

Introduction

The following report was compiled in Summer 2019 as an evaluation tool for Pillar Nonprofit Network's Be Inclusive Series.

Background

The Be Inclusive Series was created in Spring 2018 when team members of Pillar Nonprofit Network discussed ways to further amplify lived experiences and stories of struggles in the greater community of London. This series was launched in Summer 2018 with four different topics, including ableism and homophobia. It was then decided that a second edition of the Be Inclusive Series be held in Winter 2019. Five sessions were offered throughout the months of January until April. The first session was Transforming Community: Understanding the Diverse Lives of London's Trans Folk. The second session was Multigeneration Black Community Panel. The third session was Indigenous Sharing Circle. The fourth session was Understanding the Realities for People with Developmental Disabilities. The fifth was a Naloxone Training and Information Session. Subsequently to the Be Inclusive Series Winter 2019, the Network and Education Cluster wished to evaluate the efficacy and impact of the entire series. Team members also sought to generate a conversation pertaining to the series with the audience, panelists/speakers, and moderators.

Methodology

This research project was conducted in three distinct parts.

Firstly, an online survey was distributed amongst audience members who attended one or several sessions. This survey was comprised of twelve open-ended questions. Twenty-five

audience members participated in the survey, but not every question were answered by all individuals. The questions were as followed:

1. What session/sessions did you attend?
2. What was your reason for attending?
3. Did you learn anything new?
4. What will you do differently in your community and/or workplace as a result of this series?
5. How did you feel about the messages delivered throughout this/these session/sessions?
6. Overall, how would you rate the format of this/these session/sessions?
7. How would you improve the format?
8. Would you be willing to pay a registration fee to continue to have these kinds of conversations?
9. How much would you be willing to pay per conversation?
10. Do you have any suggestions of topics to include in future Be Inclusive conversations?
11. How did you hear about this series?
12. Any final comments that you would like to share?

Secondly, the opportunity for in-person interviews was offered to all thirteen panelists/speakers who participated in the series. Seven distinct interviews were held. Seven distinct questions were posed and answered by panelists/speakers. The questions were as followed:

1. In your opinion, did we create a safe space for you to share your own lived experience and learned knowledge? Please explain.

2. Based on your experience, would you consider being part of another speaker series?

Please explain.

3. Do you believe the speaker series was an adequate format to thoughtfully address your lived experiences and learned knowledge? (over lunch, informal conversation, panel or individual speaker). Do you have any suggestions in terms of organizing this series?

Please explain.

4. Did you experience barriers while preparing and delivering your sessions? (such barriers may include, but are not limited to: child minding, financial barriers, physical barriers, social barriers, transportation barriers)
5. Do you have any suggestions for future topics?
6. Did you experience any unintended outcomes as a result of being a part of the series? (unintended outcomes could be connections you made, someone reached out to you etc)
7. Any other final comments you would like to share?

Thirdly, moderators were also invited to participate in interviews. Three out of four moderators were these following seven questions.

1. In your opinion, did you create a safe sharing space for the panelists? Please describe.
2. Please describe your briefing and preparation prior to moderating the panel. Were you involved with selecting the questions and the overall format of the panel?
3. Is there anything that Pillar could do to better support you as a moderator?
4. Based on your experience, would you consider facilitating another panel? Please describe.
5. How did you feel about the messages delivered during the panel?

6. Do you have any suggestions pertaining to the format of the panel and future topics?
7. Any final comments about being a part of the Be Inclusive Series that you would like to share?

Audience Members

Sessions Attended

Out of 25 audience members who participated in the survey,

- 13 individuals (52%) attended Transforming Community: Understanding the Diverse Lives of London's Trans Folk
- 9 individuals (36%) attended Indigenous Sharing Circle with Amanda Kennedy
- 7 individuals (28%) attended Understanding the Realities for People with Developmental Disabilities
- 6 individuals (24%) attended Multigeneration Black Community Panel
- 2 individuals (8%) attended Naloxone Training and Information Session

Reasons for Attending

Audience members attended one session or several sessions for various reasons. A few individuals participated in the organization of specific sessions and wished to attend others as well. Most audience members either expressed an interest in the panels and session topics or wished to broaden their knowledge pertaining to general practices of diversity and inclusion. Some individuals described wanting to gain some tools that would assist them in creating inclusive dialogues and spaces in work environments. Most audience members recognized their privileged positions throughout daily lives and attended sessions to collect more resources in regards to allyship.

