



**MOSAIC's NuYu Popular Theatre Project:
Evaluation Report, June 2013**

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Overview

MOSAIC's NuYu Popular Theatre Project is a program for immigrant and refugee youth, ages 14 to 19 years. The Popular Theatre model uses participatory theatre for participants to explore their life experiences, find possible solutions to challenges, and connect with one another. The NuYu program involves games, discussions about settlement and other experiences, and participants co-creating interactive theatre scenes to address situations and challenges they have experienced.

The goals of the NuYu program are for youth participants to develop a greater sense of empowerment and self-confidence by sharing their stories with others and having their voices heard; to increase their peer support and social networks; to enhance their sense of community connectedness; and to contribute to improvements in skills, including problem-solving and teamwork. Another goal is to help participants with their English language skills, while simultaneously encouraging them to share words from their first languages with each other to promote language diversity.

McCreary Centre Society carried out an independent evaluation of MOSAIC's NuYu Project, from January to June, 2013. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the degree to which the program was meeting its goals, and to canvass evaluation participants' thoughts on whether MOSAIC could use the Popular Theatre model with groups other than immigrant and refugee youth. As part of the evaluation, McCreary also conducted a review of best practices for engaging immigrant and refugee youth in Canada.

Evaluation Methodology

The NuYu evaluation methodology entailed a mixed-methods approach of anonymous surveys, interviews and focus groups, as well as a review of existing MOSAIC documentation and a review of best practices for engaging immigrant and refugee youth in Canada.

Participation was voluntary, and information in this report is presented in such a way that individual participants cannot be personally identified.



Participants

The evaluation involved the following participants:

- Nineteen youth who took part in a week-long NuYu program in New Westminster, BC during their March, 2013 spring break. They took part in focus groups at the end of the program, and 16 of these youth also completed a survey on the same day (April 6, 2013).
- Ten youth who took part in previous NuYu programs. They agreed to participate after being contacted by the project coordinator who had maintained email contact with previous participants. They took part in one of two focus groups that were held on June 3 and June 8, 2013.
- Seventeen individuals who took part in weekly NuYu facilitator training sessions (Train the Trainer) from January 28 to March 11, 2013. They completed a survey at the start of their involvement and another at the end. Eight of these individuals also took part in phone interviews three months after the training ended.
- Three stakeholders involved with the NuYu program took part in phone interviews or face-to-face meetings to share their thoughts and feedback about the program. These individuals had extensive experience working at MOSAIC and developing the NuYu program.

More information about the 49 evaluation participants is included in the Findings section.

Data Sources

Surveys

McCreary developed a youth survey and two Facilitator Training (Train the Trainer) surveys in consultation with NuYu staff and senior managers at MOSAIC.

The youth survey incorporated items used successfully in previous evaluations, and included new questions that reflected the unique aspects of the NuYu program and needs of its participants. This survey included background questions that tapped age, gender, ethnic or cultural background, length of time in Canada, and languages spoken at home. It also included direct questions about the NuYu Popular Theatre Project, including participants' satisfaction with the project; to what extent their involvement helped to increase their support networks (peer and community support) and sense of community connectedness; to what degree their involvement taught them skills in various domains; and whether they had any suggestions to improve the program.

The first facilitator training survey, which participants completed at the start of training, included demographic information, questions about participants' reasons for attending, and their views on how the training could be of benefit to them and the individuals they work with. The second survey, completed at the end, included questions about what participants learned by taking part and any skill improvements they experienced; what they will do with what they learned; what they liked most and least; any suggestions to improve the training; and whether groups other than immigrant and refugee youth might benefit from taking part in Popular Theatre.

Youth Focus Groups

The purpose of the youth focus groups was to supplement the survey data with in-depth qualitative information. Participants were asked about their experiences in NuYu, including what (if anything) they gained from being involved, whether groups other than immigrant and refugee youth could benefit from taking part, and whether they had any suggestions to improve the program. Participants were also asked what they plan on doing, and what they have already done, with what they learned through their involvement in NuYu.

Individual Interviews

A McCreary researcher conducted phone and in-person interviews with stakeholders and individuals who took part in the facilitation training. These interviews canvassed participants' thoughts about the NuYu project, asked for feedback about the facilitation training, and asked whether groups other than immigrant and refugee youth could benefit from taking part in Popular Theatre.

Review of Existing Documentation

McCreary reviewed existing MOSAIC documentation of the NuYu Project and its Popular Theatre model. MOSAIC had collected survey data from past NuYu programs (youth programs and facilitator training) between 2008 and 2011. McCreary researchers entered this archival MOSAIC data into confidential databases so that it could be analyzed to assess whether the results were similar to those from the current surveys that McCreary developed and distributed for the purpose of this evaluation.

Review of Best Practices

McCreary conducted a review of best practices for engaging multicultural immigrant and refugee youth in Canada.

Limitations

The perspectives of those who took part in this evaluation are not necessarily representative of all individuals who have been involved with NuYu. For example, the evaluation did not capture the experiences of youth who started but did not complete the program. Also, the evaluation surveys, focus groups and interviews were administered in English which may have been an obstacle for those who did not have sufficient language or literacy skills to express themselves in English.

Review of Best Practices for Engaging Multicultural Immigrant and Refugee Youth in Canada

Introduction

Relocating to a new country can be a very difficult experience. Language problems, cultural differences, family pressures and possible previous traumatic experiences mean that immigrant and refugee youth often face a number of challenges integrating and making connections in their school and community.



However, as with all youth, engagement in activities within the community has been shown to contribute to promoting positive health outcomes for youth (Smith et al., 2009). This literature review aimed to consider the benefits of community engagement for newcomer youth to Canada, and specifically engagement in Popular Theatre which is a form of participatory theatre.

There are limited studies available which have examined the benefits of Popular Theatre among immigrant and refugee youth. Therefore, the literature review was broadened to consider research evidence for the benefits of various forms of participatory theatre, as well as other activities, that engage immigrant and refugee youth.

This review also outlines the common challenges faced by immigrant and refugee youth in order to reveal the potential barriers that exist for newcomer youth getting involved and staying engaged in activities in their community.

About this review

In compiling this review, McCreary Centre Society searched a variety of information databases, such as EBSCO, PubMed, and Google Scholar, for relevant research on immigrant and refugee youth engagement, with a focus on the use of artistic expression, such as Popular Theatre. Abstracts were then collected and articles with relevance to the project were retrieved and thoroughly examined. Research published since 1997 was included in the review.

In addition, a search was conducted through 'grey literature,' including government information indexes, to seek out reports with research that may not necessarily have been formally evaluated or published in peer-reviewed literature. Examples of these databases include the American Evaluation Association, the Canadian Evaluation Society, and the Canadian Best Practices Portal.

Research used in this review has been screened for its relevance and applicability to the immigrant and refugee communities in British Columbia and Canada.

Challenges facing immigrant and refugee youth

Young refugees, as well as first and second generation immigrant youth, face a number of specific challenges and barriers when moving to a new country with a different culture and language (e.g., Schleifer & Van Ngo, 2009). Additionally, beyond the universal stresses associated with settlement in a foreign environment, such as learning a new language, this experience is made more difficult for these youth by the common pressures and challenges associated with adolescence (Kilbride et al., 2000). As a result, immigrant and refugee youth may encounter many obstacles in the school environment, within their families, socially, and throughout their communities.

Newcomer youth often experience a unique set of physical and mental health challenges. Many families that move to new countries to become residents or attain refugee status have come from areas of the world that are experiencing a variety of problems and, as such, they may have spent time in very dangerous and unstable environments. Some may have Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) due to the trauma associated with violence, the loss of loved ones, persecution, and war (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007). There is also the possibility that they arrive in Canada having been exposed to communicable diseases, poverty, and malnourishment (Van Ngo, 2009).

Education is often a central and important feature in many young people's lives, and it can also be the source of a number of challenges for youth trying to settle into a new home and environment. Immigrant and refugee youth often face language difficulties, discrimination by peers, social exclusion, over-reliance on friendships with culturally-similar youth, as well as lack of validation of previous educational experience (Kilbride et al., 2000). Additionally, these youth may feel confused about their identity due to opposing cultural views and practices being presented at home compared to in institutions such as schools and within their newly emerging peer groups (Kilbride et al., 2000). Both in their school, and in their community, immigrant and refugee youth also run the risk of internalizing racism, or beginning to believe the negative stereotypes they hear and incorporating these into their views of self and others of a similar ethnic background (Van Ngo, 2009).

In comparison to their parents or adult caretakers, immigrant and refugee youth are often faster to learn the language and become familiar with the cultural norms of their new country of residence (Kilbride et al., 2000). For this reason, it is not uncommon for them to take on responsibilities and obligations that normally fall to the parental figures in the family. This may include finding employment, communicating with agencies such as banks and utility companies, and translating or interpreting for their caregivers. In addition, many parents of immigrant and refugee youth work long hours to support their families and this may result in the children performing tasks such as grocery shopping, caring for younger siblings, and cooking (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003).

Due to these various challenges, immigrant and refugee youth may be less likely to become involved and engaged in programs and activities in their community. A lack of consideration for different cultures and sensitivity to individuals' past experiences and current situations, as well as language challenges, discrimination, parental comprehension issues, and more practical concerns such as health, finances, time constraints and transportation could all create obstacles for community participation and sense of connectedness among immigrant and refugee youth.

