

FOR YOUTH INITIATIVE

December 2020

**Black Youth
Leadership Program
(Year 1)**



**INSTITUTE
FOR
CHANGE
LEADERS**



Melanie Matthews BSW, MSW, RSW

Cassandra Chester BSW (Candidate)





Table of Contents

Item	Page No.
Executive Summary	2
Introduction	3
Program Description	5
Evaluation	8
Quantitative Data	9
Qualitative Data	17
Conclusion	22



Executive Summary

The Black Youth Leadership Program (BYLP)

The Black Youth Leadership Program (BYLP) is a program designed to teach Black youth leadership skills that can be used in their daily life and also to combat systemic issues in the community. The program was delivered to over 200 Black youth broken into 12 cohorts. Each cohort engaged in 3 sessions with a specific focus on different skills:

1. Tactics and Strategies
2. Public Narrative
3. Building a Team

Results

Through a comprehensive mixed methods evaluation it was determined that the BYLP achieved its intended outcomes. The program also had strong positive results in:

- Creating an inclusive environment
- Facilitating the development of transferable leadership skills
- Connecting youth to their culture and increasing cultural appreciation
- Increasing access to resources
- Creating opportunities for participation in leadership projects
- Preparing youth to take action in their community

Conclusion

The BYLP was successful in achieving its intended outcomes. As well, the program was able to facilitate leadership opportunities for youth. Some youth participants took action to become facilitators and/or organize and carry out an event that included the celebration of Black culture and Black youth.

Next Steps

The BYLP will be run for another year with the same intended outcomes. In year 2 the program will be adapted to specifically address issues in the justice system and will purposefully include youth who are involved in the justice system while they are attending FYI's Youth Justice program.



Introduction

The Black Youth Leadership Program (BYLP)

The Black Youth Leadership Program (BYLP) utilised an anti-racist approach to promote the involvement of Black youth in creating meaningful and positive change, both systemically and within their communities. Leadership is important in many aspects of life, including fighting for social justice and the right to equitable and fair treatment, respect, and opportunities. By teaching Black youth how to be leaders, this program ensures that the voices of Black youth are heard, recognized, and their stories and feelings validated.

FYI decided to run this program in response to community need and interest from youth. This program was originally run as a pilot project in 2019 as the Leadership and Academic Success Research Project (LASR Project). The LASR Project was successful in teaching youth transferable leadership skills that they are able to apply in all aspects of their lives, including school and work. There was so much positive feedback and continued interest in the program that we decided to run the program again with an increased focus on community change and combating systemic racism in the community.

This program is run as a three session workshop delivered to 12 cohorts of youth. During the three sessions, participants were shown what elements are necessary to create change in their community. In the first session, Tactics and Strategies, individuals were encouraged to think of things that needed to be changed and tactics to overcome challenges. In this presentation, the difference between goals, strategies, and tactics were discussed. A sample scenario was used to help participants distinguish between allies, people who were neutral in the situation, and opponents.

In the second session, Public Narrative, participants were taught how to tell their stories with emotion so that they could get others invested in the change they are trying to make. The presentation discussed how to compose values to elicit emotion in others and enable action. Within each good story, there should be a plot with a challenge, leading to a choice, and ultimately leading to an outcome based on the choices made. Participants were asked to choose a story and share it within a smaller group.

In the third session, Building a Team, participants were shown how to recruit others by connecting on shared values, exploring resources and shared interests, and gaining commitment from others to pursue a movement. It was emphasized in this session that people cannot make change alone; you must have a team. As it was mentioned during the presentation, one hand alone cannot clap. In this session, participants were able to practice roleplaying and were able to try recruiting others to the cause in the practice case scenario. In each of the three sessions, participants were placed in smaller groups to brainstorm various ideas based on example scenarios.



York South-Weston (YSW)

FYI is situated in the York South-Weston (YSW) community. This program is incredibly important for the Black youth in YSW as this community faces unique challenges and has access to few resources. Youth living in this community are disproportionately impacted by poverty, racism, and systemic barriers.

Some highlights from the Statistics Canada (StatsCan) 2016 Census help articulate the challenges of youth and their families living in YSW:

- 29% of residents over age 15 have no certificate, diploma, or degree
- \$67 954 average household income, \$30 000 less than the rest of Toronto
- 32% single-parent households compared to the City average of 21%
- 23.6% of families are classified as low income
- 34% of residents under age 17 are considered low income
- 55% identify as visible minorities

Our Youth

All youth are welcome in our space and we have been a trusted gathering place for newcomers and immigrants, Black and racialized youth, youth from low income families, and justice involved youth since our inception.

In the 2019-2020 fiscal year we achieved the following:

- 649 unique youth received support from FYI
- 320 new youth began receiving support from FYI
- Nearly 40% of youth participants were newcomers to Canada
- Newcomers most often originated from Africa, the Caribbean, South America, and Southeast Asia
- 82% of youth participants identify as Black or racialized
- 67% of youth participants were high school-aged

Funding Acknowledgement

The BYLP was funded by the Government of Canada through the Canadian Heritage Community Support, Multiculturalism, and Anti-Racism Initiatives Program.

