

Be Inclusive Series Report 2019

Introduction

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

Background

The Be Inclusive Series was created in the spring of 2018 when Pillar Nonprofit Network staff considered ways to further amplify the voices of individuals with lived experience and share their stories to shed light on the barriers to inclusion felt within the greater community of London. This series was launched in the summer of 2018 with four featured topics, including ableism and homophobia. It was then decided that a second cycle of the Be Inclusive Series would be held in the winter of 2019. Five sessions were offered from January through April: Transforming Community: Understanding the Diverse Lives of London's Trans Folk; Multigeneration Black Community Panel; Indigenous Sharing Circle; Understanding the Realities for People with Developmental Disabilities; and Naloxone Training and Information Session. Subsequently, the Network and Education staff team was elected to evaluate the efficacy and impact of the series in order to inform next steps. Team members also sought to engage audience members, panelists/speakers, and moderators in a conversation about the series.

Methodology

This research project was conducted in three distinct parts.

Firstly, an online survey was distributed to attendees of one or multiple sessions. This survey was comprised of twelve open-ended questions. Twenty-five audience members participated in

the survey, but not every question was answered by all individuals. The questions were as follows:

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, all thirteen panelists/speakers who had participated in the series were invited to share feedback through face-to-face interviews. Seven interviews were conducted and seven questions were asked of each panelist/speaker. The questions were as follows:

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 invited to participate in interviews. Three of the four moderators elected to do so, and were asked the 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?

Responses

Audience Members

Sessions Attended

Of the 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 sessions for various reasons. A few individuals were involved in the organization of specific sessions and wished to attend others as well. Most audience members

either expressed an interest in the particular panels and session topics or wished to broaden their knowledge pertaining to general practices of diversity and inclusion. Some individuals wanted to gain some tools that would assist them in creating inclusive dialogues and spaces in work environments. Most audience members recognized their privileged positions in their daily lives and attended sessions to gain more resources in regard to allyship.

Additionally, many individuals considered these sessions to be a means to engage with people from various communities. They wanted to 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 recipients, 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 understanding 4% (one individual) indicated that they did not learn anything new, and 8% (two individuals) were unsure.

Most audience members stated that they gained knowledge in each session that they attended; they better understood the realities of diverse communities and their histories, as well as their own gaps in knowledge. Some audience members better understood the challenges and barriers imposed upon individuals from specific backgrounds and, as a result, gained a better

understanding of their lived experiences. They also learned proper terms and the ways that common language can isolate communities.

Audience members acquired new ways of sharing information pertaining to diversity and inclusion practices throughout their respective communities. Some individuals indicated that they would subsequently observe issues with a new lens, such as “the Indigenous lens.” They appreciated the tools offered by panelists to help them engage and seek out collaborative opportunities with 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 to promote 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 insights to help them become better allies. Lessons included: being mindful of the language they use, demonstrating active listening skills, having more compassion

and empathy for others, and seeking deeper connections with individuals.

Format of Sessions

Out of twenty-four respondents,

- Individuals gave the panels/speakers a rating of 9.7 out of 10
 - 2 individuals (8.3%) rated 8 out of 10
 - 2 individuals (8.3%) rated 9 out of 10
 - 20 individuals (83.3%) rated 10 out of 10
- Individuals gave the informal conversations a rating of 9 out of 10
 - 1 individual (4.2%) rated 3 out of 10
 - 1 individual (4.2%) rated 5 out of 10
 - 1 individual (4.2%) rated 6 out of 10
 - 1 individual (4.2%) rated 8 out of 10
 - 5 individuals (20.8%) rated 9 out of 10
 - 15 individuals (62.6%) rated 10 out of 10
- Individuals gave the structure (i.e. lunch hour conversations) a rating of 8.5 out of 10
 - 1 individual (4.2%) rated 1 out of 10
 - 1 individual (4.2%) rated 3 out of 10
 - 2 individuals (8.3%) rated 5 out of 10
 - 2 individuals (8.3%) rated 7 out of 10
 - 2 individuals (8.3%) rated 8 out of 10

- 1 individual (4.2%) rated 9 out of 10
- 15 individuals (62.6%) rated 10 out of 10

