

The Service Access Needs of Racialized and Indigenous Communities

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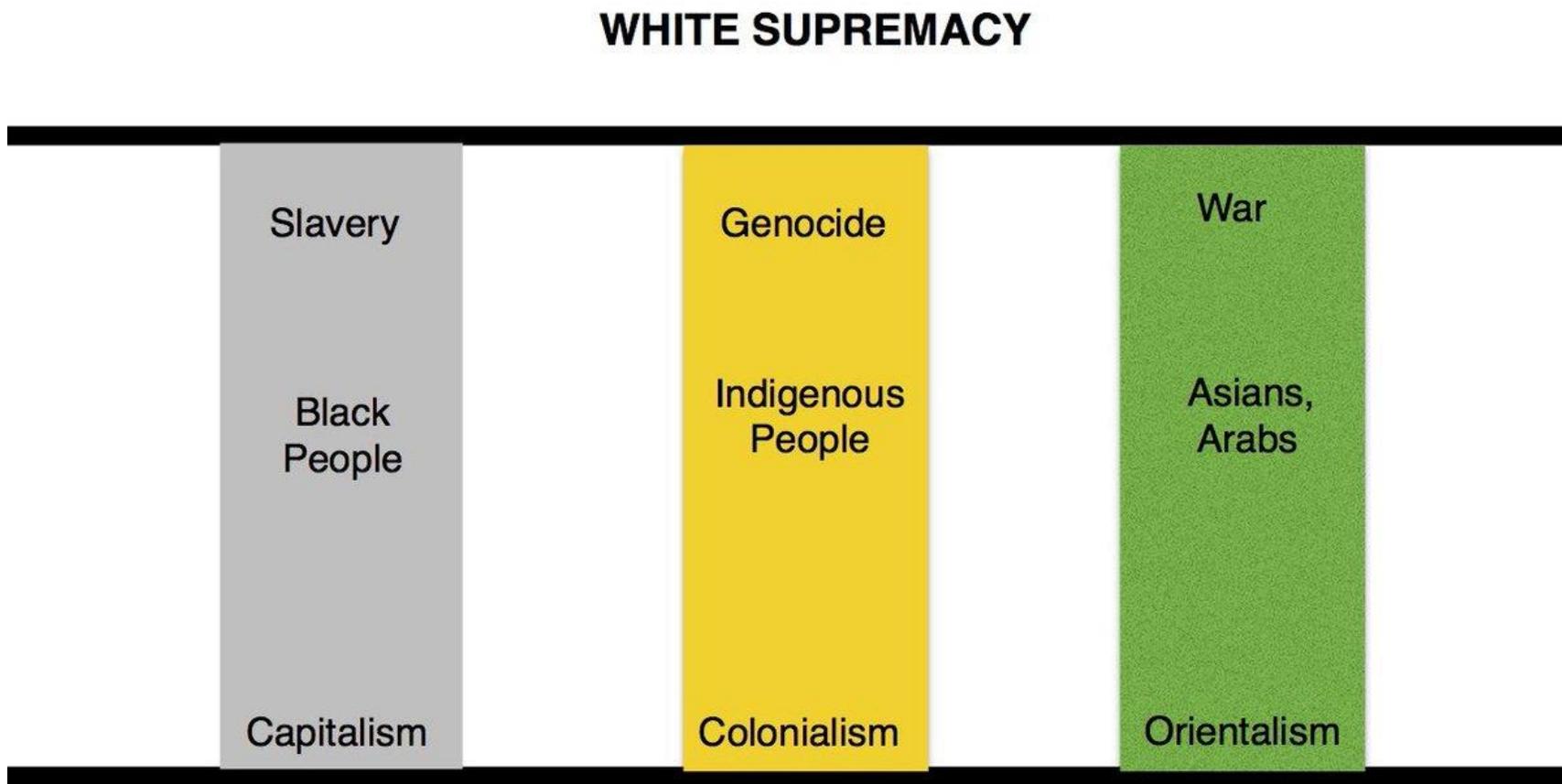
Why acknowledging
where we are is
important to doing the
work...