Funded by the Government of Canada
Financé par le gouvernement du Canada

Canada 



Program Description

Program Purpose

There are two main purposes of this program:

1. The first purpose is to address systemic issues by teaching Black youth skills related to leadership in order to ensure they are better able to make positive change within their communities. In this context, systemic issues can refer to macro and mezzo issues within the educational and justice system, including anti-Black racism.
2. The second purpose of this program is to ensure Black youth have an opportunity to increase their sense of community and pride. This happens by allowing Black youth the opportunity to expand their knowledge and engagement in their culture and racial identity.

Institute for Change Leaders (ICL) Involvement

The Institute for Change Leaders (ICL) designed the curriculum for the BYLP and ICL facilitators delivered the program. The Lead Instructor for this program was Sandra Whiting. Sandra is storyteller, speaker, and community activist who is prominent in the Jamaican-Canadian community. As this program was intended for Black youth, it was important to both FYI and ICL that the program should be Black-led. As well, two Black youth participants from early cohorts in the program were trained as ICL facilitators to further the goal of the program being Black-led and youth-led.

ICL has partnered with FYI in the past to deliver leadership programs for youth participants so they had the expertise and experience to design and implement this program.



Sandra Whiting

Participants

This program engaged over 200 Black youth in leadership programming. Twelve youth participants entered leadership roles as consultants, facilitators, and event planners. The youth were primarily from the YSW area. All identified as Black and all were between the ages of 15-24.



Intended Outcomes

The BYLP intended the achieve the following outcomes:

- Black youth, especially those involved in the justice system and education system, build leadership skills so that they can successfully advocate for themselves within systems
 - Black youth, especially those who are involved in the justice system, are supported so they can surpass barriers that prevent them from attending or re-entering an educational institution
 - Black youth become leaders in both the program and in their communities to act as mentors for their peers and advocate for systemic change in their communities
- Another intended outcome of this program is to
- Black youth will have increased awareness of issues impacting Black youth through program participation, mentorship sessions, and other FYI programs and partnerships
 - Black youth will have an increased sense of belonging
 - Black youth will have increased community connections and networking between Black youth and their peers, community leaders/partners, and others in the community

Program Structure

The program was delivered as workshops held over 3 sessions with 12 cohorts of youth. Each session involved an icebreaker activity, an instructional period delivered by Sandra Whiting, small group activities led by ICL facilitators, and a review period. The program used multimedia approaches, including lectures, videos, and interactive activities, to engage the youth in active participation.

Adaptations

FYI values being responsive and adaptive, as well as including youth voices in all our program planning and delivery. In accordance with these values, we collected feedback from each cohort of youth and used that feedback to adapt the program to improve delivery continuously.

COVID-19 Adaptation:

- Originally, the program was intended to be delivered in person, but due to COVID-19, we had to convert to online and the program was delivered via Zoom. Considerable effort was made to convert all in-person training material to online workshops including creation of new slides, adapting activities that normally use chart paper and movement, training facilitators to facilitate online, training a Black



community member as an online teacher, and collecting ongoing feedback afterwards each session with youth participants

- A significant piece we learned from the first few cohorts, is that a significant portion of the participants join the zoom workshops from borrowed mobile devices using less than ideal internet connections, so we extended the sessions by 15 minutes with a longer icebreaker activity that gave us time to help anyone troubleshoot so they could fully participate without eating into our instructional time

Inclusion of participant experience:

- In the first cohort, one of the participants described experiencing discrimination in a local Dollarama, a story that resonated with the other participants. We adapted the entire curriculum using this as a focal lens
 - Tactics: We added this session to the curriculum to address the discrimination and issues they experience
 - By using the Dollarama case study, BYLP participants learned how to plan campaigns to address instances of anti-Black racism relevant to their own experience

Cultural Content:

- Examination of survey responses from cohorts 1-3 revealed that although outcomes were extremely favourable across the board, slightly lower outcomes were reported for connection to cultural identity and community. In response, more purposeful cultural content was added including: good news stories from Black community members, more purposeful team building, and more explanation of the cultural value of past campaigns
- We implemented an opportunity for participants to take a leadership role in creating a cultural celebration that was delivered online on August 13th, 2020



Evaluation

FYI strives to complete comprehensive evaluations for all ongoing programs we deliver. The BYLP was no exception. Our evaluation was designed to facilitate the creation of evidence based practices for delivering leadership programming to Black youth as there is a dearth of information on this topic.

Method

This evaluation used a mixed methods approach to fully understand the impact and outcomes of the programs. The method was designed to collect both qualitative and quantitative data in order to facilitate collecting the most robust responses from the youth participants.

