

# Underrepresented Learners



The Underrepresented Learners project was a collaboration with the Learning Policy, Partnerships and Services Directorate to develop a 2.5 day Design Thinking workshop series. The series was centered on human experiences to create opportunities to re-imagine learning pathways for youth populations who are underrepresented in educational cohorts.

The objectives of the workshop series were to improve policy options and recommendations, support program development, and identify interventions that could be scaled-up and expanded through current youth education programming or new initiatives.

## Context

Evidence demonstrates that higher levels of education attainment are associated with greater labour market outcomes (e.g., lower rates of unemployment, substantially higher rates of labour force participation, higher lifetime earnings). While Canadian high school dropout rates are decreasing overall, some youth populations continue to be disproportionately underrepresented in educational opportunities because of early disengagement (e.g., Indigenous youth, those from low-income families, those living in rural and remote communities, and persons with disabilities). Without a high school diploma, youth have fewer opportunities to find decent, well-paid employment. This perpetuates inequalities by decreasing their opportunity to succeed in a changing labour market and to join the middle class (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Youth learning interventions have proven to be effective in improving high school completion rates and helping youth strengthen their labour market outcomes. For example, outreach or assistance programs in high school nearly double the odds of underrepresented youth completing high school and attending post-secondary education (PSE).

## Approach

Attended by a diverse group of youth, social service workers and public servants, the 2.5 day workshop explored the landscape of services for underrepresented learners, as well as the socio-economic context giving rise to their circumstances. The workshop took participants through a survey of multisource evidence, open discussions, and exercises about future possibilities. The workshop included the following phases:

### *Workshop Day 1 - Empathy*

Day 1 provided an opportunity for workshop participants to empathize with underrepresented learners by familiarizing themselves with their stories and experiences. The field research on this topic was brought to life through an evidence gallery, setting a common fact base for the needs of underrepresented learners and identifying service gaps to be used in the development of ideas.

### *Workshop Day 2 – Problem Definition and Ideation*

Day 2 challenged participants to explore alternative ways to address the problems identified during Day 1 through a series of ideation activities (e.g. brainwriting and a card game using public opinion research). Topics that surfaced were refined in such a way that allowed for multiple perspectives to collide, intersect and inform each other. The intent of the day was to generate a wealth of new ideas that could then be assessed for prototyping during Day 3.

### *Workshop Day 3: Concept Development and Prototyping*

Participants explored further possible solutions and documented them in greater detail during Day 3. Using illustration, storyboarding and role-play participants presented their ideas to the group and sought feedback for integration. The outcome of Day 3 and the workshop was a series of prototypes for early learning interventions that were conceived, designed and vetted by public servants, youth-serving organizations and underrepresented youth themselves.

### *Value Generated from this Approach: Testing Prototypes*

Moving forward, the proposed prototypes will improve policy options and recommendations for Goal Getters funding stream under the renewed Youth Employment and Skills Strategy. The results of the workshop will be elements in a Call for Concepts / Call for Proposals that will solicit participation from youth-serving organizations to implement activities that will help underrepresented youth successfully transition from high school to PSE and the labour market.



## Showcase: Empathy in Action

With the perspectives of underrepresented youth in mind, participants delved into the root causes of learning barriers faced by that population. A holistic framing arose – participants discussed the social determinants of health and the existence of basic needs as, “building blocks for the ability to pursue education and to succeed at it.” Students who come from racialized, low income and/or rural communities face many intersecting barriers and are often unaware of available supports or unable to access them. The disruption that learners experience at key transition points also came up. The transition from high school to PSE and from PSE to jobs are key junctures at which supports can drop off and students begin to fall through the cracks. The well-being of the community in which learners are born, raised and live was also an area of focus for participants who suggested that a healthy and stable community environment is imperative for producing successful learners.

Resolutions were also discussed. Existing supports could be more accessible if they were drop-in rather than appointment-based, and if they were more culturally sensitive and led by people who shared experiences with the targeted youth. Programs can overlook systemic and structural forces that put youth at a disadvantage – the history of colonialism and the ongoing oppression of Indigenous communities was raised several times. Services for Indigenous youth must resist reproducing that imbalance of power if they are going to meaningfully change outcomes. The use of technology as an engine of solutions was described in exclusionary terms for the manner in which it risks leaving behind low-income groups or those who don't have PSE as a familial inheritance.



## Problem Spaces Identified

Our participants identified with a wide range of groups and lived experiences for whom we were designing for throughout the workshop. Early on Day 1, they described their own positions as well as those who were absent but on their minds. Members of Indigenous and other racialized groups were included as were low-income single mothers, educators and educational staff who serve underrepresented youth, students who are working and volunteering alongside their education, those in pursuit of culturally relevant mental health services, students with physical and psychiatric disabilities, youth from immigrant and newcomer families, families with histories of addictions and mental health, community workers who are frontline supports for the individuals of interest to this project and, finally, those who are reconciling with their own privilege and the impact it has on underrepresented learners with whom they interact.

