless – poverty, lack of opportunities, limited resources, social isolation and loneliness.
- Neighbourhood conflict and getting caught in that cycle – having a hard time removing themselves from it.
- Trauma, stress, mental health, bullying, the feeling of helplessness, social isolation, and anger
- The ease of access to guns is a cause of gun violence, and individuals and their views on conflict management and how to respond to feeling disrespected and threatened.

What do you think are some protective factors against gun violence?

- Investing in communities, supporting programs and services
- Upkeep and programming in park spaces and recreation centers
- Connecting young people to opportunities through career centers and activities will help to build their social skills, network, and build a positive sense of identity
- Mental health education and services
- Hospitals can also play a greater role and intervene when victims are in the hospital to help build strategies and connect them with supports to extract themselves from their environment/violent life.
- Social belonging, fostering a strong sense of community, and celebrating youth
- Restricting the flow of firearms and preventing them from entering our neighbourhoods and communities.

Developing & Testing Prevention Strategies

What are some solutions or effective strategies to tackling gun violence? How can we work together to prevent gun violence?

- Acknowledgement of the structural changes that need to be addressed in order to create a safer environment for communities disproportionately impacted by gun violence – policy changes, funding, programming, and services.
- Trauma-informed process to understand the impact of gun violence on communities
- A collaborative approach where stakeholders and institutions work together to tackle gun violence in their community. Creating better partnerships between the community, schools, and community centres and agencies to work together to address gaps in resources and services needed for a healthy upbringing. Teachers and staff at community organizations and centres should receive training and education on trauma, culturally sensitive programs, and the needs of the community they are serving.
- Community engagement/involvement: Communities should have a greater voice in decisions being made that affect them.
- Gaining the trust of the community. Police need to build strong connections with members of the communities they are serving and protecting, need for more communication, understanding, and trust between each other.

What changes would promote safety and well-being in your community?

- Understanding of the community and their needs
- Safe spaces – recreational, religious services
- Increased services, programming, and education
- More opportunities & supports for young people and families
- Increased mental health services
- Stricter gun laws

Adoption of Strategies

How do you think the community can work together to tackle this issue?

- Have on-going meetings throughout the SafeTO implementation plan
- Involve all stakeholders in the implementation process and define clear goals and roles
- More community based programs, better advertising and campaigning for events, making sure as much of the community gets involved
- Supporting gun violence research, intervention, and prevention initiatives

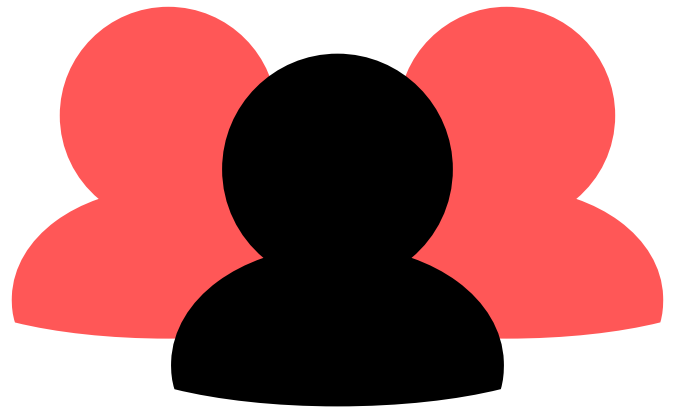
How should we evaluate impact? what should we be looking at and measuring?

- Year over year reduction in gun-related crimes, injuries, deaths
- Reduction of poverty
- Number of youth graduating
- Involvement in activities and programming
- Feedback from local communities
- Student surveys from school asking how they are feeling and whether they feel safe in their communities

How should youth be more engaged in this implementation plan?

- Having honest, safe discussions with government, community agencies, services, and police
- Have input in program planning, messaging, and engagement
- Through education programs, peer mentoring and support

IMPACT



01. Centered Youth Voices

Gun violence often occurs among young people. It was important to involve youth perspectives when discussing the implementation of a community safety and well-being plan that targets gun violence.

02. Knowledge Translation

Share knowledge amongst each other. Allow young people to understand the municipal government's strategy, while also hearing from young people what issues their communities are facing, and how they could envision their communities working together with different stakeholders to address gun violence.

03. Engage Youth

Youth learned of various ways they can get involved with the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan for Toronto, as well as connect to future opportunities for engagement with the Toronto Youth Cabinet



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SAMUEL CENTRE
FOR SOCIAL
CONNECTEDNESS

**Special
Olympics**





The Issue:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Special Olympics athletes missed out on some of the positive experiences that accompany in-person events. Our goal was to create a remote & asynchronous event that captured the three parts of in-person competition that we identified as important, yet lacking due to the necessary COVID-19 restrictions:



The motivation to exercise that comes from working toward a tangible health goal



The social connectedness that is built by cheering for one another



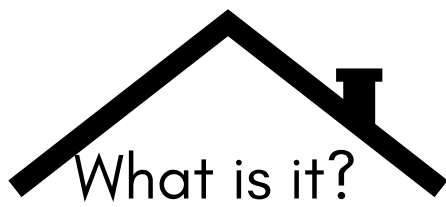
The pride and self-esteem that comes from finally being able to show off your hard work



To make this initiative successful, we partnered with local North American organizations that provide resources to individuals with Intellectual disabilities (ID).

These organizations allowed us to reach many communities and build social connectedness amongst local populations.

To foster social connectedness in the greater community, this event was open to anyone with an ID, not just Special Olympics athletes.



The Athletes at Home Challenge took place in **four parts**:

1

We asked interested athletes and their families to learn and play a new lawn game together during July. We created lawn games that could be built with materials at home, so that nobody had to go out to buy materials.

2

Athletes practiced their games between **July 1st -July 25th**. To help foster motivation, we asked athletes and their families to film their first and last turn playing their lawn game.

3

To recreate the pride and self-esteem that accompanies in-person events, we used these clips to create the Athletes at Home Live Showcase. The showcase premiered on **July 31st** and was an opportunity for athletes to show off their new skills to their families and friends. In total, **seven participants** completed the challenge in full and were featured.



4

To spread awareness of the importance of working out at home with family and friends, Justin and Adri were guests on two episodes of the Special Chronicles podcast:



EPISODE 441

Special Chronicle's host, Daniel Smrokowski, met with Justin and Adri to introduce their work and the Athletes at Home Challenge.



EPISODE 442

Justin and Adri took over the podcast to host a panel of participants from the Athletes at Home Challenge. They discussed health, wellbeing, and social connectedness at home.



On average, the Special Chronicles show reaches **23,000 monthly listeners worldwide**. Using this platform, we extended our impact beyond local communities to foster a form of global connectedness.

Beyond sharing information and resources on the importance of working out at home, we highlighted **athletes' lived experiences**. Participants shared their personal stories about working out at home in an attempt to motivate their fellow athletes.



It is important to note that not all 24 registered athletes and their families completed the challenge. Due to time constraint and internet accessibility, some families found it hard to continue. If future events chose to take on an online format, these areas should receive additional support as is needed.

While only seven athletes completed the full process, these individuals rediscovered the lost qualities of in-person events that we aimed to restore. As we were researching the health, wellbeing, and social connectedness of athletes and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic this was a major success. We were able to make a positive impact on athlete's health while they were isolated at home. Moreover, we were able to bring athletes and their families closer together during this time.

"[my daughter] has re-established some of her skills I'm really proud of her and she's proud of herself" - athlete's parent

"This was a lot of fun and very meaningful to us ... thank you for inspiring us" - athlete's parent

"I enjoyed working out with my friends and family at home ... I can't wait to see what comes next" - athlete