Tools

The evaluation tools included:

1. Case management and documentation tracked the number of Black youth participants in the program, demographics, program completion, and contact information
2. A survey was administered to all participants in the program. The survey used a 5-point Likert scale to measure how the participants perceive their improvements after completing the program. The survey also included four short answer questions for participants to provide their feedback
3. Youth facilitators were recruited from early cohorts and included in program design and delivery using their knowledge, experience, and feedback. This was an essential element of the evaluation as it directly included youth voices in a leadership role

The results from this evaluation are included in this report. Results are presented to the community as well as other stakeholders to communicate the successes, challenges, and outcomes of the BYLP.



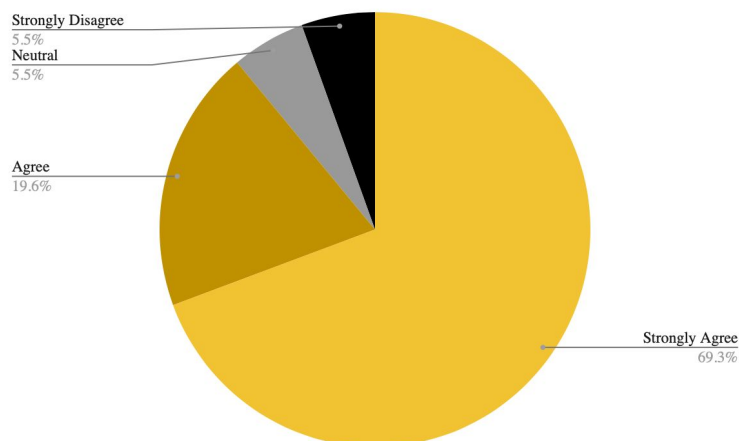
Quantitative Data

A total of 199 youth participants (N=199) responded to a survey assessing the skills, knowledge, and awareness they gained from participating in the program. Not all youth answered every question so some totals may not add up to 199. Questions 4 and 12 are omitted as they were intended as reversed scored response bias testing questions. These questions were added after the first cohort in response to concerns over validity of the answers. Surveys that did not pass response bias testing were omitted which explains why there are less surveys than there were total participants.

It should be noted in advance that some participants misread the questions and reversed the 5-point likert scale of 'strongly agree' and 'strongly disagree'. This is suspected because in the qualitative section many of these individuals stated that they loved the program while the quantitative questions showed a negative perception of the program.

The first five questions relate to how participants felt while participating in the program. The rest of the questions detail program outcomes.

Q1: I felt comfortable and safe while participating in the program.



N = 199

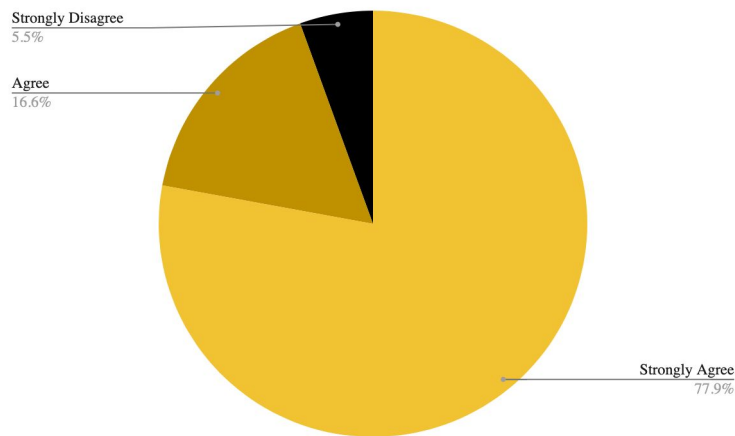
Strongly Agree and Agree = 177 (89%)

Neutral = 11 (6%)

Strongly Disagree and Disagree = 11 (6%)



Q2: The atmosphere was positive in the program.



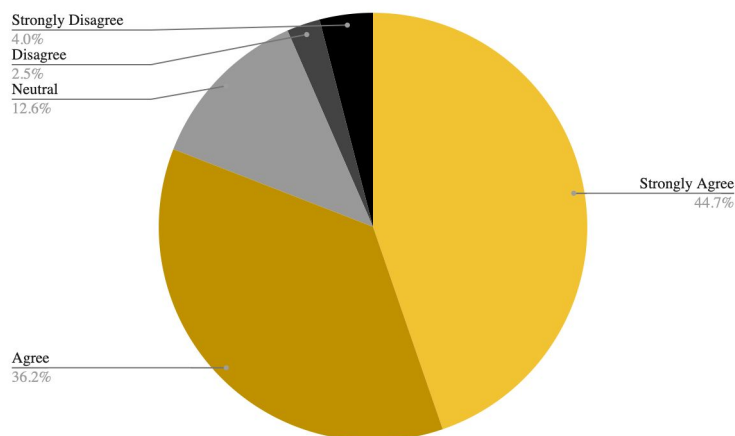
N = 199

Strongly Agree and Agree = 188 (94%)

Neutral = 0 (0%)

Strongly Disagree and Disagree = 11 (6%)

Q3: I liked the activities in the program.