Meaningful youth engagement

Taking part in activities and being involved in the community is known to have a number of health benefits for young people. Meaningful engagement in activities facilitates the building of social connections and can help create a sense of self advocacy and belonging. Additionally, youth who show the highest levels of engagement in their activities have lower levels of suicide ideation and attempts than those who feel their participation is not important or their opinion is not valued in the activities they take part in (Smith et al., 2009).

According to data collected in the 2008 BC Adolescent Health Survey, immigrant youth in BC are more likely than youth born in Canada to take part in arts-based activities, such as fine arts, drama, and dance or aerobics classes (Smith et al., 2011). Involvement in extracurricular activities such as these was found to positively influence the mental health of youth new to Canada. Newcomer males taking part in organized sports on a weekly basis reported better overall health, and newcomer females who took part in weekly dance or aerobics classes had higher self-esteem when compared to immigrant youth who were less involved. Additionally, among newcomer youth, feeling skilled in music or art was connected to high self-esteem and, specifically for immigrant females, artistic competency was associated with feelings of school safety. Among newcomer males, feeling meaningfully engaged in activities corresponded to more positive health ratings (Smith et al., 2011).

Working with immigrant and refugee youth, including designing activities and programs to engage this population, is not without its challenges due to the great variety and many differences that can exist between youth from different countries (e.g., Deckers & Zinga, 2012). These youth can be as culturally unique from one another as from the residents in their new communities and may have very dissimilar past experiences (Rousseau et al., 2005). This may include different languages, religious beliefs, socioeconomic standing, and migration experiences.

Additionally, research by Chiu and Ring (1998) on Chinese and Vietnamese immigrant adolescents identifies the importance of recognizing the differing situations of those immigrants who choose to come to a new country compared to individuals and families who were forced out of their home by extreme circumstance. It has also been shown that there can be relevant differences between youth who are first generation immigrants and those who are second or third generation immigrants (i.e., the children or grandchildren of immigrants), such as educational experiences, which should be considered when working to meaningfully engage youth in community activities (Peguero, 2011).

Participatory Theatre

Creative expression through art has emerged as an important approach when working with immigrant and refugee youth, particularly as an avenue for helping them to create meaning from their social world, to express their voices, and to form identity (e.g., Elbedour et al., 1997; Rousseau et al., 2005). One artistic approach that has received attention for use with this particular population is Augusto Boal's Popular Theatre, or Theatre of the Oppressed. This form of theatre, which blurs the line between audience and actor, was first practiced in the 1960's and gained inspiration from Freire's Popular Education movement ("popular" meaning "people") that was taking part in Latin America at the time (Boal, 1997; Graceffo, 2001). The hallmark of Popular Theatre is that the audience members become actors in the play. In the case of Theatre of the Oppressed, these "spect-actors" have the option of stopping the scene, replacing an actor who is being oppressed, and trying out a new approach, with the possibility of achieving a different outcome (Boal, 1997).

Taking influence from Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, and Jacob Moreno's Psychodrama, a form of therapy in which patients use unscripted dramatizations to gain new perspectives and insights, Jonathan Fox developed a related approach, which he called Playback Theatre (Fox, 2004). In this form of theatre, a "teller" recounts a private story, a small group of actors immediately improvise a re-enactment of the story, and the audience offers their respect and attention. Unlike Psychodrama and Theatre of the Oppressed, Playback Theatre is neither considered a form of therapy, nor does it necessarily focus on an experience of oppression. It accepts stories of both joy and suffering and does not require a solution, but promotes empathy, learning to take another person's perspective, and mutual understanding (Fox, 2004).

Some Forms of Participatory Theatre

Popular Theatre/Theatre of the Oppressed:

- *Created by Augusto Boal in Brazil in the 1960's*
- *Popular Theatre was inspired by Paulo Friere's Popular Education movement in Latin America*
- *Audience members watch a scene being acted out and then re-watch the scene with the option of stopping the action, replacing an actor who is being oppressed, and taking a new approach to potentially alter the character's outcome*
- *This form of theatre can be used as a teaching tool, as a way of exploring causes and conditions, and as a way of "rehearsing" for challenging situations one may encounter in life*

Psychodrama:

- *Developed by Jacob Moreno in the early 1900's*
- *Patients use unscripted spontaneous dramatizations during therapy sessions*
- *Psychodrama allows for a person to revisit and gain new meaning or understanding from past experiences*

Playback Theatre

- *Founded by Jonathan Fox in the 1970's*
- *The "teller" shares a personal story and actors improvise the scene as the audience watches*
- *Playback Theatre is intended to encourage empathy and perspective-taking*

Uses of Participatory Theatre

Gender specific examples of the use of Participatory Theatre

Lee and De Finney (2005) engaged a group of females from Victoria, British Columbia in a Popular Theatre program. They referred to these youth as 'racialized' which encompassed belonging to any ethnic or cultural minority. Lee and De Finney made a number of important observations about how Popular Theatre techniques were most effectively used with this group of young females. These included allowing some flexibility in the theatre-based methods to not cause the participants to lose focus and energy resulting from too much structure; facilitating the youth to put context to their experiences and gain understanding, and not simply perform them; and making connections between what is personal to them and what occurs around the world.

In another study, a group of researchers from across Europe collaborated to perform a pilot study assessing the potential effects of Participatory Theatre on behaviour and attitudes among young male soccer players (Rutten et al., 2010). Athletes at four soccer clubs watched a number of scenes performed by professional actors depicting soccer-relevant moral-ethical

dilemmas, before re-watching the same scenarios with the option of replacing the actors to try out new solutions and strategies. The audience then engaged in a group discussion about the quality and outcomes of the interventions that were employed and made suggestions about other possible avenues that could have been explored. Results included the development of a positive team atmosphere and a decrease in on-field antisocial behaviour among male participants one month post-intervention.



Participatory Theatre in the classroom setting

Popular and Playback Theatre have been implemented in a diversity of groups beyond the immigrant and refugee communities. For example, researchers in Pennsylvania have utilized Boalian Theatre with a group of student-teachers participating in an alternative certification program (Bhukhanwala & Allexsaht-Snyder, 2012). A culturally and ethnically diverse group of young student-teachers participated in acting out scenarios representing potential interactions with students and dilemmas that could arise in the classroom. The goal was to give them the opportunity to role-play and test out possible courses of action and interventions that could be applied in real classroom situations in the future. There was evidence that taking part in these theatrical activities promoted empathic reflection and perspective-taking among the participating student-teachers, and researchers felt that this supported its potential use in the future as a tool to help teachers appreciate diversity amidst a multicultural student body.

The use of Popular Theatre has also been explored in the United Kingdom as a means of educating secondary students on the experiences of refugee and homeless classmates (Day, 2002). Although there was no quantitative measure used to determine if the program was successful, feedback received through interviewing of students and teachers suggested they had gained a new perspective on refugee and homeless youth and had valued the opportunity to learn. However, the researcher suggested that to maximize the benefit to participating students, it would be necessary to designate follow-up time to increasing knowledge and thinking about ethical dilemmas and decision-making, including exploring potential collective action that students could take.

Participatory Theatre in Canada

A number of organizations and theatre companies throughout the world use Theatre of the Oppressed techniques in their theatrical productions, courses, and workshops. In Canada alone, The International Theatre of the Oppressed Organization has 13 organizations and individuals registered with it. Several of these groups reach out to youth through schools and community agencies. One organization in Victoria, B.C., focuses specifically on the immigrant and refugee experience and has addressed issues such as racism and family conflict. Another company in Calgary, Alberta works with marginalized populations including immigrants and newcomers. Another organization based in Prince George, B.C. uses Theatre of the Oppressed and other

techniques in their youth driven theatre which has explored issues such as discrimination, drug and alcohol use, abuse, and mental health issues.

In terms of documented studies, in addition to the work of Lee and De Finney (2005) with girls in British Columbia detailed previously, Rousseau (2007) carried out a pilot study in Montréal based on the ideals of Boal's Popular Theatre and Fox's Playback Theatre. She offered a classroom drama therapy program to immigrant and refugee adolescents. The program entailed high school immigrant and refugee students working with a director to act out one another's stories with the option of revisiting and replaying specific scenes while employing alternative strategies with the potential to change the outcome. The goal was to empower the youth by allowing them to draw new meaning from their experiences, collaborate and build relationships with each other, and explore additional dialogue and strategies that were not contained in the original scenario. Following participation in the program, youth indicated improvements in their emotions and behaviours, and showed improved performance in mathematics.

Throughout her experience creating and evaluating programs for immigrant and refugee children and youth, Rousseau and colleagues (2004) identified what she considered to be four key elements contributing to positive outcomes: the creation of a safe environment, acknowledgement and respect for diversity, establishment of continuity, and transformation of adversity.

