EVALUATION REPORT

Intercultural Collaborative

Evaluator: Tanzil Islam

Contents

1.0 Executive Summary

This report synthesized the findings of the evaluation of CASSA's Intercultural Collaborative (ICC) Project. It captured the experiences and reflections of all stakeholders with respect to the key facilitators and barriers to the program's success.

Satisfaction

- The mean satisfaction rating with CASSA's ICC was 4.5. Project participants reported higher satisfaction than did partner agencies; the mean rating was 4.8 among the former and 3.8 among the latter.

Critical Success Factors

- Partner agencies and project participants reported program staff attributes such as communicativeness, commitment, attention to detail, and organizational skills as key factors contributing to project success.
- ICC stakeholders felt project design was a critical success factor. They identified community participation and the multi-directional exchange in resources (e.g. labour, materials, expertise, etc.) between all stakeholders as key components of the project's design.

Outcomes

- CASSA was able to gather valuable data around the challenges faced by various minority groups across the Peel, Toronto and York regions.
- Partner agencies reported strengthened relationships with various community groups as well as the opportunity to showcase their work and the conversations their agency is engaged in
- Project participants experienced uptake in knowledge and skills as well as positive changes in attitude and behaviour.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Evaluation participants offered feedback that to help expand the training component of ICC. This includes more time allotted to the training, the recruitment of backup facilitators, training around research ethics and guidelines around having sensitive discussions with vulnerable populations.
- Partner agencies offered suggestions around project design including creating a plan for long-term and strategic partnership before working with the participants, and providing more opportunities to engage with the participants.
- Evaluation participants suggested additional human resources would be incredibly beneficial to the ICC and would help with participant retention throughout the project

- Many stakeholders expressed the need to ensure program sustainability with on-going funding

Deliverables

- ICC met all proposed deliverables.

- Exception: The number of trained participants working on the sub-projects was 60-80% of the proposed target.

2.0 What is the Intercultural Collaborative?

2.1 Objective

The objective of CASSA's Intercultural Collaborative (ICC) was to foster anti-racism and anti-discrimination in communities around the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) while promoting diversity among organizations within the art, recreation, and youth engagement sectors. The project consisted of seven phases:

1. Phase 1 - Partnership Building,
2. Phase 2 - Recruitment of Participants,
3. Phase 3 - Training,
4. Phase 4 - Sub-Project Management,
5. Phase 5 - Result Sharing (local),
6. Phase 6 - Evaluation,
7. Phase 7 - Information Dissemination (national)

Phase 1 involved building partnerships in the three sectors of focus for the ICC: arts, recreation, and youth/civic engagement. These partnerships were secured for each of the three regions of focus; Region of Peel, City of Toronto, and York Region (Ontario). For Phase 2, February and December 2018, CASSA recruited volunteer participants across these regions to participate in the ICC. In Phase 3, all participants underwent a series of training sessions focusing on providing relevant anti-oppression, anti-racism, leadership development, and project management. Following CASSA's "Knowledge to Action" AOAR and other training, participants were connected to partner agencies in the three sectors of focus to develop and deliver a sub-project together in their communities focused on challenging racism and discrimination in Phase 4. All participants who completed the sub-projects were then required to formally present their projects and findings to community agencies, policy makers, service delivery agencies and other community members in regional community forums. Participants who completed the full project were awarded Certificates for project completion in these forums. In Phase 6, CASSA contracted an independent external evaluator to conduct this evaluation study and report. Finally, Phase 7 will consist of dissemination of project objectives, outcomes, evaluation, and replication strategies to agencies to the following cities: Vancouver, Richmond, Surrey, Burnaby, Calgary,

Edmonton, and Montreal. CASSA staff will be meeting with agencies representatives in the social justice, settlement and integration, arts, sports, youth engagement, and civic engagement sectors in the above mentioned cities.

2.2 Sub-Project Summaries

2.2.1 CASSA & SCARBOROUGH ARTS: Behind the Art – Intersections & Diversity

Over a five-week period, ICC participants met weekly with the Executive Director of Scarborough Arts to articulate a project idea and implement a plan to host a series of events. Scarborough Arts provided an opportunity and space during their Birkdale Art in the Park event on June 23, 2018 as well as their Bluffs Gallery on June 29, 2018. Project participants organized and developed a public panel event that brought together artists from different cultural backgrounds and artistic mediums.

Artists shared the ways in which their identities informed their artistic practices and how making art becomes increasingly complicated through the limiting and problematic lens of diversity and multiculturalism, especially with respect to race and settler colonialism.

Artists included: Fallon Simard, an Anishinaabe visual artist and scholar; Tara Farahani, an author, storyteller, and multi-disciplinary professional; Emily Peltier, a queer femme curator; Himalayan Vibes, a Nepalese folk music group; Benita Kasekete, a spoken word artist, playwright, and painter; and Mehtap Mertdogan, a mosaic tile artist. Each panel included performances, presentations of art, and a Q&A with attendees.

2.2.2 CASSA & THORNCLIFFE PARK YOUTH COUNCIL: Heritage Cup 2018

The Thorncliffe Youth Committee participants of the ICC developed and organized the 2018 Heritage Cup, a four-week cricket league in the Thorncliffe Park neighbourhood. The project participants participated in an Anti-Oppression/Anti-Racism and Project Management training specifically designed for their project. This included a component on managing the allotted budget and developing a format for the drafting of players for teams, a game schedule, designing trophies and awards, as well as creating a reflection component on the importance of cricket to each participant as well as a community such as Thorncliffe Park. The reflections were printed and shared during the Toronto Region Community Forum with stakeholders and community members that attended the event.

