

Collingwood

Sessions 1 & 2 (Feb 13 & 20, 2020) Debrief

2 people in each session. The Collingwood group has not been seeing the same level of participation as the Kitsilano group.

Process Highlights:

The second session ran more smoothly than the first, as we were (or at least I was) caught off guard by the low turnout. The second session ran more like our normal model. We have reason to believe that our next session may have more people, since our participants expressed some interest in bringing friends to the next session, but it is hard to predict whether that will happen considering the busy lives of our participants and of their friends.

In the second session, both participants found our group because of Facebook. This goes to demonstrate the utility of social media advertising for our group, since we would have had no participants without Facebook.

We have postulated numerous reasons why the Collingwood group is having a much lower turnout than our Kitsilano group. The first reason relates to socio economic status. Kitsilano is a much richer area than Collingwood, and there is a known association between SES and participation in climate action.

Higher SES people are more likely to have all of their basic needs met, without a significant amount of stress involved in meeting those needs. Individuals who can comfortably pay all their bills with money left over for leisure are less likely to deal with a significant amount of stress when meeting their basic needs, and will therefore have more energy to participate in things such as a climate support group.

Lower SES individuals suffer more stress when working to meet their basic needs, and likely have a higher need to disengage, relax, and engage in self care activities in the evenings. Meeting with a group to discuss the worst existential crisis in history may not have any tangible benefits to individuals who are oppressed daily by our capitalist society.

It is important to bear this in mind when asking people to take action or “awaken” to the current crisis; people with more privilege have more responsibility to do more about the climate, since they benefit the most from the active destruction of the world and likely have the more energy to act from being less oppressed than others.

The second reason we suppose that Collingwood may be less popular is due to a language barrier. While I am not personally familiar with the area, it is my understanding that a higher proportion of the population in this area do not have English as their first language, when

compared to the Kitsilano area. Given that our group is only offered in English (for now), it is understandable that a large proportion of the population in this area wouldn't benefit from our group.

While the low turnout hasn't been too encouraging, the fact remains that we have had some attendance, and it is certainly worth continuing the group at least until the end of the fourth session. In this time, it would be wise for us facilitators to make considerations and accept feedback that will help improve ourselves as facilitators.

Michelle offered some very helpful comments to this end, which will be important for us to keep in mind so that we can continue to improve our group facilitation skills for the future. It can be easy to see a low turnout such as we've had in the last two weeks at Collingwood as a bad thing, yet it is important to remember that we are still in our humble beginnings when it comes to offering this group, and we are still helping people, even if it's two at a time.

Further, the more sessions we facilitate, the more opportunity we have to develop ourselves as facilitators so that we may be more helpful to future participants.

While I believe there are more positives to draw from our Collingwood experience than negatives, the fact still remains that other neighbourhood houses may see higher attendance for our group, and if we're only offering two groups at the moment, we may benefit from considering which two locations allow us to help the most people.

The need for new facilitators is rapidly arising, and we are considering internship/volunteer models to accommodate that need. We have some people in mind as facilitators, but it would be wise for us to formalize a procedure for locating and training new facilitators, as well as developing a contract of sorts which will detail the level of commitment new facilitators make when they join us.

Ultimately, our goal for the Climate Support Group is that it will be able to sustain itself in the event that the current facilitators stopped existing. Not that Tom and I have plans to stop doing this group, but it would be in GTEC's interest to have this neighbourhood house support group structure be able to continue regardless of who the facilitators are at the time. Given the demand for volunteer and internship hours, there shouldn't be an issue sustaining this type of support group at each of the neighbourhood houses in the lower mainland once we get there.