

BIPOC Summer Student Program 2024

Yearbook



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**WE DESIGN AND TEST REAL-WORLD SOLUTIONS TO COMPLEX,
COMMUNITY HEALTH PROBLEMS — MANY AT THE
INTERSECTION OF HEALTH AND EQUITY**

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health equity

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Health equity is created when individuals have the fair opportunity to reach their fullest health potential. Achieving health equity requires reducing unnecessary and avoidable differences that are unfair and unjust. Many causes of health inequities relate to social and environmental factors including income, social status, race, gender, education and physical environment. We offer expertise and resources for integrating health equity in health promotion programs and policies.

PUBLIC HEALTH ONTARIO

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A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

I am extremely pleased to welcome you to the MAP Centre for Urban Solutions and the MAP BIPOC Research Summer Student Program.

As a Research Student with MAP, you have joined the ranks of Unity Health Toronto, a remarkable organization that excels in clinical care, education and research across a network of three sites: Providence Healthcare, St. Joseph's Health Centre and St. Michael's Hospital.

Our work focuses on working collaboratively with communities and policy partners to develop and test real-world solutions to complex urban health issues. We are defined by our commitment to system and policy change to achieve health equity, long-term community partnerships, and scientific excellence. However, our success and global recognition would not have been possible without all the brilliant and dedicated minds who work here.

So, thank you for your passion for advancing equity and justice, and for joining us at MAP in your mission to create a healthier future for all.

I look forward to meeting and getting to know you. And remember my door is always open!

- STEPHEN HWANG
DIRECTOR, MAP CENTRE FOR URBAN
HEALTH SOLUTIONS

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A WORD FROM THE ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

As it's the fourth year of the MAP Summer Student Program, we're in awe of the research past MAP summer students have developed.

We're very excited to share the work of this year's summer students and their respective research teams. This yearbook was inspired by the original retrospective of the inaugural program that students at the time Melenna Awaju, Peri Ren and Christina Choo created, back in 2021.

This program has enabled students to gain research skills, access professional development resources, participate in skill-building workshops, seek mentorship from MAP scientists and network with like-minded peers at a world-leading health equity research center.

On behalf of the summer students, we'd like to thank the MAP organizers, principal investigators, supervisors and research scientists we've had the pleasure of working with for their guidance and learning experiences!

- JASMEET & YISRAELLA

**MEET THIS
YEAR'S
MAP BIPOC
SUMMER
STUDENT
PROGRAM
ASSISTANT**

**MAP SUMMER STUDENT
PROGRAM 2024**

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MARTHA TAYLOR



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Martha is a recent graduate from Trinity College at the University of Toronto with an Honours Bachelor of Arts in Health Studies, German and Portuguese. She has a deep passion for engaging in racial (health) equity work and working with communities; her goal is to become a doctor. In her free time, Martha enjoys watching anime, writing fiction (she also wants to become a bestselling published author), hanging out with family and friends, and appreciating the small things in life.

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From the bottom of my heart, thank you all so much for making the time that we spent together a wonderful one. I can't begin to describe how much fun I had during our seminars and seeing your competitive spirits come out during our activities. From the moment we had our Scavenger Hunt and I watched y'all take off and race around trying to find the clues, I knew our summer would be a good one. I kept saying it and will keep saying it: your active participation and engagement made this program a fun one, so major shoutout to you all! Even when the program ends, if there's any way I can support you, I would be more than happy to do so. You're all rock stars and I hope your light always shines. Stay in touch!

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**MEET THIS
YEAR'S
MAP BIPOC
SUMMER
STUDENT
WORKING
GROUP**

**MAP SUMMER STUDENT
PROGRAM 2024**

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Current Members:



[From the Top Left, Going Clockwise]: Melenna Awaju (Anti-Racism and Equity Advisory Board Consultant), Shajitha Rasiah (Research Coordinator II), Martha Taylor (Program Assistant), Denese Frans-Joseph (Research Equity Specialist), Christina Salmon (Senior Manager, Research Programs and Partnerships), Samira Prasad (Communications and Marketing Advisor)

Historical Members: Suzanne Zerger, Jemal Demeke, Cassandra Freitas, Kaminda Musumbulwa, Galo F Ginochio, Sarah Zaman, Puneet Parmar

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Samira Prasad

Samira Prasad (she/her) is a Communications & Marketing Advisor at the MAP Centre for Urban Health Solutions. She has sat on the AREA Summer Student Working Group for two years. She believes in making public health research accessible to all, as diverse experiences and backgrounds make for better work.