Using Participatory Theatre to promote youth health

Participatory Theatre has been used around the world as a tool for health education. For example, in Tanzania, where HIV/AIDS is a serious health challenge, researchers looked into participatory theatre as a way of opening dialogue about the cultural and sexual practices that lead to the transmission of HIV, as well as possible solutions (Bagamoyo College of Arts et al., 2002). Youth were trained in Popular Theatre and were educated about HIV/AIDS. These youth then returned to their home communities and trained more youth, before heading out to gather information from community members on challenges associated with sexual behaviour and HIV/AIDS, as well as other social problems. These youth then collaborated to identify key themes in their research and create performances, which were delivered back to the community, followed by the facilitation of a group discussion. This use of participatory theatre helped to break down barriers of silence and reduce stigma associated with conversations around sexuality and HIV/AIDS and allowed for important information to reach audience members and for valuable discussions to take place (Bagamoyo College of Arts et al., 2002).

Similarly, Participatory Theatre has been used in Bangladesh to raise awareness and develop strategies to address health and social issues such as human trafficking. The audience has consisted mainly of farmers and other men and women living in the villages and slums, who are most likely to experience the injustices that are enacted in the theatre performances. By allowing performers and spectators to collaborate and come up with plans for action, it is thought that this approach can help raise consciousness around public issues and encourage societal changes (Ahsan, 2004).

Other programs for immigrant and refugee youth

Other programs, beyond those focusing on participatory theatre, have been successful in engaging with immigrant and refugee youth to help them feel more connected to their new community and to contribute to their healthy development. A few examples are explored below as they may be helpful when thinking of ways to engage newcomer youth who do not wish to participate in a theatre program.



Doherty and Taylor (2007) explored the role that participation in extracurricular sports and physical activity programs can have in helping newcomer youth to adjust in their new country. They and others (Tirone & Pedlar, 2000) have concluded that participating in physical activities positively impacts the integration process, including facilitating the development of social relationships.

In their work with newcomer youth who were English language learners in a Canadian high school, Doherty and Taylor (2007) found evidence linking participation in sport with increased emotional, social and physical well-being. Youth also reported having benefited from increased opportunity to develop their English language skills, and to become more familiar with mainstream Canadian culture. Participants pointed out that immigrant youth may feel left out of peer groups and games due to language barriers and lack of knowledge of sporting rules, but the overall conclusion of the study was that involvement in sport and physical recreation programs can meaningfully influence settlement of youth newly arrived in Canada (Doherty & Taylor, 2007).

In an Australian pilot study, Baker and Jones (2006) looked into the effect of music therapy on the classroom behaviours of newly arrived immigrant and refugee youth. One or two times a week, a group of newcomer youth from an intensive English-language reception High School took part in music therapy interventions. These sessions incorporated many different elements, such as the sharing of music from their own cultures, instrumental improvisations, as well as singing and dancing. Students who took part in the music program showed a decrease in disruptive behaviours, such as hyperactivity and aggression (Baker & Jones, 2006).

The Supporting the Health of Immigrant Families and Adolescents (SHIFA) Project (Ellis et al., 2013) is a school-based initiative to promote positive mental health among immigrants attending Boston Public Schools. It is a multiple strategy approach that involves community outreach and education of immigrant families, anti-stigma school and teacher training, school-based youth groups, and in some cases referrals to more intensive mental health treatments. Preliminary findings show that this program has been successful in promoting immigrant youth's engagement in mental health services and suggests that integration of different systems are important for engaging immigrant youth and their families (Ellis et al., 2011).

In an example of a program aimed at high risk immigrant youth, a group of health professionals created the Minnesota Runaway Intervention Project for young, sexually assaulted or exploited immigrant girls. The goal of the program was to positively influence the girls' healthy development by lowering risky behaviours, decreasing trauma responses, and putting in place protective factors (Edinburgh & Saewyc, 2009). The program consisted of home visits by advanced practice nurses and weekly after-school empowerment groups. Findings from their program evaluation showed that immigrant girls who were involved in the program experienced improvements in family and school connectedness, self-esteem, and safer sex practices, and decreases in emotional distress, suicidality, and risk behaviours, such as drug and alcohol use (Saewyc & Edinburgh, 2010).

Promising practices

In a review outlining promising practices for facilitating positive youth development among immigrant and refugee youth in the United States, Morland (2007) outlined a number of important elements to consider when planning and implementing programming. First, she states that the immigrant community needs to be made a partner in the process, such as by allowing community leaders and parents to give their input into the program delivery and make suggestions about how to maximize its relevance for youth in their area. Parents or guardians and other family members should be engaged in the activities to avoid widening the "acculturation gap" between adolescents and their caregivers, and instead to foster good communication and understanding.

Morland (2007) also shared the importance of encouraging the participation of multicultural/multilingual staff who understand cultural diversity and can act as positive role models. The environment and curriculum should act to strengthen youths' cultural and ethnic identity by celebrating where they come from while simultaneously supporting their identification within their new community. She suggests that immigrant and refugee youth should be encouraged to assume leadership positions in programs and within their communities and should be supported in their academic and career aspirations. Lastly, Morland indicates that programs aimed at encouraging positive youth development among immigrant and refugee adolescents should network with other organizations, providing education about multiculturalism and making connections with other relevant programming in their community.

Similarly, in a toolkit developed for program coordinators of immigrant and refugee youth mentorship programs, the organization MENTOR (2009) created a list of recommendations for working with newcomer children and youth. These included:

- Acknowledging and building the program around the strengths of immigrant and refugee youth and trying to address challenges faced by this population.
- Supporting youth to maintain the ethnic, cultural, religious, and family values of their home country.
- Encouraging youth to be leaders and to seize opportunities to teach others about their language and culture.
- Creating positive peer relationships and providing positive adult role models.
- Supporting youth in their educational journey.

- Involving parents and other family members in the process.
- Showing ingenuity and flexibility to meet the needs of the youth and their family.

Keleher and Armstrong (2005) suggest that programs with immigrant youth must be made sustainable. This may be achieved by incorporating skill development and ongoing support mechanisms into the program as well as building new connections and changing community attitudes. Furthermore, connections should be established in multicultural contexts and materials presented in ways that are sensitive and respectful of culture (Keleher & Armstrong, 2005; Trevin et al., 2004).

Summary

This review has outlined the many challenges faced by immigrant and refugee youth and has shown that youth's unique settlement situation should be considered to facilitate their meaningful engagement in community activities. As was found by Smith et al. (2011), meaningful participation in activities is of great importance for immigrant and refugee youth because of its association with health benefits, including more positive ratings of overall health and greater self-esteem.

Best practices for engaging immigrant and refugee youth have included the following recommendations (Keleher & Armstrong, 2005; MENTOR, 2009; Morland, 2007; Trevin et al., 2004):

- Include the immigrant community as a partner from the beginning.
- Engage family members in the process.
- Include multicultural /multilingual staff.
- Create an environment that strengthens ethnic and cultural identities and celebrates diversity.
- Build the program around the strengths of immigrant and refugee youth while acknowledging the challenges they face.
- Foster positive peer relationships and provide positive adult role models.
- Encourage youth to take on leadership roles and to seize opportunities to teach others about their language and culture.
- Provide support in other areas of life, including life-skills, academics and career development.
- Demonstrate flexibility in meeting the needs of the youth and their families.
- Network with other community organizations.
- Work toward making programs for immigrant and refugee youth sustainable.

There are a number of ways of engaging immigrant and refugee youth, including the use of creative expression through art. Popular Theatre, which is a form of Participatory Theatre, is

one such approach. When using Participatory Theatre techniques, key elements have been identified that contribute to a positive and beneficial experience for youth. These include:

- Creating a safe and respectful environment
- Acknowledging and encouraging diversity
- Transforming adversity
- Allowing flexibility in theatre techniques (i.e., making room for participants to navigate the experience in their own way and promote playful interaction)
- Adding context and insightful reflection to youth's experiences
- Connecting personal experiences with global challenges

Popular Theatre has been applied in a number of settings and for various purposes, including gender-specific programming, within the classroom for both teachers and students, as a means of promoting positive health behaviours, and as an educational tool in sport. This approach has also been used with groups other than immigrant and refugee youth.

This review has outlined some of the possible benefits of Popular Theatre, including enhanced perspective-taking, empathy, and understanding of social issues; improved social and emotional adjustment; decreased stigma; and promotion of open dialogue.

Many Popular Theatre programs have not been evaluated. Evaluating these programs would shed more light on the effectiveness of this approach when working with immigrant and refugee youth, and on how much other groups of individuals may benefit from taking part in Popular Theatre.

Such an evaluation was recently carried out for MOSAIC's NuYu Popular Theatre Project. MOSAIC is a non-profit organization in Vancouver, BC that addresses issues affecting immigrants and refugees during their settlement and integration into Canada. The results of the NuYu evaluation are presented next.

Evaluation Findings

Stakeholders' Description of NuYu

"Popular Theater brings a different level of engagement, more rooted in participants' experiences."

~Stakeholder



Stakeholders explained that the original Popular Theatre program at MOSAIC was geared toward immigrant and refugee parents, but after their children attended a Popular Theatre performance they expressed interest in taking part and a program was developed specifically for youth.

The stakeholders indicated having had experience engaging immigrant and refugee youth in various ways, including through crafts, games, sports, and outings. However, they felt that Popular Theatre was a more accessible approach for this group of youth because of its relatively low reliance on English language skills and its efficacy at engaging those who are shy or withdrawn.