This project engaged with the themes of community building through sport and the ways in which cricket can serve as a catalyst to engage with questions of diasporic identity formation, inclusion/exclusion, and belonging among youth in low-income communities.

2.2.3 CASSA & NORTH YORK COMMUNITY HOUSE: Harvesting Community Change

On September 22, 2018, ICC participants organized a day of civic engagement festivities in the Lotherton neighbourhood with North York Community House (NYCH) entitled, "Harvesting Community Change." The day began with a workshop on workers' rights by the Workers Action Centre focused on the Fight for $15 and Fairness campaign and was followed by activity and information booths promoting civic engagement. The booths included: a station teaching the public how to make buttons, which are tools of popular education and awareness-building; a pop-up booth informing residents about the voting process prior to the 2018 Toronto municipal elections; stations focused on conflict mediation and art-making; and booths showcasing representatives from local community partners who provide services for Lotherton. The day concluded with a collective journey through the community garden and a free lunch for the community, including a soup that was made by community members using ingredients from the community garden.

Participants organized this event following many engaging meetings with two staff members from NYCH that helped to guide the development process, discuss budgeting, outreach, and overall coordination. This project also created additional opportunities for CASSA to engage with NYCH for other projects, including the development and dissemination of a Toolkit for Refugee Youth.
A video was created to capture the festivities that is publicly accessible: https://youtu.be/-XyE3i2V0Rk

2.2.4 CASSA & BIKE BRAMPTON: Brampton Community Voices on Bike Safety and Health + Infographic

In partnership with Bike Brampton, CASSA's ICC project participants hosted a community consultation to learn more about the specific needs of Brampton, Ontario residents who would like to use cycling as a way to get around the city as well as those already on the roads.
Project participants met with the chair of Bike Brampton to learn about the existing and planned biking infrastructure in the city as well as areas of concern that have already been identified by Bike Brampton and other partners who have conducted community audits. In preliminary discussions, project participants and Bike Brampton organizers agreed that there was a need to engage with racialized and underrepresented communities in cycling advocacy and decision-making. However, rather than developing a project that addressed this need from within our group, participants decided it would be best to set up a community consultation with members of the public that engaged specifically with the South Asian community in Brampton to learn about their specific needs around cycling and how they would like to be engaged.

The consultation was an evening of networking and knowledge sharing. Participants learned from one other the challenges and safe ways of getting around the city. They received hands-on biking

knowledge, community resources, and mentorship from other local cyclists. They addressed concerns around health, safety and traffic congestion, as well as themes relating to environmental justice. The knowledge shared was recorded and made into an infographic that has also been translated into Punjabi to help advocacy groups, such as Bike Brampton, be more informed and inclusive in their work.

This consultation was held to learn more about the issues that should be brought to city officials, as well as to create opportunities for community members in Brampton to be represented and to present at these decision-making tables in the future.

2.2.5 CASSA & ART GALLERY OF MISSISSAUGA: Crossing Differences to Respond & Resist

With the support of the Art Gallery of Mississauga (AGM), ICC project participants developed and delivered an event, "Crossing Differences to Respond & Resist", that brought together community members to intimately engage with Bonnie Devine's, an Indigenous artist, powerful exhibit, "Circles and Lines: Michi Saagiig". This was followed by a Chai (tea) Circle, art-making, and a dialogue on issues of settler colonialism, diaspora, and identity.

Participants met with gallery staff, including Curators, Community Activators, and the Director at the start of the project to learn more about the gallery and opportunities for engagement. The group then communicated regularly though teleconference meetings and email to organize this event. Conversations in the planning process were centered around decolonization, migration, social justice, and identity in Canada, a colonial settler state. The event was held after hours in the gallery space. It prioritized racialized community members in Mississauga—particularly those identifying as South Asian diaspora. Participants stressed the importance of these difficult conversations within our communities in order to begin approaching initiatives and actions for solidarity with indigenous communities seeking justice and sovereignty.

2.2.6 CASSA & VOLUNTEER MBC: StepUp Youth Ambassadors Training Module Development

CASSA worked closely with Volunteer MBC (Mississauga, Brampton, Caledon) and their Youth StepUp Ambassador Executive Team to develop a training module in the form of a zine and workshop around Anti-Oppression/Anti-Racism that will be used by the Executive Team to train other youth in the Region of Peel. This module will support their efforts to engage with youth and promote volunteerism through an AOAR lens. The zine is a popular education tool that the Youth Ambassadors can learn from and apply to facilitation activities in their training of new youth volunteer members who will engage with the wider community.

The purpose of this civic and youth engagement project was not only to continue to promote volunteerism in Region of Peel, but also to encourage increased attention to representation and

inclusivity as Volunteer MBC continues to grow community through volunteerism. Following the training session with the Youth StepUp Ambassadors Executive Team, an Assembly was planned and held. Its purpose was to engage with new volunteers. Some of the tools from the training module were applied here.

2.2.7 CASSA & MARKHAM ARTS COUNCIL: Community Collaborative Mosaic – "Let it Fly"

Between August and October 2018, CASSA and the Markham Arts Council (MAC) partnered to organize the creation of a community collaborative mosaic mural entitled "Let it Fly" with the help of lead artist, Mehtap Mertdogan in Markham, ON. This project's focus was on anti-racism/anti-discrimination and promoting building stronger and more supportive community.