Shajitha Rasiah



Hi! My name is Shajitha Rasiah (she/her), and I sit on AREA (Anti-Racism and Equity Advisory). I am a proud Tamil-Canadian; my parents immigrated from Sri Lanka several years ago. This program is very near and dear to my heart because when I first started at Unity Health Toronto in 2017, I was an undergraduate student at UofT with no prior research background. I remember being grateful for the opportunity but also feeling a bit out of place. I learned to navigate the research world on my own and eventually met some great mentors that helped me find my way.

I made a commitment to myself that as I move up in research, I will help foster an environment where students feel safe, can be their true authentic selves, ask questions freely, and feel prioritized and valued. This commitment is what led me to join the MAP Summer Student Working Group.

Melenna Awaju



Melenna Awaju (she/her/elle) is a second-generation Eritrean-Canadian and was part of the inaugural cohort of the MAP Summer Student Program in 2021. The program ultimately enabled her to hone in on her career aspirations within health policy and health equity and she pays it forward by now sitting on AREA as a Consultant. Melenna is committed to MAP because MAP's programming is unique, is meticulous with its approach to creating culturally-safe research programming for new BIPOC researchers, and because MAP's programming is successful. She also envisions for the program to expand globally, empower more racialized students and promote the importance of health equity research to the largely positivist research world.

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Christina Salmon



Christina Salmon (she/her) is the Manager, Research Programs and Partnerships of MAP Centre for Urban Health Solutions and is committed to advocating for and implementing anti-racism and anti-oppressions policies to enable inclusivity and justice in the Research Institute. Christina is a member of the Unity Health Toronto Council on Anti-Racism, Equity and Social Accountability (CARESA) and the Patient & Community Engagement in Research Committee (PCERC). The MAP Summer Student Program is close to her heart as she understands the barriers that racialized people face and this program is an incredible opportunity for racialized students to learn, build relationships and receive mentorship which will impact their future careers.

Denese Frans-Joseph (she/her) is the Research Equity Specialist for the research community at Unity Health Toronto. She identifies as Canadian born with Ghanaian-Jamaican ancestry. She is deeply committed to working from an anti-racist and anti-oppressive framework and is dedicated to addressing individual, social and systemic factors that impact the health status of folks who experience marginalization due to systems of oppression and discrimination. She is the Co-Chair of the REDI Task Force at Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute, Co-Lead of the Anti-Racism and Equity Advisory for MAP Centre for Urban Health Solutions, and a member of the Summer Student Working Group for the MAP BIPOC Summer Student Program.

Denese Frans-Joseph



I'm truly honoured to be part of a program that makes such a meaningful difference in students' lives. It's amazing to see how we are committed to creating spaces where racialized students can feel safe, valued, and supported as they learn and explore the research world. This program gives them a real chance to dive into impactful research and thrive in environments that haven't always been welcoming. I'm excited about our mission to increase the representation of Black, Indigenous, and racialized students in research and I'm incredibly grateful to work with a team that is so committed to this important goal.

**WORDS FROM
MAP'S
FOURTH
COHORT OF
SUMMER
STUDENTS**

MAP SUMMER STUDENT
PROGRAM 2024

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YISRAELLA J. ALEBA



Yisraella is a student at Queen's University, entering her second year in the Health Sciences program. Driven by her passion for science and helping others, she aims to become a clinical physician with a focus on research. Yisraella aspires to be a doctor who treats people with dignity and equity—a commitment deepened by her experiences working and shadowing at MAP, as well as through volunteering and connecting with the community. She intends to use the knowledge and skills she has acquired to provide excellent healthcare to everyone.

WHAT PROJECT(S) HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON THIS SUMMER?

I have been working with Team Hwang on the Beyond Housing project, a complementary program that provides support to people experiencing chronic homelessness who are not engaging with existing shelter services. I have also shadowed and attended meetings for the Navigator program. Both of these initiatives are remarkable and are already making a significant impact in communities in Ontario.