Important Distinction

- **Equity-Seeking/Equity-deserving:** are those that identify barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination and actively seek social justice and reparations (CanadaCouncil.ca).
- **Sovereignty-seeking:** Indigenous communities are sovereign nations whose history on these territories dates back to a time before the formation of the Canadian nation-state and the establishment of white-settler societies. As such, the Canadian government has different legal and treaty obligations to the first peoples of these territories.

The Three Pillars of White Supremacy



Ciann L. Wilson



Background:

BSc – University of Toronto

MES – York University

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Areas of Research Interest:

- Community and Arts-based Research
- Health Intervention Research
- Health, Education, and Social Service Access
- Critical Race, Intersectionality, and Anti-Colonial Theories
- Intersectionally marginalized communities



Principles of CBR

1. Community Driven
2. Community Relevance
3. Equitable Partnerships & Collaboration
4. Capacity Building
5. Attending to Process
6. Multiple Forms of Knowledge
7. Action Outcomes

The Tale of Two Projects

- **The Proclaiming Our Roots Project** - with mixed Indigenous-Black Communities across Canada
- **The Muslimah Project** – with Muslim Women in Waterloo Region

Setting the Context

- Ontario is home to 40% of Canada's population and is the most ethno-racially diverse province in the country, with nearly 26% of the population identifying as visible minorities, and another 2.4% identifying as Indigenous (World Population Review, 2019).
- It is projected that the population of Ontario will grow by 30.2% in the next 24 years, due in large part to international migration (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2019).
- The comparatively poor health and wellbeing outcomes among Indigenous and Black communities in Ontario is well documented (Rodney & Copeland, 2009; Veenstra & Patterson, 2015).

What we know about non-profits...

- An American report demonstrated that over 80% of non-profits are White-led (i.e. led by White Executive Directors and predominantly White staff) (Tomkin, 2020).
- In sectors where the salaries of staff have been disclosed such as in the HIV sector in Ontario, a roughly \$25,000 gap was noted on average between White staff and those who are Black, Indigenous, or racialized (Cameron and Wilson, 2018).
- The majority of “disadvantaged communities” are predominantly lower-income Black and Brown citizens, who have limited social capital and financial security (Tomkin, 2020).
- Racialized and Indigenous communities have expressed a dire need for social services offered by non-profits. As such, they represent a large client base for non-profits (Tomkin, 2020; Wilson, 2020).

The Pandemic of Racism, white supremacy and saviourism

- “The excuse that change takes time is bogus, and we can look to white organizations’ responses to the pandemic to prove this. A wave of flexibility, creativity and innovation happened overnight as people started to work from home. Protocol and procedures that dragged before were suddenly expedited...Funds and budgets that were deemed complicated before, became accessible in crisis. Ideas that staff of color had been expressing for centuries were magically back on the table for consideration. This shows that when there is a sense of urgency or pressure, non profits can move mountains to keep themselves afloat...Clearly, racism and white supremacy as our most constant pandemic is simply not a priority,” (Tomkin, 2020).