Over the course of several open house events at the McKay Arts Centre and public outdoor community spaces (including at a local church and Markham Culture Days), over 40 members of the York Region community came together to help put this piece together with their ideas, words, vision, time and energy.

An excerpt from Mehtap Mertdogan's artist statement: "The scrabble tiles symbolize a positive environment while the background represents Canada's mosaic structure, while the various colors of wood show our cultural and personal differences. The figure in the foreground represents the transformation of the individual in this affirmative environment. Mirrors sometimes became a symbol of our inner conflicts, sometimes childhood wounds, sometimes from our ancestors and while healing with an encouraging environment without losing its essence."

Project Video: https://youtu.be/sGPa7y05MGM

2.2.8 CASSA $ SOCIAL SERVICES NETWORK: Intergenerational PhotoVoice on Ageism

In October 2018, The Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA) and the Social Services Network (SSN), partnered through CASSA's ICC. Volunteer participants of the ICC in York Region engaged in a Civic and Youth engagement project with SSN around ageism using photography and storytelling. Project participants met with executive staff members to discuss the possibilities of the project as well as organizational capacity and mandate to determine how the project could be most effective for both clients and SSN.

Over the course of several weeks, project participants developed the sub-project through in-person meetings, teleconferences and online collaborative platforms. The group decided to explore ageism and the ways in which it impacts both youth and seniors. On October 20th, 2018, youth participants facilitated small group discussions with elders in their community at the Unionville Home Society to learn about their lived experiences as well as the changes they would like to see in their

communities. This knowledge has been captured in a PhotoVoice project that participants hope will be shared with decision-makers and the public to amplify the voices of elders around issues that are important to them, their personal lived experiences, and the changes they would like to see. Some elders also shared the reasons why voting is important to them in the lead up to the 2018 municipal elections in the Greater Toronto Area.

This project was intended to be an entry point to lasting and sustainable change in tackling barriers faced by elders in our communities, especially their experiences of discrimination, ableism, racism, sexism, and ageism.

The PhotoVoice blog can be accessed publicly via: http://intergenerationalphotovoice.wordpress.com

2.2.9 CASSA & MAPLE HIGH SCHOOL: Focus Group/Panel on Barriers and Challenges for Racialized Young Women in Accessing Community Sports

On October 25th, 2018, a dedicated group of volunteer participants from the ICC organized and held a focus group/panel at Maple High School in Vaughan, ON that provided a supportive space for 30 racialized young women between grades 10-12 to share their experiences on the barriers they continue to face in accessing sports in their school and communities. The session was created for young women by young women and offered a non-judgmental, supportive environment in which participants could share their individual experiences with their peers through a panel, small group discussion, large group discussion, and written submissions.

In general, issues around accessibility, racism, gender, and equity were most prevalent among the experiences shared by the group. These issues were also impacted by social and gender norms. Participants came from different racialized backgrounds.

Through regular meetings, teleconferencing, and collaborative online platforms, project participants discussed the importance of bringing conversations around the barriers for South Asian young women to the forefront of community spaces to advocate for change. The group also listened to a podcast in which Urooj Shahzadi shared her research on this topic with a group of young women. This prompted the project group to create this type of discussion at Maple High School, the current and former school of all project participants. The information and knowledge gathered from the session was compiled into a consultation submission for the Ontario Government's Consultation on Education, particularly on the Health and Physical Education curriculum.

3.0 Evaluation Goal

The goal of this evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the ICC. This evaluation sought to identify critical success factors, short-term impacts and opportunities for improvement to future

iterations of this initiative. This report synthesized the findings, which captured the strategic and generative ideas of program staff as well as the experiences and reflections of program participants and partner agency staff. The findings will be communicated for accountability commitments to stakeholders and presented to agencies nationwide.

4.0 Evaluation Findings

4.1 Satisfaction

Evaluation participants noted various ways the ICC achieved its stated objectives. Project participants were connected with art, recreation, and civic and youth engagement sector agencies. Many reported enjoying their volunteer experience and gaining valuable knowledge and skills through it. Some partner agency staff described workshops to be successful insofar as they drew sizeable audiences and offered meaningful learning experiences. The mean satisfaction rating with CASSA's ICC was 4.5. Project participants reported higher satisfaction than did partner agencies; the mean rating was 4.8 among the former and 3.8 among the latter. Out of 29 responses from project participants, 79.3% (n = 23) rated the initiative very interesting overall (Fig. 1). One project partner reported enthusiasm around participating in future iterations of this initiative and strongly recommended other agencies become involved as well.
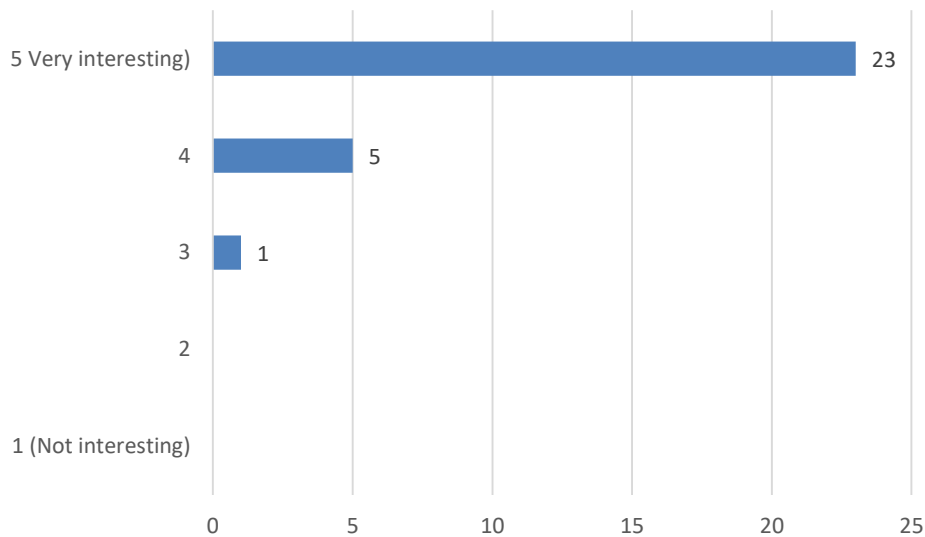