WHAT ARE THE MOST VALUABLE THINGS YOU'VE LEARNED IN YOUR TIME AS A SUMMER STUDENT?

Where do I begin? I've learned so much! During my time as a summer student, I discovered that there's a place for everyone in research, and anyone can make an impact—whether by participating in a trial, sharing experiences in an interview or focus group, or being invested in implementing research interventions. It might feel uncomfortable, but it's crucial to be in environments where you can grow, gain experiences, and expand your horizons. As Anaïs Nin said, 'And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.' The world truly becomes what YOU make of it. Be mindful of your platform and ADVOCATE for those who cannot.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE MEMORIES FROM YOUR TIME AS A SUMMER STUDENT?

My favorite memory is visiting the Farmer's Market at Nathan Phillips Square, where I met my Team Hwang members for the first time. I enjoyed getting to know them and spending time together outside the office. All of my offsite work, visits, and shadowings—whether visiting the Lakeshore Respite with John, shadowing navigators like April and Amanda, or observing at Seaton House with Dr. Hwang—have been profoundly enriching experiences, especially in the realm of healthcare and health equity. These are lifetime memories that I will cherish forever, and I am immensely grateful for the opportunity. Another highlight was meeting all the summer students and growing together in our research skills through weekly seminars. Thank you to MAP, for creating a safe and growth-oriented environment, and to my team for their help and support.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO APPLY FOR THIS POSITION OR PROJECT?

I decided to apply for this position because I was interested in research, and with my background in supporting individuals experiencing homelessness, I found the Beyond Housing project to be the perfect opportunity for my first research experience. It turned out to be an excellent choice; I learned a great deal and it has given me optimism and renewed hope for the future!



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JASMEET BENEPAL

WHAT PROJECT(S) HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON THIS SUMMER?

Knowledge Translation of Recent Studies into Infographics and Blog Posts for Parents and Guardians.

WHAT ARE THE MOST VALUABLE THINGS YOU'VE LEARNED IN YOUR TIME AS A SUMMER STUDENT?

During my time as a summer student working on knowledge translation, the most valuable lesson I've learned is the importance of tailoring information to the audience. For knowledge translation, information should be accessible but also, relevant and engaging for the specific target audience. This involves understanding the audience's background and context and then presenting information in a way that resonates with them.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE MEMORIES FROM YOUR TIME AS A SUMMER STUDENT?

During my time as a summer student, I will remember the networking opportunities where I got to meet and interact with professionals in the field, to ask questions and gain insights from their experience. I am also grateful for the social events where I got to bond with my peers and the mentorship moments where I gained feedback and encouragement from Martha.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO APPLY FOR THIS POSITION OR PROJECT?

I decided to apply for this position in pediatric clinical primary care research because I am deeply committed to improving child health outcomes and advancing our understanding of pediatric care. My background working on improving primary care in pre-adolescents and adolescents, as made me passionate about addressing the unique health care challenges faced by children before adolescence.

This role aligns perfectly with my goal of contributing to evidence-based practices that can enhance patient care and outcomes. I am excited about the opportunity to work with a team dedicated to researching innovative solutions and interventions that can make a real difference in children's lives. Moreover, I am motivated by the potential to translate research findings into practical applications that can benefit families and communities. The chance to contribute to impactful research is both inspiring and fulfilling to me.

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TINA LIU



Tina is a student at McMaster University, entering her 2nd year of Psychology, Neuroscience & Behaviour. She is interested in pursuing medicine and research to help vulnerable and diverse populations such as children, older adults, and people with disabilities. She enjoys gaming and digital art in her free time.

WHAT PROJECT(S) HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON THIS SUMMER?

I've been working under Dr. Mikaela Gabriel to investigate the barriers to holistic health that Indigenous women face upon experiencing homelessness, primarily in urban centres like Toronto. We are conducting a scoping review to identify current gaps in the literature, highlight Indigenous peoples' experiences with homelessness, and identify key recommendations from academic articles and grey literature. An additional project I'm working on is investigating the available literature and services on Indigenous reproductive care in urban centres across Canada. I'm hoping to draw attention to the unique needs and injustices that Indigenous women experience in the process of childbirth and care.

