

Understanding Contexts of Youth-Adult Partnerships: Call notes (Oct. 10, 2012)

Next steps: National calls every 2-3 weeks, scheduled ahead of time (Nish will send out a Doodle poll to find preferred times/days)

1) Introductions and looking forward

Robin: Looking forward to Youth Engagement pilot evaluation tool

Patti: Interviewing teachers

Tania: Jumping back in and final product

Marina: Collaborating with the team

Mark: Get together and find what our projects have in common

Stoney: Getting together and common threads, YMCA in Toronto - our committee is in it's 3rd year and seeing a new group take over, it's fun to see how the project is shifting

Kim: Meeting with YAC - anxious to see product, excited

Marla: Have all of our transcripts and focus groups, sitting down with Mark and Rebecca next week to find themes

Rebecca: Excited to go through focus groups and analyze all the great data we collected

Serena: Collected evaluations at the youth conference, going over our results at our meeting next weekend

Maria: Heartwood, created youth-adult partnership video, showed it to stakeholders and board, going to be presenting at a conference in Cape Breton

Gord: Piloting within the next month the Youth Engagement indicator resource kit within Van Island (Courtney)

Bonnie

Regrets: Linda, Dave, Susan R., Kaeli

2) Where are we at: Updates from teams, sharing findings/strategies

Addressing power imbalance in research questions

- Kim (YMCA GTA): One of our youth commented that we are asking youth personal questions (what do you feel about...?), but not as personal with the adults. Need to make sure that young people have the opportunity to put forth the questions that they want and ask same questions of adults.
- Maria (Heartwood, Halifax): similar to our video: the team often said that youth were asked personal questions and challenges but never asked adults about the most challenging or worst things they've experienced. It's important to ask adults to share personal things, workers often know a lot of personal info about youth, sets up a power imbalance (e.g. in the video: worker shares personal passion for video with youth)
- Stoney (Students Commission, Toronto): take it a bit further - young people weren't asked the systemic questions, all the systemic questions went to the adults, and young people have insights into systemic change

- Patti (St. Thomas More College/Nutana, Saskatoon): our team is using similar questions with youth and adults, but not sure the degree that our questions are personal - are asking about experiences, but depends on what they respond
- Mark (WLU, Kitchener): we all developed questions together, 2 different groups where we interviewed ourselves, the questions were more nitty gritty (less personal)
- Marla (City of Kitchener): In our meetings, we decided in our group to share a rose, bud and thorn at the beginning of each meeting, ended up sharing personal things in our lives, but the research questions weren't as personal
- Rebecca (WLU, Kitchener): We asked "what did you get, what did you learn?", but we didn't deal with a lot of the feelings side of things, was more abstract than that (e.g. how close to an ideal partnership did this come?). Feelings did come up: when we did reflection journals, we asked some power-sharing questions

Internal research team reflection and communication:

- Rebecca (WLU, Kitchener): main source of info was focus group and we shared the transcript, but haven't looked at journals - ran out of time. It would have been nice to dedicate a meeting to go over the themes, a process we wanted to use to go through it, so much of it was individual and missed coming together.
- Patti (St. Thomas More College, Saskatoon): Marina is leading us in a reflection of our team, looking at the level of the research team, as well as outside of the research team. We are pretty good at the beginning of meetings doing the process, but challenged to find times to meet with a team of 6 so that when we are together our time is short so we have been making choices where to focus on process and on product
- Marina (Youth Launch, Saskatoon): reviewing reflection questions with each team member one-on-one to see if they are comfortable, each question could get deep. We're going to meet as a team and do a few discussion groups and figure out whether we do a reflective journal; it's a good way to wrap up the meeting, solidify and carry to next meeting, otherwise it's too easy to leave and let things linger. This has been the most interesting part so far of the project. We're sampling questions from the Kitchener team and adding new ones - strategies to try in the group

Strategies for reflection:

- Vocal reflection at the end of each meeting if people don't want to write
- Head, Heart, Feet Spirit sheets
- Journaling: at sessions or at home
- Facebook?
- Rebecca (WLU): lesson from our group is if you use journaling as data - talk about how that will look and what expectations (e.g. when they should be submitted). We asked for everything to be submitted at the end, and didn't get enough back. So good to go in with intentionality, collect them throughout but communicate that we won't read them until the end. Backing it up with a focus group was a way for us to capture it all.

Facebook and youth-only spaces

- Stoney (Students Commission, Toronto): the YMCA GTA Youth Advisory using Facebook communication in a closed group without Stoney and Kim – they could see the changes happening in the meeting as a result of the communication on Facebook, but didn't see what was going on. This year, the YAC opened the FB to the young Board Member also and planning to open it soon for others
- It started out as being just between them, and now talking about whether we include it as documenting the process of this project: the notion of adult-only and youth-only spaces within youth-adult relationships. Youth initially felt that they needed youth-only spaces to talk about issues they were having without the adult presence
- Kim (YMCA GTA): one thing the YAC did on facebook was the nomination process to rank the new potential candidates
- Stoney: particularly Kim in her role and Kamal the Board member were unable to flag organizational stuff re: nomination process, etc. because they did not see that facebook ranking process. Can track how adult presence can be helpful in some cases too.

Turnover:

- Mark (WLU): there were different constraints on youth and adult partners - school year was a constraint on youth partners, most have left
- Stoney (Students Commission, Toronto): Common theme: time flow in terms of youth coming and going, in the YMCA GTA project we've seen a roll over of people in the advisory committee, it is an ongoing reality to the project. Interesting to see differences depending on who is on the committee

Project updates:

- Kim (YMCA GTA): Linda is taking research questions to ethics review
- Gord (UVic): conducted a lengthy focus group discussion, have 22-23 pages of transcription - senior students in School of Child and Youth Care analyzed data to develop themes and typology. Questions: what does a positive YAP look like? Youth co-researchers speak from their experience in this project with a strength-based approach. Get a sense of what they value, and how we can improve it within our group and ended up getting strong data including how their relationships with adults and skills built in this project have influenced their experiences outside of MCFD
- Students were able to come up with very strong themes re: YAPs. Kaeli is going share examples of the best analyses of the data to put up on the website, they include different typologies and different ways to present the data
- Robin (Ministry of Child and Family Development, Victoria): Youth engagement indicators toolkit pilot involving a collaboration with MCFD, 3 year project. Consists of a user guide, practice framework, evaluation tool, and documentation of our process to develop the tool and models youth engagement. The focus is on engaging

- youth at systemic level of MCFD, at community level to identify a team of people (youth and adult champions) to implement the toolkit in the community
- Toolkit: collection of indicators we want to see in a healthy org/community re: youth engagement. Indicators: organizational readiness, existence of youth-adult partnerships, youth leadership in decision-making, youth involved as researchers/evaluators, youth diversity
 - Toolkit supports local teams of youth and adults to implement, discussion prompts and qualitative data collection. Process: values discussion to come to a common understanding re: youth engagement, YAPs; collect data; analyze data and going back to the community to have a followup discussion re: strengths and areas for future focus and develop a prioritized action plan
 - practitioners with a varied understanding re: YAPs and how they're used in our context - a lot are from risk-focused approaches, so the focus is on shift in thinking and discussion about the possibilities
 - Gord (UVic): key goal is to increase awareness re: youth engagement with a strong component of youth-adult partnership. This project to develop the indicators is a strong model re: youth engagement approach

3) For next call:

Brainstorm: What do we want to get out of the overall national project? What do we want to be able to say/demonstrate as a larger group re: Youth-Adult relationships? How can we compare or connect findings across teams?