Figure 1: Satisfaction ratings among ICC project participants in response to the question: "On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the group project you worked on? (1 = not interesting and 5 = very interesting)"

4.2 Critical Success Factors

4.2.1 Attributes of Program Staff Contributing to Program Success

Partner agency staff were grateful for the efforts of the ICC coordinator and outreach associates as well as for the opportunity to participate in the initiative. They attributed the successes of the initiative in part to the attributes of program staff. They praised CASSA staff for their *communicativeness* and for demonstrating *commitment* to the project. They also appreciated the coordinator's *attention to detail and to the needs of all stakeholders*. For instance, during phases 2 and 3, adjustments were made to the AOAR training in response to participant feedback around workshop content and facilitation style. This willingness to customize the training demonstrates a desire to accommodate project stakeholders. One partner agency staff member noted how challenging it is to access the type of training provided by CASSA's ICC from reputable agencies, particularly in the Region of Peel. Hence, the coordinator's attentiveness to stakeholders' needs allowed the training to fill a niche. Research has indicated that the tailoring of programs to target populations and local contexts are critical success factors to program effectiveness (Dizon, Grimmer-Somers & Kumar, 2014).

Evaluation participants described the coordinator and outreach associates to be *effective at leading the stakeholders toward program objectives*, *working out logistics* and *executing plans*. They also noted program staff were *organized*; while there were only twelve responses to the survey question around the year-end forum, 75% (n = 9) of respondents agreed it was very well organized (Fig. 2). Some partner agencies appreciated that program staff were proactive and had a plan in place when they approached partner agencies.
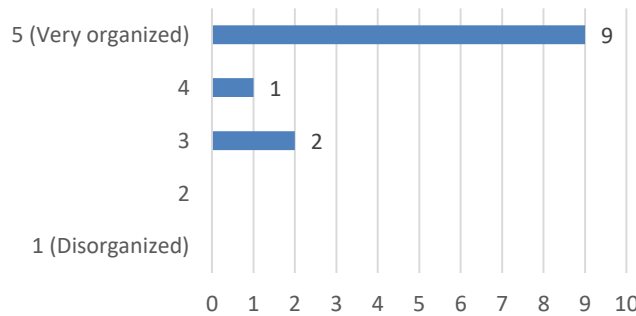
"I think that the final event was where things kind of came together…I heard in community that it was a really gentle space to have conversations and people were encouraged to participate and to share and reflect. I think that creating space where people can speak is a really amazing thing for any event to do"
– Project partner staff

4.2.2 Project Design

Evaluation participants identified several aspects of the project design as key contributors to the successes of the ICC. For instance, program staff felt the project was designed to afford participants *creative freedom and flexibility* in the planning and coordination of their sub-projects. This allowed participants to be creative in the way they challenged racism and discrimination in the community. Other strengths with respect to project design include the extent to which it necessitated *community participation* and the myriad *exchanges in benefits between stakeholders*.

Community Participation

The interactive nature of the ICC allowed project participants to collaborate with diverse communities and agencies. Some sub-projects saw an influx of attendees at workshops and events. Partner agencies also noted the diversity of participants and their *representativeness of the community*. One project partner described a workshop attended by more than twenty participants from various South Asian communities, representing a cross-section of the larger South Asian community in the Region of Peel. They credited this *diverse community participation* in part to program staff's provision of translation services during the event. Another project partner described their experience putting together an art piece with people from various backgrounds as valuable.

One sub-project in York Region involved dialogue around structural oppression between youth and seniors. Partner agencies reported that seniors often experience social isolation and can benefit from opportunities to interact with younger members of the community and that both youth and seniors can benefit from story-sharing. They considered this *intergenerational interaction* a strength of the sub-project.

Benefits for Stakeholders

The ICC's success required multi-directional exchange of resources. Stakeholders exchanged *labour and materials*, and shared *expertise* with one another. Partner agencies provided CASSA with *space* and supported with *project promotion* as well as *participant recruitment*. One project partner who acted as a mentor to other project participants stated that the partner agency's provision of a room contributed to the success of the sub-project because it gave them a safe space to store art supplies, thereby alleviating them of the inconvenience of carrying materials back and forth between sessions on public transit.