Additionally, many individuals noted that they considered these sessions as a means to engage with folks from various communities. They wanted further their understanding pertaining to diverse lived experiences, and to recognize challenges and struggles faced by individuals on a daily basis. Audience members also wanted to understand the realities of service distribution recipient, as well as seek new means to create positive shifts within their workplaces.

Knowledge Gained

88% of the audience members (22 individuals) who responded to the survey believed that they gained new knowledge and understandings. 4% (one individual) indicated that they did not learn anything new, and 8% (two individuals) were unsure.

Most audience members agreed that they gained knowledge in each session that they attended. They further understood the realities of diverging communities, their different histories, and the various gaps that exist amongst them. Some audience members better understood the challenges and barriers faced imposed upon individuals from specific individuals and, as a result, their lived experiences. They also learned proper language and the ways that common language can isolate communities.

Audience members acquired new ways of dispersing knowledge pertaining to diversity and inclusion practices throughout their respective communities. Some individuals indicated that they would subsequently observe issues with new lenses, such as “the Indigenous lens”. They appreciated the tools offered to engage and seek out collaborative opportunities between various communities. Audience members also gained knowledge pertaining to various learnings, practices, and traditions. Additionally, a few individuals felt inclined to seek support to face daily challenges and share their own lived experiences without fearing potential repercussions.

Changes in Community and Workplace

Many audience members indicated they wished to continue efforts in promoting diversity and inclusion practices within their own communities. Other individuals wanted to seek out expertise to shift existing policies and programming towards a diversity and inclusion framework. They were also interested in finding means to create space that further demonstrate practices of diversity and inclusion, such as gender-neutral washrooms. Audience members noted a greater understanding pertaining to the lived experiences of their clients, and confidence in providing meaningful and pertinent resources.

Audience members gained further knowledge to help them become better allies. Such tips include: being mindful of the language they use, demonstrating active listening skills, having more compassion and empathy for others, as well as seeking deeper connections with individuals.

Format of Sessions

Out of twenty-four respondents,

- Individuals rated panels/speakers as 97.5%
 - 2 individuals (8.3%) rated it as 8 out of 10
 - 2 individuals (8.3%) rated it as 9 out of 10
 - 20 individuals (83.3%) rated it as 10 out of 10
- Individuals rated informal conversations as 90.4%
 - 1 individual (4.2%) rated it as 3 out of 10
 - 1 individual (4.2%) rated it as 5 out of 10
 - 1 individual (4.2%) rated it as 6 out of 10

- 1 individual (4.2%) rated it as 8 out of 10
- 5 individuals (20.8%) rated as 9 out of 10
- 15 individuals (62.6%) rated it as 10 out of 10
- Individuals rated over lunch conversations as 85%
 - 1 individual (4.2%) rated it as 1 out of 10
 - 1 individual (4.2%) rated it as 3 out of 10
 - 2 individuals (8.3%) rated it as 5 out of 10
 - 2 individuals (8.3%) rated it as 7 out of 10
 - 2 individuals (8.3%) rated it as 8 out of 10
 - 1 individual (4.2%) rated it as 9 out of 10
 - 15 individuals (62.6%) rated it as 10 out of 10

While a few individuals noted that they appreciate the format of attended sessions, most audience members provided suggestions to improve the format of future sessions. Some individuals appreciated when panelists were placed in a circle, and indicated that all panels should be organized as such. A few audience members suggested that more tangible takeaways be offered in every session. Additionally, individuals suggested that the timeframe of each panel or talk be more restricted to allow further networking opportunities and occasions to discuss directly with the panelists/speakers, or alternatively increase the time of the overall session. Some audience members also suggested having time set aside to discuss resources that are available throughout the city of London.

Fees per Session

Out of 24 respondents, 11 individuals (45.8%) indicated that they would be willing to pay a registration fee for future sessions. 11 individuals (45.8%) noted that they were unsure of whether they would pay or not, and 2 individuals (8.3%) indicated that they would not pay a fee.