While a few individuals noted that they appreciated the format of the sessions they attended, most audience members provided suggestions to improve future sessions. Some individuals appreciated when panelists were seated in a circle and felt that all panels should be organized in such a way. A few audience members recommended that more tangible takeaways be offered in every session. Additionally, individuals suggested that the timeframe of each panel or talk should be more restricted in order to allow time for networking and for opportunities to speak directly to the panelists/speakers; alternatively, they suggested Pillar should increase the length of the overall session. Some audience members also recommended setting aside time 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 or not they would pay, 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 less; 6 indicated that \$10 would be a reasonable fee, and 1 person noted that they would be willing to pay any amount under \$20.

Suggestions for Future Topics

- Addressing hypocrisy (e.g. talking about inclusion, yet maintaining an exclusive audience)
- Exploring employment challenges
- Addressing spaces that are not inclusive to different communities
- Discussing political intolerance and prejudices
- Discussing resilience
- 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 the struggles of persons with various types of disability
- Understanding the intersection of mental health and LGBTQ2+ communities

Publicity of Sessions

Twenty-two respondents shared how they found out about the Be Inclusive Series.

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

- 1 individual (4.6%) through Eventbrite

Panelists/Speakers

Engaging with Team Members at Pillar Nonprofit Network

All panelists/speakers emphasized the importance of fostering meaningful relationships with Pillar Nonprofit Network and Innovation Works, as this allows for the creation of safe spaces for heavy discussions. Most panelists/speakers noted they had positive encounters with the team during the planning stages of the Be Inclusive Series and in the 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 they experienced less engagement with Pillar’s team members, they appreciated being consulted prior to their event to help develop messaging for publicity purposes.

Format of Panels/Speakers

All panelists/speakers agreed that the overall outcome of the Be Inclusive Series was a success. When asked to comment further, 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 the content of

the conversations. 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 to share their lived experiences whenever they chose to do so. Other panels/sessions adopted a fixed format where each panelist/speaker expressed their thoughts during their allocated time. While most panelists/speakers found the former option to be a more logical and natural fit for the discussions, others noted that the latter was most efficient because it provided each panelist/speaker with adequate time to share.

Panelists/speakers appreciated that all questions posed were open-ended, which generated informative, honest, and thoughtful answers. One panelist expressed that some replies did not correspond to the initial question and moderators were quick to redirect panelists toward productive conversation. However, all answers were meaningful and addressed diverse lived experiences.

Even though some questions were shared with panelists prior to the discussion, moderators asserted that the outcomes were entirely improvised since there were no fixed scripts. They noted that the format of the panels felt natural and appreciated discussing logistics with the panelists before commencing.

Physical Space of Innovation Works

The physical space of each panel/session was organized according to the individual needs and preferences of its panelists/speakers. Accordingly, some panelists sat on the stage while others felt more comfortable at the same level as audience members. Moderators recognized that the informal setup was conducive to reducing anxiety and discomfort experienced by the panelists.

Creation of Safe Space

Some moderators noted that the creation of a safe space commenced prior to the panels/sessions, with a meeting held 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 provide positive sharing opportunities. Innovation Works was thus perceived to be the best location for the crucial discussions that derived from this series because this space cultivates an atmosphere that is rare in London. The space was perceived to be insulated from “the outside world,” with Innovation Works providing a feeling of safety that is often absent in today’s society. Accordingly, panelists/speakers felt empowered to share their lived experiences and stories of struggles due in part to the location. Further, panelists/speakers described the space of Innovation Works as one that reinforced the existence and legitimacy of the Be Inclusive Series.

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

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

Engagements Between Moderators and Panelists

Panelists appreciated the presence of moderators before and after the panel discussion, and attributed the events' success to them. Moderators were indispensable, as they shaped questions to reflect the lived experiences of each panelist. Most moderators and panelists created the content for their panel simultaneously. They met beforehand and discussed ways in which the panel could address lived experiences and stories of struggles while debunking preconceptions and societal myths. Moderators asked panelists what they wanted to share in their panels and edited their 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 level and ensured that responses from panelists were formulated in accessible language.