WHAT ARE THE MOST VALUABLE THINGS YOU'VE LEARNED IN YOUR TIME AS A SUMMER STUDENT?

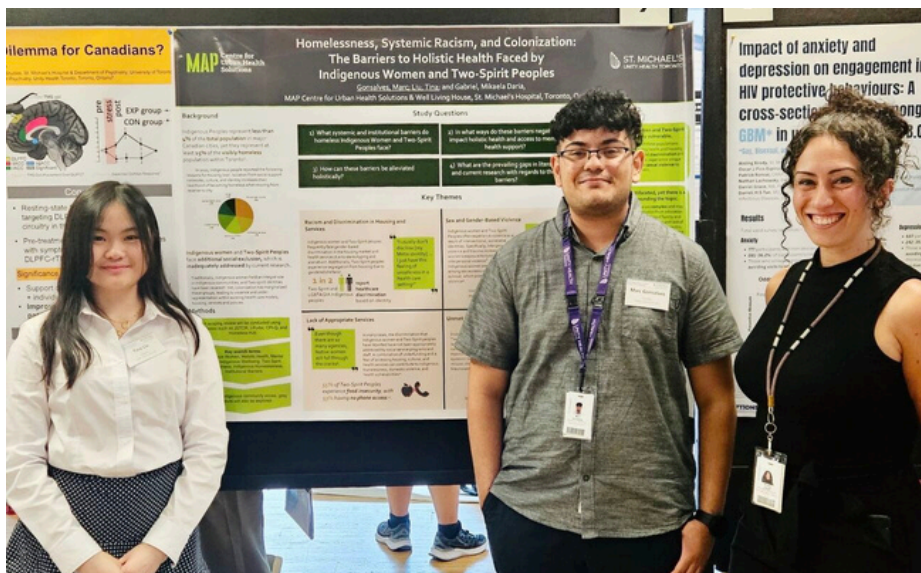
Working with Mikaela and my fellow student Marc, I've definitely realized the importance of having a supportive team. They were always receptive to my suggestions and made me feel recognized & heard. We worked together even in a time crunch, bouncing ideas off each other and enjoying ourselves in the writing process. I really enjoyed the research process even when it was tough. Whether making a poster or writing a manuscript, I persevered and made the most out of this experience.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE MEMORIES FROM YOUR TIME AS A SUMMER STUDENT?

When Mikaela, Marc and I met up for the KRSS poster competition, we all began geeking out about video games, specifically Pokemon. I felt super immersed in our nerdy discussion about our favorite Pokemon games - my stress melted away. The conversation was right up my alley as I'm part of a gaming club in university, called McMaster Extra Life, that raises money for the children's hospital.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO APPLY FOR THIS POSITION OR PROJECT?

Mikaela's project piqued my interest as it was an opportunity to directly impact the lives of one of the most vulnerable populations in Toronto. Having little background knowledge on Indigenous and homeless populations, I knew this position would expand my knowledge on the barriers they faced, in a more enriched and involved way compared to the classroom. Always believe in yourself. I never expected that I'd be in a position where I could contribute to research right after my 1st year of University.



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MARIA MESFIN



Maria is a final year Global Health student at York University, and is passionate about health policy and social determinants of health that impact the outcomes in underserved populations. She hopes to pursue postgraduate studies in this area in the near future.

WHAT PROJECT(S) HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON THIS SUMMER?

During the 2024 Map Summer Student Program I had on the "Inequities in neighbourhood park distribution and quality in Toronto and Mississauga" project with Dr. Gillian Booth.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE MEMORIES FROM YOUR TIME AS A SUMMER STUDENT?

Working outdoors and auditing parks with my fellow colleagues. It was an opportunity to bond and form relationship that we otherwise would have not got to do.

WHAT ARE THE MOST VALUABLE THINGS YOU'VE LEARNED IN YOUR TIME AS A SUMMER STUDENT?

I found the research in how our everyday physical environment is impacted by socioeconomic and racial discrepancies very insightful. I found the knowledge gained on the specific features of outdoor spaces that incentivizes members of communities to use parks valuable as well.

WHY YOU DECIDE TO APPLY FOR THIS POSITION OR PROJECT?

I decided to apply to this project as I was drawn to the idea of investigating how socioeconomic and racial inequities impact health outcomes. I believed the knowledge and skills I would gain from this would align with my future academic and career goals.