Out of 11 respondents, 4 individuals (36.4%) indicated that they would be willing to pay \$20 per session. 7 individuals (63.6%) noted that they would be willing to pay other amounts. 6 individuals indicated that \$10 would be a feasible amount, and 1 individual noted that they would be willing to pay any amount under \$20.

Suggestions of Topics

- Addressing hypocrisy (talks about inclusiveness, yet selective of the audience)
- Exploring employment challenges
- Addressing spaces that are not inclusive to different communities
- Discussing political intolerance and prejudices
- Discussing resiliency
- Discussing the politics of madness (oppression of individuals labelled as ‘mad’ from a psychiatric survivor’s perspective)
- Understanding and talking to the bereaved
- Understanding lived experiences and struggles of persons with various types of disabilities
- Understanding the intersection of mental health and LGBTQ2+ communities

Publicity of Sessions

22 respondents shared the way that they found information pertaining to the Be Inclusive Series.

- 9 individuals (40.9%) indicated through the Pillar Nonprofit Network's e-newsletter
- 7 individuals (31.8%) indicated through word of mouth
- 6 individuals (27.3%) indicated through Pillar Nonprofit Network's email
- 3 individuals (13.4%) indicated through Pillar Nonprofit Network's website
- 3 individuals (13.4%) indicated through Pillar Nonprofit Network's Facebook page
- 1 individual (4.6%) indicated through Eventbrite

Panelists/Speakers

Engaging with Team Members at Pillar Nonprofit Network

All the panelists/speakers emphasized the importance of fostering meaningful relationships with Pillar Nonprofit Network and Innovation Works as it allows the creation of safe spaces for heavy discussions. Most panelists/speakers noted positive encounters with the team during the planning stages of the Be Inclusive Series and final execution of their panel/session. One individual stated that team members “did everything they could to make [me] comfortable” and another agreed that they “went above and beyond”.

While moderators noted less engagement with Pillar's team members, they appreciated being consulted prior to their panel for content and publicity creation.

Format of Panels/Speakers

All panelists/speakers agreed that the overall outcome of the Be Inclusive Series was a success. When asked to further comment, one panelist stated “I do not think there could have been any other way to do it better”. Panelists/speakers believed that team members, particularly

the Education and Events Manager, attempted to create authentic conversations with each panelist/speaker in the early stages and asked key questions in order to understand potential content. Panelists/speakers appreciated that each format of the panel/session was designed according to the needs of their communities

Some panels/sessions were framed as open discussions and panelists/speakers enjoyed having opportunities of contributing with their lived experiences whenever they chose to do so. Other panels/sessions adopted a fixed format where panelists/speakers were allocated their own period of time and expressed their thoughts during that time. While most panelists/speakers found the former option to be more logical and natural, others noted that the latter was most efficient because it provided each panelist/speaker with adequate sharing time.

Panelists/speakers appreciated the fact that all questions posed were open ended which generated informative, honest, and thoughtfully composed answers. One panelist expressed that some replies did not correspond to initial questions, and moderators were quickly to redirect panelists towards meaningful conversation. However, all answers were meaningful and addressed diverse lived experiences.

Despite the fact that some questions were previously created and shared amongst panelists, moderators emphasized that the outcomes of panels were entirely improvised since there were no fixed scripts. They noted that the format of panels felt natural and appreciated discussing logistics with the panelists prior to commencing.

Physical Space of Innovation Works

The physical space of each panel/session was organized according to the individualized needs of its panelists/speakers Accordingly, some panelists preferred sitting on the stage while

others felt more comfortable being at the same level as audience members. Moderators recognized that the informal set-up was beneficial to reduce anxiety and discomfort experienced by the panelists.

Creation of Safe Space

Some moderators noted that the creation of a safe space was commenced prior to the panels/sessions, by holding a meeting to discuss potential topics that each panelist/speaker hoped to address with the audience.

