



PROJECT NEWS

Finding Your Voice. Knowing Your Rights.

Project Team

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The Project: Finding Your Voice, Knowing Your Rights

Our work aims to improve workplace health and safety outcomes for youth workers between the ages of 18-30, who are also English language learners (ELL). In the coming 18 months our team will research, create, and pilot resources designed to complement existing language training and employment readiness services. Newcomer youth face challenges accessing their safety and labour rights in the workplace that can contribute to injury and prevent their full and equitable, integration into Alberta's labour force. Finding Your Voice, Knowing Your rights addresses the unique needs of newcomer youth by speaking to the intersectional vulnerabilities of being a youth, newcomer, English language learner, and new-to-Canada worker. Employing a rights-based approach to these issues through participatory and co-creation methodologies, our project will create scalable teaching tools and online learning resources for young ELL employees, ELL instructors, and employers.

Partner Perspectives: ActionDignity

Since its inception, ActionDignity has been in the forefront of initiatives addressing diversity, human rights, racial inequities and public participation. It has built leadership and organizational capacity in Calgary's ethno-cultural communities and enhanced the presence and participation of members of these communities in civic activities, public consultations and elections. It developed innovative approaches that strengthens the role of ethno-cultural communities in the design, access and better delivery of services, domestic violence prevention and neighbourhood strengthening. It also participated in an important research on the impact of changes to public policies especially on immigration.

Community brokers from Action Dignity are playing a key role in connecting our research to ethno-cultural communities throughout the city. They have shared their in-depth knowledge of community needs with the co-creation team, contributed to data collection and analysis, and will be actively involved in the upcoming knowledge mobilization activities.

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Project Update: Co-Creation

Since September 2019, we have been working on analyzing our data with the co-creation team. The team, which consists of 12 research participants and student research assistants, have been meeting bi-weekly to identify emerging themes, develop recommendations, and shape knowledge translation assets. By engaging the “end user” – in this case young workers - in these activities, co-creation can help mitigate the power imbalances often present in the research/practice divide.

Over the fall, the team developed outlines for three resources that address the needs of language instructors, employers, and young newcomer workers. In the coming months the co-creation team will provide further input into the final products, and assist with their piloting and evaluation.

In January, the team shared our preliminary findings through two Peer-to-Peer sharing sessions held at Bow Valley College. Over the course of two sessions 24 students learned about their OHS rights, discussed intersecting challenges faced by newcomer youth which may prevent them from exercising their rights under the current responsabilization model with its focus on safety voice (see below), and discussed recommendations for employers to improve training and onboarding for new to Canada young workers.

Timeline

Data Collection: April-September 2019

Analysis and Resource Development: August-December 2019

Piloting and Evaluation: January-August 2020

Knowledge Mobilization and Reporting: August-December 2020

Key Concepts: Safety Voice

At the individual level, responsabilization (discussed in our previous newsletter) manifests through the notion of **safety voice**. Safety voice refers to *the behavior of speaking up about safety due to perceivably risky situations*. An example of safety voice in the workplace is when an employee recognizes they do not know how to perform a required task, voices this to their supervisor, requests the proper machinery or training to be able to do it, and the proper procedures are followed by both employer and employee. However, the reliance of safety voice for safe workplaces is problematic because it assumes the need to exercise voice at work and demand change as opposed to having safe conditions already set up. The speaker is framed as an actor who can be split from workplace power relations, (non) union-status, age, gender, language ability, cultural groups, organizational culture, and the type of employment that someone is embedded in – all of which have a tremendous impact of speaking out behaviours.