*More details on problem statements are found in Annex B.*

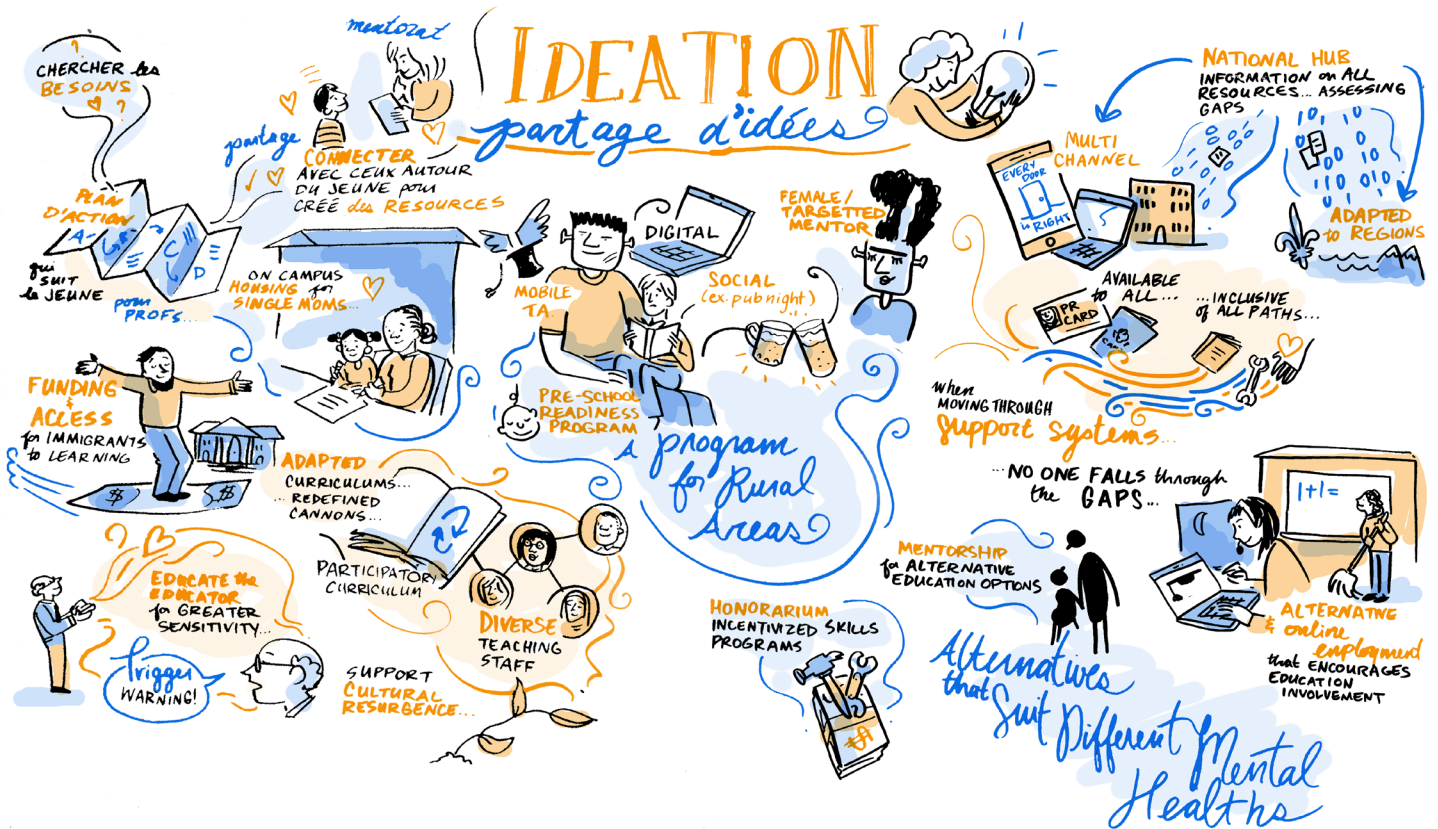


Participants playing the underrepresented learners design card game.

## Promising Ideas Generated

In a series of ideation exercises participants envisioned responses to the problems that had been framed:

- A 24-hour drop-in centre that had touch points for every major service, that offered child care and a food court,
- Free PSE for everyone and education with values rooted in Indigenous traditions, institutions that prioritized representation in their recruitment so that underrepresented students had new and different models for their futures,
- Stable funding streams for community-level organizations that reliably deliver to the populations in question. Refer to Annex A to see all the ideas generated during the workshop.



# Final Prototypes

## Peer-Led Educational Support

### Challenge Statement

Indigenous and other culturally marginalized youth need a way to access culturally inclusive PSE to encourage enrolment and continued participation because the current curriculum is not reflective of their experiences.

### Idea

The Peer-Led Educational Support Initiative was envisioned as a government-funded, community-based initiative for Indigenous and other culturally marginalized recent high school graduates and/or first year PSE students. It enables these populations to access mentorship and peer support around the challenges of transitioning to, and staying in, PSE.



### Key Features:

- Create a space for students who feel alienated from the conventional PSE system because of underrepresentation. The initiative develops a peer support network for navigating the PSE system and the psychosocial experiences that are unique to underrepresented learners.
- An annual program would commence with a weeklong launch at the start of each school year and followed by meet ups to connect again with the community formed.
- A community and land-based program, this experiential initiative has Indigenous traditional knowledge at the root (eg. sharing circles) but promotes cross-cultural exchanges so that all participants have a place in the initiative.
- The program is centered around sharing of cultural experiences, the program promises to respond to a gap in conventional curriculum.
- As the program continues past the first year, second year students are encouraged to come back and find volunteer or employment opportunities by being mentors to the new cohort.

### NUF Scorecard details:

New

3.2/5

Useful

4.2/5

Feasible

4/5

### Insightful participant feedback:

"It is difficult to make these initiatives credited. There are some similar initiatives that exist (e.g. MNO - Infinite Reach). It is hard to keep alumni involved as peer mentors. There needs to be a strong reason to keep mentors involved (incentive of some kind). Using sharing circles as an evaluation tool would be cool. However, cultural knowledge is hard to scale and evaluate in general."

