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BCRC

**BLACK IN
QUEBEC
PRESENTS**

**IN
FOCUS**

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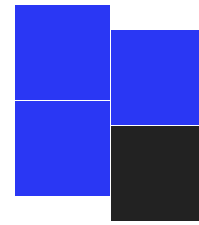


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BLACK IN QUEBEC

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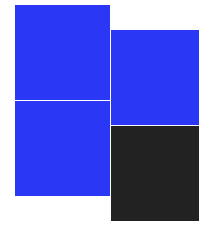


BLACK IN QUEBEC

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BLACK IN QUEBEC 2020 FOCUS GROUPS



BLACK IN QUEBEC

About

Black in Quebec is a research project being undertaken by the Black Community Resource Center (BCRC). The purpose of the project is to collect and analyze information pertaining to the well-being and vitality of Quebec's English-speaking Black Community (ESBC). The aim is to establish a knowledge hub which can inform the BCRC and other community stakeholders as to the state of the community and thus, create targeted interventions which are informed by evidence and the challenges articulated by the community.

Introduction

Due to the Information Gaps pertaining to the well-being of the ESBC, the project collected detailed, qualitative information from members of Quebec's ESBC through conducting Focus Groups. These were meant to better inform the project about different aspects of the community such as the challenges facing the ESBC and solutions which should be considered. This process occurred in two parts, one-on-one interviews with members of the ESBC as well as group discussions with members of the seniors in the ESBC. Ultimately, upon conducting the Focus Groups, the Black in Quebec team was provided with a large amount of detailed, qualitative data derived directly from community members. This document presents the findings from the Focus Groups which are organized in two parts: challenges identified and solution based responses. Given that the Focus Group discussions were semi-structured and participants offered varying levels of details, the findings reflect distinct issues or solutions identified by the participants in no particular order but were categorized thematically. Certain findings may have overlapped more than one theme.

METHODOLOGY



01

PARTICIPANTS

Focus group participants were recruited through community networks and personal contacts. A recruitment poster was shared and promoted on various social media platforms in order to engage a more diverse sample of participants. A second phase of Focus Groups were carried out through collaboration with the Intergenerational Program at the BCRC where a small group of seniors were interviewed. A total of 34 individuals were involved in the Black in Quebec Focus Groups. The composition of the Focus Groups involved participants from diverse age, gender, educational, and economic backgrounds ranging from arts, schools, and post-secondary academic institutions, to community organizations, religious organizations, politicians and seniors in the community. Participants also included individuals who are long-standing advocates in the English-speaking Black community as well as young leaders in the Black community.



02

ETHICS

A number of strategies had been taken to address or mitigate ethics concerns related to the process of conducting the Focus Groups. These steps required: 1) Obtaining informed consent before conducting Focus Groups. 2) Briefing participants with a suitable level of detail and with due clarity prior to the Focus Group. 3) Debriefing participants and reiterating key messages after the Focus Group session concluded.



03

DURATION AND PLATFORM

Each Focus Group interview lasted around 90 minutes. Given the uncertainty and social restrictions stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic, all interviews were held online through Zoom and were recorded. Each Focus Group involved a moderator, a note-taker, and the participant.

04

QUESTIONS

A set of questions were carefully developed prior to the Focus Groups. The Focus Groups were semi-structured and included a series of rating questions from the Sense of Community Index¹ and a few open-ended questions (Ex. 1. From your experience and perspective, what are some of the challenges you notice facing the ESBC? or 2. What comes to mind when you consider the life satisfaction, subjective and objective well-being of the ESBC in Quebec?). Other questions in the Focus Group, for instance one pertaining to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, were scaled from 1-5. The Intergenerational Focus Group also included open ended questions such as 1) how has your sense of contact with people who care for you and whom you care for, been affected by COVID-19? How has your community changed? 2) if you have children and/or grandchildren, do they have more opportunities for a better education/employment than you did? 3) Since the beginning of your story in Quebec, what has changed for the better, what has changed for the worse, and what has stayed the same?

05

ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

After conducting the Focus Groups, all interviews were transcribed word-for-word in order to prepare for content analysis. When analyzing the data, information was organized into five thematic categories: education, economics, health, psycho-social, and socio-cultural. Once all the data was analyzed, the results were consolidated into this report for dissemination.

1. Chavis, D. M., & Pretty, G. M. H. (1999). Sense of community: Advances in measurement and application. *Journal of Community Psychology, 27*, 635-642.

& McMillan, D.W., & Chavis, D.M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology, 14*, 6-23.

