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Head and Heart Indigenous Research
Fellowship

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Supporting Research with Indigenous Youth

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Supporting Research with Indigenous Youth

This write-up will highlight the progress and work of the research team on the Making the Shift Project that partnered with Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU) over the course of the 10-week Head & Heart Fellowship. The purpose of this research is to implement the EQUIP Health Care Model into social service settings to make services and supports more accessible to Indigenous youth.

What is the EQUIP Health Care Model?

The EQUIP Health Care Model follows an equity approach to health care, with a focus on those who experience greater health or social inequalities. The EQUIP Model works to reduce barriers and allow for more accessible care. The three dimensions of EQUIP include, trauma- and violence-informed care; cultural safety/anti-racism; and harm reduction/substance use health.

What is Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU)?

YOU is an organization in London, Ontario that provides youth, ages 16-30, with basic needs and housing, access to physical, mental or dental health care, or education and employment supports. The main focus of this research project was with YOU's shelter which features 30 individual bedrooms for youth experiencing homelessness.

Weekly Team Meetings

The research team I worked closely with over the 10-week period consisted of Principal Investigator Dr. Abe Oudshoorn, Research Coordinator Amy Van Berkum, Research Fellow Emilia Cormak, YOU staff Sara Palmer, and Head and Heart Fellow Rachel Radyk. The team participated in weekly meetings to share information, ideas, updates, and progresses of our work. We determined individual goals for each week to keep us on track.

Surveys

Our team started by reviewing how the EQUIP model and surveys would be adapted and reframed to appropriately represent Indigenous youth within the service setting and in specific Youth Opportunities Unlimited Organization. We did this by altering questions to make them more specific to Indigenous youth regarding their experiences at YOU. By doing this we are ensuring that the surveys will be relevant and reflect the needs and priorities of Indigenous youth.

Recruitment

As per one of the research objectives of engaging with Indigenous youth, we created posters to share information about the project as shown in [Figure 1]. We used the posters as a recruitment opportunity for the interviews of those who have accessed YOU services and for the

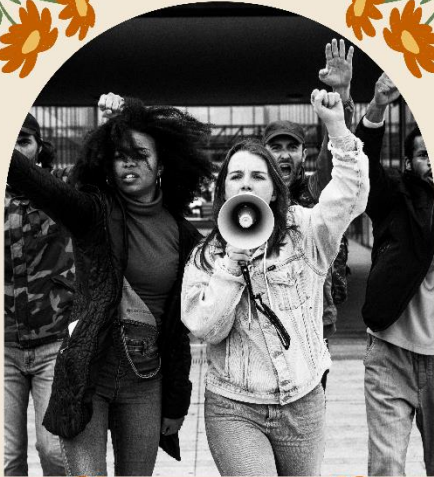
formation of the youth council. By creating space for Indigenous youth voices to be heard we are upholding and respecting the knowledge, lived experience and stories of the youth participants.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

MAKING THE SHIFT

Are you a First Nations, Inuit or Metis youth who wants to develop their leadership skills and make an impact in the community and for Indigenous youth seeking services at Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU)? We would love to hear from you.

We are recruiting 10 First Nations, Inuit or Metis youth to participate in the Indigenous Youth Council. Participation in YOU services is not required.



Participants will be compensated for each meeting attended.

Contact for more information: Sarah Palmer
call or text : (519) 476-9166
sarahp@you.ca





Figure 1 – Youth Recruitment Poster.

Establishing Youth Council Meetings

To make the meetings with youth and the youth council more accessible, we arranged for the meetings to take place in a more central location, the YOU downtown London location, and provided bus tickets for youth to reduce accessibility barriers. By removing barriers, we are upholding our responsibility as researchers to remove as many barriers as possible for Indigenous youth participants. Along with this, we created presentations for youth participating in the council that would be engaging and provide education and understanding to the Making the Shift Project and their role. Lastly, to ensure YOU and the research project is a safe space for youth participants, we have adapted the feedback form for youth to fill out if they have any suggestions or complaints.

Community Outreach

We also began connecting with Bill Hill, a consultant to the research team working through the Parkwood Institute, to be appointed to an Indigenous Elder to be available to attend the council meetings. We recognized that the topics being discussed could be triggering to the Indigenous youth. The Elder will be there for the youth by creating a safe space and offering emotional and mental supports. Taking these steps ensures we are showing respect for the Indigenous culture and promoting healing within Indigenous youth.

Next Steps

The Making the Shift Project is still ongoing. The team is continuing to work to form the youth council and are planning for the first council meeting. This research will work to help remove barriers that Indigenous youth face in accessing social supports. The goal of this research is to limit and prevent Indigenous youth homelessness.