*New: Has the idea been tried before? Is there anything like this already being done in the government or by another organization?*

*Useful: Does the idea have the intended benefit? Does the application solve client's problems without creating any new problems?*

*Feasible: Can it be done? A new and useful idea still has to be weighed against its cost to implement.*

# Service Directory for Young Canadians

## Challenge Statement

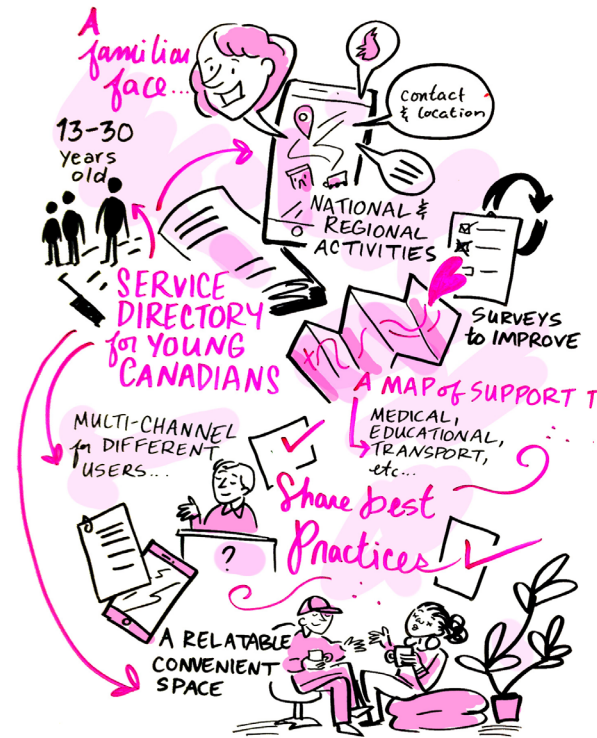
Underrepresented youth need comprehensive access to a knowledge base/hub of information on current support services. Currently, services are fragmented and youth can become overwhelmed and/or confused when determining 'where to start'.

## Idea

The Service Directory for Young Canadians is an organization that works at the regional and national levels to create a comprehensive view of all the support services available youth, as well providing advice on which of these services each individual youth could access to help their specific situation and also facilitate first contact.

## Key Features:

- A centralized platform, which has different interfaces for different stakeholders, for example support workers, school, staff, and clients. It would be the first thing they would see is a prompt asking for what type of help they might need. A comprehensive directory listing and directing all youth to services such as financial aid, accommodation, transportation, education, social, medical, etc.
- The national program creates cohesion between regional offices by providing templates or best practices for the region while being flexible so that the regions can address and tailor their programs to the needs of their specific areas.
- Offer FaceTime appointments for students in remote areas that don't have a big enough community to support an in-person advisor. This feature is also for people who have anxiety going to appointments, or people who have disabilities that don't allow them to get out, or people who have time constraints who don't have the luxury of time to make it to an office.
- The hub would host story sessions, for youth to share their experiences with services, the impacts that it had on them, or the services they wish they had known about when they needed them. The intent is to drive home the real world impact and to remind stakeholders that we are working with individuals and not statistics.
- The hub would offer co-ops, internships, apprenticeships, or volunteer type positions for youth such as communications or administrative type work.
- The process would include intake forms to address needs, that would address all the needs of youth to ensure they are being met because the youth might not come in with the intent to ask for supports or have knowledge of what is available to them. The hub will also create follow up surveys to gauge the helpfulness of the services and whether youth need further direction.



## NUF Scorecard details:

New

3/5

Useful

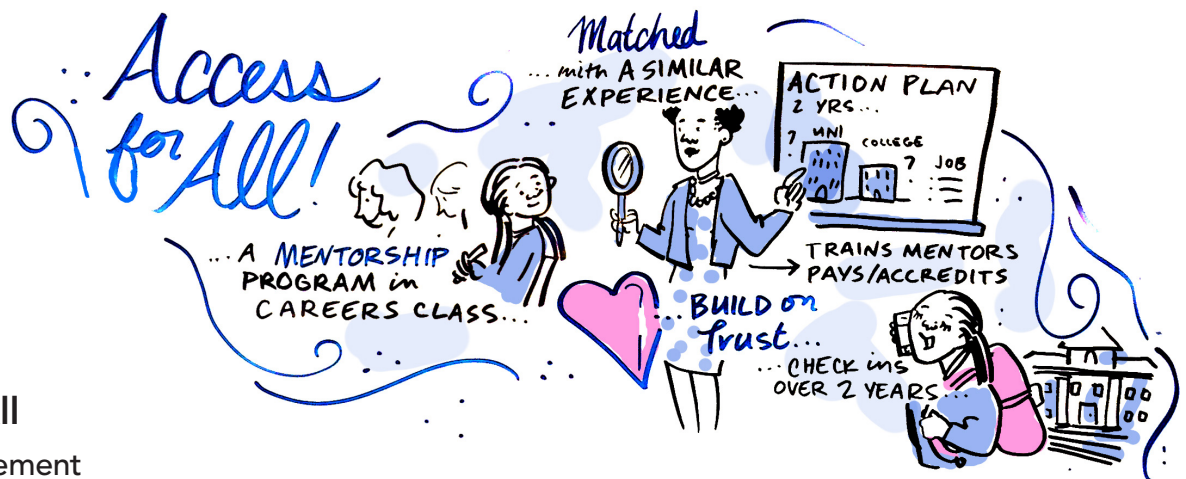
4/5

Feasible

3.5/5

## Insightful participant feedback:

"Like navigation screen idea - could be located in mall and other places where youth tend to be. Good idea to make space youth-friendly and for it to be located in areas where population in need exists. However, it may be difficult to keep info up-to-date. Youth often need more individualized support. Sounds expensive to implement - a lot of overhead costs such as space, staff and technology."



## Access for All

### Challenge Statement

Underrepresented Youth who don't feel like they belong in the PSE environment.