Program Goals

Stakeholders described NuYu as a program that provides newcomer youth with the opportunity to use Popular Theatre to articulate, explore and reflect on their experiences, and to practice how to better handle problems and challenges they face. They said that the program curriculum allows youth to take part in a process where their experiences are the driving, central element. They added that a goal of the program is to create a space for empowerment where youth can find their voice and develop self-confidence. Another goal is for youth to support one another and develop friendships borne out of common experience and respect, and in the process feel less isolated and more connected to their community. Stakeholders added that although not the initial goals of the initiative, youth have often improved their communication and English language skills, learned teamwork skills, and inspired community dialogue as a result of their involvement in NuYu.

Stakeholders also remarked that NuYu enables the development and identification of potential leaders and future facilitators of Popular Theatre. One stakeholder described the program as "a bridge for youth participants to become youth leaders."

All the stakeholders thought that the NuYu program has been successful in achieving its goals. They felt that the program has been run by staff who have a profound understanding of the Popular Theatre methodology and who are successful in developing a sense of belonging and community for the youth participants. They described the program not as a one-off project, but

rather as a continuous program under constant review, where staff and managers reflect on past experiences and work to make adaptations and improvements.

Stakeholders felt that not only immigrant and refugee youth, but also other youth could benefit from involvement in Popular Theatre, including groups who experienced oppression, such as street-involved youth, Aboriginal youth, and youth in custody. They explained that although different groups might experience different issues and challenges in their lives, the universal applicability of the Popular Theatre methodology would enable anyone to gain value from taking part in.



Gender Differences

Stakeholders observed gender differences in youths' response to the NuYu Popular Theatre program. They noticed that male participants tended to prefer active games and physical activities in which they could expend energy, whereas females were more eager to engage in verbal exchanges and share personal experiences.

Additionally, stakeholders pointed out that although recruitment was done in mixed-gender classrooms, and male and female newcomer youth seemed to show equal interest in the NuYu program, more females than males usually registered and took part in the program.

All the stakeholders mentioned that the program is sensitive to gender issues and takes steps to ensure that both males and females feel comfortable throughout the program. They try, when possible, to have one male and one female facilitator present and offer to separate participants by gender during games and activities that involve physical contact in order to respect religious beliefs and potential past traumas.

Challenges

Stakeholders acknowledged that a major challenge of the NuYu program has been receiving continuous funding. They felt that the program would benefit from reliable, long-term funding so that they could establish a consistent annual schedule, re-start a Youth Advisory Committee that had been initiated in the past, run yearly youth facilitation training programs, reach out to more young people, and provide more follow-up and long-term support to their past participants.

Stakeholders also acknowledged that they face a number of challenges engaging immigrant and refugee youth. One stakeholder spoke of unique life circumstances that are relevant to the newcomer community, such as taking on part-time jobs due to precarious financial situations and having mature responsibilities as a result of being more proficient in English than their adult caregivers.

Stakeholders said that these circumstances have created obstacles for recruiting youth to NuYu. They remarked that another challenge for engaging youth in the program stems from some people's perception of arts-based programs as an unnecessary luxury, coupled with the difficulty explaining the Popular Theatre methodology and articulating what youth can expect from the NuYu experience.

However, stakeholders said that NuYu staff are aware of these challenges and take proactive measures to overcome them. Youth are provided with bus tickets, food, and honoraria to remove financial barriers to participation. Staff also try to be accommodating with scheduling sessions, and consider school, family and other commitments that youth may have. Additionally, stakeholders said that MOSAIC actively recruits youth in classrooms and uses its relationships with other organizations and the support of program alumni to get the word out about the NuYu program.

Stakeholders' Suggestions

When asked what improvements could be made to the NuYu program, stakeholders reiterated the need for continuous funding, the desire to re-start a Youth Advisory Committee, and to offer more follow-up with participants.

One interviewee thought that continued support for participants could take the form of yearly get-togethers where youth could watch a recording of their performance, reflect back, and share their experiences.

Stakeholders also said that they would like to offer NuYu alumni yearly opportunities to take part in youth Facilitator Training and to return to volunteer or to gain paid work experience within the NuYu program.

In addition, stakeholders felt that a valuable element to add to the program would be to offer youth who are English Language Learners (ELL) with an opportunity to connect with graduated NuYu participants to provide them with a positive role model and mentorship.

Stakeholder comments:

"Everybody can benefit from the opportunity to reflect on their experiences through theatre."

"[NuYu shows us] we all have a role. We can all be agents of social change."

"[Youth in NuYu] find their voice and gain confidence."

"In NuYu there is laughter, and laughter is healing."

Youths' Experiences in NuYu

Recent Participants (March, 2013)

McCreary researchers facilitated focus groups on April 6, 2013 with 19 youth participants following their week-long involvement in the NuYu Popular Theatre Program. These youth had taken part in NuYu in New Westminster, BC during their March, 2013 spring break.

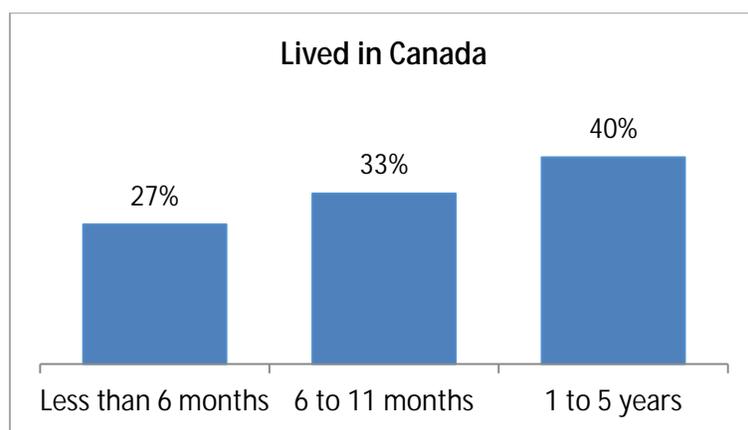


When asked to separate into two discussion groups, youth separated themselves by gender so that one discussion group consisted only of females (11 youth) and the other only of males (eight youth). The discussion groups lasted between half an hour and forty-five minutes. Youth were asked to describe the NuYu program in their own words and to give feedback on topics such as why they had attended NuYu, what they had gained by participating in the program, how satisfied they were with how NuYu was run, and suggestions for how it could be improved.

Sixteen of these youth also completed an evaluation survey on the same day. Most of these youth (60%) were female, and they ranged in age from 13 to 16, with an average age of around 14½ years.

Participants who completed a survey indicated coming from a variety of ethnic or cultural backgrounds. The most commonly reported background was Southeast Asian (36%) but youth also reported African, East Asian, West Asian, and/or Latin American backgrounds.

The majority of youth (60%) had lived in Canada for less than a year, and none had been in the country for more than five years.



Ninety-three percent of youth who completed a survey spoke a language other than English at home at least some of the time, with the majority of these youth doing so most of the time.

Previous Participants

A total of 10 individuals (7 females, 3 males) who had previously taken part in NuYu Popular Theatre participated in two separate focus groups (June 3 and June 8, 2013) to discuss their time in the program. These alumni came from a variety of different cohorts who took part in NuYu from 2006 to 2011.



None of the past participants had experience with Popular Theatre before getting involved with NuYu. Most had little experience with theatre in general, although two had taken part in theatre in their home countries. Virtually none had previous experience with MOSAIC.

Reasons for Taking Part

Most of the recent youth participants said they had heard about the NuYu program through their school or a MOSAIC staff member who had encouraged them to join. Previous participants recalled learning about the NuYu program through a variety sources, including friends, email, and through another MOSAIC program they had taken part in.

Many of the recent and previous participants spoke of not having been fully aware before they took part in NuYu about what the program was about, but had heard that it involved other immigrant youth and incorporated aspects of theatre.

A number of recent participants said they took part in the program because they wanted to meet other newcomer youth whom they could relate to, and were interested in making new friends. Some recent participants, particularly the boys, had feared that the program would be “boring” but were surprised on the first day with how interactive and engaging it was. The youth agreed that the reason they returned to NuYu each day was because it was a fun and enjoyable experience for them.

Past participants listed a number of reasons they had decided to take part. Many thought that it would be a fun new opportunity, hoped to expand their social circles by making friends, and wanted to practice their English. Three past participants had interest in theatre and a number of alumni had wanted to add another activity to their schedules that previously consisted mainly of spending time at school and home. Most also hoped to learn new skills and some wanted to gain leadership experience.

Overall Impressions of NuYu

When describing their experience in NuYu, past participants recalled taking part in exercises depicting certain social realities and having the opportunity to tell their stories and have them heard by people who understood them. They described taking part in the performances and acting out skits with a protagonist and an oppressor and having the ability to change the

character's situation through interventions. They appreciated that the Popular Theatre methodology involved no scripts but rather the sharing of real-life experiences and stories that many newcomer youth could relate to. Many also discussed taking part in games and trust exercises that fostered the development of close friendships among participants.

Both past and recent participants expressed great satisfaction with the NuYu program overall, and many stated that it had surpassed their expectations. They not only learned important skills and knowledge but also reported that they had fun (87% of recent participants who completed a survey indicated having fun).

Most of the recent participants who completed a survey (87%) felt that a safe space had been created for sharing their thoughts and ideas. Past participants said that the creation of a safe space, and the instructors allowing for everyone to participate in a way they felt comfortable with, made for a very pressure-free and positive environment for people to share and grow.