Panelists/speakers recognized the importance of holding the Be Inclusive Series in a location that is already considered a safe space. They noted that safe spaces are essential to generate authentic conversations and to provide positive sharing opportunities. Innovation Works was thus perceived as the best option for the crucial discussions derived from this series because this space perpetuates an atmosphere that is rare in London. The space was compared with contemporary society -- “the outside world” -- and Innovation Works provides a feeling of safety that is often absent in today’s society. Panelists/speakers described the space of Innovation Works as reinforcing the existence and legitimacy of the Be Inclusive Series. The space also empowered the panelists/speakers to share their lived experiences and stories of struggles.

Some panelists/speakers felt safe because Innovation Works is a renowned space within the greater community of London. The sentiment of safety was furthered for panelists/speakers because each community represented in the series -- the Black community, disability community, Indigenous community, and trans community -- were offered their own space to share lived experiences and their stories of struggles were not homogeneous.

Moderators also recognized their role in creating a safe space. They shared that this role was easiest when they themselves also have some lived experience that could be connected with the topics addressed within their moderated panel. Some moderators indicated the importance of feeling comfortable with both panel facilitation and the addressed topics.

Engagements Between Moderators and Panelists

Panelists appreciated the presence of moderators prior and subsequently to the panel, and attributed them the success of panels. Moderators were indispensable in shaping questions in such a way that they reflect the lived experiences of each panelist. Most moderators and their panelists created the content for panels simultaneously. They met beforehand and discussed ways in which panels could address lived experiences and stories of struggles while debunking preconceptions and societal myths. Moderators asked panelists what they wanted to share throughout their panels and edited questions accordingly. One moderator was not involved in question creation because they did not want to take the space of panelists, but believed they were nevertheless part of the overall process since they facilitated the conversation. Additionally, moderators remained mindful of the audience's comprehension and ensured that responses from panelists were formulated in accessible language.

Moderators regarded their role as being an available support to panelists if necessary. Relationships between moderators and panelists were forged prior to the panels. Most moderators reached out early to panelists and offered their intent for the panel as well as opportunities to co-create questions (only if they wished to be part of that process). Additionally, they wanted to ensure that they knew panelists' lived experiences and stories of struggles in order to generate a framework of questions that would be pertinent to each panelist.

Benefits of Panels

Many benefits derived from executing the Be Inclusive Series. Panels/sessions were overall perceived as ways to educate audience members and advocate for individualized needs of community members. They were also utilized as a means to amplify voices that are often silenced in contemporary members and generated different types of discussions. Panels/sessions were viewed as outlets for panelists/speakers to speak their own truth. Both moderators and panelists/speakers expressed that some individuals are often denied such opportunities because they are perceived through assumptions as not capable of holding influential discussions. Panelists/speakers appreciated that each panel/session was comprised from various lived experiences and stories of struggles within specific communities. They thus believed this content contributed to the audience's understanding pertaining to their communities and dismantling preconceived assumptions.

Panelists/speakers noted several benefits experienced through their participation in the Be Inclusive Series. Reflecting on their experience, one panelist expressed they “felt heard, understood, and so good”. Some panelists/speakers gained more self-confidence from their participation on the panel/session and wish to receive more sharing opportunities in the future. They experienced satisfaction in knowing that their shared lived experiences and stories of struggles may have shifted perspectives for audience members and other panelists/speakers. Moderators noticed that panelists/speakers felt empowered to participate in the conversations. Most panelists/speakers viewed themselves in a helping role, which further empowered them to actively participate throughout the panel/session. They believed that their engagements amongst each other allowed them to dismantle societal assumptions. They received positive feedback

when engaging with audience members and this solidified the fact that their voices are indispensable to the growth of diversity and inclusion practices in society. One panelist mentioned that they inspired other individuals from their own community to participate in similar conversations. Additionally, panelists/speakers enjoyed meeting like-minded individuals and fostering relationships with their colleagues.

Moderators believed that the Be Inclusive Series was positively utilized to humanize lived experiences and stories of struggles that are not always portrayed in contemporary society. One moderator stated: “panels are such a beautiful way for sharing lived experiences and provide opportunities for community members to humanize stories of struggles”. Panelists discussed tangible actions that could be achieved in order to instill change within the greater London community. All moderators and panelists believed part of the success for the Be Inclusive Series could be attributed to the absence of shaming others and calling out. Rather, panelists provided the audience meaningful steps that they could take to promote diversity and inclusion within their own community.