FOCUS GROUP TIMELINE



April 2020



May 2020



**June to October
2020**



December 2020



**May to July
2021**




Education

Focus Group Findings

CHALLENGES

- **Encouragement & Motivation**
Not everyone has the motivation to continue their educational journey and not everyone has sources of encouragement for doing so.
- **Stigma**
There can be a sense of stigmatization from some who may feel their educational level may not be high enough to participate in discussions and attempt to find solutions. It can also manifest if people who have high levels of education are dismissive of the ideas and capabilities of those who have less.
- **Access to Resources**
People may struggle with gaining access to resources such as time or money in order to pursue their education.
- **Neglecting Black History**
Educational institutions may not teach about the history of Black peoples and if they do, may be doing so inaccurately. This may lead to questions about identity and how Black peoples are portrayed and discussed in educational institutions and beyond.
- **Research Gaps**
There is a lack of research pertaining to the experiences of Black students (and parents) in the educational system.
- **French Proficiency**
Some in the community lack strong, French linguistic proficiency which affects their educational outcomes by, for instance, limiting the number of institutions they can attend in the province.

SOLUTIONS

- **Research**
Conducting research pertaining to the experiences of Black students in the educational system as well as the relationship their educational experiences have to their economic outcomes.
- **Civic Engagement**
Fostering discourse within the community pertaining to the development and vitality of the community. Crucially, creating spaces for extracurricular discourse and activity between youth and elders as a means of transferring knowledge and skills from one generation to the next. Furthermore, cultivating the potential of having positive role models and mentors in the community.
- **The Education System**
Spreading awareness about the structure of the educational system so that parents and students in the community can be best informed to make decisions within the educational sector which works best for them.
- **Online Learning**
Learning more about how to best exploit the benefits offered by online learning and minimize the potential negative impacts.

Economic

Focus Group Findings

CHALLENGES

- **Entrepreneurship**
 - Lack of very large Black owned businesses in this environment.
 - Challenges with accessing credit and financing for entrepreneurial projects.
- **Immigrant Experience**
 - Lack of recognition of foreign credentials . Relatively large population occupying lower paying jobs (despite potentially being overqualified).
- **Family Structure**
 - Many challenges facing single parent households including economic ones.
- **Community Organizations**
 - Financial dependence on a limited number of stakeholders (ex. government) and the need to increase capacity to fundraise.
 - Risk of a sense of competition between organizations who share similar goals attributable to funding models which can undermine the will to collaborate.
- **Bilingualism/French Proficiency**
 - Challenges with having level of French proficiency accepted within work environments.
- **Brain Drain**
 - Having talented and skilled community members leaving to other places and taking their knowledge and experiences with them.
- **COVID-19**
 - Exacerbated level of risk facing the community given the current economic status and challenges facing the community.

SOLUTIONS

- **Financial Literacy**
 - Teaching the community more about the economic tools and strategies they can utilize to maximize their economic outcomes. This can include teaching about economic structures, actors, history, and institutions.
- **Collaboration (Comm. Organizations)**
 - Maximizing the ability to collaborate with like minded individuals, institutions, and organizations who share an articulated common vision, goal, and/or interest.



Health

Focus Group Findings

CHALLENGES

- **Awareness and Priority**
 - Lack of awareness to take care of physical health. A lot of people avoid going to the doctor until it's too late.
 - Not being prioritized in family planning.
 - Don't talk about it enough in the Black community.
- **Race-based Data**
 - Hesitancy from the provincial government to collect race-based data.
 - Lack of health-related data
- **Access to healthcare resources**
 - Lack of healthcare resources in English-speaking communities.
 - Although patients have the right to be served in their preferred language, in reality, it's still challenging for patients to receive health related service in English.
 - More work needs to be done in order to address the needs of visible minorities and Indigenous communities.
- **Underrepresentation in the health sector**
 - Lack of Black doctors
- **Health Disparities**
 - Disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black families
 - Health is related to socio-economic status. Additional challenges built on socio-economic barriers.
- **Exposure to Risk during COVID-19**
 - A large proportion of healthcare workers are from ESBC → higher risk of exposure, have kids at home who are supposed to go to school.

SOLUTIONS

- **Social Determinant of Health Model**
 - Looks into social determinants of health which include housing economics and jobs to provide a response strategy for people at risk.
- **Prevention Approach**
 - Taking a preventive approach where the system is working towards increasing protective factors and reducing risk factors.
- **Role of Community**
 - The Black church community plays a part in looking after the well being of the congregation. When they notice someone isn't doing well health wise and more they come together and help out.