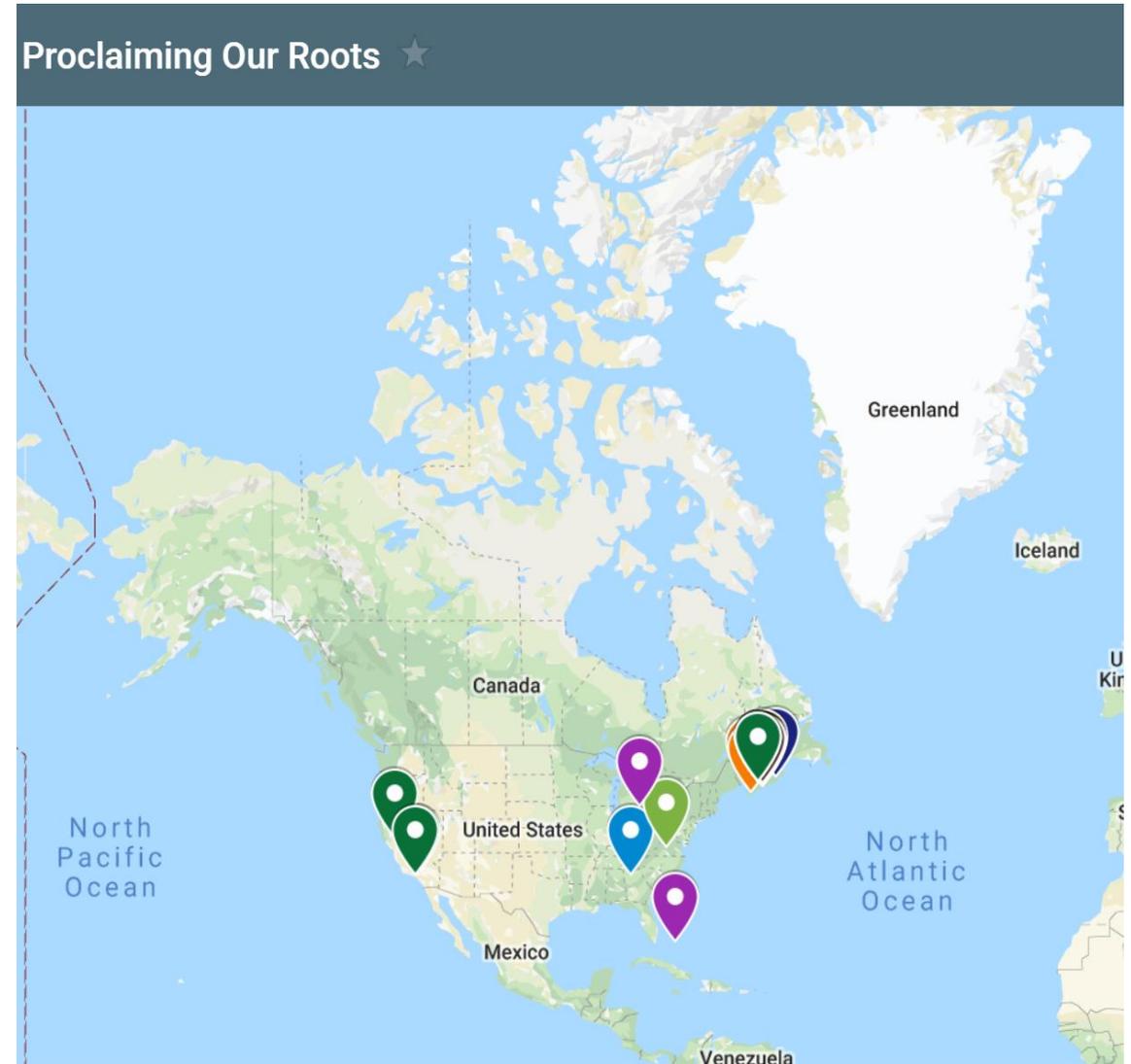
The Proclaiming Our Roots Project

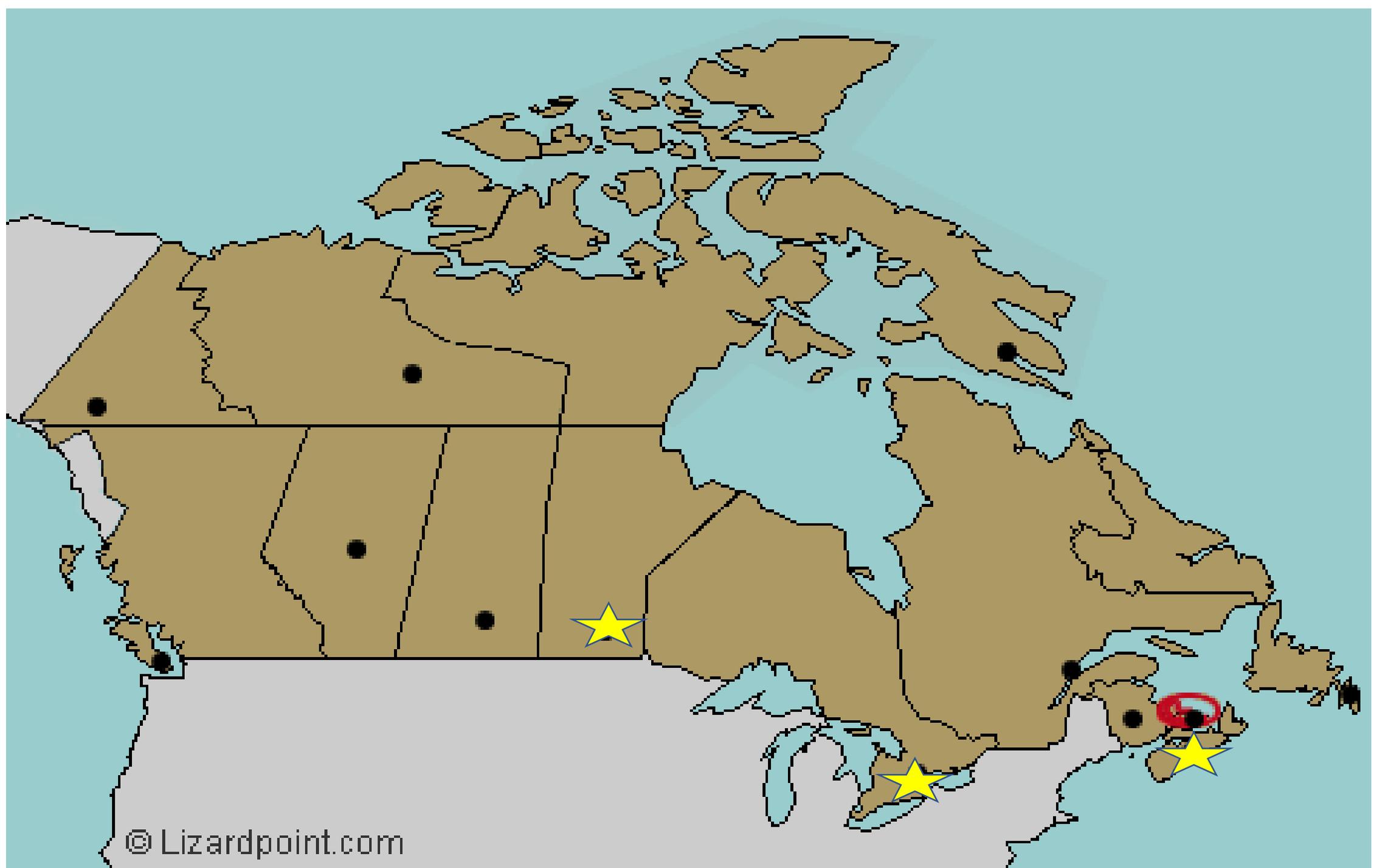
- 1) Gain an understanding of the forms of violence and erasure faced by people of Mixed African and Indigenous ancestry, and how this relates to their service access in Toronto and Halifax
- 2) Situate their lived experiences in national discussions about truth and reconciliation and imagine new models for support
- 3) Create a written, visual and narrative website archive of the histories, realities, and geographies of people of both African diasporic and Indigenous ancestry in Canada

*This project was funded by SSHRC

Methods Employed

- **Digital storytelling** (personal videos of experience layering text, image, voice, sound, etc.)
- **Community mapping**
- **Individual semi-structured interviews**
- **Group dialogue**





What did we learn?

We use **Thematic Analysis** to look at interview and workshop group discussion data.

We identified the **Main Themes** that arose from this data.

Results on the service needs of Indigenous-Black People's

Participants acknowledged the distrust they feel when their service provider does not seem like they understand their lived realities or belong to their communities.

“So, there was a mistrust and I feel that it’s rightfully so.... There was nobody that looked like us, so how was I going to open to you when I don’t think you share my values, my understanding.” Hfx RS

The distrust participants felt was elevated in instances where the larger institution had a long history of colonial violence towards their communities that cost Indigenous peoples their lives (i.e. hospitals, schools, or specific non-profits or initiatives).