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DEANDRA OSAYANDE



Deandra Osayande is a 3rd year undergraduate student at the University of Toronto, with a major in Human Biology and a double minor in Psychology and Immunology. She is passionate about healthcare and aspires to become a medical doctor. She demonstrates her passion through her research, leadership, and community involvement.

WHAT PROJECT(S) HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON THIS SUMMER?

I've been working on patient reaction to involuntary admission and treatment.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE MEMORIES FROM YOUR TIME AS A SUMMER STUDENT?

My favourite memory as a summer student was attending the weekly MAP seminars at the Li Ka Shing Institute! It was great to meet up and interact with the rest of the MAP team to share our experiences, learn new research tips, and play fun games.

WHAT ARE THE MOST VALUABLE THINGS YOU'VE LEARNED IN YOUR TIME AS A SUMMER STUDENT?

The most valuable things I've learned during my time as a summer student are: how to properly conduct a literature search. This will be very helpful for me as a student! I've also learned the importance of networking and how to maximize these connections, how to market yourself and your experiences and knowledge translation skills.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO APPLY FOR THIS POSITION OR PROJECT?

I decided to apply for this project because it was a great opportunity to gain insight into the mental health research field and learn about the experiences of a stigmatized and vulnerable population.



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TAIJA THOMPSON



Taija graduated with a Bachelor's degree from Queen's University in Biology and Psychology. She has an interest in global health research, and social epidemiology. In her spare time, they enjoy reading and rock climbing!

WHAT PROJECT(S) HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON THIS SUMMER?

I worked on multiple project related to the effect of precarious employment, and helped to conduct an intersectional analysis of how this type of employment affects equity deserving groups.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE MEMORIES FROM YOUR TIME AS A SUMMER STUDENT?

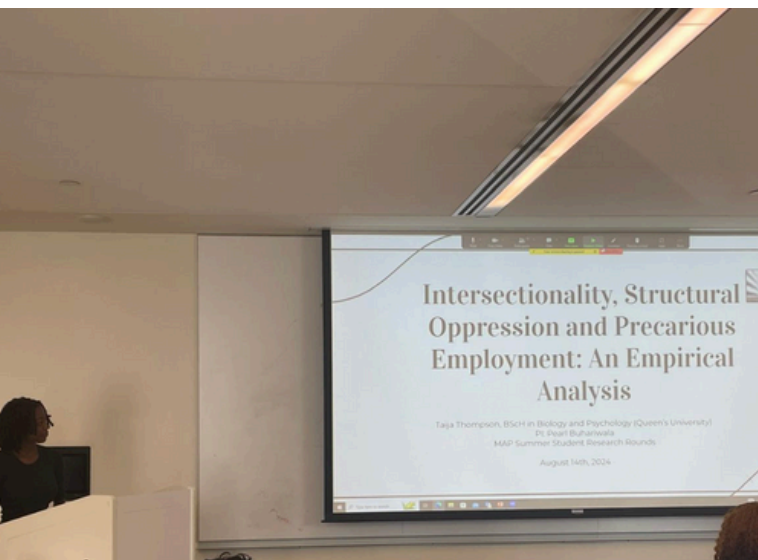
The scavenger we did in the first meeting really helped set the tone for the rest of the summer. It was a great ice breaker!

WHAT ARE THE MOST VALUABLE THINGS YOU'VE LEARNED IN YOUR TIME AS A SUMMER STUDENT?

During my summer position, the most valuable experiences were the opportunities to network with professionals in the field. Their guidance and insights not only expanded my knowledge but also helped shape my career aspirations.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO APPLY FOR THIS POSITION OR PROJECT?

I was particularly drawn to the project's focus on precarious employment and its impact on marginalized communities. It aligned with my interest in social epidemiology and my desire to contribute to research that highlights the lived experiences of those most affected by systemic inequities. This program offered numerous opportunities for professional and personal development, far exceeding my initial expectations.



