



Our Health Counts Toronto Newsletter

OHC Toronto Reference Group Meeting Updates

On September 10th, 2014, the Our Health Counts Toronto research team hosted the second meeting and brought together the Reference Group at the Toronto Birth Centre. The Reference Group is comprised of representatives from Aboriginal and allied health and social service organizations in the GTA. Members of the group meet quarterly throughout the project to help guide the research process, including review of the survey tools, data analysis, and strategies and means of sharing the research findings. The third reference group meeting will be held on **Tuesday, January 27th, 2015 at 12:00pm to 3:00pm** at the Toronto Birth Centre.

We had a great turnout of reference group members at the second meeting held on September 10th, with representation from 30 organizations. The meeting provided the opportunity to review and provide feedback for the adult and child survey tools, a surveyor training and data management overview, and a project update. We broke out into 4 discussion groups, each focusing on a specific topic that the reference group felt that needed further editing. This consisted of: questions around parenting; the child survey tool; men's health; and trauma and resiliency. Due to the detailed and in depth feedback that we received, the development of the survey tools took longer than estimated in order to ensure maximized referral, while at the same time including all reference group members feedback. The survey tools are now complete, been approved by our community partner, and have been sent off to the programmer.

For the upcoming OHC Toronto reference group meeting on January 27th, we will be discussing next steps in the project. We will be looking for feedback from reference group members on the start-up of respondent driven sampling (RDS) and advice on the selection of sample "seeds". As described at the last reference group meeting, "seeds" are members of our target population who are purposely selected to begin the sampling process; seeds represent a diverse sector of Indigenous communities across Toronto. We will also be seeking advice on promotional tools for the project, and advice/assistance in getting our survey sites set up and running. The three survey sites are SGMT located at the Toronto Birth Centre in Regent Park, Native Canadian Centre Toronto in the Annex, and Queen West Community Health

What is the purpose of the OHC Toronto Newsletter?

Prepared and distributed on a quarterly basis, the newsletter is designed to provide Co-Investigators and Reference Group members with the most up-to-date information about the Our Health Counts Toronto project.

Recent Events

Our Health Counts Toronto Pilot Test

Once we incorporated all of the great survey tool feedback from reference group members, we implemented a pilot test to determine its feasibility. We brought the survey tools to De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre in Hamilton on November 12 and December 5, 2014.

After the first pilot test, alterations were made to the adult survey tool around grammar and the overall flow of the survey, based on the feedback provided. Participants who completed the child survey tool found it to be straight forward, and stated that they would recommend the survey to others. Feedback from both of the surveys indicated that although they are thorough, they are both too long and needed to be shortened. The Well Living House team did their best to address these concerns, while at the same time, being inclusive of initial reference group feedback.

OHC Survey Sites



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For each *Our Health Counts Toronto* newsletter, we will feature a question and answer section from either a co-investigator or a reference group member that is a part of the project.

Questions and Answers with Reference Group Member...

Ellen Blais

Ellen Blais is the National Co- Chair of the National Aboriginal Council of Midwives, and the Aboriginal Health Consultant Lead for the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network.

1. How would you disseminate the data in the project? What format do you recommend and why?

"It is important for the data to reach the grassroots level of the Toronto urban Indigenous community as well as the academic institutions, policy makers, government departments and general audiences at local, provincial and federal levels. At the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINS) there is a provincial network of Aboriginal Health Leads who can disseminate this information locally to communities across Ontario. Another method of local dissemination is the Toronto Aboriginal Health Advisory Circle, which is tasked with creating an ongoing Aboriginal Health Strategy for Toronto. This circle was formed through a partnership between the Toronto Central LHINS and Toronto Public Health so current data will be a valuable source in informing strategic planning for the Aboriginal community. Indigenous Cultural Competency training both through in- person training and online training is currently available to health care providers across Toronto and throughout Ontario. Aboriginal health data from Our Health Counts Toronto could be used locally in this kind of training. We have several youth councils that are currently in existence that would be a tremendous source of knowledge about how we can share this data using technology such as smartphones."

2. What would be your measurement of success?

"I have heard very clearly from many sectors in our community that in thinking about Indigenous health, we need to take all of the social determinants of health into account, that the concept of a diverse healthy urban Aboriginal community cannot be segmented and broken down into pillars. People want to talk about the integration of healing, wellness and cultural identity, about wholistic health, about health equity. There is a thirst for learning about the traditional ways of Indigenous knowledge and learning how to apply this knowledge the current environment. Success would be about the creation of data sharing agreements that value this kind of Indigenous knowledge and respect the OCAP principles. Through these kinds of agreements we can use this data to change perspectives of decision makers, to change the culture of oppression to a culture of shared collaboration and trust, for others to value our traditional knowledge and ceremony as integral to healing, for this kind of data to change the ways we have been using data for decades into innovative new models of thinking about Aboriginal health, which puts the decision making and control back into our hands. Success would then be healthier communities created by and for Aboriginal people."

3. What are your learning objectives as being a reference group member on this project?

"In my work, which includes many aspects of Aboriginal health at the local and provincial levels, I am frequently at a loss for accurate local data to inform my work that involves advancing health care initiatives and funding for the community at the community level. If there is no baseline data, how do we know that what we are measuring is accurate? I am looking forward to being a small part of a big picture of the important work of Our Health Counts Toronto so that I can incorporate this data into all of my work."

4. Why did you decide to be a reference group member on this project?

"When I was asked to be a reference group member, I felt honoured and excited to be a part of this project. Being involved in the Aboriginal community in Toronto for the past 20 years and part of that time being a midwife at some of the beautiful births, has been an integral part of my life and self-identity. This community is filled with people who are incredibly resilient and resourceful. A lot of my work has been to support women and their families and to find creative ways to support that strength and diversity within the community. There is still a lot of work to do to make systemic changes within the health care system. I see Our Health Counts as an integral part of that change in providing the data that will shape the future health of the community."

What's been done and what's happening next?

Timeline

The events with a red line are upcoming. Presently we are slightly behind schedule. Due to the detailed and in depth feedback that we received, the development of the survey tools took longer than estimated in order to ensure maximized referral. Our goal is to begin RDS by the end of February, 2015. The next reference group meeting will be held on January 27th, 2015 to discuss RDS sampling start up.