Ninety-three percent of recent participants indicated on the survey that they had shared their experiences and ideas with the group, and the same percentage reported listening to others' stories during their involvement in the program. Past participants explained that hearing the personal stories of other individuals taught them how to listen and to be compassionate.

Some female participants spoke in the focus group about the consistency of the meeting location and the ritual of starting every day with a question to get to know one another as factors that contributed to making them feel more comfortable.

When asked on the survey what they liked most about NuYu, recent participants commonly listed taking part in the games, activities and skits. They added in the focus groups that they appreciated taking part in group exercises and having the opportunity to work with many different individuals because it taught them to work together as a team and build trust with one another.

Many male participants indicated liking the games that involved physical activity, such as "cat and mouse," more than those that entailed sitting still and expressing their thoughts and feelings. In contrast, female participants stated that they particularly liked the games and activities that required them to verbally communicate with one another because it enabled them to develop meaningful connections.

Male and female participants identified the games, accessible location, the facilitators and other participants, the free food and transportation, the performances, and having the opportunity to tell their stories through acting and games as what they liked most.

Many past and recent participants also stated that making new friends, getting to share their ideas, practicing their English, and having fun were what they liked most about the program. Some past participants added that taking part in the program had allowed them to think more positively about their own life and experiences, which they appreciated.

Increased Knowledge

Virtually all recent participants who completed a survey reported learning about Popular Theatre (100%) and practicing ways to deal with challenges (92%) during their time in the NuYu program. Similarly, many past participants described learning new ways to deal with problems they encountered in their own lives through acting out skits based on real experiences and performing interventions.



Recent participants indicated on the survey that they had gained insights about other cultures. Similarly, past participants said they appreciated learning not only about Canadian culture, but the cultural backgrounds of the other participants.

Participants also reported that they had learned they were not alone in their feelings and experiences since coming to a new country, and that they had learned how to overcome their shyness.

Recent participants said in the focus groups that their involvement in NuYu taught them a great deal about how to address bullying and about the gravity of discriminating against others. Male participants remarked that they have become more aware of the issues and will be less likely to discriminate against others as a result of taking part in NuYu.

“Bullies can learn to respect other people.”

Skill Improvements

“I learned to communicate with others and solve problems.”

Recent participants who completed a survey reported skill improvements in a number of areas. Virtually all felt that their skills had improved at least somewhat, with many indicating a lot of improvement.



Most of the participants highlighted in the focus groups that their skills in cooperation, teamwork and communication had improved because of their involvement in NuYu. Many also noticed improvements in their English language skills as a result of their involvement in the program.

Youth explained that the NuYu facilitators were very helpful about checking in with participants' levels of comprehension and explaining the meaning of new words. In addition, a number of recent female participants enjoyed that each person had the opportunity to teach the group words, such as "hello" and "goodbye" in their own native language. They felt that NuYu was a safe space for them to practice their English without judgment because everyone was making an effort to improve their language skills.

"I loved how we could learn each other's languages."

Social and Emotional Functioning

"We feel more comfortable approaching people."

Recent participants felt that their involvement in NuYu had contributed to improvements in their social and emotional functioning. Specifically, many reported on the survey at least some improvements in their self-esteem (100% of youth), overall mood (94%), and confidence sharing their ideas with others (93%).

In the focus groups, youth participants explained that they felt more confident in themselves as a result of spending time talking with one another and sharing stories about their lives. This translated into youth feeling less shy, not only with one another, but also in their everyday lives. They recounted feeling more comfortable approaching people they did not know and engaging them in conversation.

Additionally, the vast majority of recent participants who completed a survey reported improvements in their support networks (93%), their sense of connection to their community (93%) and their feelings of connectedness to their school (93%).

Some past participants described the networking they were able to do through NuYu and how participating in the program connected them to numerous other opportunities in the community. Many also said that taking part in NuYu had increased their sense of belonging to the community, and some pointed out that in a sense NuYu was its own community.

Peer Support

All recent participants reported on the survey that they made new friends through NuYu, and 87% intended to keep in contact with the people they had met through the program.

Many recent and past participants explained in the focus groups that they valued the opportunity to meet other youth, share their ideas, and hear each other's stories about coming to Canada which they came to realize were similar to their own. Many participants described feeling more supported and less isolated as a result of the people they had met and friendships they had developed while taking part in NuYu.

Female participants highlighted the friendships and connections they had formed with one another as the most valued outcome of their participation in NuYu. They spoke of having had fears and anxiety when coming to Canada around forming relationships and making friends, and of their experiences eating alone during lunch hour when they first started school. They were very grateful for having met one another and described how they had all become friends and were able to eat together at school. One female participant spoke of the ease with which they had connected with one another and thought this may have been due to many of the youth sharing similar past experiences and having faced the same challenges since arriving in Canada.

Comments from recent NuYu participants (survey responses):

"The best part was [hearing] other stories that were the same, seeing you aren't alone."

"[I learned] that I'm not the only one going through a rough time moving here."

"I was so happy I met people I could actually relate to."

"NuYu friends are my first friends in Canada."

Who can benefit

As with the stakeholders, both recent and past participants felt that not only immigrant and newcomer youth could benefit from taking part in Popular Theatre, but also other groups of people. Examples of people they felt could benefit included those from a cultural or ethnic minority, youth with tumultuous family backgrounds, youth struggling with mental health challenges, individuals with disabilities, and both victims and perpetrators of bullying.

One past participant suggested that NuYu should be implemented in schools so that youth born in Canada could take part alongside newcomer youth in order to promote increased understanding.

Nearly all of the past participants felt that males and females benefited equally from their involvement in NuYu. However, consistent with the stakeholders' comments, they mentioned that males tended to prefer lively physical activities to verbal activities, whereas females enjoyed sharing personal stories. Past participants remarked that having comparable numbers of males and females in the group created a strong group dynamic.

After NuYu

"[I plan to] help others who have just immigrated, let them know that it will get better."

Recent participants were asked on the survey and in the focus groups what they will do with what they learned through NuYu. Many youth hoped to use the knowledge and skills they had learned to help other immigrant and refugee youth who were new to the country by sharing their experiences and letting them know "they are not alone." Other recent participants said they hoped to use their increased confidence to approach new people and initiate conversations. Many recent participants also felt NuYu would help them to develop new friendships and to more freely share their ideas with others in the future. Some also said that as a result of what they had learned from the skits and interventions, they felt well-equipped to deal with certain challenging situations if they were to arise.

Many recent participants expressed a desire to take part in the program again in the future, and 93% indicated on the survey that they would recommend involvement to their friends. Most past participants had recommended NuYu to other young people, some of whom had gone on to participate in the program.

A number of past participants indicated having used skills and techniques they had learned through NuYu in their personal, academic and professional lives, and a few have used the games and activities in their jobs working with children.

Some past participants felt that their increased confidence speaking with, and in front of, others had been of great benefit to them in subsequent professional and schooling situations. Many felt that rehearsing scenarios had helped them to know how to handle challenging situations that arose later in their lives and to recognize ethnic and cultural prejudices and stereotypes.

Looking back on their experiences in the NuYu Popular Theatre program, past participants felt they had gained enduring friendships, skills, and support networks that have continued to positively impact their lives.

Two past participants said that since being involved in NuYu, they had taken the facilitator training course. Although not all the past participants were aware that facilitator training was offered through MOSAIC, many expressed keen interest in taking part and hoped to have more experience with Popular Theatre in the future.

Youths' Suggestions

Youth participants discussed ideas for how NuYu could build on its strengths to become even stronger:

- Given the benefits of taking part in the program, youth felt that all students attending a new school, including newcomer youth, should be told about NuYu and have the opportunity to take part.
- Participants felt that the program should be more widely advertised. Examples included mentioning it in the morning announcements at school and creating a promotional video to show in classrooms. They suggested that this video should describe the NuYu program, show youth taking part in the activities, and include interviews with past participants in order to clearly demonstrate what the program is about and to encourage youth to attend.
- Participants said they had been somewhat nervous when they arrived at the first session because they had not known what to expect. They proposed that participants who had taken part in NuYu previously could meet with new participants at the start of a new program cycle so they could explain what the program entails and could encourage them to continue coming.
- Past participants recommended that the program find ways to encourage participants to attend all the sessions and to be on time.
- Past participants and recent male participants suggested including more physical activities in the NuYu program.
- A logistical suggestion included starting the program slightly later in the day (e.g., 10 am) if it were to take place again during spring break. Also, some of the males (but not females) said that the day felt too long and that each session should be shorter (less than 5-6 hours per day). Some past participants suggested increasing the length of the lunch breaks.
- Some recent female participants wished that the NuYu program was longer in duration (e.g., two weeks).

More comments from recent NuYu participants (survey responses):

"I [would] like to join NuYu again. It's fun and it helps a lot because I learned self-confidence."

"NuYu is very helpful to newcomers. Thank you again!"

"Thank you for inviting us in this program. It helps me to communicate with others and not to be shy. I hope I can join again... I love this program."

"I like all parts of NuYu. Thank you!"

Quotes from previous NuYu participants (focus group):

"After taking part in NuYu it was like, 'Wow, I know so many people now and I started with no friends.'"

"What I liked about NuYu, the people were so nice. Maybe it's because we understood each other."