WORDS FROM OUR SUPERVISORS & WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

MAP SUMMER STUDENT
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A WORD FROM THE SUMMER WORKING GROUP

“

Deandra, Jasmeet, Maria, Taija, Tina and Yisraella; we're so grateful to have had all of you as part of this year's MAP Summer Student program! You all flourished on your respective projects, and seeing you present your projects during the Research Rounds filled us with nothing but pride and happiness. We hope you carry the pillars of health equity research you have learned about onto your future ventures. We look forward to staying connected and seeing what you do in the future!

”

- MELENNA, DENESE, SAMIRA, SHAJITHA,
CHRISTINA & MARTHA

TEAM BOOTH

“

Maria traveled to over 250 parks all over north west Toronto and Scarborough to conduct audits of the quality of public greenspace, especially in areas with high rates of diabetes. Maria was dedicated to conducting these audits, sometimes having to battle pops of extreme weather (both extreme heat and extreme rain!), unexpected car problems, and heavy traffic! She also conducted a valuable lit search that will help us understand the factors that influence use of parks, and how park quality might play a role. It is amazing how much work can be achieved in such a short amount of time and we thank Maria for her tenacity and diligence!

- NATALIE MCGLYNN (RPM)

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TEAM O'CAMPO

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Taija has been great to work with over this summer student placement. Taija has shown great enthusiasm and has taken work across three projects. Taija has jumped into tasks supporting manuscript development, qualitative interview analysis, and literature reviews across our precarious employment projects. The contributions Taija has made significant contributions to helped push our work forward. We wish Taija best of luck in her future endeavours and have no doubt Taija will achieve amazing things.

- PEARL BUHARIWALA (RPM)

”

TEAM MAGUIRE

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Jasmeet has been an absolute delight to have as a MAP summer student on our team. Jasmeet has contributed in a meaningful way to enhancing knowledge translation of our research findings. I wish Jasmeete the very best in her upcoming medical studies at Queen's University!

- JONATHON MAGUIRE (PI)

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TEAM HWANG

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It has been wonderful learning and working with Yisraella this summer. From the beginning, she demonstrated a strong interest in understanding the relationship between homelessness and health and learning from people with different experiences and perspectives. She always took initiative and collaborated well with others, seeking direction where needed and working independently as appropriate. She openly accepted feedback and was exceptionally insightful regarding her strengths and areas for improvement. She is very inquisitive and felt comfortable asking questions to further her understanding. During her time with the team, she was able to liaise effectively with both researchers and members of the community. We wish Yisraella all the best as she continues her studies.

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- EVIE GOGOSIS (RPM)