Program staff felt that the ICC allowed partner agencies to *expand their reach*; they were able to showcase their work to and share their vision, mission, values and mandates with individuals and

communities who might not have otherwise been exposed to them. They pointed out that an arts agency could, for instance, promote the importance of arts in a community who might not have been engaged with the arts. They also mentioned that it presented partner agencies with an opportunity to initiate with this community the conversations their agency is having around diversity, inclusion and

> "I think we've had some impact on some of the folks who were on the organizing committee in terms of inspiring them, maybe, to take up more in relation to active transportation, specifically cycling"
>
> – Project partner

race. One project partner stated that the collaboration allowed him to "foster new relationships and connections". Program staff also pointed out that smaller agencies that do not traditionally do programming could benefit from involvement in the ICC by *expanding their portfolio*, thereby opening themselves up to new funding opportunities. Lastly, partner agencies were grateful for CASSA's provision of all necessary material supports.

Program staff felt the ICC has opened the door to the *possibility of future collaborations* between CASSA and partner agencies. The manifold benefits for project participants are outlined in the Outcomes section.

4.4 Outcomes

4.4.1 CASSA

CASSA was able to *gather valuable data* around the challenges faced by various minority groups across the Peel, Toronto and York regions. For instance, through one collaboration with Maple High School students, they learned young, racialized women in the York region experienced racism, Islamophobia and sexism from coaches, peers, family members and ethnic communities when participating in sports. Another sub-project exposed the challenges faced by south Asian seniors in the York region. These include ageism, racism, ableism, emotional and psychological stress from the pressure to assimilate, frustration with politicians and governments for not catering to the needs of seniors and the increase in medical costs in Canada.

4.4.2 Partner Agencies

ICC partner agencies reported *strengthened relationships with various community groups*. The initiative also allowed them to *showcase their work* and to encourage more conversation around the issues their agencies explore. Some partner agencies also described the ways their agencies *used the*

learnings from the ICC to improve their own programs and services. One Region of Peel partner mentioned using the project output in their recruitment efforts, reporting that the Punjabi-translated output had a particularly positive response in the Punjabi community. They plan to continue to use it as well as to create more materials like it for future promotion activities. Another project partner also mentioned the materials created through the ICC are being adapted and will be used in youth programs.

4.4.3 Project Participants

Project participants reported more benefits from their participation in the initiative than did CASSA and partner agency staff. Those project participants who shared their experiences around various oppressions expressed appreciation for the *opportunity to speak and to be heard*. Project participants also valued the opportunity to gain *tangible, hands-on experience working in the non-profit sector* as well as the chance to network with members of the sector. Project participants reported gaining knowledge and skills as well as experiencing changes in attitude and behaviour.

> "…they [felt] that they have a voice. They can speak to somebody. Somebody's actually there to listen to them."
> – Project partner

4.4.3.1 Change in Knowledge and Skills

In response to a question regarding how much they learned through their involvement in the ICC, 78.6% (n = 22) of project participants responded having learned a lot. The mean rating was 4.8 out of five, where one represented nothing and five represented a lot.
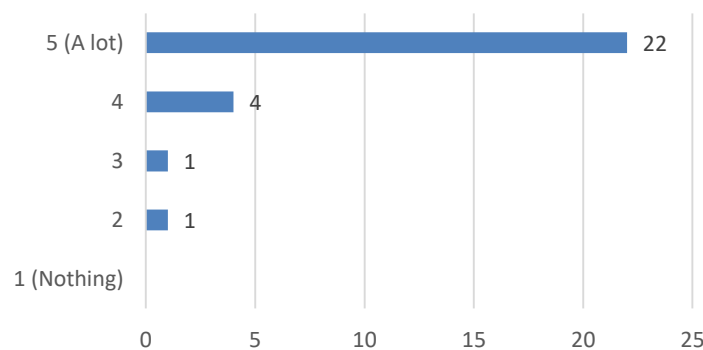
Figure 3: Project participants' self-reported change in knowledge and skills in response to the question: "On a scale of 1 to 5, how much did you learn from your participation in the group project? (1 = nothing and 5 = a lot)"

Project participants noted that they learned about the challenges faced by minority groups in their communities. They also reported learning how to interact with and conduct purposeful conversations around the systemic oppressions faced by these communities.

Project participants felt the knowledge and skills they gained would likely help them to gain employment and would help them in future work. These included knowledge and skills around *networking, project management, event planning, and effective collaboration with diverse groups*. One project partner reported that high school, college and university students who were either at the beginning of or have yet to begin their careers benefited greatly from learning how to make project planning decisions. Participants also learned about several useful activities that can be implemented when doing anti-oppression work. Those who participated in the project involving the Markham Arts Council gained mosaic art skills and techniques. One project partner noted the *provision of resources* such as a handbook given to students involved in one York region sub-project was beneficial; these resources would allow them to recollect and apply their learnings in future projects.