Focus Group Findings

CHALLENGES

- **Stigmatization**
 - Taboo surrounding the discussion of mental health issues in the community. Can lead to this important aspect of health being neglected.
- **Sense of Belonging**
 - Isolation can be a problem in the community as people may be dealing with certain challenges without any support.
 - Sense of a need for more role models who community members can look up to and learn from.
- **Social Services**
 - Negative impact of overrepresentation in the social services system (ie. Youth protection) and the long term negative psycho-social consequences that may have.
- **Online Learning**
 - Despite some positive aspects, by shifting to online education and not having an in-person learning experience, students have not had a chance to connect, foster dialogue, form bonds and learn together in the same way.
- **COVID-19**
 - Detrimental collective psycho-social impact of the pandemic. Being or knowing of someone who has suffered from the pandemic and experiencing a traumatic event collectively.
 - Questions of trust with the healthcare system

SOLUTIONS

- **Framing**
 - Challenging a discourse that paints the community as "victims" by transforming the understanding and framing of the community to that of "survivors". This can impact how the community identifies itself collectively and individually.
- **Resilience**
 - Despite the challenges, positivity is still a staple aspect of the community and a source of self and collective empowerment.



Focus Group Findings

CHALLENGES

- **Credibility**
 - Feeling of a lack of credibility given to members of the Black community. In other words, lack of trust of community members by people both inside and outside of the community.
- **Parental expectations**
 - There can be a drastically high level of parental expectations and ensuing pressure which can be negative for psycho-social well-being.
- **Symbolic Alliances**
 - Interactions with many individuals and organizations who claim to support the community through their rhetoric but that are far less willing to express friendship and solidarity through actions.
- **Fragmentation**
 - Sense of more work to be done in terms of fostering solidarity in the community and mobilizing as a community.
- **2nd Class Citizenship**
 - Feeling unrepresented in the decision making process of the society (economic, political, etc). Furthermore, feeling non-acknowledged and not viewed as equal members of the society.
- **Self Judgement**
 - Certain members of the community may judge themselves very harshly for not having met certain expectations of theirs which may be negative for their psycho-social well-being and may underplay or understate the progress they have made.
- **Leadership**
 - A need for more leaders in the community who can help guide and teach others.
- **History**
 - The importance of protecting history and specifically Black history from being re-written and changed.

Sense of Community Index

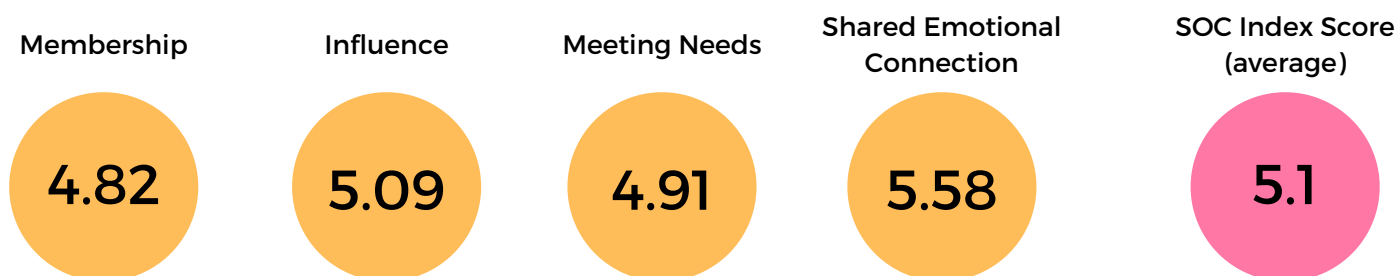
What is the Sense of Community Index and why are we using it?

The Sense of Community Index is a measure which can be applied in the social sciences to gauge a respondents sense of community. It is based on a theory developed by McMillan and Chaves (1986) about sense of community being "a perception with an affective component" (senseofcommunity.com). The index is organized across four elements: Membership, Influence, Meeting Needs, and Shared Emotional Connection. The reason we used this index was to gauge the sense of community from respondents in the context of the English-speaking Black Community in Quebec across the four elements.

Our project modified the SOC Index (see Appendix A) by structuring our questions by creating a 7-point scale indicating level of disagreement (1=strongly disagree) or agreement (7=strongly agree) with statements relating to the four elements. 4 represented neither agreement or disagreement.

Findings

Average Score- Focus Group Interviews



Average Score- Intergenerational Focus Group Interviews



Sense of Community Index

Interpretation of Results

Respondents on average demonstrated a higher level of agreement with all statements across the 4 elements and this was true for both the initial Focus group participants and the Intergenerational Focus Group participants. For the initial Focus Group, Membership (4.82), Influence (5.09), and Meeting Needs (4.91) all scored positive but Shared Emotional Connection had the highest average score (5.58). For the Intergenerational Focus Group, Membership had the highest score at 6.29 followed by Shared Emotional Connection (5.36), Influence (5.00), and Meeting Needs (4.28).