Moderators regarded their role as being available to panelists for support if necessary.

Relationships between moderators and panelists were forged prior to the panels. Most moderators reached out early to panelists to share their intent for the panel and provide opportunities to co-create questions (for those who wished to be part of that process).

Additionally, they wanted to ensure that they were familiar with 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

Panels/sessions were predominantly perceived as avenues to educate audience members and advocate for the individualized needs of community members. They were also utilized as a means to amplify voices that are often silenced and, accordingly, generate different types of discussions. Panels/sessions were viewed as outlets for panelists/speakers to speak their own truth. Moderators and panelists/speakers expressed that certain individuals are often denied such opportunities because they are perceived to be incapable of conducting influential discussions.

Panelists/speakers appreciated that each panel/session was comprised of various lived experiences and stories of struggles within specific communities. They believed this content contributed to enhancing the audience's understanding of their communities and dismantling prejudiced assumptions.

Panelists/speakers noted several benefits of participating in the Be Inclusive Series. Reflecting on their experience, one panelist expressed that they “felt heard, understood, and so good.” Some panelists/speakers gained confidence from their participation on the panel/session and wished to engage in more sharing opportunities in the future. They experienced satisfaction in knowing that sharing their lived experiences and stories of struggles may have shifted perspectives for audience members and other panelists/speakers. Moderators noticed that panelists/speakers felt empowered by participating in the conversations. Most panelists/speakers viewed themselves as being in a helping role, which further empowered them to actively participate throughout the panel/session. They believed that their engagements with each other allowed them to address and invalidate harmful societal assumptions. They received positive feedback when they engaged with audience members, and this solidified the belief that their voices are indispensable to the adoption of diversity and inclusion practices in broader society. One panelist mentioned that they inspired other individuals from their 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 effective in humanizing the struggles of people who are not always portrayed in contemporary society, with one moderator stating “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 adopted in order to instill change within the greater London community. All moderators

and panelists believed part of the success of the Be Inclusive Series could be attributed to the absence of shaming others and calling out mistakes. Rather, panelists provided the audience with 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 expressed that a relationship with team members at Pillar Nonprofit Network must be established prior to each panel session. All parties involved must engage with each other throughout the process, from the planning stages to the execution of each panel/session. Additionally, moderators and panelists/speakers recommended that the same level of briefing be available to future participants. 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 subsequent discussions were required. One moderator added that space should be created during Pillar's team meetings to discuss lessons learned and work through feelings.

Format of Panels

Moderators suggested that opportunities should be offered to do a trial run of each panel, which would help establish a safe space for panelists/speakers.

Moderators noted that panelists/speakers should always be offered the opportunity to introduce

themselves. One moderator believed that bios were less important, and disclosed that some panelists experienced anxiety when asked to create their own bios. Panelists wished that time was distributed evenly among all individuals during the panel. Panelists situated at the far end of the panel were required to keep their answers succinct because they were impacted by time constraints. They provided brief overviews of their lived experience and struggles despite wanting to dive deeper in the conversations.

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

Most audience members appreciated the format of all panels/sessions; however,, 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 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 for interaction amongst them.

Engagements Between Moderators and Panelists

Moderators recommended that a meeting be held with the panelists/speakers to discuss how the panel/session will be conducted. They also expressed that further briefing for panelists/speakers 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 the format and future content should be similar. People with lived experiences and stories of struggles must be consulted and involved in the implementation and execution of their panel/session, including set-up of the physical space. Education efforts to refute assumptions and share lived experiences and stories of struggles must be continuous. Panelists/speakers mentioned that questions should be crafted to focus on the information and stories they want to convey. Moderators noted that Pillar Nonprofit Network must be strategic in selecting future moderators because not all individuals are skilled and/or

comfortable 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, the benefit for the greater society is not evident. They stated that Pillar should provide support to various organizations, in terms of logistics and resources, to elevate their efforts instead of being at the centre of this series. Community organizations who are in close proximity to 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 should address the politics of radical social change and intersectionality in more evident ways, and noted that Pillar Nonprofit Network should seek panelists and speakers who can challenge the status quo. Another stated that it may be beneficial to distribute community resources that are related to the 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.