

Self-Healing Communities ACEs

BGC Greater Saint John



By building community understanding of the lifelong impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), BGC aimed to deepen understanding around trauma and intergenerational impacts to shift practice with survivors of trauma, across sectors. Primary areas of focus included: Building more trauma informed health, education, justice and social services at the systems level; and increasing focus on the need for intergenerational approaches to programs, interventions and evaluations. While current policies and systems tend to focus on the needs of the child, they often miss the needs of the parents, resulting in a limited long-term impact on these children.

The pandemic interrupted the project, and further demonstrated that people coping with many impacts of trauma, including chronic health and mental health conditions, struggles in school, challenges with finding and keeping a job, as well as interpersonal relationships, need to be supported in a different way if we want different outcomes.

While this project was owned by BGC, it was in partnership with other community members including staff from Horizon who were the project leads. Ultimately, they could not maintain their capacity to complete the project as intended and the Community Foundation worked with BGC to plan the remaining year of Self-Healing Communities (202-2023). BGC hosted a large-scale community event featuring trauma and parenting specialist Dr. Jody Carrington, and in partnership with Port City Counselling offered a no-fee family therapy program to BGC participants and their parents/caregivers.



PROJECT CHALLENGES

- The project “owner” was not the same organisation as the project leader/staff, which made for significant organisational and accountability challenges impacting the project owner (BGC) and the project administrator.
- The SHC team was not able to host the anticipated amount of in-person training due to public health guidance during the pandemic
- The SHC team identified that some of their system partners were working in environments that were “not ripe for process change”
- When the original project leader (SHC) stopped work on the project, we were unable to assess the overall impact on the project (how people who were trained on ACES through Self-Healing Communities made changes to their workplaces/systems)

PROJECT SUCCESSES

- The BGC effectively pivoted to take over management of the project, and were able to support 200+ community members/parents with Dr. Carrington’s presentation, and 30+ individuals with family counselling
- Over 1000 people attended an ACE Interface training (in smaller groups and virtually (2020-2022)).
- A partnership with the Public Health Associations of NB and PEI provided SHC with the opportunity to host quarterly learning sessions that were attended by people from all over the world.
- Horizon Health adverse childhood experiences and trauma in their newly adopted Pediatric Standards.
- There were discussions and training with key system partners such as Justice and Public Safety, Social Development and Education.

