

BRIDGING GAPS BETWEEN NEWCOMERS & INDIGENOUS PEOPLES: VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE + INTERVIEWS

A collaborative project between the SCSC & BAM - Books Art Music Collective



Community Engagement Initiative Report
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Issues Discovered

Newcomers and refugees face many barriers in accessing Indigenous-based resources on how to meaningfully participate in the journey to reconciliation. These include:

- Insufficient educational resources available to newcomers/refugees (on Indigenous Peoples' lives, histories, cultures and perspectives)
- Gaps in educational curricula
- Anti-Indigenous stereotypes told by settler society.

ISSUES & GOALS

Goals

- To gauge Newcomers' *understanding* of Indigenous presence, and understand the barriers and facilitations to Reconciliation
- To gather *perspectives* from Newcomers, refugees, Indigenous Peoples, and organizations serving these groups, on potential solutions to barriers
- To generate *recommendations* on how Canada (governments, non-profits, Newcomer settlement sector) can facilitate Indigenous-Newcomer community relationship-building

About the Initiative

The initiative was hosted on Zoom, and occurred **from May 31st-July 5th**. It was delivered in 2 parts:

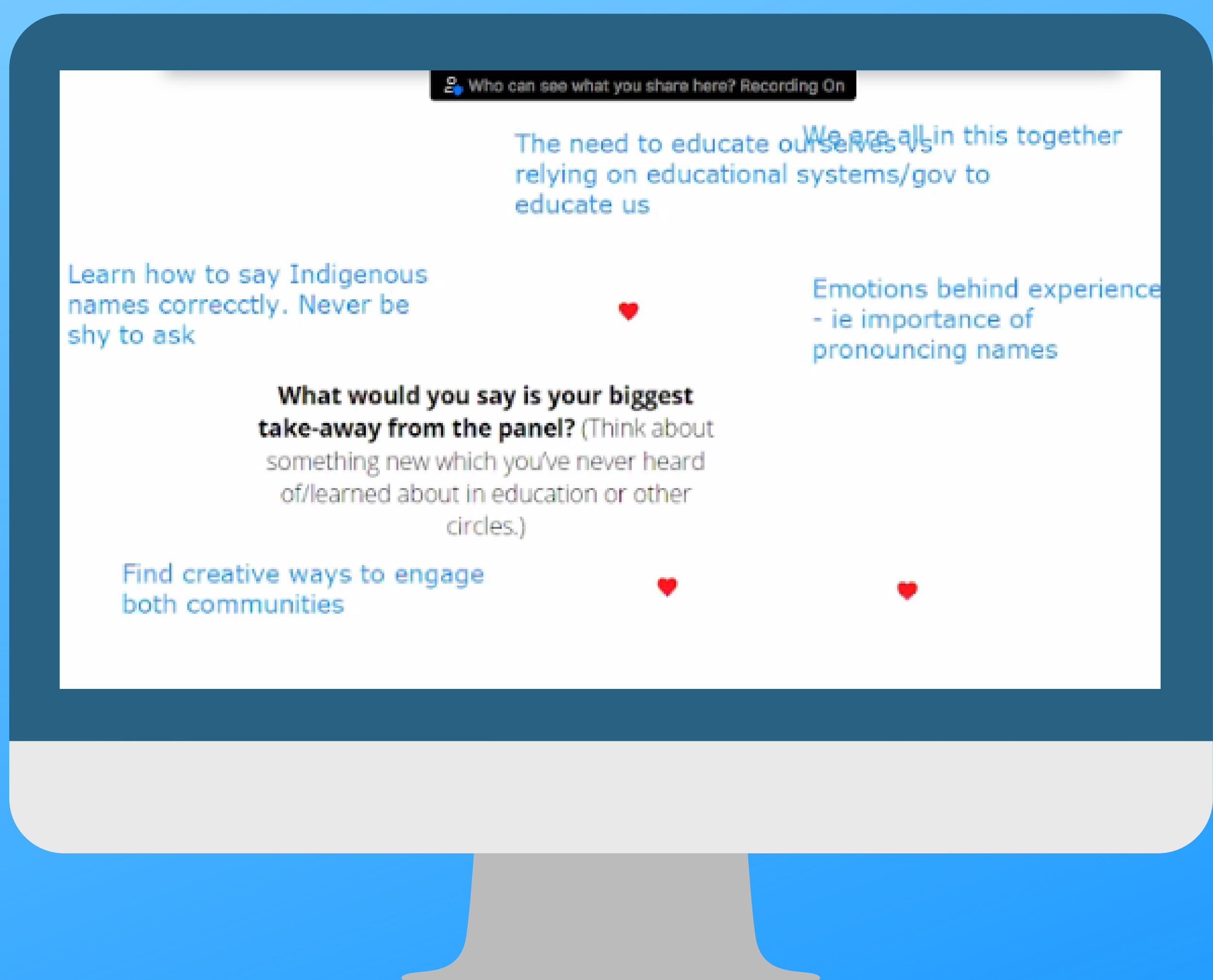
- **1 virtual event**, featuring a **Panel Discussion of 3 Indigenous speakers**, where they answered 3 questions on 3 key themes: *Indigenous-Newcomer solidarity, 'Decolonizing' vs. 'Indigenizing' Education*, and Face-to-Face Connections.
- **Another key event component:** 4 mini **audience engagement surveys**, to track event attendees' understanding of Indigenous presence both BEFORE and AFTER the Panel.
- **14 one-to-one interviews**, with **7 individuals & 7 organization representatives** (all from Newcomer & Indigenous communities).