N = 199

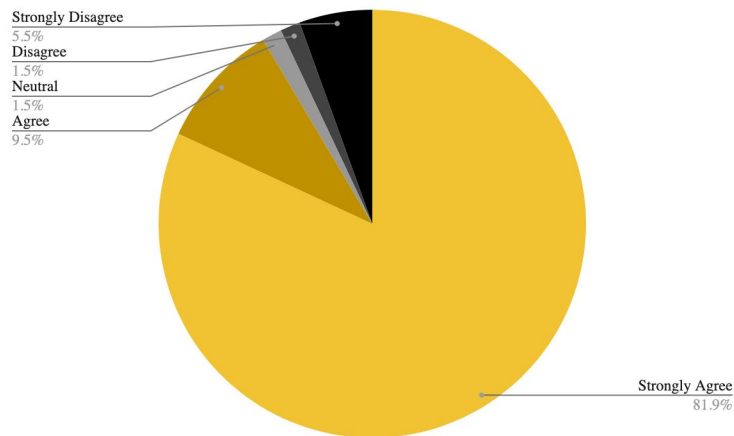
Strongly Agree and Agree = 161 (81%)

Neutral = 25 (13%)

Strongly Disagree and Disagree = 13 (7%)



Q5: The staff/facilitator(s) were supportive and caring.



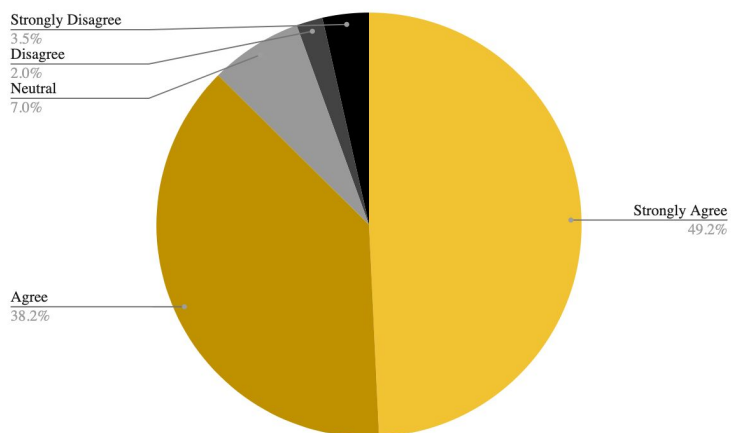
N = 199

Strongly Agree and Agree = 183 (92%)

Neutral = 3 (2%)

Strongly Disagree and Disagree = 13 (7%)

Q6: I learned new skills that I can use in my life.



N = 199

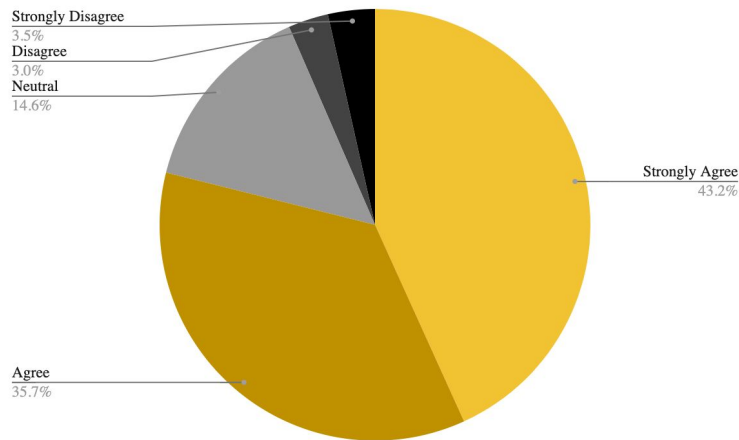
Strongly Agree and Agree = 174 (87%)

Neutral = 14 (7%)

Strongly Disagree and Disagree = 11 (6%)



Q7: My leadership abilities increased.



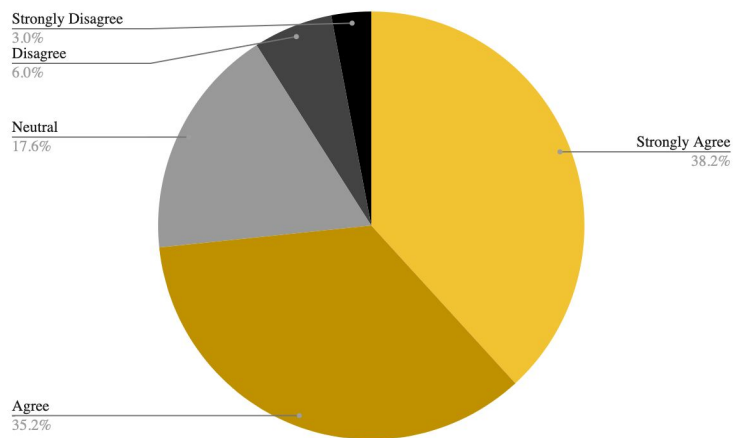
N = 199

Strongly Agree and Agree = 157 (79%)

Neutral = 29 (15%)

Strongly Disagree and Disagree = 13 (7%)

Q8: I have a better understanding of the barriers affecting my community.



