

Community Participation Supports- Innovation through Partnerships

OADD – November 9th, 2022

Donald Gordon Centre - Kingston, Ontario

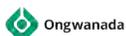


Actual Quotes from People Who Access Community Participation Supports at Ongwanada during the covid-19 pandemic:

“Since covid, there’s never anywhere to go. Especially now there’s nowhere to go... Nothing.”

“I have my days. Especially when I hear that we are going to be in a lockdown. I have my days that I’ll get out of sorts. When you are used to something and everything changes – it can throw you off for days.”

“I miss my friends. There are times when I’m scared and need to talk to someone but I can’t because I can’t go to my program.”





The Impact of Covid-19

There is no question that the **Covid-19 global pandemic** has impacted all of us in some way, and it also impacted the manner in which Ongwanada operates; some of these impacts were **time-limited**, others are/will be **long-standing** or permanent in nature; however all of these impacts have forced the organization to consider how it operates.

Using The Impact of the Global Pandemic for Positive Change

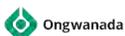
We asked ourselves how we could utilize these impacts in order to provide **more inclusive and person-centred** supports and services to respond to people's **strengths, individuality and changing needs**.



How Did We Do This?

Two Major Partnerships and Collaborations Which Helped Us Ensure That:

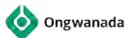
- We are following our **mission, vision and values** as an organization by exploring the experiences of adults with developmental disabilities (DD), their caregivers, and Ongwanada staff to identify factors which can **facilitate communication and decision making** of adults, and their opportunities for **meaningful social participation** according to their aspirations and wishes
- Our services and supports **echo the guiding principles for reform laid out in MCCSS' Journey to Belonging**; we **promote health, well-being and safety**
- Our services and supports **help address systemic barriers** (for example, discrimination, racism, ableism) that prevent people from accessing supports and fully participating in their communities.
- Our services and supports are **sustainable** - improving the ability of services to help people now and into the future.

Partnership & Collaboration #1



People Minded Business (PMB)



A **pilot project** focused on exploring new ways to support people accessing community participation supports, with Ongwanada's Crescent Centre being the main focus. Planning for this pilot project started in May 2021.

Ongwanada brought in **People Minded Business (PMB)** to facilitate this process in an **inclusive and collaborative** way. This project brought together people receiving supports, family members/Host Family Providers/caregivers and employees of Ongwanada, including front line staff.

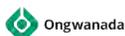
We wanted to **shift and evolve** the way that we were offering community participation supports;

1. Away from fitting people into services that we offer, and towards creating supports and services based on what people receiving support want
2. Away from the congregate-care type of setting.

Partnership & Collaboration #1



People Minded Business (PMB)



A core group was formed from the initial large group involved with information gathering and sharing for our pilot project. This core group **co-designed** and then implemented a **new approach** to providing community participation supports, using information gathered through multiple sessions together that started in July 2021.

Based on the **outputs, outcomes, and learning** that was achieved through this pilot project, Ongwanada then evolved how we provided supports in a larger scale to include all programming at Crescent in May 2022, and again just recently in October 2022.



Partnership & Collaboration #2



Queen's University



From the incredible work done in collaboration with PMB, Ongwanada also **recognized the need for communication support** for people with developmental disabilities, leading to our second partnership & collaboration project with **Queen's University**.

The goal of this study, which was called **Voice & Choice**, was to explore experiences of adults with developmental disabilities (DD), their caregivers, and Ongwanada staff to **identify factors which can facilitate communication and decision making of adults** and their opportunities for meaningful social participation according to their aspirations and wishes.

From this research, we are aiming to explore the interests, ambitions and life goals of adults with DD to better understand what is considered **meaningful** to them, and to describe the perspectives of adults with DD, their families and service providers on **barriers and facilitators** to communication and meaningful social participation.

Partnership & Collaboration #2



Queen's University



A summary of our main findings from our research study included:

1. **Communication challenges**-adults with DD expressed that they worry about being **misunderstood** and the resulting consequences, not being able to find the words they want to use to express themselves, **difficulty** in expressing their needs and feelings, especially when dealing with **strong emotions**
2. **The negative impact of covid-19**-the profound impact of covid-19 on **social connections**, having extremely limited opportunities to socialize and communicate, a lack of things to do and feelings of **decreased overall well-being with less structure and predictability**; many reported feeling that they had **less support** and having to do more things **on their own**
3. **Understanding others' communication**-strong emphasis on **tone** of voice and **body language** cues, especially facial expressions.* Understanding others' communication was described as much easier to do with **people familiar to them** from the perspective of adults with DD, and how this impacts their feelings of **safety and trust when communicating themselves**

Partnership & Collaboration #2

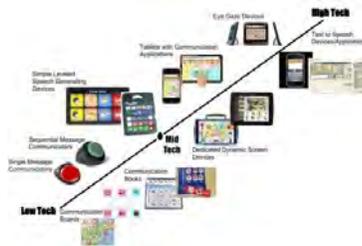


Queen's University

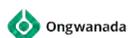


Voice & Choice Study Findings-Experiences with AAC*

- Many people with developmental disabilities have complex communication needs
- It is estimated that only 1 in 10 have access to appropriate AAC systems and support
- Increasing evidence shows that AAC tools and strategies can have a positive impact on the lives of people with developmental disabilities including participation in the community



Overall Communication Strategies from Voice & Choice Study



- Importance of relationships, familiarity, and feelings of trust and safety as a foundation to communication
- Having opportunities for communication is important
- Be patient, kind and “nice”
- Ask relatives or support staff for help if needed, but talk to the person with a developmental disability first
- Break down the message to smaller chunks
- Spend more time with the person

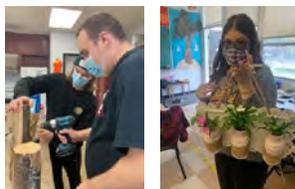


So Where Do We Go From Here?

As we know from our partnerships and collaborations and especially due to the covid-19 pandemic, the **need to be able to stay connected** in different ways was amplified, leading to people **relying on technology** for many things that they never previously had to before. The addition of temporarily allowable expenses under the **Passport Program** to include technology in order to provide program recipients the means and ability to stay safe, connected, occupied and engaged at home, including virtual and online learning and skill development activities, also opened up so **many new opportunities** for so many, including service providers like Ongwanada.

On September 19, 2022, Ongwanada was thrilled to announce that we will receive funding through a **Resilient Communities Fund grant** through the **Ontario Trillium Foundation** over 24 months, allowing us to hire a **Community Connections Coordinator**.

The Community Connections Coordinator will help **strengthen the understanding** of how to use various technological devices to their fullest extent in a **safe and fulfilling manner**—hosting **workshops** throughout the year that will be accessible to people who access supports through Ongwanada and their families as well as our community partners and people that access their services.



“ When I’m with **my friends**, doing the things that I love to do and sometimes **trying new things** even if they scare me a little bit, I feel like **I’m making a difference** somehow. And do you know what? **That makes me so very happy.**”