Project participants found the training useful. Among 28 respondents, 71.4% (n = 20) rated the training very informative. In the AOAR training evaluation surveys, project participants rated their knowledge around AOAR and project management before and after participating in the training. The mean change in knowledge around AOAR was 1.35 and the mean change in knowledge around project management was 1.37. The mean ratings before and after the training session are given in Figures 5 and 6.
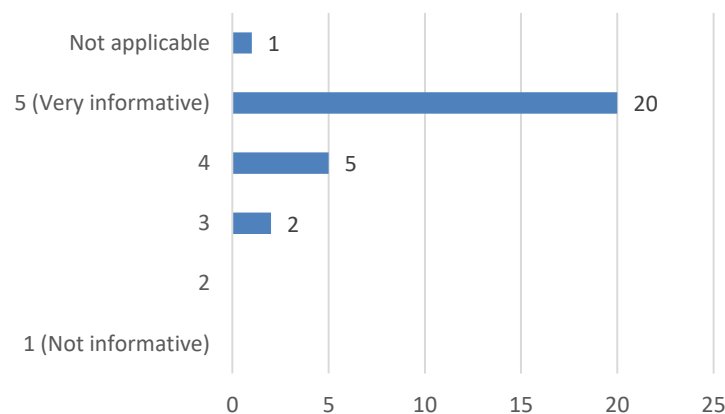
Figure 4: Project participants' satisfaction ratings with the AOAR training in response to the question: "On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the training you received at the start of the project? (1 = not informative and 5 = very informative)"

4.4.3.2 Change in Attitude

Figure 5 demonstrates the responses to the survey question around project participants' changes in attitude. Out of 28 responses, 53.5% (n = 15) described significant change in attitude, while 7.1% (n = 2) described no change.
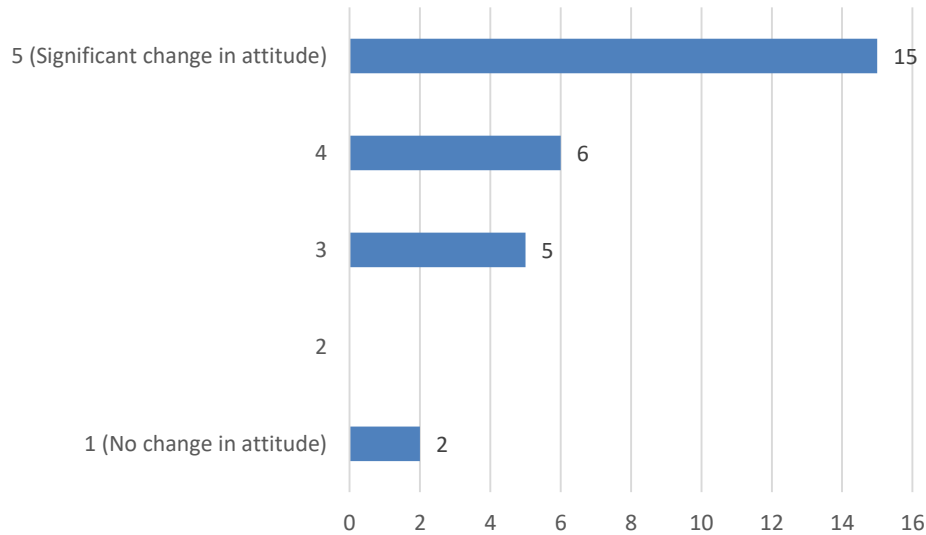
Figure 6: Project participants' self-reported change in attitude in response to the question: "On a scale of 1 to 5, to what degree have these learnings led to changes in your attitudes toward the type of discrimination your group addressed? (1 = no change in attitudes and 5 = a great deal of change in attitude)"

Project participants discussed the various changes in attitude they experienced through the project. They described *increased empathy* and respect for diverse communities, humility, patience, consideration and *optimism that change can be created*. They experienced increased passion toward the issues they explored through the project and toward eliminating injustice, as well as a heightened appreciation and understanding for the need for these kinds of projects. They described feeling more open to interacting with people from different cultures, backgrounds and faiths and more tolerant of diverse views. They also felt a desire to become involved with projects working toward goals similar to those of the ICC as well as research around the issues explored through the initiative. Program staff noted capacity building can lead to an increase in confidence.

4.4.2.3 Change in Behaviour

Fig. 6 demonstrates how survey respondents described their change in behaviour. Out of 21 responses, 52.4% (n = 11) experienced significant change in behaviour, while 14.3% (n = 3) experienced no change in behaviour. Project participants described making more effort to treat people equally, exercise more attentiveness and patience, ask questions and take time to learn about others to expand their worldview. They described trying to help others, for instance, by *advocating for the communities whose struggles they explored through the sub-project*. They make more effort to foster relationships with members of these communities as well as to initiate conversations around and to *share knowledge with others about their struggles* in their classrooms and with peers.
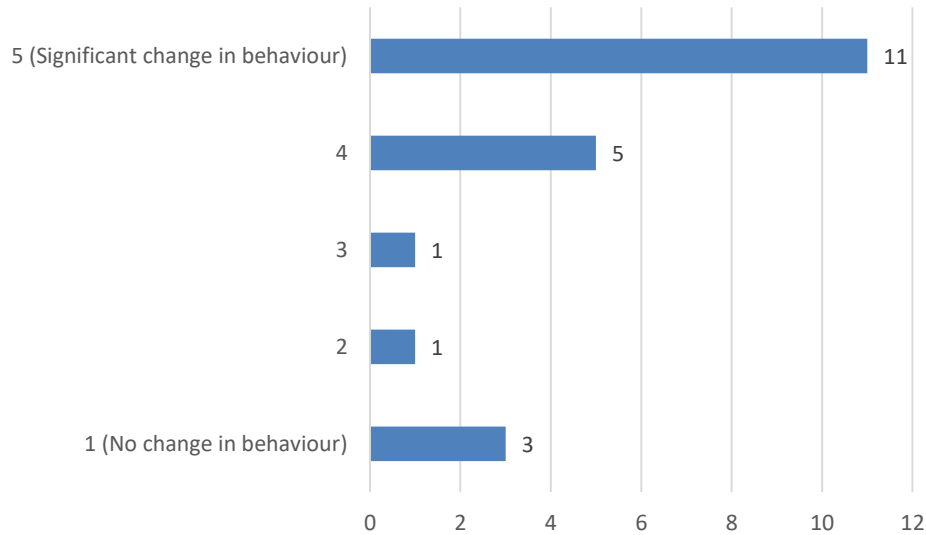
Figure 7: Project participants' self-reported change in behaviour in response to the question: "On a scale of 1 to 5, to what degree have these learnings led to changes in your behaviour? (1 = no change in behaviour and 5 = significant change in behaviour)"