"Youth have a chance to talk about their experiences and can open up about their stories to the public during the performances."

"This is a program I bet anybody can feel comfortable in."

"NuYu opened my eyes to things I didn't even really know were happening."

"When I joined [NuYu], it gave me so much hope for the future."

NuYu Facilitator Training (Train the Trainer)

Participants

Participants who took part in the NuYu Popular Theatre Facilitator Training (January 28, 2013 – March 11, 2013) were asked to complete an evaluation survey at the start and at the end of the training.

Seventeen participants (65% females) completed a survey at the start of their involvement. They ranged in age from 19 to 52 years, with an average age of 32. Fourteen participants (69% females) completed a final survey at the end of the training.

When completing the final survey, participants had the option to also complete a separate contact information sheet if they were interested in taking part in a follow-up interview a few months later. Three months after the facilitator training ended, McCreary contacted those participants who submitted a contact information sheet. Eight participants (6 females, 2 males) took part in a phone interview. The purpose was to gather more in-depth feedback about the facilitator training and to assess what they have done with the knowledge and skills they had acquired through the training.

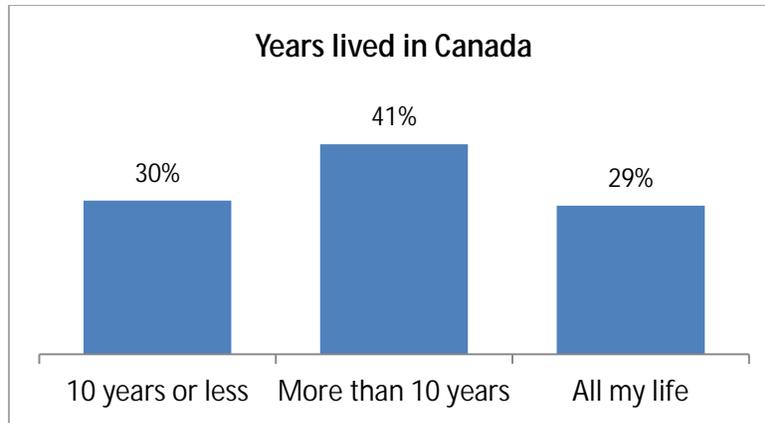
Participants who completed the first survey were most commonly affiliated with a non-profit organization other than MOSAIC (33%), whereas the remaining participants were affiliated with MOSAIC, government agencies, school boards or other organizations, and a number of individuals reported not being connected to any group.

When asked on the first survey how they had become aware of the facilitator training opportunity, participants listed a variety of sources including staff at MOSAIC, through work, by email, and word-of-mouth.

Most of those being trained as facilitators had no prior experience participating in NuYu Popular Theatre (75%), being a participant in other Popular Theatre (63%), or as a facilitator in other Popular Theatre (88%). However, 88% of participants reported having at least some experience working with immigrant and refugee youth, with the majority of these participants indicating having 'a lot' of experience working with this population. Participants who took part in a follow-up phone interview explained that they had used a wide range of mediums when working with immigrant and refugee youth, including film (claymation, documentaries), visual art (photography, graffiti art, drawing), music (drumming, body percussion), guided imagery, dance, sports, field trips, and a number of games, ice breakers.

Most participants (64%) indicated on the final survey that they had taken part in all six of the training sessions, with most others having attended between three and five sessions and virtually none having attended two sessions or fewer.

On the first survey, facilitator training participants reported a variety of cultural or ethnic backgrounds, and the most common was Southeast Asian (41%). Most had lived in Canada for over ten years, while 30% had lived in Canada for ten years or less.



Around half (47%) reported speaking a language other than English at home most of the time, while 41% reported doing so some of the time, and a small minority spoke only English at home.

Description of NuYu Facilitator Training

Stakeholders identified the main goals of the facilitator training as a combination of increasing the pool of Popular Theatre practitioners, not only for the NuYu program but within the community, and teaching people the skills and methodology to use in their own work and to pass on to others.

In the phone interviews conducted three months after the facilitator training, many participants said that the training had given them the opportunity to experience two sides of Popular Theatre, namely participating and facilitating. They described the beginning of the training as composed of games and icebreakers, followed by learning the purpose of the activities. This was followed by learning techniques for facilitating Popular Theatre and having the opportunity to practice. Many added that the training was well structured, expertly facilitated, very beneficial, and a productive use of time. Some also spoke of the training as an amazing opportunity for personal growth and an “eye-opening experience.”

Stakeholders described the facilitator training as encouraging a deep sense of respect for people. They saw a benefit of the training as its ability to foster connections among a diverse group of people (e.g., youth workers, teachers) and to create a support network. One stakeholder spoke of past participants keeping in contact with each other through email to exchange information about jobs and events and to refer youth clients to one another.

Stakeholders felt that the facilitator training achieves its goals to the best of its ability. Due to limited funding and the amount of time participants can afford to commit, the program encompasses the equivalent of only one week of training, whereas, as one stakeholder stated, “You build skills over a lifetime.”

Reasons for Taking Part

Participants who took part in a phone interview said they had heard about the training in a variety of ways, such as from supervisors and colleagues, through emails from MOSAIC, and by word-of-mouth.

Virtually all those who completed the first survey indicated taking part in the facilitator training to learn about Popular Theatre and to improve their skills working with immigrant and refugee youth. Other commonly reported reasons were to improve their facilitation skills, to learn more about engaging youth in a creative way, and to help immigrant and refugee youth. On the final survey at the end of the training, all participants indicated they had gotten what they had hoped from the training.



When asked on the final survey what had helped to keep them coming to the sessions, participants most commonly listed acquiring new skills and knowledge, and having fun. Those who missed sessions identified illness and prior commitments as their reasons.



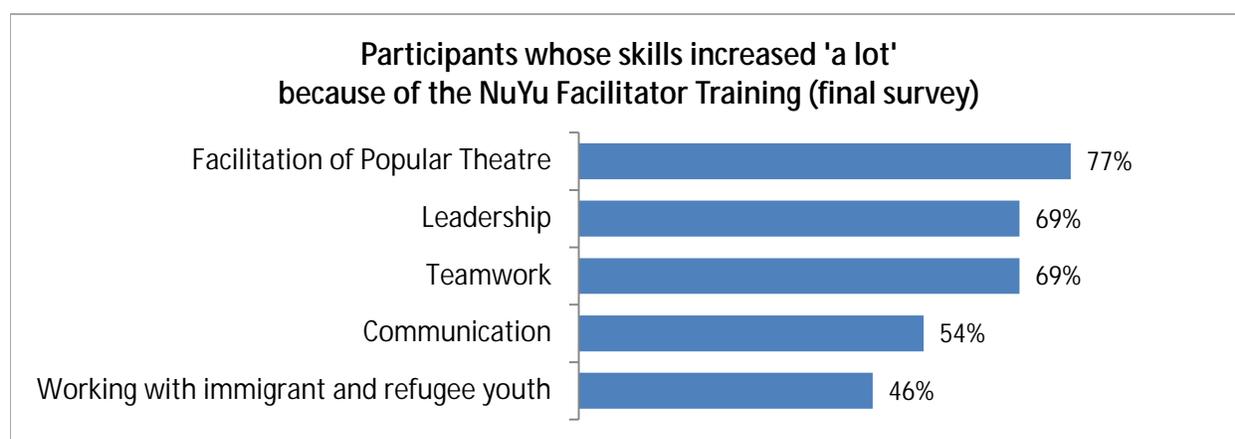
Increased Knowledge and Skills

"[I learned] theatre is a powerful way to share knowledge and emotional expression. It's universal."

~Facilitator training participant (interview)

On the final survey, most participants reported that the NuYu facilitation training taught them 'a lot' about Popular Theatre (86%), about engaging youth in a creative way (93%), and ways to help immigrant and refugee youth (57%). The remaining participants felt that they learned 'some' information on these topics, and none indicated learning nothing. Some participants added that they learned how to identify different forms of oppression, as well as new games and activities.

When asked about improvements in specific skills, all participants who completed a final survey reported at least 'some' skill improvements in facilitating Popular Theatre, working with immigrant and refugee youth, and in the areas of communication, teamwork, and leadership. Many participants reported 'a lot' of improvements in these areas.