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TEAM LAW

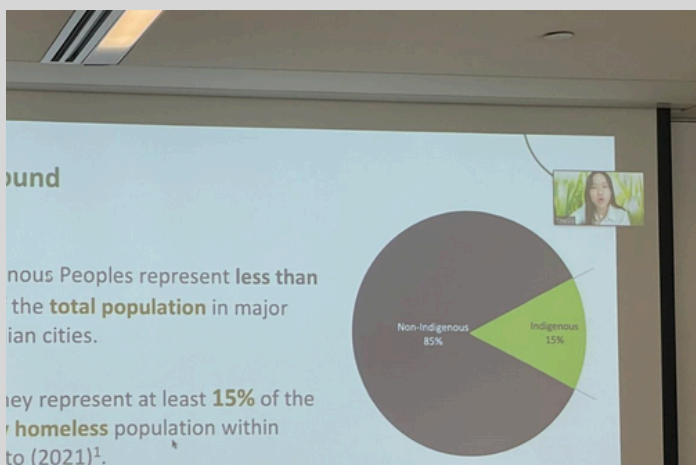
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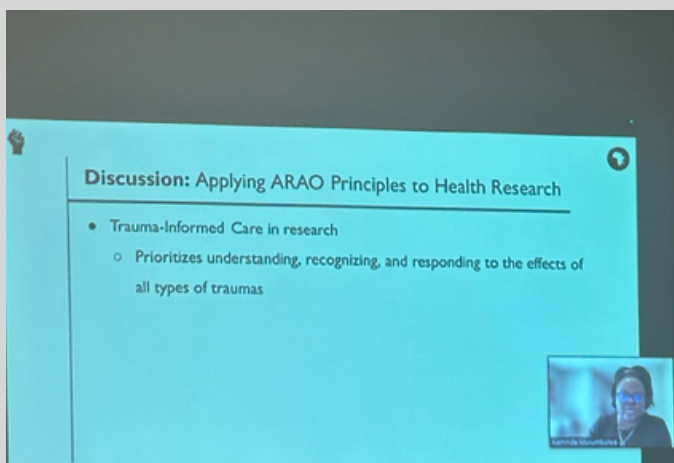
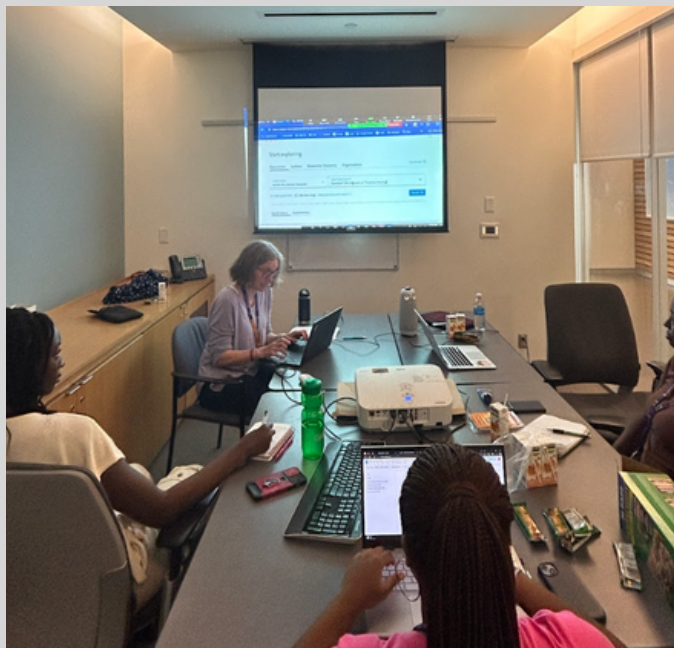
I have had a very positive experience working with Deandra. In her reflection and our debrief, i would highlight her commitment to this project, excellent organization, attention to detail, time management, and critical thinking skills were key strengths. She did a great job in a scoping review project while learning about the bigger research project with additional participations. She also learned that it's okay to learn throughout the process, ask relevant questions, and persevere. We learned to raise concerns in a more timely fashion and she has quickly incorporated the learning to good effect. She has improved and demonstrated well in communication, knowledge translation, and critical analysis skills. A pleasure to work with.

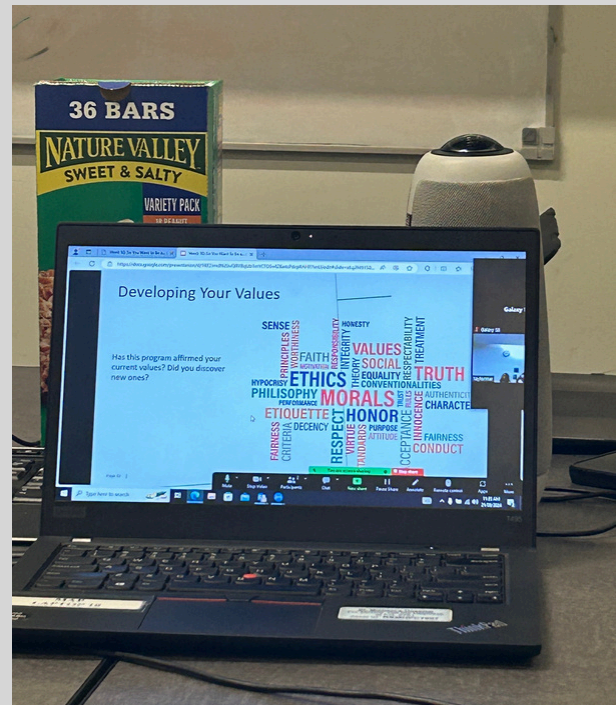
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- SAMUEL LAW (PI)

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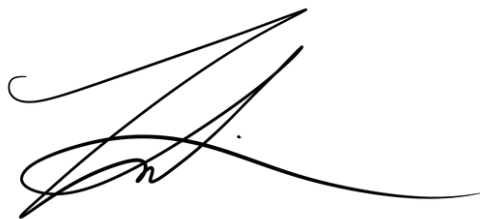






SIGNATURES

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Mariam M.



J. Benepal

Yisraella