N = 199

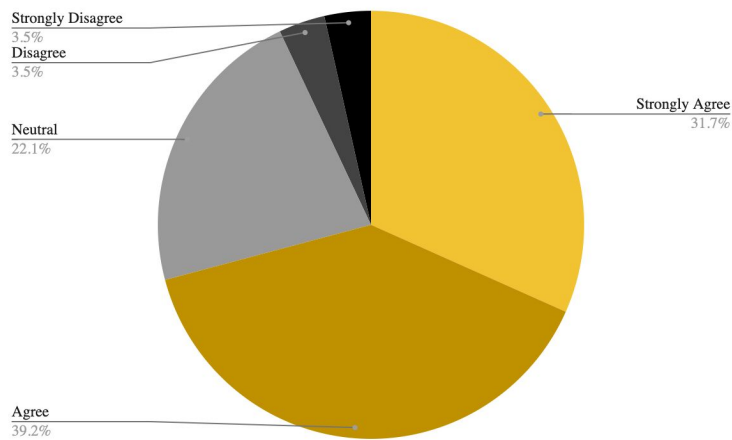
Strongly Agree and Agree = 146 (73%)

Neutral = 35 (18%)

Strongly Disagree and Disagree = 18 (9%)



Q9: I am more confident in my ability to access resources in my community.



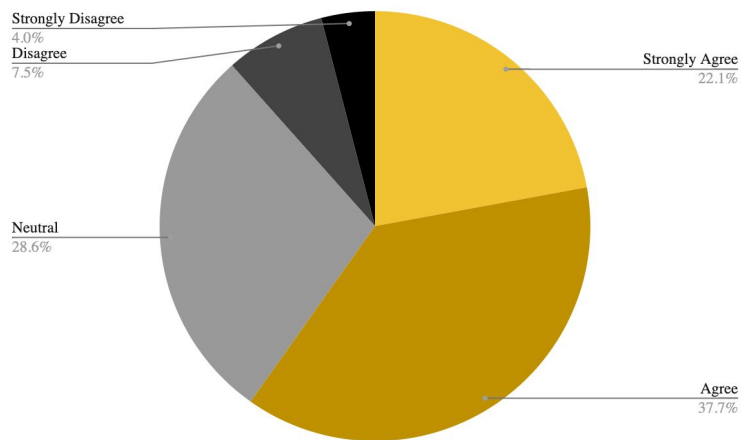
N = 199

Strongly Agree and Agree = 141 (71%)

Neutral = 44 (22%)

Strongly Disagree and Disagree = 14 (7%)

Q10: I feel more connected to my community.



N = 199

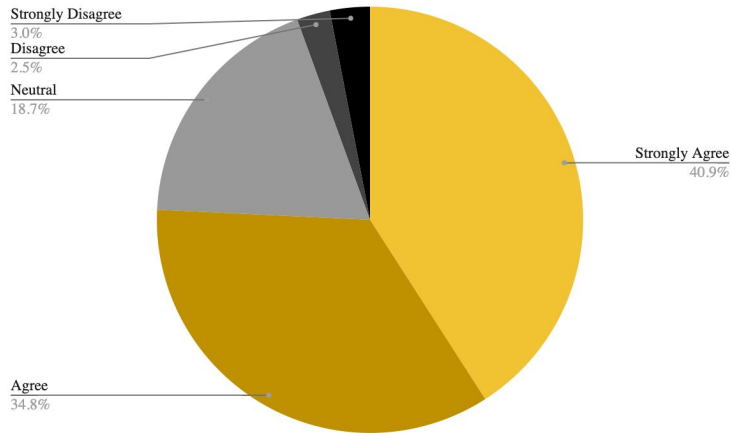
Strongly Agree and Agree = 119 (60%)

Neutral = 29%

Strongly Disagree and Disagree = 23 (12%)



Q11: I am more prepared to take action about issues I care about in my community.



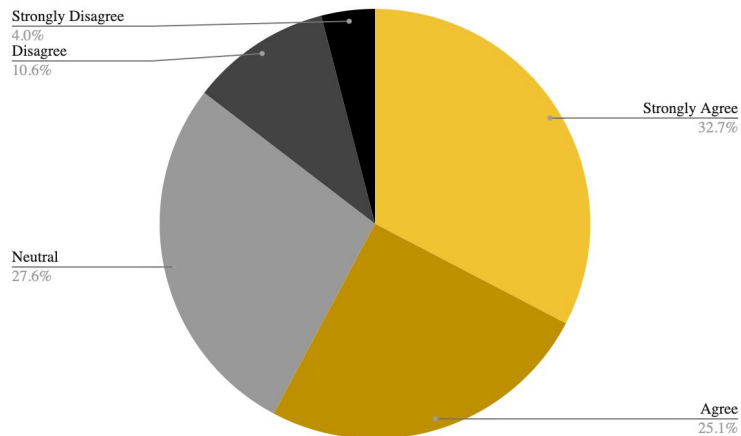
N = 198

Strongly Agree and Agree = 150 (76%)

Neutral = 37 (19%)

Strongly Disagree and Disagree = 11 (6%)

Q13: I have a greater connection to my cultural identity.



