

May 2018

Anti-Racism Directorate Youth Engagement Session

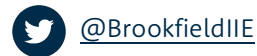
A policy innovation engagement between the Brookfield Institute for Innovation + Entrepreneurship and the Anti-Racism Directorate.



The Brookfield Institute for Innovation + Entrepreneurship (BII+E) is a new, independent and nonpartisan institute, housed within Ryerson University, that is dedicated to making Canada the best country in the world to be an innovator or an entrepreneur.

BII+E supports this mission in three ways: insightful research and analysis; testing, piloting and prototyping projects; which inform BII+E's leadership and advocacy on behalf of innovation and entrepreneurship across the country.

For more information, visit brookfieldinstitute.ca.



20 Dundas St. W, Suite 921
Toronto, ON
M5G 2C2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background	3
The Challenge	3
The Methodology	4
Lesson Learned	8
Outcomes	9
Recommended Next Steps	10
Appendix A: Participants	11
Appendix B: Workshop Agenda	12

BACKGROUND

One of Ontario's greatest strengths is diversity. Yet, systemic racism is a prevalent issue in Ontario despite the abundance of diverse backgrounds and cultures in local cities and communities. Systemic racism occurs when an institution or set of institutions working together creates or maintains racial inequity. This can be unintentional, and does not necessarily mean that people within an organization are racist. It is often caused by hidden institutional biases in policies, practices and processes that privilege or disadvantage people based on race. It can be the result of doing things the way they have always been done, without considering how they impact particular groups differently.¹

Decades of research shows Ontario's Indigenous and Black populations experience systemic racism and inequitable outcomes. Individuals in Ontario also face racism due to their religion; this includes Islamophobia and antisemitism. The systemic nature of the problem impacts many throughout society, including vulnerable groups such as Ontario's youth. The Anti-Racism Directorate (ARD) was created to target systemic racism by building an anti-racism approach into the way government develops policies, makes decisions, evaluates programs and monitors outcomes. The ARD takes a collaborative approach to better understand the causes and impacts of systemic racism. It does this by working with ministries across government on policy interventions, collaborating with communities that are impacted by systemic racism and working to increase public awareness. By engaging the public, the ARD seeks to better understand how people have experienced or witnessed racism across different population groups, geographies, and demographics. Combining insights from engagement with data and traditional research, the ARD will develop and lead public education initiatives to increase awareness of systemic racism and how it impacts Indigenous and racialized people.

¹ A Better Way Forward, Ontario's 3-Year Anti-Racism Strategic Plan

THE CHALLENGE

Systemic racism presents unique challenges and hardships for youth, partly because youth participate in critical societal systems built around them (e.g., child services and education), and some of these systems demand mandatory participation. They are often on the receiving end of systemic barriers, with little opportunity to impact decisions at the policy level which shape their experience.

Recognizing that youth require a different approach to discussing systemic racism, the ARD set out to consult and engage youth through a series of public engagement initiatives. The ARD engaged BII+E to help design, facilitate and execute a youth-led engagement session in the Fall of 2017. The objectives of the engagement session included:

- + Co-develop a foundational narrative to inform the development of a public awareness campaign on systemic racism with 20-30 youth participants (Indigenous, Black, Muslim and Jewish, aged 16-29 years of age);
- + Engage community partners and build relationships to garner support for public education and awareness initiatives;
- + Ensure participants have a positive experience and maintain a sense of safety throughout the session.

THE METHODOLOGY

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

ARD and BII+E developed seven design principles to guide planning of the engagement session. A design principle refers to fundamental elements and truths that are considered critical to the success of a given initiative, and are embedded throughout the design process and its components. The challenge was to design and facilitate a session that embodied the following seven principles:

- + **Safety:** The engagement environment should support comfort among participants, with the space and with the facilitator. Decisions leading up to, during, and following the workshop should prioritize participant safety.
- + **Diversity:** The engagement aims to understand the experience of systemic racism across distinct identities. The design should support respect and understanding of the differences of participants.
- + **Convergence:** The experiences of individual participants will likely be different. The engagement should focus on the commonalities among participants. The message should reflect these commonalities.
- + **Action:** The labour of revisiting the experience of racism is only justified by the intention to act. The engagement should articulate its purpose and intended next steps to all participants.
- + **Transparency:** Participants should have full access to all information relevant to their participation. Participants will be updated about any consequent developments.
- + **Playfulness:** Discussing race and racism can be heavy. The design of the engagement will support interactivity, connection, and fun. Participation should be fun and engaging.
- + **Empowerment:** Participants are adults. As such, they should be afforded as much choice and individuality as possible throughout.