### Idea

Access For All is a mentorship program for youth in grade 10 who are interested in exploring the PSE landscape. The program would be offered through the civics/career choice class that is part of the curriculum in all provinces and territories. Youth are more inclined to stay with a program that fits in their daily schedule. The aim is to reduce the feeling of not belonging in PSE spaces for new high school graduates and increase the number of racialized, underrepresented, and vulnerable youth who access PSE.

### Key Features:

- A program for youth in grade 10 who are interested in pursuing PSE will be matched up with a mentor who has already experienced their first year in PSE.
- Through an initial interview process, youth will be paired up with mentors who looks, identifies, and has experienced similar challenges.
- The interview process will identify needs, interests and challenges that will then aid the mentor in creating a step-by-step plan to help youth choose the right PSE path for them.
- Mentors will help navigate the many systems within PSE like financials, housing, applying for grants, etc.
- The program will highlight more than the traditional avenues for PSE and enable youth to explore learning options beyond universities and colleges.
- The program is set to be intensive in the first few months by creating a plan and setting up follow up touch-points over the course of the next 2 years.
- Mentors will earn a wage or PSE credits for their involvement, dependent on the amount of years served as a mentor.
- Mentees will be incentivized to finish the program with the offer of a \$500 scholarship towards their PSE.

### NUF Scorecard details:

New

3.7/5

Useful

3.9/5

Feasible

3.9/5

### Insightful participant feedback:

"Worries for feasibility: few high school students know their path/what they want to do at the 10th grade level, will change mind many times, need to address the stress; long commitment for the mentor and complications of shorter programs."

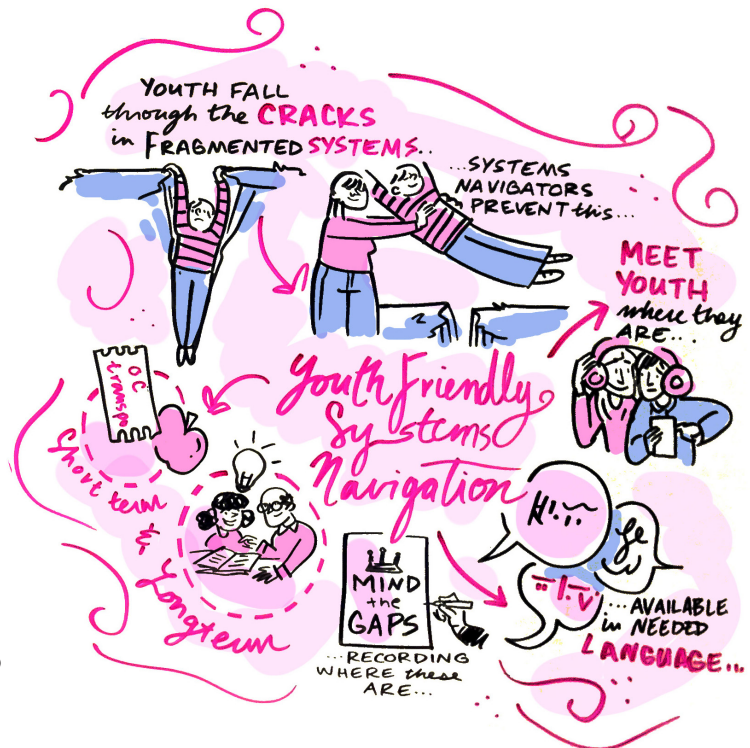
## Youth-Friendly Systems Navigation

### Challenge Statement

Designing for youth aged 12 to 30 who are facing barriers to completing a high school education and achieving success in PSE. This population needs improved understanding of and access to services that can aid in their successful completion of PSE and attendant improvements to their socio-economic status. Currently delivery of services is fragmented and services access are not design for youth and can be intimidating and unapproachable.

### Idea

The youth-Friendly Systems Navigation program is a national not-for-profit organization that trains, recruits, and supports system navigators through regional networks. A systems navigator is a trained advocate from within the community, they develop relationships with local community partners and service providers to which they can connect youth.



### Key Features:

- Navigators have a strong understanding of local systems such as education, housing, health and so on. They will be embedded in and working in partnership with local community youth serving agencies so that a new infrastructure does not need to be built and can meet youth where they are at while leveraging the relationships that have already been established
- System navigator will also be mobile and will be able to meet youth “where they are at” psychosocially.
- Offices are physically located within youth-focused and youth-friendly spaces that already exist in the community (eg. youth non-profits, libraries, community centers, schools)
- A systems navigator is similar to an “auntie” – a person that really cares about what is going on in your life and will help you navigate challenges in a caring and person-centered way.
- A systems navigator might have a background in social work but it is not required. They will help build capacity and will have some training in counselling. Their approach is compassionate, empathic and holistic.

### NUF Scorecard details:

New

2.8/5

Useful

3.9/5

Feasible

3.6/5

### Insightful participant feedback:

“Sounds like a great idea, similar to pathways. May want to encourage more voting at the municipal, provincial and federal level. From my own experience getting a photocard in Ontario was very stressful.”





## Access to Success

### Challenge Statement

A program that will help youth who are facing geographical barriers and challenges that are preventing them from going to PSE because they need improved access.

### Idea

Access to Success is a not-for-profit model that will increase flexibility, access, and completion of PSE in rural and remote communities. The desire for the program is to emulate the in-person PSE experience as much as possible while eliminating the need to be physically present at a post secondary institution unless absolutely needed.

### Key Features:

- Transportation assistant (bus passes or financial assistance) for people who need to travel to university for meetings, buying text books, etc.
- The program will feature priority enrolment for youth who have higher needs (single parents, etc)
- Social supports where youth can meet friends to being to build a network and a sense of community away from their university.
- Pre-school readiness program for students that have already enrolled in PSE, where over the summer they can meeting with mentors to discuss life after high school and prepare for PSE.
- Virtual classrooms where professor record their lectures and put them online so students can access them on their own time and whenever they are ready.
- Mobile teaching assistants who will come to communities to help facilitate examinations for youth who face geographic barriers and challenges.