The most drastic difference in score was for the Membership element with the Initial Focus Group scoring 4.82 but the Intergenerational Focus Group scoring 6.29, the highest score across all elements and both groups. The lowest score tallied across both groups and all elements was for the Intergenerational Focus Group's Meeting Needs score (4.28) which was slightly above the neutral mark of 4.

Ultimately, both groups were positive overall with the Initial Focus Group scoring 5.1 on average for the SOC Index and the Intergenerational Focus Group scoring 5.23. There was some variation in the elements which received high scores from each group which further research may be able to elaborate upon.

Limitations

In collecting the qualitative data, there were a few limitations encountered by the project team. Firstly, the SOC Index has been demonstrated to be a "strong predictor of behaviours" but there have been examples of inconsistencies with its reliability. Secondly, the sample size of the SOC Index was relatively small. The SOC index was only applied starting with the 10th respondent of the Initial Focus Group and 9 members of the Intergenerational Focus Group bringing the total sample size to 20 of the 34 individuals who took part in the Focus Groups.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the purpose of the Focus Group portion of the project was to collect qualitative, detailed information directly from members of Quebec's English-speaking Black Community (ESBC) in the hopes that it could further inform the project team about the state of the communities vitality and/or well-being. People who were interviewed in the Focus Group had a relatively high sense of community pertaining to the English-speaking Black Community in Quebec. Furthermore, people identified some of the challenges the community is facing across the areas of education, economic, health, psycho-social, and socio-cultural. The challenges varied from practical issues (ie. lack of race based data) to deeper, complex ones such as sense of belonging and fragmentation. While presenting the challenges in the community, people also engaged in the discussions about possible solutions and the project team aims to use this information to inform our advocacy, policy recommendations and overall approach to community development. Despite the challenges faced by the project team and the limitations of the data collected, the BIQ team still found this process to have been very useful in fulfilling its purpose and views this research as laying an important foundation for future research to take place. As expected, there was a wide and diverse range of views expressed in these discussions. Not everyone identified the key challenges as such. However, it also of interest that there were areas with higher levels of consensus such as the discussion around the economic challenges and racial discrimination faced by the community. Ultimately, the Focus Groups captured a glimpse of the diversity of thought within the ESBC but also captured a glimpse of what some of the defining issues of the community may be. We aim to make this information highly accessible and utilizable when community stakeholders plan for their future activities, research, or programming.

References

Chavis, D. M., & Pretty, G. M. H. (1999). Sense of community: Advances in measurement and application. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 27, 635-642.

McMillan, D.W., & Chavis, D.M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14, 6-23.

<https://www.senseofcommunity.com/soc-index/>

Appendix A

Sense of Community Index

Membership:

1. I can trust people in the English-speaking Black community in Quebec.
2. I can recognize most of the members of English-speaking Black community in Quebec.
3. Most community members know me.
4. The English-speaking Black community in Quebec has symbols and expressions of membership such as clothes, signs, art, architecture, logos, landmarks, and flags that people can recognize.
5. I put a lot of time and effort into being part of the English-speaking Black community in Quebec.
6. Being a member of the English-speaking Black community in Quebec is a part of my identity (please briefly elaborate).

Influence:

7. Fitting into the English-speaking Black community in Quebec is important to me.
8. The English-speaking Black community in Quebec can influence other communities.
9. I care about what other community members think of me.
10. I have influence over what the English-speaking Black community in Quebec is like.
11. If there is a problem in the English-speaking Black community in Quebec, members can get it solved.
12. The English-speaking Black community in Quebec has good leaders.

Integration and fulfillment of needs:

13. The English-speaking Black community in Quebec has been successful in getting the needs of its members met.

14. Being a member of the English-speaking Black community in Quebec makes me feel good.

15. When I have a problem, I have access to resources within the Black and larger community.

16. People in the English-speaking Black community in Quebec have similar priorities and goals.

17. It is easy for me to access information on health, education, employment and justice.

18. The events and activities in the various communities are open, welcoming, informative and make me feel a strong attachment to each other and the larger community.

Shared emotional connection:

19. I interact with other community members and enjoy being with them.

20. I expect to be a part of the English-speaking Black community in Quebec for a long time.

21. Members of this society have shared emotional experiences and connections.

22. I feel hopeful about the future of the English-speaking Black community in Quebec.

23. Members of the groups that make up this society care about each other.