



Our Health Counts Toronto Newsletter

OHC Toronto Reference Group Meeting

On May 28th, 2014, the Our Health Counts Toronto research team hosted the first 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 will 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.

We had a great turnout of reference group members with representation from 20 organizations. The meeting provided the opportunity to connect the research team and Reference Group members, to review the roles of the Reference Group, research team and research partners (Well Living House and the Seventh Generation Midwives Toronto), and to begin to provide some initial input on the survey tools and approach to community engagement. Over the course of the summer, Well Living House will be following up with Reference Group members to get their feedback on the survey tools before they are finalized.

Some of the feedback provided by the Reference Group included: getting through to youth; including children and youth who have been adopted or are in foster care; reaching out to those who are incarcerated and those who have been incarcerated and are transitioning back into community; having questions specifically for men; focussing on mental health as an important priority; including options of identifying sex, gender, and 2-Spirited peoples; reaching out to shelters, couch surfers, and those experiencing homelessness; having questions surrounding violence against women and challenges in accessing medical care; having a focus on seniors and their experiences with addictions and mental health, including 2-spirited seniors; and including questions around pregnancy and child welfare.

Organizations involved in the OHC Toronto Reference Group:

Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council - De Dwa Da Dehs Nye>s – NaMeRes - Native Women's Association of Canada – Centre for Addiction and Mental Health – Elizabeth Fry Toronto – Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care – Central West Local Health Integration Network – Native Youth Sexual Health Network – Queen West Community Health Centre – Nishnawbe Homes – York University – Anduhyaun – ImagineNative – Toronto Birth Centre – 2-Spirits of the 1st Nations – Native Women's Resource Centre Toronto – Toronto District School Board – Southern Ontario Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative – Street Health – First Nations House – University of Toronto – Native Child and Family Services Toronto – Native Canadian Centre Toronto – Metis Nation of Ontario

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

Respondent Driven Sampling: A way to reach a broad population base, including hidden or hard to reach populations through existing social networks.



Respondent Driven Sampling Workshop

On May 29th, 2014 we hosted a Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS) workshop at the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto. We will be recruiting our entire OHC Toronto cohort using RDS! We had a great turnout with attendance from Reference Group members, community members, students, and front line workers. Dr. Janet Smylie provided a presentation, followed by Dr. Michelle Firestone who offered an engaging step-by-step process to learn the basics of RDS in a fun, interactive way. Following this, Dr. Michael Rotondi provided a session on the quantitative side of RDS for those who were interested.

Newsletter brought to you
by Well Living House

For more information, call 416-864-6060 ext. 77349



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 Co-Investigator...

Dr. Heather Howard

Heather Howard is a Research Faculty Affiliate with the Centre for Aboriginal Initiatives at the University of Toronto, and Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Michigan State University.

1. How would you like to disseminate the data in the project?

"It is important to disseminate the project in a range of ways which reach first the Indigenous community and healthcare policy-makers and providers, as well as other scholarly and public audiences. So a number of formats should be investigated including the usual venues such as community gatherings, media, scholarly journals and professional meetings, and websites but we might also think of more creative ways to share the knowledge gained through this research, such as interactive games, workshops, and mobile-phone technologies. We might want to plan to pilot some of them to see what works best in various contexts. We can also look at some best practices of other successful population health study dissemination strategies, which might include, for example, ways to integrate our findings into healthcare provider basic and continuing education requirements. I am involved with First Story Toronto, a mobile phone app. which shares knowledge, events, history, stories, arts and more about the Indigenous peoples of the GTA. We could incorporate findings into the First Story app. Most importantly, members of the Indigenous community will have great ideas on how to disseminate our findings. I think we should incorporate a question in our survey to participants about what the best way would be for us to share our results with them and others."

2. What would be your measurement of success?

"Of course the greatest measure would be the eradication of illness and disease for Indigenous people in the city. This may sound idealistic but we need to aim this high to think most broadly about how the information we gather with this study could be applied to the greatest outcomes. We already consider social determinants of health, structural inequalities, and Indigenous resiliency in our research design, and are consulting throughout the research with the project's community reference group to include information which may be most useful for future interventions aimed at least at the prevention and reduction of disease and illness, and improvement of individual, family, and community well-being. We will need to follow up this initial survey of baseline information with evaluation of how the data is being incorporated into future work of healthcare and community program providers."

3. What are your learning objectives as being a co-investigator on this project?

"We can't have success if we do not have a more accurate picture of baseline health information about Aboriginal people living in the city. The Aboriginal community in Toronto is extremely diverse. There are a number of factors that are particular to the social contexts of urban living and Aboriginal community structures that are likely impact this baseline information. I think our study will provide a much needed and unique opportunity to design and carry out a learning process with these contexts in mind so that the statistical information we collect can be applied to realistic and doable programming and policy development."

4. Why did you decide to be a co-investigator on this project?

*"My decision to be involved in this project is personal as well as scholarly. I am not an Indigenous person but have been welcomed as a relation in the community which I consider my home. My first husband who was Anishinaabe and a very active advocate for Indigenous peoples' rights passed away from complications of diabetes when he was only 42 years old. This was a great loss still felt not just by me but by the community. Diabetes and a number of other preventable diseases continue to impact every Indigenous family and there is a great deal of suffering which continues. However, there is also tremendous strength, resilience and ingenuity within the community and I have dedicated much of my scholarly work to community-based research aimed at understanding how these can be mobilized toward positive change. I am very excited to be involved in *Our Health Counts* because it will provide incredibly important comprehensive data about health status, access to primary healthcare, and unmet needs, and understanding of Indigenous peoples' health knowledge. I also believe that the Indigenous-based reciprocal philosophy which drives the research will provide opportunities to establish truly productive partnerships and relationships critical to improving the success of both community-based and mainstream healthcare service providers."*

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

Timeline

The events with a red line indicate that they are upcoming. Well Living House Post-docs will be contacting each reference group member individually to get their feedback on the project survey tools, before they are finalized. The next reference group meeting will be held on September 10th, 2014. Further details regarding the location and time of the meeting will be sent closer to the date.