THE APPROACH

To design and facilitate an effective and inclusive engagement session, BII+E and ARD drew from a number of design methods. The methods reflect two broader approaches:

- + **Human-Centered Design:** This method is particularly effective in youth engagement because it acknowledges youth as ‘experts’ of their own experiences and seeks to develop solutions based on the unique set of experiences/needs of an individual. Tools deployed in this engagement included participant interviews, storytelling, and observation.
- + **Co-designing:** This is a more collaborative approach that involves and empowers all stakeholders throughout the problem-solving process. It is particularly effective in public policy work because it acknowledges that no one stakeholder has the solution to a policy challenge and multi-disciplinary perspectives are needed. Tools deployed in this engagement included card sort, journey mapping and the use of personas.

When combined, human-centered design and co-design paint a rich picture of how individuals experience a challenge – in this case, the impacts of systemic racism. This approach was selected to capture how Indigenous and racialized youth experience systemic racism, while gaining insights into the system touch points and common experiences of youth across all population groups.

THE TOOLS

A variety of co-design and qualitative research methods, tools, and activities were used throughout the engagement.² The session was centered around:

- + **Understanding and identifying privilege** and therefore oppressive systems: Recognizing how the systems and spaces we interact with may have intentional or unintentional mechanisms of oppression.
- + **Co-defining systemic racism:** Creating a shared understanding, through storytelling and building empathy, of what systemic racism is and how it impacts different individuals.
- + **Building convergence:** Fostering empathy and finding commonality with amongst different racialized groups.

Though all seven design principles were accounted for in each activity, some principles were emphasized more in some activities than others, depending on the nature of the activity and the desired outcomes.

² An overview of the agenda is available in Appendix B.

Activity	Description	Principle	Desired outcomes
Knapsack of Privilege ³	<p>Participants used post-its to describe the characteristics of the person/people who benefit the most from the way Canada operates. “Who is your world made for?”</p> <p>Participants generated characteristics of the privileged, and then examined which characteristics they shared and did not share with those who are privileged.</p>	Safety Diversity Convergence Playfulness Empowerment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deepen participant familiarity and understanding of privilege and personal interactions with privilege. 2. Challenge perception of privilege as a binary occurrence (i.e. you either have it or you don't)
Card Sort	<p>Participants were provided with a deck of cards with places that commonly perpetuate systemic racism (e.g. education, housing, law enforcement).</p> <p>In small groups, participants ranked the systems in which they perceived, witnessed and/or experienced the most systemic racism.</p>	Safety Convergence Playfulness Empowerment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Obtain insight into which systems affected racialized and Indigenous youth more than others. 2. Identification of the Top 6 places where youth experienced racism.
Journey Map	<p>Journey maps of the Top 6 places or systems were placed around the room.</p> <p>Participants were encouraged to map out the steps of engaging in each scenario, what you might do, think and feel at each one.</p>	Safety Diversity Action Transparency Empowerment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deepen ARD's understanding of how youth interact with government systems, where youth encountered racism and their reactions and feelings to racism in these places.
Storytelling	<p>In pairs, youth selected one touchpoint from the journey map and shared the significance and meaning of that touchpoint with each other. This included 'what happened', 'why it resonated with them, and their thoughts and feelings.</p>	Safety Convergence Transparency Empowerment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identification of similarities in stories and points of divergence. 2. Obtain insights to inform the narrative of the public awareness campaign.

³ Peggy McIntosh, *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, http://www.winnipeg.ca/clerks/boards/citizenequity/pdfs/white_privilege.pdf

LESSON LEARNED

The co-designed process provided critical insights about engaging youth on a complex, difficult issue. Outlined below are key success factors that should be replicated in future engagements, as well as opportunities for improvements.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

- + **Adopt a Co-Design Mindset:** Engaging youth to co-create solutions enables deeper insights. Through their lived experiences, they provide invaluable insights into their needs, the needs of different Indigenous and racialized groups, and intervention opportunities within critical systems that can lead to widespread societal change, now and in the future. These insights will inform potential policy and programming solutions.
- + **Create Design Principles:** These principles served as the foundation to guide all planning of the engagement. They are reflected in all of the activities and were incorporated into all key decisions. It should be noted that ensuring safety and comfort of all participants was critical to the success of the engagement. Decisions that reflect this principle include: inviting youth workers to provide support when needed, starting off the day with a group conversation about the principles, and having the head facilitator share personal experiences with racism.
- + **Apply Innovative Tools:** The core partners developed personas of the youth to anticipate what might come up. Using this tool throughout the planning processes enabled the agenda to be iterated upon and improved to overcome potential barriers.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

- + **Narrow Age Range:** Given the broad age range of participants (16 to 29 years-old), younger participants were challenged to contribute as much as their older peers. It was noted that future sessions should focus on narrower age ranges to better serve the needs of participants and tailor the demands of each activity.
- + **Ensure Access:** Access should be given greater consideration in any future sessions, including accommodating varying English literacy skills and needs such as dyslexia. Ample support for participation and multi-modal activities is imperative. Future registration forms could be designed to include and capture these data points.
- + **Consider Third-Party Facilitators:** The need for third-party facilitators should be weighed against the desire to create a safe environment in future sessions. In this session, youth workers demonstrated an unexpected desire to participate, which deepened the conversations, but limited their ability to facilitate tables.