Recommendations

Engaging with Team Members at Pillar Nonprofit Network

Moderators and panelists/speakers acknowledged that a relationship with team members at Pillar Nonprofit Network must be established prior to the panels/session. All parties involved must engage with one another throughout the entire process -- from the planning stages to the execution of each panel/session. Additionally, moderators and panelists/speakers suggested that the same level of briefing be available to them. They appreciated the details that were relayed, and found it beneficial to be kept informed. Although debriefing opportunities were not

provided, moderators and panelists/speakers alike did not believe further subsequent discussions were required. One moderator added that space should be created during Pillar's team meetings to discuss learned knowledge and work through feelings.

Format of Panels

Moderators suggested that opportunities should be offered to do a trial of each panel, which would further the notion of safe space for panelists/speaker.

Moderators noted that panelists/speakers should always be offered the opportunity to introduce themselves. One moderator believed that bios were less important, and expressed the fact that some panelists experienced anxiety when asked to create their own bios. Panelists wished that time during the panel was distributed evenly among all individuals. Panelists situated at the end kept their answers succinct because they were impacted by time constraints. As such, they provided brief overviews of lived experiences and stories of struggles despite wanting to dive deeper in conversations.

Moderators suggested that future moderation should be performed by individuals who are already involved in communities that are addressed within each panel/session. This is key for commentary purposes, because moderators should have the knowledge to connect individualized responses with the bigger topic that is being addressed in each panel/sessions. The already established connection would also allow moderators to shape panels/sessions according to the individualized needs of that distinct community.

Most audience members appreciated the format of all panels/sessions. Despite this, some individuals were interested in hearing a formal presentation on the topic before having a

discussion period among the panelists/speakers. One individual noted that politics of radical change should be integrated within these presentations.

Physical Space of Innovation Works

Moderators and panelists/speakers noted that physical space must be meaningfully set-up for the comfort of both audience and panelists/speakers. Some panelists/speakers suggested they should be situated on a stage, because this provides the opportunity to feel elevated and in a unique position. Contrastingly, moderators believed they should be at the same level as the audience because they were simply facilitating the discussion.

Moderators noted that microphones should be made available for each panelist/speaker, allowing the possibility of interaction amongst one another.

Engagements Between Moderators and Panelists

Moderators suggested that a meeting be held with the panelists/speakers and discuss how the panel/session will be conducted. They also expressed the fact that further briefing for panelists/speaker is required, especially in terms of envisioning tangible ways to implement change within the greater community and how to meaningfully relay this information to audience members.

Next Steps

All panelists/speakers and moderators agreed that the Be Inclusive Series should remain part of Pillar's annual programming. They believed that future content and format of future series should be similar to subsequent ones. Folks with lived experiences and stories of struggles must be consulted and readily involved in the implementation and execution of their panel/session, including set-up of the physical space. Assumptions dismantling and education

efforts pertaining to lived experiences and stories of struggles must be continuous.

Panelists/speakers mentioned that question creation should be centred on information and stories that they want to convey pertaining to their own lived experiences. Moderators noted that Pillar Nonprofit Network must be strategic in selecting future moderators because not all individuals are apt and/or comfortable in generating connections between what is being conveyed by panelists/speakers and how it relates to the greater society.

One moderator questioned Pillar's role in the implementation and execution of this series because, in their opinion, it is not evident for the greater society. They stated that Pillar should provide support to various organizations in terms of logistics and resources in order to elevate their efforts instead of being at the centre of this series. Community organizations who are in close proximity with marginalized communities should be showcased and made visible by Pillar Nonprofit Network.

Most audience members agreed that they would attend another Be Inclusive Series, because it fosters an inclusive space. One individual suggested that future panels/sessions address politics of radical social change and intersectionality in more evident ways, and noted that Pillar Nonprofit Network should seek panelists/speakers and speakers who can challenge the status quo. Another stated that it may be beneficial to distribute community resources that are related to topics discussed by the panelists/speakers. Audience members also suggested that they should be offered the opportunity to submit questions for the panelists/speakers prior to each panel/session.