N = 199

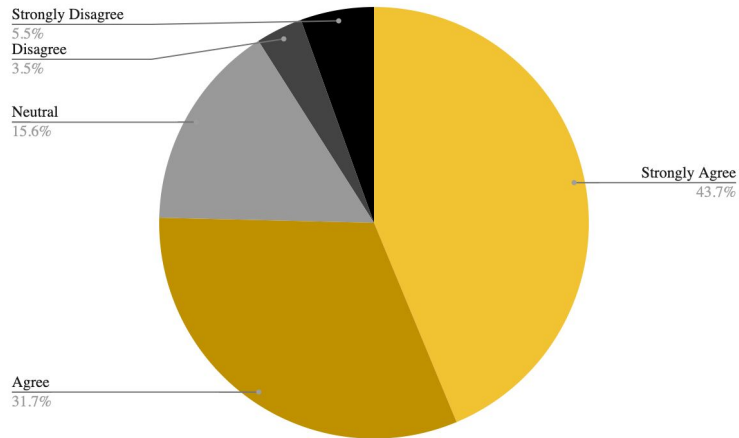
Strongly Agree and Agree = 115 (58%)

Neutral = 55 (28%)

Strongly Disagree and Disagree = 29 (15%)



Q14: I feel an increased sense of belonging and pride in my cultural identity.



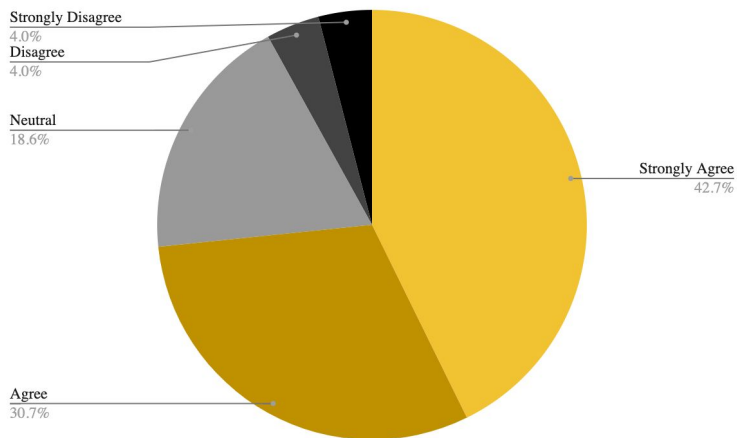
N = 199

Strongly Agree and Agree = 150 (75%)

Neutral = 31 (16%)

Strongly Disagree and Disagree = 18 (9%)

Q15: I learned skills that will help me improve in school.



N = 199

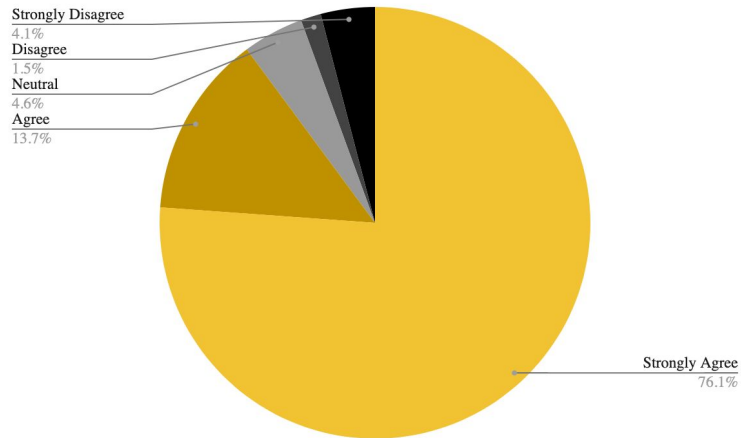
Strongly Agree and Agree = 147 (74%)

Neutral = 36 (18%)

Strongly Disagree and Disagree = 16 (8%)



Q16: Overall, I am satisfied with the program.



