

**2020-2021**

**CALGARY FOUNDATION  
YOUTH COUNCIL**

**YEAR-END REPORT**



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# DIY SUMMER FUN INITIATIVE



In the summer of 2020, the Calgary Foundation's Youth Council continued its exploration of poverty in Calgary and reached out to organizations about growth areas. One of these areas was accessibility to resources, which worsened during the 2020 pandemic, closing many accessible summer programs for low-income families. In response, the Youth Council started a community project called DIY Summer Fun. Its primary purpose was to address the difficulties experienced by low-income families during the pandemic.

Members and volunteers created weekly themed activity kits focused on mental health, physical health, and the environment. The kits were designed to increase accessibility by distributing them through the Dashmesh Culture Club's Lunch Program.

**\$1500**

**RECEIVED IN GRANTS  
AND DONATIONS**

**300**

**KITS DELIVERED**

## **ENGAGEMENT NUMBERS**

**2**

**- COUNCIL MEMBERS**

**7**

**- YOUTH VOLUNTEERS**

# CHARITIES CONTACTED



## Picking a Topic

Early youth council meetings suggest students' increased interest in current issues. Stated issues included food security, volunteerism, mental health, cultural art, and racial equity. Ultimately, members chose to focus on mental health for 2021-2022. Based on discussions and notes, the primary reason for this choice is attributed to youth being significant stakeholders in mental health conversations and the aftermath of a pandemic that substantially reduced mental wellbeing.

**The Calgary Foundation Youth Council's interest in mental health resulted in an accentuated focus on mental health-associated organizations that recognized the intersection between mental health and racial justice. Members discussed the following organizations, met with representatives, and deliberated their approach to mental health.**

### 01. TRELLIS SOCIETY

In January 2021, the Youth Council met with Trellis representative Christy Morgan, who dedicates her time supporting Indigenous programs.

### 02. ETHIOCARE & ALBERTA HEALTH SERVICES

In February 2021, the Youth Council met with Ethiocare representative Bekele Hankebo and clinical psychologist Weghata Burhane. Both invited discussions around the cultural barriers to accessing mental health services.

### 03. SANKOFA

In March 2021, council members met with Sankofa representative Marian Ashton and learned about how the organization builds the confidence of Black Calgarian Youth by fostering a safe space in which youth can explore cultural music and socialize with their peers.

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## 04. THE COLOUR FACTOR

In March 2021, council members sat with Color Factor Co-founders Nitu Purna, Iftu Hargaaya and Priscilla Cherry. These community leaders implement wellness/traditional healing practices to “help close the gap in the mental health care system” for BIPOC Calgarians.

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## 05. ANTIX COMMUNITY ARTS

In April 2021, the Youth Council met with Antyx Community Arts' artist in residence, Bryan Francisco, who uses community arts to encourage youth to become more engaged in their community.

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## 06. THE IMMIGRANT EDUCATION SOCIETY

In April 2021, the youth council met with Ronni Abraham, the Immigrant Education Society's representative. She discussed the organization's new Healthy Minds Initiative, which aims at providing mindfulness workshops and counseling services.

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**CHARITIES CONTACTED**  
**7**

**CHARITY VOTED MOST IMPACTFUL:**  
**TRELLIS SOCIETY**



# RACIAL

# EQUITY

# MEETING

In May of 2021, self-elected members engaged in the Calgary Foundation's Racial Equity Audit. Participants discussed the inequalities present within the Calgary Foundation's practices by meeting with auditors Djaka Balis-Amare and Tim Fox. The Youth Council's involvement supported the Calgary Foundation's goal of building more equitable structures.

A graphic on the right side of the page featuring the text "Racial Equity" in a large, bold, sans-serif font, with "Calgary Foundation Audit" in a smaller font below it. The background includes abstract grey shapes and a faint, large, stylized letter 'X'.

## **ENGAGEMENT NUMBERS**

# 4 YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBERS

# REFLECTIONS - MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT IN CALGARY

The following is a summary of the conversations that occurred as a result of meeting with different organizations. Through the Youth Council's meetings with various non-profits, members were able to identify a series of overarching themes.

## **Cultural Relevance**

01

- Families are more comfortable creating dialogue with individuals who understand their culture or share similar life experiences.
- Cultural healing components are an important element of mental well-being.
- Using a trauma-informed lens is important.

## **Lack of Trust**

02

- Many marginalized immigrant populations fear that seeking mental health support will impact their families' status in Canada.
- Trust can be created by reaching out to community leaders and talking to influencers (e.g., church leaders).
- Racialized youth fear accessing mental health services because they fear being further harmed.

## **Stigma**

03

- Language/terminology used in western culture and the healthcare field does not always translate well, leading to the exacerbation of stigma and refusal of support.
- Mental health practitioners can mitigate this by focusing on the symptoms instead of the diagnosis. By reframing their approach, practitioners invite more efficient discussions.
- Generational gaps worsen the stigma around mental health.

## **Funding**

04

- Funders fail to recognize the importance of trust during the accessibility of mental health services. This leads them to bypass grassroots organizations in favor of larger ones.
- Some non-profits feel that mainstream organizations that are just now beginning to advocate for BIPOC rights compete for the same funding as those who have been working in the community for a longer time, thereby creating unfair competition.
- Grassroots organizations are often at a disadvantage when applying for funding as many have limited staff and resources.

## **Supporting Wellness and Systematic Challenges**

05

- Indigenous people are often asked to heal themselves, their families, support others in healing, and support organizations all simultaneously.
- Racialized youth lack access to arts, sports, and other activities to connect/build confidence/express themselves – because of cost, issues of belonging, and representation amongst leadership/teachers/coaches.

# SUGGESTIONS FOR 2021-2022

Following the conclusion of the Youth Council's work this year, members suggested several alterations to ensure the Youth Council's continued involvement in Calgary Foundation's non-profit work. The following is a list of approaches that were proposed.

## Organized & Methodological Approach



**GOAL:** This approach is designed to increase member involvement and engagement.

- Host an initial meeting at the start of every year to discuss specific roles for the members (notetaker, meeting host, outreach member to make connections with other youth groups) and goals/actions for that year.
- Book all meetings at the beginning of the year.

## Dual Approach



**GOAL:** This approach is designed to make the youth council more accommodating for members while also making it more appealing to members who wish to work towards more definite products/end goals.

- Separate the Youth Council's work into learning and action. A portion of the year will be allotted to initiating change through projects, while the rest of the year is used to learn about different organizations/non-profits. The idea is that the latter can inspire the former.
- Create a balance between group discussions/reflections and conversations with charities.
- Create a balance between in-person opportunities and virtual meetings to maximize member participation.

## Increased Involvement Approach



**GOAL:** This approach is designed to increase and better assess the youth council's influence on Calgary Foundation's work.

- Members are allotted the opportunity to make grants through a collective process at the end of the year.
- Collect reflection videos from each group session. These can be used for the curation of a year-end report that can better inform Calgary Foundation's non-profit work.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**Thank you to the youth and the Calgary Foundation staff who worked tirelessly on the projects mentioned within this report. We thank them for their continued support.**

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## **Contact:**

The Calgary Foundation  
<https://calgaryfoundation.org>



@CalgFoundation