### NUF Scorecard details:

New

2/5

Useful

4/5

Feasible

3.5/5

### Insightful participant feedback:

"Outreach to high schools - could you support them in finding suitable online learning? Love the social connection activities. Not sure how pre-school readiness fits if the barrier is geographic. Feasibility of T.A. supporting students in various programs/disciplines. Perhaps more feasible for "T.A." to just support with connecting students to resources on campus via skype or online. I like the idea of a technology subsidy and it seems to be relatively cheap to implement."

## Overall Lab Observations

This workshop brought together participants with lived experience, front-line organizations serving underrepresented youth as a core function of their business and ESDC employees. Designing workshops that are meaningful for mixed participants is never easy. The GoC often engages with participants with lived experience as a must for their consultations needs, but these participants often leave with little to nothing when they return back to the communities they serve. It is an asymmetrical benefit where the GoC receives more by pushing its internal ways of thinking to fit into the reality of the people we serve. A big part of this workshop was to model for a news way of working with diverse perspectives in generating idea collaboratively. Several participants expressed gratitude for these new and helpful tools, and how they would bring them back to their organizations.

Developing a three-day workshop takes time. The Lab is constantly trying to improve its approach and a big focus recently has been accessibility. In serving underrepresented learners, there are more layers of accessibility that are needed to be considered. We learned during the session that people with accessibility needs do not always speak up, especially in an environment that invites them as a guest and is not their home turf. So there must be more deliberate touch-points where we can empower participants to speak up for their needs to pro-actively disclose their requirements in a respectful way so that the Lab can adjust its approach, agenda and activities, and they feel they can fully participate.

We also learned that the empathy stage can be triggering for participants. Through surfacing the barriers and challenges youth face to develop interventions, several participants mentioned how it made remember all their friends and family that are in difficult situations. Having staff trained to help participants navigate their feelings and having dedicated space to reflect, regroup with a telephone line to a service like Employee Assistance would be beneficial.

A third of participants were indigenous youth. This meant more considerations were needed to embrace the Indigenous ways of learning for a successful workshop. This included adjusting pace for storytelling and exchanges, and designing exercises and activities that are respectful of their culture, making time for their rituals to cultivate a safe space, and creating a space that leveled the playing field among participants to engage in an intentional co-development process.



# Annex

Annex A: Ideas Generated with the URL Design Card Game and Brainwriting Exercise

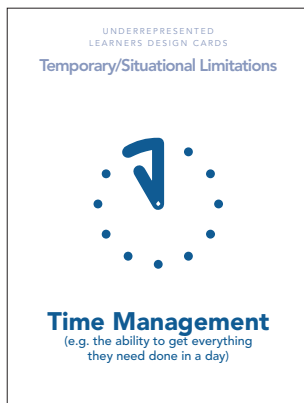
Annex B: Problem Spaces Identified through Challenge Statements

Annex C: Changing Habits Exercise

## Annex A: Ideas Generated with the URL Design Card Game

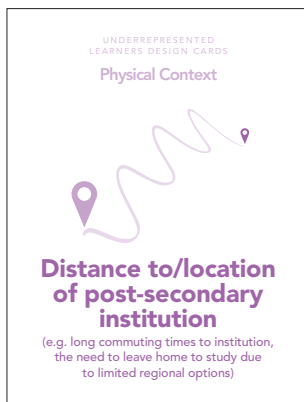
The Lab curated the barriers and challenges of underrepresented youth from research conducted for the department into a card game. Participants draw random and unique constraints to define their problem space and use the perspectives at their table to develop an intervention.

### Group One - Round One:

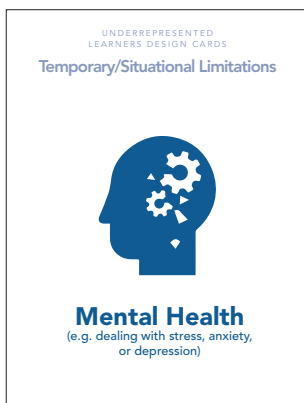


#### Ideas

- Provide transportation for those that require it in a timely manner
- Provide pre-support to academics for student that may struggle in a subject (e.g. individualized learning plan, tutoring)
- TAs that can travel to teach
- Online learning (record lectures or livestreams) with the ability to speak with professors online.
- Flexible deadlines
- Go at your own pace type course online
- Developing program timelines with academic advisor
- Financial incentive or scholarship exclusively for online students or to take custom classes
- Program specific support group or club with mentors
- Pre-school readiness program (e.g. skills, transit system, navigating school)
- Increase the options available in terms of education
- Introductory sessions before programs begin
- Scholarships/financial aid for individuals that are in rural areas

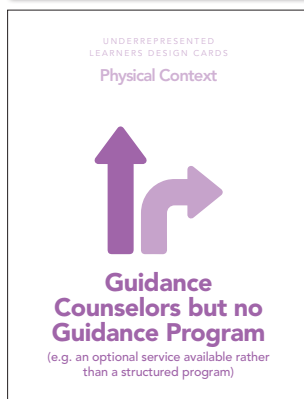


### Group One - Round Two:



#### Ideas

- Mentorship programs that provide guidance to disadvantaged youth along with targeting the specific interest of youth.
- One-on-one mentorship programs that understand the interest of youth and introducing PSE programs that are relevant to their interests.
- Increasing guidance programs that understand and promote support for mental health along with how to navigate possible career paths.
- Create consistent guidance/counselling program
- Explore alternative educational sources (cannabis school, work experience)
- Demonstrate real value for PSE (e.g. DJ > audio engineering) following passion could help with mental health
- Promote different options and avenues for PSE (mental health days does not equal sick days and does not affect attendance)
- Mentorship/roles models to provide support
- Limitations of their expectations so they can be better prepared
- Awareness of the programs that are available (supports, physicians, counselling)
- Mentorship with people who have those jobs
- Workshop skills
- Take mental health days when necessary (make it a necessity)