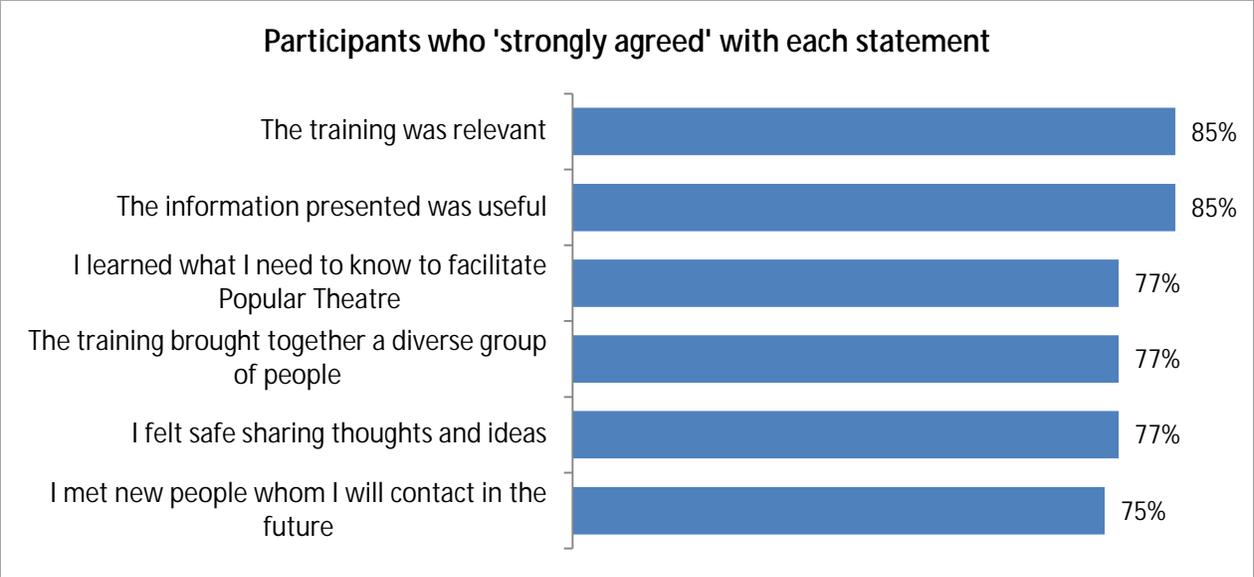


Some participants added that the training enhanced their empathy and perspective-taking skills. They explained that they are now better able to see a situation from all sides and to acknowledge the views of others that may differ from their own.

More Feedback about NuYu Facilitator Training

Virtually all participants who completed a final survey were satisfied with the facilitator training overall, were satisfied with the quality of the information and the way it was presented, and the amount of time devoted to training. Seventy-one percent indicated they were satisfied with the location where the training took place.

Participants also reported that a diverse group of people were brought together, they felt safe sharing their thoughts and ideas with the group, and will likely seek future contact with the people they met in the group.



Almost all those who took part in a phone interview said they had gotten what they had hoped to get out of the training, and some indicated having gained more than they ever could have expected.

One participant who took part in a phone interview spoke of gaining new perspectives through learning the context and meaning behind the activities that she had taken part in previously while participating in the NuYu Popular Theatre program. Many felt they had learned new ways to engage youth, had developed skills facilitating new games and activities, were able to network with other professionals, developed new friendships, and gained valuable insights from the instruction they had received. Some participants described benefiting from the chance to exchange knowledge and share challenges and feedback.

When asked what they liked most about the NuYu facilitator training, participants who completed a final survey cited a number of different aspects, from creating a safe and trusting environment, to hearing people’s different stories, playing games, acting, testing out interventions, and hearing group feedback.

In the phone interviews three months later, participants overwhelmingly felt that the main strength of the training sessions was the quality of the instruction. Many felt that they benefited immensely from having such knowledgeable role models and that the instructors contributed to creating a very positive group dynamic. Some also cited the quality of the participants as a strength of the program, in that the participants were able to positively contribute to group conversations and debriefs following games and activities. A number of participants also identified the Popular Theatre methodology, including its emphasis on experiential learning, as a strength of the training.

Who Can Benefit

*“Popular Theatre could be used with everyone.
It could benefit everyone.”
~Facilitator training participant (interview)*

Training participants felt that the facilitator training will assist them in supporting immigrant and refugee youth. They explained that newcomer youth could benefit from involvement in NuYu Popular Theatre because it creates a safe environment for them to share their stories, gives them a creative voice without English language skills as a barrier, allows them to connect with other newcomer youth, and can improve their confidence and communication skills. Overall, they felt that taking part in NuYu Popular Theatre would be a very positive and empowering experience for immigrant and refugee youth.

Most participants (92% on the final survey) felt that the facilitator training could help support other groups of people beyond newcomer youth. Many felt that Popular Theatre is widely beneficial because the methodology is centered on the universal experiences of participants. Participants thought that it could benefit other oppressed groups, such as Aboriginal youth, immigrant and refugee adults, seniors, victimized women, at-risk and marginalized youth, and individuals experiencing physical and mental health challenges.

Many also felt that the benefits of such an experience could be extended beyond those who were oppressed to include other members of the community, such as mainstream students, parents and community leaders for them to gain a better understanding of others. A number of people also suggested integrating newcomer youth and youth born in Canada and using the techniques to teach about bullying and to promote leadership.

All the participants indicated on the final survey and in the interviews that they would recommend the NuYu facilitator training to others, and a number of individuals had already done so. Most felt that it could be of benefit to a variety of different community members, including teachers, because of the valuable lessons, techniques, relationships, and insights that people gained from their time in the program. Participants felt that taking part in the training would be an eye-opening experience for others and would challenge them to explore their own experiences in a positive way.

Next Steps

On the final survey, participants reported on the benefit of bringing their newly acquired skills, understanding, and creativity back to their place of work and implementing it within their jobs. Some hoped to take their new skills back to their workplace to enhance and build on existing programs and services, while others hoped to become more involved in work with newcomer youth and to facilitate their own Popular Theatre Forums.

When asked on the final survey how confident they would feel facilitating a NuYu Popular Theatre group, participants most commonly indicated feeling 'quite' comfortable (61%) or 'very' comfortable (31%) doing so. However, a number of participants suggested that spending more time shadowing facilitators and having the opportunity to gain additional experience facilitating workshops would help to increase their confidence.

Many of those interviewed three months after the training said they had used the skills and techniques they had learned in the training since completing the program. They most commonly cited using the games and icebreakers to engage the youth they worked with. However, the majority stated that they would not feel comfortable facilitating Popular Theatre

in the community. Many felt they could not remember all the details of the activities and that they had not gained the level of confidence necessary to facilitate independently.

Stakeholders were aware that many participants likely do not feel sufficiently confident to run a Popular Theatre workshop in the community once they complete the facilitator training. They attributed this to having only a limited time to teach the methodology, an inability to supply continuous follow-up support, and the fact that only extensive practice by the individuals can allow them to master the techniques and methodology. One stakeholder mentioned that the methodology may be more easily grasped by those who had experience participating in Popular Theatre before taking part in the facilitator training.

Suggestions for Future Facilitator Training Sessions

Participants who took part in the facilitator training had the following suggestions for future sessions:

- Allotting more time in the training sessions to practicing the facilitation techniques so that training participants could gain more confidence facilitating Popular Theatre in the community.
- Including weekly “homework” assignments for people to practice techniques on their own, which would increase their practice time and give them the opportunity to return to the next session to reflect and receive feedback and clarifications on the activities.
- Developing a written guide to which training participants could refer. This guide could include detailed, step-by-step instructions for the activities and for running Popular Theatre forums.
- Adding an extra session at the start of the training to introduce anti-oppression work and to show a visual representation of the Popular Theatre methodology.
- Moving the training sessions to a more central location, easily accessible by public transportation. This would reduce potential barriers to attending.
- Offering facilitator training workshops over a single week would increase the continuity of material and would allow for more diverse participants to attend.
- Incorporating a condensed curriculum into a workshop for teachers during Professional Development Days because school teachers could gain particular benefit from the training.
- Including certain practices such as acknowledging traditional First Nations territory and making the space more trans-inclusive, to make a wider variety of individuals feel welcome in the facilitator training program.

Stakeholders also had suggestions for the facilitator training:

- As a result of funding constraints, stakeholders felt that the amount of follow-up support they were able to provide to participants was not yet at the optimal level. They suggested that if additional funding were secured, follow-up refresher sessions should be added every few months. These follow-up sessions would allow participants to practice applying the methodology, to exchange feedback and ideas, and to discuss any challenges and successes they have encountered using Popular Theatre in the community. Similarly, many training participants wished to have “booster sessions” every few months where facilitator training alumni and instructors could meet to review the material and share feedback about their experiences implementing the techniques.
- Offer training participants the opportunity to co-facilitate or shadow Popular Theatre workshops or run practice forums with youth. Doing so would enable them to practice their facilitation skills and gain confidence in the process.

Training participants' comments about the facilitator training (final survey):

"I definitely learned a lot about Popular Theatre and facilitation."

"Networking was great; meeting other workers that have the same experience as me was very comforting to know you are not alone."

"[The training] is empowering and challenges you to grow and think."

"I understand myself better as an individual, worker, facilitator and bystander and what I can do in all those roles."

"Theater is really more engaging, more interesting, will capture youth's attention better than the usual discussion."

"I learned different theater activities to engage immigrant & refugee youth. Also, [I learned] details of facilitation techniques to ensure youth bring out their stories while feeling safe and comfortable."

"Anyone can benefit in participating in Popular Theatre. The facilitator training breaks it all down for it to be less intimidating to participate."

"What an amazing and unique experience. I feel a lot of gratitude and love, and will take the learnings with me in my personal and professional worlds. Thank you!"