"[What] I think is a take-away, [are] the [emotions] behind [Indigenous Peoples'] experiences,...how they feel about, for example,...pronouncing their names...I felt that was important for us to know."

- An Event Attendee

Our Impact

- **13/40 participants** who signed up attended the event.
- **90% of all attendees who answered our poll** indicated that their **understanding of Indigenous Peoples has “grown”** after listening to the Indigenous panelists. This is a win for social connectedness, as it demonstrates that cross-group understanding can be strengthened if Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples have a chance to directly hear from each other.
- **5 typed responses** to our annotations board for the question "What was your biggest take-away from the Panel?"



Highlights

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We're able to bring different perspectives, it's also about sharing knowledge. Indigenous Peoples, yes, of course, have been fighting colonialism on these lands for over 500 years. But we can teach each other things, learn from each other. In the same way, Indigenous Peoples on these lands can teach us how to better combat colonialism on our own homelands.

- Shanese Indoowaaboo Steele, on benefits of Newcomers participating in reconciliation

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It would be nice if our history, the history of Indigenous Peoples worldwide, was taught in school...If [settlers, Newcomers, and refugees] have no clue, they don't have any context on how to address us or...on how to properly acknowledge our traumas.

- Crystal Semaganis, on how education can properly engage with Indigenous ways of seeing, knowing & doing

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13/14 interviewees believe community events/forums are important for building bridges between Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples.

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8/14 interviewees expressed that the citizenship test & Newcomer orientation toolkits should be more inclusive to Indigenous Peoples' experiences & share the true history of colonialism in Canada.

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Reflections

We feel that our event successfully fostered a greater understanding (among Newcomers) of Indigenous Peoples' situations, challenges, and perspectives. Some of our challenges, however, include that we could not have a larger-scale event due to a low budget. Due to COVID-19, we hosted our event in a virtual format, potentially impacting attendees' engagement levels. Despite the small sample size, the participants' insights are valuable for helping us answer our key research questions.

Recommendations

- Follow the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) 93rd Call to Action on creating an inclusive and decolonized citizenship test and orientation toolkits.
- Reform the way English language (ESL) education teaches about Indigeneity. One interviewee suggested that land-based learning brings people close to Indigenous lands and worldviews.
- Provide targeted funding to help small-scale and grassroots organizations create reconciliation-related community programming and educational resources.
- Create toolkits centered around Indigenous allyship. Toolkits should update frequently, and be accessible to all abilities and language speakers.
- Build long-term relationships with Indigenous organizations/leaders to 'Indigenize' Newcomer settlement programming.