## Group One - Round Three:

UNDERREPRESENTED  
LEARNERS DESIGN CARDS


Temporary/Situational Limitations



**Finding a job/employment**  
(e.g. finding a stable job or a successful career path)

UNDERREPRESENTED  
LEARNERS DESIGN CARDS

Physical Context



**Poor High School Experience**  
(e.g. not graduating, graduating with low marks, graduating without the right prerequisites, being "streamed", equivalency problems for high school degrees outside of Canada)

UNDERREPRESENTED  
LEARNERS DESIGN CARDS

Social Context



**Online Courses**  
(e.g. impression they could learn more and develop skills at lower cost through a different course of study)


### Ideas

- Employment services to help give them opportunities
- A more refined search that tells you about the job market
- Increase volunteer experience
- Employment services agencies
- Online flexibility
- Career and aptitude experience
- Volunteer experience
- Online courses may help this client look for more flexible jobs
- Less desirable employment but with time to work on school
- Finding online-based employment
- Volunteer experiences (honorarium)
- Finding a low-income job for now to continue with schooling – online courses are more flexible.
- Going to an unemployment help centre

## Group Two - Round One:

UNDERREPRESENTED  
LEARNERS DESIGN CARDS

Temporary/Situational Limitations




**Indecision/Uncertainty**  
(Uncertainty about what to study and uncertain whether PSE is an option they want to pursue)

### Ideas

- Bring in people from different fields to come talk about/present their career/profession (e.g. Junior academic)
- Have a portal that provides resources/information on different programs, careers, information on scholarships, etc.
- Have internships at high school level in orgs (short-term) to experience different work environments
- Guidance counsellors and programs that are more understanding of the needs of indigenous youth
- Guidance and systems navigation
- Guidance programs that work with indigenous communities to create their programs
- Bring in people who fit the perceived lack of relevance (e.g. female computer scientists)
- Embedding structured says that students can visit universities/colleges while also explaining what the differences are
- Cultural competency training (understanding marginalized backgrounds)
- Guidance programs or activities outside school environment
- Shadowing PSE students/ smaller-scale campus tours
- Opportunities to inspire ideas about education/PSE in students
- Allowing students to shadow within programs of interest to meet teachers and current students in that program to ask questions, etc.
- Provide students with a mentor they can identify with when entering the program (e.g. another woman in STEM, or someone of a similar background, etc.)

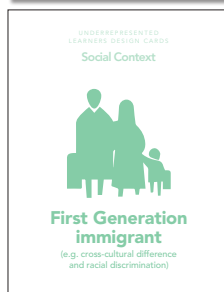
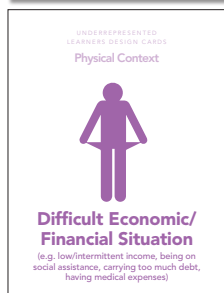
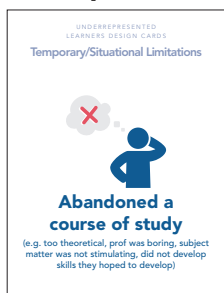
UNDERREPRESENTED  
LEARNERS DESIGN CARDS

Physical Context



**Guidance Counselors but no Guidance Program**  
(e.g. an optional service available rather than a structured program)

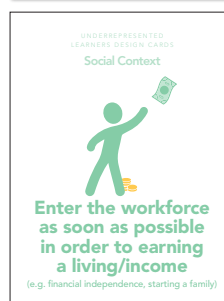
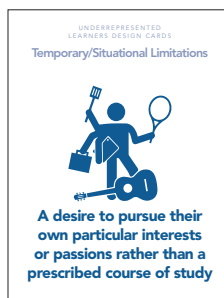
## Group Two - Round Two:



### Ideas

- Help student figure out how credits they have can transfer to other programs so there isn't additional incurred debts
- Not penalizing students for switching programs (i.e. losing funding or grants, etc) and helping them transition smoothly
- Culturally-appropriate mentorship opportunities
- Engagement with newcomer services on campus if possible – or on campus associations
- Consistent financial support
- Providing emergency financial assistance so they can complete the program
- Curriculum should be reflective of many diverse backgrounds – needs to be relatable
- Culturally specific supports – connected to similar community members/agency
- Support center that addresses language barriers, basic needs and living situations
- Advisory aid that gets to why study was abandoned, figure out possible solutions or find a better academic/PSE fit
- Help finding/accessing scholarships and bursaries
- The creation of more accessible scholarships and bursaries
- Create programs/courses that are more meaningful/engaging to diverse populations
- Creation options for leave a course/exit strategies
- Provide services on campus to help integrate into Canadian society, including tutoring groups, information on financial assistance programs (e.g. WUSC refugee program)
- Provide a mentor to be paired with this individual over the course of the year
- Involve them in community activities to help connect them to other people

## Group Two - Round Three:



### Ideas

- Offer a community service placement aligned with interests that helps develop life skills, that includes transportation to an accessible organization
- Offer employment opportunities tailor to youth with disabilities, which include transportation
- Provide opportunities to take different approaches
- Ethical entrepreneurship programs
- Learning how to protect yourself as an entrepreneur
- Help find meaningful employment/something they want to be
- Accessible transportation (buses, taxis, organizations with volunteer drivers)
- Entrepreneurship training/mentorship
- Agricultural/natural resource specific training
- Online self-directed study
- Paid apprenticeship/internships where they can learn skills in area of interest while earning money
- Short programs that offer a general employable skill they could use to quickly enter the workforce while pursuing their interests and passions