Archival MOSAIC Data

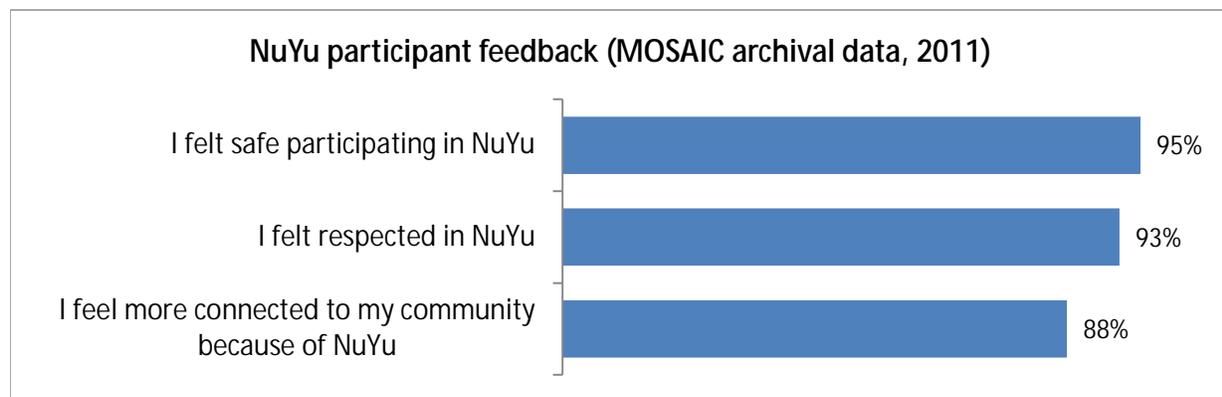
“NuYu is the best program to learn theatre skills and express your feeling[s] through forum theatre. Also, you can talk about yourself and there is no right or wrong.”

Youth participants

Archival data analyses, from feedback forms collected by MOSAIC between 2008 and 2011, indicated that youth who previously took part in NuYu felt similarly about their experience in the program as did youth who completed surveys for the purpose of the current evaluation. Specifically, they provided very positive feedback about the program and indicated that it was a fun and enjoyable experience.

They reported developing a deeper understanding and respect toward others, gaining more confidence, making new friends, and feeling more connected to their community. They also reported realizing that others shared similar challenges to their own, and that they learned how to solve problems through involvement in the program.

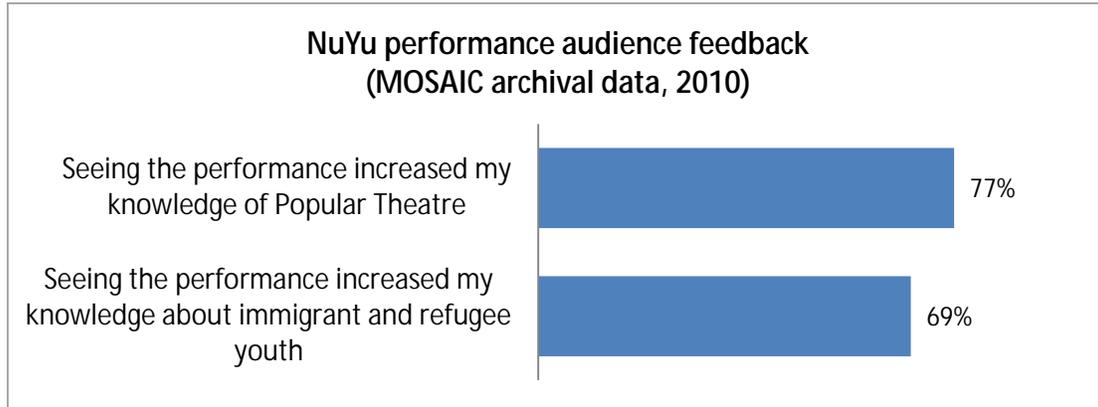
When asked for suggestions to improve the program, many participants indicated having no suggestions because they liked the program as it was. Some youth who had suggestions recommended that the program should be better advertised so that more young people could learn about NuYu and benefit from taking part.



Audience members

MOSAIC also collected feedback from audience members who attended a NuYu performance. Most were between the ages of 19 and 40 and indicated they had heard about the forum through family or friends. They reported feeling more knowledgeable about both newcomer youth and Popular Theatre as a result of the performance. Many appreciated hearing the participants' stories and taking part in the interventions. The majority of audience members reported that the performance dealt with issues they or someone close to them had faced. They agreed that the performance was useful to them and relevant to the needs of the community. Some felt that the experience could have been improved by more widely advertising the event to have a larger audience; including props and sound amplifiers; and

adding a discussion after each scene to talk about the intervention and get the youth actors' feedback.



Facilitator training

Data analyses were also carried out on facilitator training feedback forms that MOSAIC had previously developed and collected. Consistent with findings from more recent NuYu training participants, results indicated that previous participants were satisfied with the training. For example, the majority felt that the training brought together a diverse group of people which was reflective of the diversity in the community (88%) and that the training was relevant to the needs of the community (81%). Most also felt that the information presented was useful (87%) and that diverse perspectives were valued and encouraged (88%). Further, the majority of previous training participants were motivated to take action based on what they learned in the training (75%) and most indicated that they would recommend the training to others (81%).

For more information about this archival data, please contact MOSAIC.

Summary and Conclusions

Findings from this evaluation indicated that the NuYu program targeted the intended group of multicultural immigrant and refugee youth. On the survey, participants reported a wide range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and most had lived in Canada for less than one year.

Youth participants expressed great satisfaction with the NuYu program overall, and many indicated that it had surpassed their expectations. They reported feeling safe taking part in the program and having learned valuable knowledge and skills (e.g., communication, teamwork, English language skills). They also indicated learning ways to overcome challenges in their lives, including discrimination, and hoped to use their experience in NuYu to reach out to other newcomer youth. Participants also reported an enhanced support network and a greater connection to their community and school because of their involvement in NuYu. In addition, most indicated improvements in their mental health, including improved mood, self-esteem, and confidence. Participants described having fun and developing meaningful friendships in the process.

Youth involved in NuYu in previous years reported applying what they had learned through NuYu in their personal and professional lives, such as to navigate challenging situations and to better recognize and address social injustices. Some also incorporated the NuYu games and activities into their work with children and youth. Past participants also felt they had gained enduring friendships and support networks that have continued to positively impact their lives.

Gender differences were identified in that recent male participants preferred lively games that involved physical activity more than those that entailed verbally communicating their thoughts and feelings. Female participants, on the other hand, valued the activities that involved verbal exchanges with one another because they felt that these activities fostered a deeper understanding and connection among participants. This finding was consistent with stakeholders' observations of differences between male and female participants. Youth participants' recommendation to incorporate more physical activities into the NuYu program may increase the likelihood of males joining and staying engaged.

Youth participants had other suggestions for how NuYu could build in its strengths. For example, many recommended greater advertising of the program in such a way that would motivate and inspire youth to join. One idea was to create a video that explained the NuYu program, demonstrated youth taking part in the activities, and included interviews with past participants. This approach could address the challenge that stakeholders identified of explaining the Popular Theatre methodology and articulating what youth can expect from the NuYu program.

As far as the NuYu facilitator training, those who took part reported learning new skills and techniques and benefiting from the opportunity to network with other individuals eager to learn ways of engaging newcomer youth. They felt the instruction was of high quality, the program was well run, and that a positive environment was created for learning and exchanging knowledge. Almost all the participants indicated that they would recommend the NuYu facilitator training to others, and a number of individuals had already done so.

Some suggestions for the facilitation training were to allot more time to practicing facilitation techniques so that participants would feel more confident implementing Popular Theatre in the community; to add a session at the start which introduced anti-oppression work and showed a visual representation of Popular Theatre; to develop a detailed written guide which would include instructions on how to run the activities and Popular Theatre forums; to offer a condensed workshop to teachers during Professional Development Days; and to incorporate some culturally inclusive practices that could help make a wider variety of individuals feel more welcome in the training.

Youth participants, individuals involved in the facilitator training, and stakeholders all felt that Popular Theatre could be an effective approach to use not only with newcomer youth but also a range of other groups who have experienced oppression, because of the universal applicability of the methodology. One idea was that youth born in Canada could take part alongside newcomer youth in order to promote increased understanding. Findings from the Review of Best Practices suggest that the Popular Theatre methodology can in fact be used successfully with a variety of groups.

In sum, MOSAIC's NuYu program has been meeting its goals of supporting youth during their settlement and integration into Canada by enhancing participants' self-confidence, peer support networks, connection to their community, and skills in various domains. Additionally, the program has not only helped participants with their English language skills but has also encouraged them to teach one another words from their first languages. This is in line with best practices identified in the literature for engaging immigrant and refugee youth, specifically acknowledging and encouraging diversity, and seizing opportunities to teach others about each youth's language and culture (e.g., MENTOR, 2009; Morland, 2007). Also in line with best practices is NuYu's approach of fostering positive peer relationships and providing positive adult role models, which give participants the support they need.

Another best practice recommendation is program sustainability (Keleher & Armstrong, 2005; Trevin et al., 2004) which requires long-term funding. Stakeholders explained that a major challenge for the NuYu program has been a lack of continuous funding. They felt that long-term funding would enable the NuYu program and facilitation training to be run regularly throughout the year and would thus allow more people to benefit from the program. Reliable funding would also enable MOSAIC to offer more follow-up support to youth and training participants, which would help the NuYu program become even stronger.

As far as the evaluation methodology, the mixed-methods approach of surveys, focus groups and interviews provided valuable information about the NuYu program. However, the voices of individuals who chose not to get involved in NuYu and those who left before program completion were not included in this evaluation. Future evaluations could try to include these individuals to gain a better understanding of any obstacles to getting and staying involved in the NuYu program.

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