Results on the service needs of Indigenous-Black People's

- Participants identified a need for services that addressed the intersectional issues they were facing e.g. anti-Black racism, Indigenous erasure, intergenerational trauma, poverty, mental health, etc. One-issue organizations are inadequate for their complex needs.
- Participants were especially frustrated by feeling that because they were Black-passing or did not have a colonially-entrenched status card, they were not welcome to programs and services targeted at Indigenous communities. They felt they were forced to choose one aspect of their identities.
- Black and Indigenous communities report receiving a lower quality of services from providers.

The Muslimah Project

- ❖ Center Muslim women's voices in the community
- ❖ Explore the impacts of discrimination on Muslim women's sense of belonging, wellbeing, and mental health
- ❖ Create space for Muslim women to come together to share experiences and identify community strengths

What did we do?

Throughout November and December (of 2018) we conducted **five focus groups**.

In total, we spoke with **55 Muslim women** who lived in either Kitchener (31%), Cambridge (34.5%), or Waterloo (32.8%).

We were able to hear from women from many different countries, including India, Pakistan, Iran, Lebanon, Somalia, Eritrea, Jordan, Syria, Turkey and ranged in age from **16 to 57 years old**.

What did we ask about?

- ❖ Experiences of Discrimination

When you think of the word discrimination, what comes to mind?

- ❖ Impacts of Discrimination

Belonging

What impacts, if any, has discrimination had on you?

Mental Health

What are the strengths that you harness when facing discrimination?

Wellbeing

- ❖ Community Strengths

How might local services improve to better meet the needs of Muslim women?

- ❖ Community Needs

What did we learn?

We use **Thematic Analysis** to look at all focus group conversations.

We identified the **Main Themes** that arose during focus groups.

We organized these themes in order to provide **Key Findings.**

Results on the service needs of Muslim Communities

- Participants did not feel that service providers reflected the communities they served, which indicated that racialized people were not being hired.
- Participants expressed a desire for Muslim-centered spaces to gather and receive social supports, as well as a need for service providers who understood the need, as well as the cultural taboo around mental health.
- There were not many Muslim-friendly spaces available for recreational use – be that parks, gyms, service providers, etc.

Results on the service needs of Muslim Communities

Participants reported feeling very scared and intimidated by the Canadian systems when it came to their children, for fear that disciplining their children would result in child welfare involvement.

“...a lot of Muslim families tend to fear Family and Children Services or they come into Canada thinking that I can't even tell my child off or do anything because I will lose my child...there's this big fear towards losing your child or having your child call the police or...getting in trouble with the law and you know having to be sent back home or something like that,” (FG2).

Results on the service needs of Muslim Communities

Participants felt it important for service providers to provide Muslim communities, and especially newcomers, of their rights in Canada so they are better equipped and empowered to protect themselves and navigate systems.

“We need to be able to have more programs that work around helping Muslim women understand...the Charter of Rights. So, what do my rights as a Canadian citizen include? And, most people would not know that. Or the fact that most of the, 99% of information in Canada is available online and you can access anything and all, you know, property, rents, and whatever else you can get or all of your rights available to you.”

How Black, Indigenous and Racialized Communities Survive

- Racialized and Indigenous peoples often have to “block-out” the racism and microaggressions they face when seeking services in order to continue to engage with these spaces (POR).
- These communities led a lot of unpaid work educating the broader public and providers in order to combat discrimination and racism, as well as so others understand their religious and spiritual needs (Muslimah).
- They often have to figure out how to navigate systems for themselves and through their social networks in order to get what they need.