## Ideas Generated with Brainwriting Exercise

**Challenge Statement: A young single mother who is juggling work and parent responsibilities needs a way to acquire financial and non-financial supports because they want to complete PSE while providing for her children.**

### Round 1

- Stipends that covers food, transportation, and childcare for young single mothers in PSE.
- Scholarship to cover all mothers in PSE and flexible schedule to accommodate taking care of her child and work
- Listes des ressources disponibles pour les nouveaux etudiants, voir ce qui est disponible
- Creation d'une service de garde pour etudiants-parents a tres faible cout dan les locaux de l'universite accessible pendant horaire de cours

### Round 2

- On campus living for young mothers with supports that would require money (including food, transport, housing, daycare) and it would create a support community
- More spaces for monoparents to come together on campus to share experiences and reduce the stigma around their stigma
- Subsidized living and/or being paid for on the job training (like an internship)
- Ajuster le cout en fonction des revenus
- Create programs within campus living to promote different-cultural teachings as mothers/parenthood

### Round 3

- Create a program that allows young mothers to create a schedule for classes, support, and budget they require
- Create support networks for young parents to meet other young parents. Bring in non-financial and financial resources they can use.
- Helpline for young mothers in PSE
- Create work-school program for young mothers with options in their field of study
- Based on income the PT/F covers the rest to ensure they can study and support themselves

**Challenge Statement: Black youth that don't feel they belong in PSE spaces.**

### Round 1

- More funding and scholarship provided for black youth from lower income homes
- Liste de services/ressources disponibles pour nouveaux etudiants (kiosque)
- Mentor program for black youth to leverage when applying for PSE for financial and non-finacial supports
- All universities should have departments dedicated to African Canadian history and future with acknowledgement of their contributions to Canadian society and run by African Canadians
- Awareness sessions when the school period starts to get the pulse of the population
- Promote African history in all department to showcase the work in all fields and create awareness of their contributions to the world
- Recognition and more research done on the diversity that African Canadians add within their community and encourage it's expression from first generation immigrants and respond to the need specifically

## Annex B: Problem Spaces Identified through Challenge Statements

The following problem statements were generated by participants on our day two:

*Challenge Statement Format: [user] needs a way to [need] because [insight]*

1. A low-income youth with mental challenges struggling to successfully finish high school and move into Post-secondary Education or gainful employment needs a way to cope and access affordable (free) services that are reliable and consistent because they need to navigate the school system successfully and to preserve their life.
2. A child that needs to financially support their family and cannot afford/does not have the time to attend PSE needs a better financial aid process to access financial aid (better grants/loads/community initiatives) because they need to feel supported by Canadian society.
3. Single mom with physical disability (low income daughter of 60s scoop int. trauma) needs a way to address lack of cultural competency in Post-Secondary education because will reduce barriers and facilitate PSE completion in a more inclusive space.
4. A young student that wants to better their life needs a person to support them and guide them by giving them opportunities because they have little to no life experience or direction.
5. A single mother who has dropped out of high school needs a better way to upgrade and transition into PSE because she would like a better job to provide for her family.
6. Indigenous and other culturally marginalized youth need a way to access culturally inclusive PSE to encourage employment or continue enrollment because their cultures and experiences are not represented in current curriculum and feel alienated in post-secondary education.
7. A young single mother who is juggling work and parent responsibilities needs a way to acquire financial and non-financial supports because they want to complete PSE while providing for her children.
8. A youth with poor mental health problems at home (unstable) needs better access to mentors/supports to help succeed in high school because it will help foster an environment of wellness, safety, and a sense of belonging that will help them succeed in school.
9. A homeless/street-involved youth living in a new city needs a way to re-engage in education/employment because they would like to get off the street and integrate into their new community.
10. A youth from a low-income family who has not had a positive education experience needs a way to find an appropriate PSE option and the funding for it because education should be a right not a privilege.
11. Urban indigenous youth needs a way to access resources, capacity and supports because they are marginalized and are lacking basic services.
12. A person struggling to finish high school needs a way to concentrate on their studies because other obligations and pressure take too much of their time and attention.
13. A young single mother who is juggling work and parent responsibilities needs a way to acquire financial and non-financial supports because they want to complete PSE while providing for her children.
14. Black youth that don't feel they belong in PSE spaces



## Annex C: Changing Habits Exercise

Participants were encouraged to identify habits around challenges and barriers that underrepresented youth face to completing their education.

### **What current habits do we want to stop, or do less of?**

THE WHOLE | The high level patterns that shape society (nation, society, economies, legal systems, hierarchies)

- Stop generalizing
- Reduce jargon (make language more understandable and less bureaucratic)
- Service providers can not/should make immediate assumptions
- Prison system pathway (ex. Carding)
- Education system: Standardized testing
- Assume what Canadians want/need
- Creating rigid programs and policies that don't change with Canadians needs
- Working in silos and not collaborating on similar objectives
- Assuming that "everyone welcome" = inclusivity
- Stop thinking in terms of money
- Not involving youth in decision making regarding programs that are targeted towards them
- Ne pas luseigna la vrai histoire colonaide du Canada auz jeunes
- Only funding projects for a short duration
- Whole of government approaches (horizontal)
- Public service for the people but not for the politicians
- More flexible funding
- Creating more barriers
- De-valuing certain types of education (i.e. college vs university vs apprenticeship)
- Silos within government, level of government, sectors, funding streams, etc.