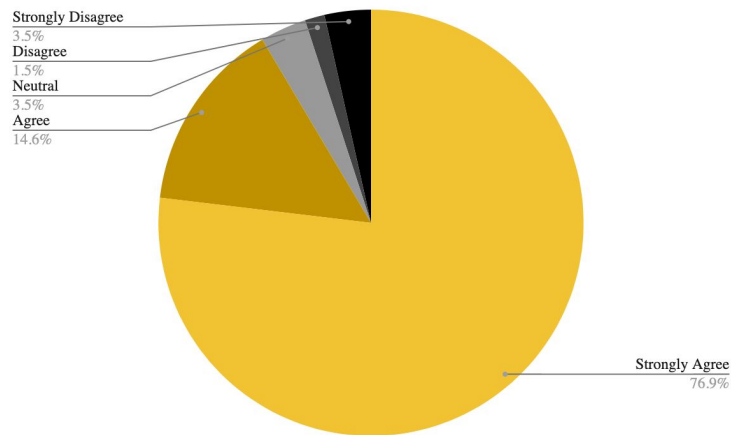
N = 197

Strongly Agree and Agree = 177 (90%)

Neutral = 9 (5%)

Strongly Disagree and Disagree = 11 (6%)

Q17: I would recommend the program to a friend.



N = 199

Strongly Agree and Agree = 182 (91%)

Neutral = 7 (4%)

Strongly Disagree and Disagree = 10 (5%)



Qualitative Data

The survey included four open-ended questions for participants to respond and freely share their personal experiences.

What was your favourite part of the program?

There were many themes noted. The most prominent theme was utilization of the breakout rooms. Participants felt that working in small groups made it easier to talk and therefore the conversations were richer since individuals were able to speak their minds. As well, some participants felt that the breakout rooms were nice because talking in smaller groups made them feel more comfortable.

Other themes that were noted include the sharing of personal stories, the poems that were discussed, the Dollarama story, role playing, and being able to meet new people.

“I loved when we were sharing our personal stories involving making a life changing decision. It helped me know that I am not the only one struggling and knowing that others can get through it means that I can do it too.”

“The variety of activities and group work. It allowed us to be involved personally with some of the members as well as practice critical thinking skills.”

“The poems and how they correlate to the hardships of people.”

“Identifying the difference between active allies, neutral allies, passive opposition and active opposition. It helped me understand the many positions we can take, intentionally or unintentionally.”

“My favorite part of the program was the breakout rooms and the discussions that we had. I also liked that most participants were the same color as me. It was easier to relate to the problems that we as a minority encounter on a daily basis.”

“My favourite part was definitely when we got to share our stories. At first I didn't feel comfortable at all sharing my story, but after hearing others and supporting words from our facilitator, I was able to share. It turned out to be really rewarding and I was able to hear support and suggestions from my group members.”



What part of the program could be improved for next time?

A few participants mentioned timing as being an issue since some people were not on time. If people are late but were able to access the powerpoint themselves, they could catch up prior to joining the group so as not to interrupt the facilitator and participants. Some participants suggested that they should have a copy of the material being discussed.

“As participants we could have access to the presentation that’s set to view only. This would allow other participants who entered the call late or had to [temporarily] leave to catch up to the rest of the group.”

“I feel like it would make it easy for people to participate if they’re not constantly trying to remember the different points.”

“I would suggest that there be slides or notes shared, either in advance or after the presentation so that people can feel prepared and ready to participate in conversation. It can also help during the breakout sessions when they would like to review what was previously discussed, and make it easier to take notes during the presentation as you will have references.”

More time to discuss in the breakout sessions was another common theme and some participants even mentioned things such as people speaking over one another.

“Students would often get cut off while they were still speaking and that was a bit discouraging.”

“I feel as though there is a bit of a disconnect between the participants and many of the facilitators, especially in the big group (not as much so in the breakout rooms)...If a student responds it was only just acknowledged or ignored, even though we were encouraged to voice our thoughts.”

In addition, it seemed that there was some confusion. Communication could be improved to ensure that participants know what is expected of them.

“In the final session we had to make a plan with everyone but the facilitators didn’t say if we actually do it and communicate with our group.”

One participant stated that they did not enjoy the breakout rooms, which was interesting since so many people enjoyed them.



Finally, two participants mentioned that there should be more people of colour leading the program.

What did you learn about leadership and how will you use leadership in your life?

The answers to this question were contradictory in some cases. Two participants stated that one person cannot make change by themselves, yet multiple other participants stated the opposite.

“I have learned that I am at most powerful and do not need other people to take a stand and sometimes standing alone is more powerful than standing with others.”

“I learned that I always have a voice no matter how insignificant I think it might be I can still create change.”

“It takes one person to create change.”

Other themes that were mentioned multiple times by various participants include being able to do anything that you set your mind to and being able to speak up and stand up for issues that you believe in.

Other quotes that really seemed to sum up the program are shown below:

“I learned that being a leader isn’t just about doing it all by yourself and trying to be a hero, it is about creating alliances and making change.”

“Try to be present for those in need and maybe even inquire myself into situations, because sometimes asking for help can be scary for others.”

“You do not have to be the loudest. Just have the will to change things and be strategic.”

“[You’re] never too young to make a difference.”

Is there anything else you would like to share?

