

Voices for Change: Creating a provincial BIPOC Youth Forum to support organizational change

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Introduction

In Canada, there is longstanding evidence of health inequities for racialized groups. Structural racism exists in the policies and practices in the Canadian public health system and other sectors, and is a significant contributor to the health disparities for Indigenous and Black youth.,. Youth rallied for anti-racism change within Foundry, during the re-emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020. To address their calls for action, Foundry undertook an anti-racism organizational assessment which included creating a dedicated space for youth, the Anti-Racism Organizational Change Youth Forum (AROC-YF). Youth gathered to discuss race anti-racism, advocate for equity within the health system, collectively prioritize areas for change in Foundry. Their insights are guiding changes within Foundry.

Objectives

Co-designing an inclusive, safe and equitable space for IBPOC youth to advocate for systems transformation in current health structures. To lead the change for an organization to prioritize youth voice and lived experience in the areas of anti-racism, equity, justice, and inclusion.

Approach/Methods

IBPOC (Indigenous, Black, People of Colour) youth co-created the use and design of the provincial AROC-YF . As a part of the organizational assessment, AROC-YF members engaged in anonymous surveys, focus groups and dialogues . An external consultant facilitated the discussions and analyzed the data. Racial caucusing was used to increase participant safety.

Results/Policy Implications

AROC-YF expertise is guiding Foundry's anti-racism priorities in training, safety, services, evaluation, communications, as well as future projects. There is value in peer to peer learning when critically exploring topics such as decolonization, health justice, and the social determinants of health. To strive for safety within the group and during meetings, members felt racial caucusing had a positive impact. Spaces dedicated for youth outside of internal organizational meetings are a needed means to encourage open dialogue, criticism, and community building. Creating avenues to merge youth and employees work in anti-racism is an area that will be explored further in the coming year.

Conclusion

A new approach was needed to embrace a mosaic of voices to impact the current health system. System transformation and organizational change requires input, leadership, and opportunity given to IBPOC youth. As leaders in youth health, we need to be listening, learning, taking guidance from youth, while giving decision making ability directly to youth. The AROC-YF provides an opportunity to understand meaningful engagement with IBPOC youth on their experiences of services, safety, representation and care.