THE PARTS The Parts | The social ties/dynamics among groups (tribes, communities, organizations, ethnic groups, village/town/city)

- Fragmented services (community organizations not working together)
- Competing for funding instead of partnering
- Making assumptions on behalf of different groups
- Ne pas honorer les autochtones pour leur resistance et ne pas les inclure dans le design des program d'éducation
- One size fits all programs and services
- Systemic racism

ONE ON ONE | The individuals and their social setting (person, citizen, families, household, neighbourhood, relationships)

- Doing for not with
- Self medicating
- Less teen pregnancies
- L'évaluation neative
- Assuming people from same cultures will act the same
- Interrupting others
- De-valuing lived experience

### **What current habits do we want to develop, or do more of?**

THE WHOLE | The high level patterns that shape society (nation, society, economies, legal systems, hierarchies)

- Addressing intersectionality
- Alternative pathways to meaningful employment
- Reduce stigma
- Funding education
- Simple language for greater accessibility (e.g. to funds)
- Listen to diverse voices
- Stable support provided to organizations so that they can continue to deliver the programming to students
- Visibility – representation of different groups in all systems
- Human-centered design
- Stop thinking about equality and focus on equity
- Stop thinking about equality and focus on equity
- Focus on identity intersectionality
- Leveraging community based organizations
- Travailler collectivement
- Decolonization de notre system gouvernementales
- Intégrer tous dans des échanges a des décisions
- Reconnaître le passe et present coloniale du pays
- Asking the community what it wants
- Working together to provide holistic supports
- More mentorship opportunities at a younger age
- Develop more active listening and meaningful engagement
- Simplified information/communication

## THE PARTS | The Parts | The social ties/dynamics among groups (tribes, communities, organizations, ethnic groups, village/town/city)

- Asking the community what it wants
- Working together to provide holistic supports
- Considering individual needs for accessibility
- More flexible access criteria
- Acknowledge barriers
- Access to education (addressing and reducing barriers)
- Involvement of group being served in organization/delivery
- Involve all levels of personal support
- Incorporate community values
- Access to support groups
- Visibility: representation of different groups
- Dialogue
- Fund food at programming
- Facilitate connections/knowledge mobilization
- Partnering with other communities on common ground
- Inclure plus de personne racialize dans les positions de decision et pouviour
- Essayer de batir des relations avec les commun..auts minoritaires
- More tailored services and programs
- Innovations that aren't just tech related
- Recognizing that education is not a priority when basic needs are not being met
- More access to support for mental health
- More meaningful work/summer employment opportunities

## ONE ON ONE | The individuals and their social setting (person, citizen, families, household, neighbourhood, relationships)

- Understand individual needs. ASK !
- More accessible /tailored pathways to a variety of career opportunities (e.g. apprenticeship)
- Doing "with" not "for"
- Asking questions and acknowledging the types of challenges different community members might face in completing their education.
- Achieving education
- Civic education
- Share information with each other
- Increase diverse perspectives to grow together
- Autoevaluations: reflexion sur soi pa soi
- Take time to understand each other and where we came from and our lived experience
- Listen to youth (more emphasis on youth agency. Listen to what the youth wants and needs)
- Seeing leadership in everyone
- Being aware of limitations of others
- Peer mentorship (enabling youth)

## **What do we need to do to make this transformation happen?**

### THE WHOLE | The high level patterns that shape society (nation, society, economies, legal systems, hierarchies)

- Accessible medical/dental for all
- More direct engagement with the populations we serve
- Viable, valued alternative education.
- Guaranteed employment for graduates after university/college.
- Completely change the education system
- Every city has a centrally located hub of all necessary services and supports
- Increase awareness and education on challenges faces by underrepresented youth.
- Ensure frontline workers have access to necessary training
- Introduce incentives for employers as incentive to hire young people
- Increase cross-organization communication
- Consistent funding (that lasts beyond an election)
- Less Tokenism
- Give communities ability to be self sustainable and decide how education should look for them
- Ask Canadians about their experience and needs
- Render l'education a tous les niveau graduate et la prounouviour a toutes les communités
- Crier un system culturellement plus edequat et specific a la diversite de notre societe
- Build programs that support students and those in their circle of care (teachers, social workers, etc) that deal with unique and difficult circumstances
- Create different entry points which allow you to get to the same end goal
- Les etudes gratuities (prescolaire > universite)
- Using a rights based framework people should have access to basic human rights
- Multi year funding to reduce burden/capacity issues organizations face to accessing funding
- Arreter de reduire le fonds de l'educations et les services socioux
- Access to free university
- Reduce barrier to funding by finding more innovative ways to dispersing funding
- Involving youth in co-development in creating programs for them

- Review and identify systemic issues to programmatic change
- Multi-sectorial partnerships/collaborations
- Providing financial and non-financial supports
- Inclure les jeunes et le consulter sur leur education et leur interests
- Reinforce a holistic collective effort and partnership
- Eliminate racism and discrimination
- Free PSE for all
- Committing to auctioning our ideas (implementation)
- More cultural representation available to youth
- More solutions that take a holistic and cradle to career approach
- Addressing how colonialism has an impact on us today
- More long term, adequate funding for proven solutions
- Eliminate poverty

THE PARTS The Parts | The social ties/dynamics among groups (tribes, communities, organizations, ethnic groups, village/town/city)

- Child care at post-secondary centers and support
- Sex education
- Listen to youth
- More support for transitioning to PSE
- Meet them where they are

ONE ON ONE | The individuals and their social setting (person, citizen, families, household, neighbourhood, relationships)

- Increase representation of role models
- Individual learning plans for all
- Lead by example
- Find out what your population needs/wants to smooth access
- Montrer l'exemple
- Volunteer as a mentor
- Croire en eux et leur montrer
- Increasing mental health initiatives within the community
- Leadership development for youth
- Listen to youth