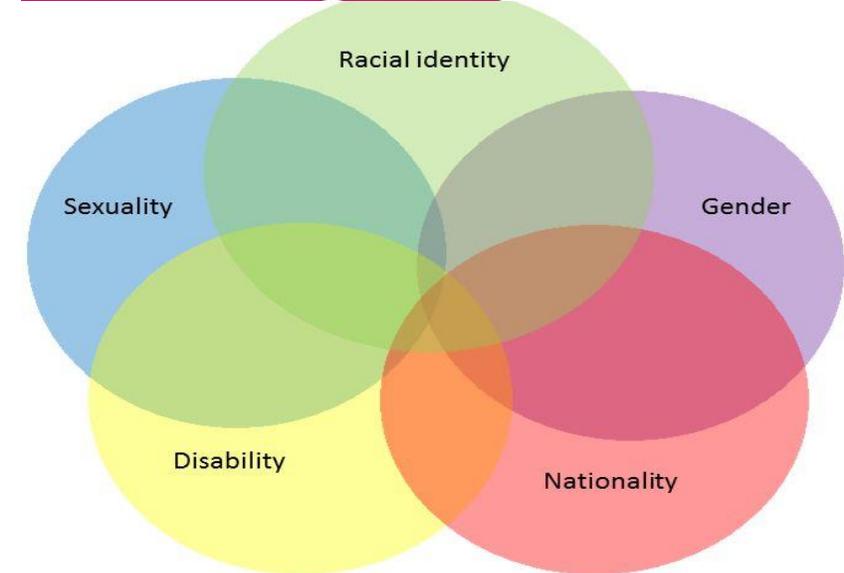
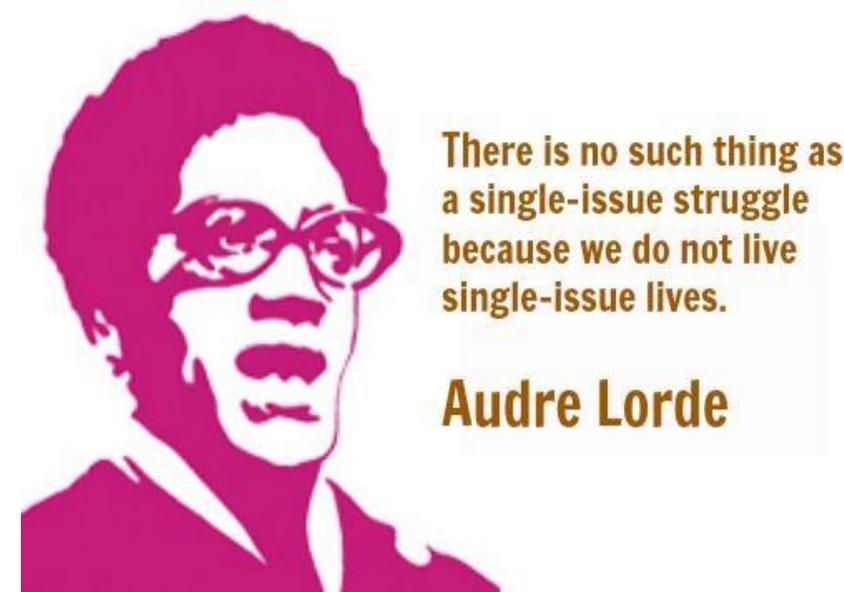
How Black, Indigenous and Racialized Communities Survive

- One strategy identified was intentionally seeking services from multiple providers simultaneously so they had access to all the information and resources they felt they needed or were missing when accessing only one provider (POR).
- There was an identified need for culturally relevant services and resources offered by diverse service providers who understand family and community dynamics and needs.
- Participants identified making use of Indigenous spirituality and alternative practices as a form of resistance, health and wellbeing against Western systems (POR). This includes forming their own groups, networks, mutual aid supports, etc.

The Intersectional Nature of the Issues

Formulated by African American legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989

Intersectionality or intersectional oppression: a concept (and political movement) that highlights the way oppressive institutions such as racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, classism, etc. are interconnected



What providers must do...

- Listen, learn, read, do the work, and make room for communities by moving over and making resources available for community needs.
- Step aside, decenter yourself.
- Support racialized and Indigenous staff, especially those whose ideas challenge you or make you uncomfortable. Chances are, these are the folks on the pulse of the issues at hand.
- Hire, promote, and equitably pay Black, Indigenous, and racialized staff. Mentor and encourage these staff to take on leadership positions.
- Support racialized and Indigenous programs and organizations to apply for grants they are best suited for (e.g. trustee relationship).
- Put resources and \$\$\$ into underserved communities.

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