4.5 Opportunities for Improvement

Project stakeholders provided a lot of insight into changes that can be implemented in future iterations of the ICC. For instance, one project partner felt project participants were only able to engage superficially with the art, recreation, and civic and youth engagement sectors and felt that more can be done to ensure that they are given opportunities to engage more meaningfully. Two partner agencies mentioned that in future, the project should be driven more by the overarching goals of the initiative than by the deliverables. Another project partner had hoped that following the end of the collaboration, there would have been more participation in their agency's programs by ICC participants. Below is a summary of the feedback provided by evaluation participants around improvements that can be made to the training, participant recruitment and retention, project design, resources, ongoing engagement, planning and preparatory work as well as communication.

4.5.1 Training

Evaluation participants offered feedback that could help to design more effective AOAR training. Project participants mentioned that learnings from the trainings would have been better retained and implemented during the project planning and implementation phase if less time had elapsed between the training and the planning/implementation phases. They also suggested the incorporation of *more group work* and *hands-on learning*. Many evaluation participants noted how challenging it is to provide guidelines around doing anti-racism and anti-oppression work in a two-hour workshop and suggested *additional training* would ensure participants are equipped with the learnings necessary to engage in these conversations in a meaningful way.

Another opportunity to improve the training session is to ensure *suitable back-up facilitators* are selected in case primary facilitators are unable to attend the workshop. In an unfortunate turn of events, one of the facilitators who was vetted and ensured to be competent and to have views that align well with CASSA's values became unavailable at the last minute. Another facilitator was chosen and this person did not reflect the views of the agency and the project and had to be excused from the workshop.

Challenges that arose in one sub-project highlighted the importance of offering *clear guidelines around how to work with vulnerable populations and to lead discussions around sensitive topics*. Partner agencies themselves offered some advice: to personalize and build trust, it is important to incorporate entertainment, and to establish a meaningful rapport (e.g. through icebreakers, personal story sharing, breaking bread, etc.) prior to opening up discussions around sensitive topics. This approach equalizes power between the researcher and the researched.

4.5.2 Participant Recruitment and Retention

With respect to increasing participant recruitment, one project partner suggested *increased distribution of print materials* as well as *increased social media marketing* of the initiative by both CASSA as well as the partner agencies. With respect to one sub-project which was designed to allow volunteers to drop in whenever they were available, the partner said that they were often the only project staff present and could only speak to so many potential volunteers at a time. They mentioned that if more staff had been present during the drop-in sessions or if at least some print materials describing the project and outlining details around the volunteer session had been posted, it could have allowed for more volunteer contribution.

One project partner mentioned the main challenge was volunteer retention. For instance, in one Region of Peel sub-project, while 21 people showed initial interest, only 38.1% (n = 8) remained on the project until the end. Among those, six (28.6%) participated regularly (e.g. attended two or more meetings). While one evaluation participant suggested that retention might be ensured in future iterations of the project if it is designed with volunteer experience in mind, most others suggested avoiding open calls for participants and instead opting for partnerships with schools, places of worship and volunteer centres and other backbone organizations rather than frontline agencies. Another emphasized seeking *partnerships with organizations which are regularly see large attendance*. Other resolutions to these challenges are given in the Project Design section.

4.5.3 Project Design

Evaluation participants suggested many opportunities for improvement around project design. These include strategizing around how to create the most meaningful partnerships with agencies in the region, offering more direction to participants, and limiting the scope of the project.

4.5.3.1 Meaningful and Strategic partnerships

Through the ICC, CASSA staff partnered with a variety of agencies. This included agencies with institutional structures and physical offices as well as without. Agencies without institutional structures and physical offices were a challenge to work with; partnership with them entailed having project meetings in public places like libraries. One program staff member noted that projects like the ICC rely on the resources of institutional organizations to support the project participants. In future, it might be helpful to *think about what CASSA needs from partnerships* (e.g. agencies with institutional structures, physical offices, adequate human resources, material resources, venue, etc.) before establishing relationships.

One program staff member suggested *utilizing CASSA's member agencies* in the art, recreation, and civic and youth engagement sectors would be an effective way to ensure provision of appropriate venues and an adequate number of participants, material resources from partner agencies. This staff member outlined the following steps:

- Put out a call for project groups that might have participant programs (e.g. youth program, senior programs, etc.) indicating CASSA is looking for agencies who will lead sub-projects in the region
- Require the team to have a minimum of five to seven volunteers from their client base who would be responsible for coming up with a sub-project proposal
- Accept the appropriate projects, fund them and provide participants with training in AOAR and project management

The $500 allotted to each project could be provided as a government sub-project grant. This would allow the member agencies to support with the recruitment process. Moreover, the pre-existing relationships with partner agencies would likely be a critical success factor.