There were multiple themes mentioned. The majority of the participants enjoyed the program and had fun. Many people thought the program was wonderful and were thankful for the opportunity to have participated. A positive energy was also noted. In addition, multiple participants mentioned that the facilitators were welcome, friendly, and supportive.



Some participants gave constructive feedback and recommendations. For example, going deeper into certain subjects and sharing links to other programs and resources, such as podcasts, books, and shows.

“Overall, I appreciate that there were real life issues that we were able to discuss. It wasn’t an uncomfortable experience at all and I felt able to speak my mind freely (in the breakout groups).”

“I really enjoyed this program! It was a safe environment and I felt heard anytime I shared an idea/thought. I have also learned valuable information that I can use in the future.”

“I wish there were more of these leadership trainings and other skill trainings available to our community.”

“It was amazingly organized, well taught and a great program all around. I’m so grateful for this opportunity!”

Celebrating Graduates of the Black Youth Leadership Program

On August 13th, 2020, 12 graduates of the BYLP planned and carried out a cultural celebration. Two program participants, Monica Tonle and Elijah Gyansa, hosted the celebration. Program facilitators, participants, community members, and other stakeholders attended the celebration. Graduates of the program shared poems, songs, and stories they have created that inspire others and create change. In addition, short video clips were shown throughout the presentation. Graduates are able to share their knowledge and tell others what they learned by participating in the BYLP.

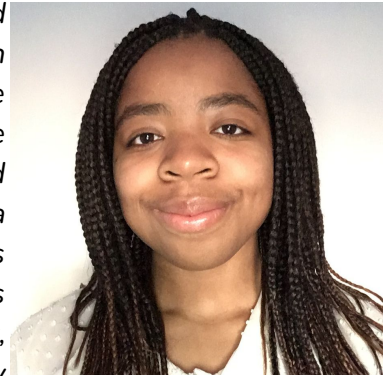
CFL star Wayne Moore also attended the celebration and shared his story of perseverance. The event planners felt strongly that having positive role models for the Black community was important and an integral part of celebrating Black culture. He shared how important it is to continue on your path to reach your goals. Challenges will come up; Wayne said to go through challenges rather than go around them.

To see a short clip of this celebration, go to this link: <https://vimeo.com/461585130>.



Two program participants achieved particularly significant success from participating in the program. Monica and Elijah became leaders within the program and were integral to the success of the August 13th event. They are now both employed by ICL and continue to deliver leadership programs in partnership with FYI. These participants shared their experience of the program.

“My name is Monica Tonlé. I am a 16-year-old teenager, although I was 15 when I first came in contact with ICL and their Black Youth Leadership program. My experience was transformative, to say the least. I met incredible individuals that share my fire, my will to make the world better. I was a participant during the summer of 2020, a summer where it was easy to feel isolated. Fortunately, this program reminded me that there are amazing individuals everywhere. Also, through partaking as a student and finally, as a facilitator a sense of unity filled my heart. I am immensely happy to have participated in the programs and I wish it to much more youth.



Also, I have learned multiple things. A lot of information that few students of my age have had access to in such a comprehensible and interactive manner. By the end of the summer, I knew about the spectrum of allies, steps to enact social change, how to write a press report and how to organize a successful event. Which with the help of other youth and ICL staff we were able to do.” - Monica T.



“Over the past few months, I have had the privilege of participating in meaningful workshops and meeting some amazing individuals through the Institute for Change Leaders (ICL). My involvement with the Black Youth Leadership Program has been a refuge for me amidst the global pandemic. It has given me a feeling of belonging with aspiring change-makers. A main aspect of the program, aside from learning how to fight injustices and gathering resources, was understanding the importance of storytelling. In learning the fundamentals of connecting to people through a story, we can not only recruit others but build meaningful bonds to eventually unite to make a difference. The invaluable skills I’ve gained have built my confidence and changed my perspective on the potential impact youth like myself can make. After completing the program as a participant and becoming a facilitator, I have found my own story and work to help others discover their own story and use that drive to take action to be the change they need to see.” - Elijah G.



Conclusion

Based on the quantitative data as well as the qualitative responses from the survey, it is clear that the Black Youth Leadership Program has been valuable to those who have participated. Positive outcomes were reported in the following areas: leadership skill building, academic skill building, community connection, and connection to cultural identity. These are all important aspects of one's well being and feelings of inclusion.

In addition, many of the youth noted that they have a greater sense of confidence. Partnered with an increased understanding of how to pursue social justice, these youth felt that they can make change by standing up against social issues they value. This is important in reducing racism and making the community a safer, more inclusive place for all.

Next Steps

The BYLP will be run for a second year. The 2021 cohorts will include largely youth who are involved in FYI's Youth Justice program. We believe that these youth will strongly benefit from learning leadership skills to combat anti-Black racism in the justice system. The learnings from the first year of this program will be applied to year two in the form of revised curriculum and the inclusion of Black youth facilitators.