- + **Consider Travel Demands:** The prompt, early start time was difficult for everyone to accommodate, and some participants missed the introduction and framing of the session due to the travel required. Inclusive practices should ensure that all participants are rested and stay locally overnight to allow for full participation.

OUTCOMES

BII+E enabled the co-design of a safe and inclusive session that brought together youth from diverse backgrounds and geographies. The session helped forge a sense of commonality, while remaining respectful and aware of the differences youth of varying backgrounds experience in their everyday life. Because the activities encouraged storytelling and the sharing of personal experiences, empathy and understanding was established despite the complex nature of the topic. This enabled the ARD to walk away with a number of insights relating to the impacts of systemic racism on the well-being and mental health of youth.

Furthermore, a number of insights that are valuable to informing future public engagements emerged:

- + **Focus on empowerment:** The framing of future initiatives should emphasize empowerment. This framing will minimize the possibility of reinforcing stereotypes and stories of trauma. Furthermore, future initiatives should consider building in dedicated time for youth to challenge the ARD on the desired outcomes and better understand ‘what is in it for them.’ Providing an opportunity to engage in open dialogue with the ARD team about goals and objectives will strengthen outcomes and build trust and transparency between the ARD and local communities.
- + **Provide Youth with a Platform:** The Speaker’s Corner⁴ generated significant interest from participants. Youth were encouraged by the ability to share their perspectives and experiences beyond the single engagement session. Future initiatives should acknowledge and give youth a platform to seek action through discourse and political dialogue.
- + **Apply Human-Centered Design:** The ability to apply human-centered research processes and collect rich qualitative data helped to inform ARD decision making with respect to public education initiatives and also enabled a continued relationship with the youth for other ARD initiatives (e.g. ARD Conference, Social Media Influencer Campaign, Anti-Racism Subcommittees). The methodology should also be considered when engaging youth more broadly.

⁴ See Appendix C.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

In order to build off the learnings and successes of this engagement, it is recommended that the ARD consider the following next steps:

- + Synthesize key insights and findings to ensure the voices of this engagement are reflected in the broader public awareness campaign.
- + Reflect on how the outcomes and lessons learned can inform future public education and awareness initiatives.
- + Share insights with ARD policy leads to inform future areas of research, as well as policy and program development.
- + Continue to explore design methods, and qualitative research tools, as an input into the policy development process.
- + Establish ongoing relationships with youth who participated in the session. Encourage engagement and participation in future public education and awareness initiatives. This could include attending conferences, as well as other public consultations.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANTS

Outreach was targeted to youth organizations to engage 20-30 Black, Muslim, Indigenous, and Jewish youth aged 16-29. The youth organizations represented various communities identified in the ARD strategic plan. To target these communities, ARD approached Provincial Youth Outreach Workers (YOWs) in identified cities with the goal of identifying 5-6 youth that fit the following criteria:

- + Identify as Indigenous or racialized
- + Are interested in exploring issues related to racism or discrimination
- + Enjoy participating in collaborative activities
- + Are prepared for the emotional impacts of a discussion focused on systemic racism.

We involved YOWs because the engagement required adult allies who:

- + Had strong relationships with youth, who would be ideal candidates for the session
- + Could accompany youth to the session as many would be travelling from outside the GTA
- + Could be an emotional support on the day of the session and post-session, should any issues arise

Youth from Hamilton, London, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, and Toronto were represented at the engagement session. Participating community organizations included:

- + East Metro Youth Services, Toronto
- + Jewish Community Centre, Toronto
- + London InterCommunity Health Centre, London
- + Nishnawbe Aski Nation
- + Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre, Ottawa
- + Regional Multicultural Youth Council, Thunder Bay
- + Wesley Urban Ministries, Hamilton
- + Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities

Breakdown of Participants

Population	Male	Female	Youth Outreach Worker
Black	10	2	M:1 F:1
Black Muslim	2	3	M:1 F:2
First Nations	1	4	
Metis	0	0	
Inuit	1	1	Black/ Inuk F:1
Jewish	0	2	
Muslim	1	5	
TOTAL: 29	15	17	M:2 F:3

APPENDIX B: WORKSHOP AGENDA

Time	Agenda	Activity/ Tools
9:00am – 10:00am	Reception and Introduction	1. Minister's Address
10:00am – 10:30am	Building Relationships	1. Community Agreement 2. Toilet Paper Game
10:30am – 10:40am	Break	
10:40am – 12:00pm	Co-Defining Systemic Racism	1. Knapsack of Privilege 2. Card Sorting
12:00pm – 12:55pm	Lunch	
12:55pm – 2:15pm	Sharing Narratives	1. Journey Mapping 2. Storytelling
2:15pm – 3:00pm	Building Convergence	1. Sentence Starters 2. More Than Meets the Eye Game
3:00pm – 3:10pm	Break	
3:10pm – 3:45pm	Conclusion	1. Next Steps 2. Supports and Resources