4.5.3.2 Limit Scope of Project

One of the most common feedback from program staff, partner agency staff and project participants was around the amount of time allotted to the project. There was broad consensus that a project of this scope can be completed more successfully if stakeholders were given more time. Challenges around scheduling meetings, as well as delays in recruitment of and turnover in participants further complicated matters.

However, as will be discussed further in the Ongoing Engagement section, the funding structure did not allow for more time to be committed to the project. Originally, the ICC was to be an 18-month long project involving 12 sub-projects across four regions – York, Peel, Toronto and Durham. Following the recruitment of the Project Coordinator, it was reduced to a thirteen-month project involving nine sub-projects. However, in retrospect, program staff felt *1) six sub-projects across two regions during a one-year period, or 2) nine sub-projects across three regions during an eighteen-month period* would have been more realistic and manageable goals.

4.5.4 Resources

Dovetailing with the above point, many different project stakeholders mentioned that additional human resource support will be beneficial to future executions of this initiative. One program staff member suggested a *full-time Project Coordinator* should be hired and that each region should have its own paid *Outreach and Project Associate who commits more than the three to five hours a week* that were allocated during this execution of the initiative. These support staff should be brought on during the early stages of the project and made responsible for outreach, overall support and budget. In this way the wide variety of tasks including outreach, buying materials, constructing the training modules and all other logistics could be divvied up between more staff members. It would also allow for more consistent, frequent and significant engagement in sub-projects by program staff, as partner agency staff identified as a critical success factor.

4.5.5 Ongoing Engagement

While there are benefits to short-term projects, many project partner staff and project participants noted ongoing engagement leads to more sustainable results. Project participants echoed these sentiments, stating they gained so much from the initiative that they hope to be involved in similar projects in the future and that they did not want the end of the project to mark the end of the work done through the ICC. A few partner agencies mentioned they were not sure how scalable a thirteen-month initiative could be and noted that longer-term projects ensure higher impact and better guarantee clients receive respect and dignity. Others pointed out that it made it difficult to assess the long-term impact of such short projects; while it was abundantly clear there were short-term changes in knowledge, skills, attitude and behaviour, it is unclear how the participants would have responded to evaluation questions months or years in the future.

In future, partner agency *concerns around programmatic sustainability can be assuaged through conversations* involving key stakeholders at the outset of the initiative. A strong communication strategy ensuring the project is shared widely can also maximize impact, which may

subsequently make donor support for future iterations of the project more likely. The strong partnerships that transpire from meaningful communication increase the likelihood of partner agencies supporting future executions of this initiative once primary funding terminates.

5.0 Conclusions

Participants and partner agencies were very satisfied with the ICC. Evaluation findings show that stakeholders identified program staff attributes and project design as critical factors contributing to program success. Project participants experienced uptake of knowledge and skills as well as changes in attitudes and behaviours related to issues explored through the ICC. CASSA benefited through the gathering of valuable data around the themes investigated through the sub-projects and ICC partner agencies reported strengthened relationships with various community groups as well as the opportunity to showcase their work and the conversations around equity and justice in which they are engaged. Stakeholders also identified various opportunities for improvement around the training session, participant recruit and retention, project design, human resources, scalability, project planning and communication. Except for the expected number of participants involved in the development and implementation of sub-projects, the project met all proposed deliverables.

6.0 Recommended Planning Implications

Table 3 demonstrates the recommended planning implications compiled from stakeholder feedback. These include recommendations around improvements to the AOAR training session, participant recruitment and retention, project design, resources, project sustainability, planning and preparatory work as well as communication.

Table 1: Recommended Planning Implications

TRAINING
Increase outreach
Smaller time gap between training and planning/implementation phases
More group work
More hands-on learning
Cater to needs of all participants, regardless of level of experience with AOAR and project management
Identify suitable back-up facilitators in advance
Include discussion around research ethics and guidelines around working with vulnerable populations
PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION
Recruit all participants from community
More distribution of print materials by both CASSA and partner agencies

More social media marketing by both CASSA and partner agencies
More staff/volunteers present during planning sessions to engage potential volunteers
Partner with schools, places of worship, volunteer centres, and other organizations with large memberships
PROJECT DESIGN
Meaningful and strategic partnerships
Consider what traits your agency is looking for in partner agencies
Consider partnering with CASSA's member agencies
Share examples of previous successful projects with participants
Limit scope of project: Commit to 1) six sub-projects during a one-year period; or 2) nine sub-projects across three regions during an eighteen-month period
RESOURCES
Commit additional human resource support (i.e. one full-time coordinator and regional part-time Outreach and Project Associates)
ONGOING ENGAGEMENT
Address potential partner agency concerns around programmatic sustainability through conversations with key stakeholders at the outset of the initiative
Implement strong communication strategy to maximize impact
MORE PLANNING AND PREPARATORY WORK
Incorporate more de-brief sessions before and after the project
COMMUNICATION STRATEGY
Regularly check in with project mentors to ensure adequate volunteer support is available
More in-person meetings
More interaction across partner agencies
Conduct debrief session with project participants following end of sub-project
OTHER
Ensure project participants engage meaningfully in art, recreation, and civic and youth engagement sectors
Ensure sub-projects are driven by overarching goals of the initiative

7.0 Literature Cited

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