

# Summer 2021 Recreation Program Impact Report



## **Executive Summary**

Soch Mental Health is a community mental health promotion initiative aiming to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health resources and programming to the South Asian Community. Since its inception, Soch has delivered over 173 mental health workshops and has received over \$155 000 in grant funding.

Racialized communities in the Region of Peel were among the hardest hit populations during the pandemic, as they made up 83% of COVID-19 cases despite comprising only 59% of Peel's population. Moreover, before the pandemic, members of the South Asian community in Canada were 85% less likely to seek treatment for mental health and illness concerns, in comparison to those who identify as white. There is also a lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health support for the South Asian community. Thus, the Summer Recreation program aimed to reconnect families and the community, build social skills, reduce isolation and promote the need for recreation among the South Asian community.

Recreational programming was delivered virtually over a 4-week period in July 2021 to all age groups (children, youth, adults and seniors) via workshops that aligned with the emotional, spiritual, intellectual, physical and social domains of wellness. A total of 40 workshops were delivered and the childrens' groups experienced the highest levels of engagement. Next steps include dissemination of the findings to academic spaces and the continuation of recreational programming in the fall, winter and spring months.





## Introduction



#### **About Soch**

Soch Mental Health is a community mental health promotion initiative started by two community mental health nurses, Jasmeet Chagger (RN, BScN, MSc) and Maneet Chahal (RN, BScN, MSc). Soch aims to start the mental health conversation to break the stigma in the South Asian community and empower the community with the skills to navigate the mental health system, support loved ones and most importantly, take a preventative approach to caring for one's overall mental wellbeing. In Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi, Soch means "to think" or "a thought". As community mental health nurses, we truly believe that the way of combating the stigma towards mental health is to change the way our community "thinks" about mental health.

Since its start in 2015, Soch has delivered 173 mental health workshops and has received over \$155 000 in external funding from various grants. Specifically, Soch has received funding from the Multicultural Community Capacity Grant, Red Cross Covid-19 Emergency Fun, Canada Summer Jobs and the Region of Peel Covid-related Emergency Funding. Soch has also grown to a team over 40 volunteers across 10 specifalized program series; namely, Men's Mental Health, Womens' Mental Health, Perinatal Mental Health, Queer and Trans Mental Health, International Students, Seniors' Mental Tealth, Addictions & Mental Health, Sunehri Soch, Poetry & Mental Health, and Children and Youth Mental Health.



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## **Introduction**



#### The Summer Recreation Program

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of creating and developing a summer recreational opportunity for the South Asian community is to help the community heal from the impacts of COVID-19. The South Asian community in Canada consists of approximately 1.6 million individuals, making it the largest racialized group in the country. (1) Studies also show that members of the South Asian community in Canada are 85% less likely to seek treatment for mental health and illness concerns, in comparison to those who identify as white. (1) Moreover, although racialized communities only make up about 59% of the Region of Peel's population, racialized population comprised 83% of Peel's COVID-19 cases. (2) Combined with the negative mental health impacts of lockdowns and restrictive social practices, there is a need for culturally contextualized, community-based and family-centred upstream mental health support. Thus, Soch's Summer Recreation program was developed to promote and provide culturally and linguistically appropriate recreational opportunities as a means of preventative mental health support to South Asian communities during the pandemic.

#### **Funding**

The Summer Recreation Program received funding from Canada Summer Jobs to hire a Recreation Supervisor and a Recreation Coordinator for an 8-week period between June and August 2021. Soch also received support from the Region of Peel COVID-18 Community Fund to hire the Program Coordinator for a 10-week period between June and August 2021.

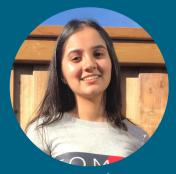
#### **Team**



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## **Objectives**



The Summer Recreation Program aimed to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate recreational programming for the South Asian community to fulfill the following objectives:

Reconnect families & the community



**Build social skills** 



**Reduce isolation** 



Promote the need for recreation







**Figure 1:** Overview of the eight dimensions of wellness **(4)** 



#### **Domains of Health**

Five of the eight domains of health, which are also referred to as dimensions of wellness, guided the development of this program's workshops. Figure 1 depicts the widely known eight dimensions of wellness. In this program, the first week consisted of programs that explored healthy outlets for spiritual and emotional skills building. Specifically, the spiritual domain is about making a connection with yourself, and finding a purpose, value and meaning in your life. Similarly, the emotional domain focuses on identifying, recognizing, and respecting different emotions, feelings, attitudes, and values of others as well as their own. (3) The second week focused on intellectual programming, which consisted of programs that helped build thinking skills and allowed attendees to learn something new or maintain curiosity about learning. (3) Workshops in the third week aligned with the physical domain of health. These programs were designed to get attendees to engage in activities that were higher energy, challenging and fun. Thus, the workshops from this week challenged and benefited participants' physical and mental health. (3) The final week of programming consisted of programs based in the social domain, which involved participants socializing with each other and working together. It also emphasized communication skills and allowed participants to get to know each other and build healthy relationships. (3) Overall, the summer recreation program was designed from a therapeutic recreation standpoint. Each of the workshops were also designed to empower participants to engage in self-care and build positive coping skills.



#### **Cultural Contextualization**

The main strength and defining aspect of this program was the cultural and linguistic tailoring of the workshops, which allowed it to truly cater to South Asian communities. Several workshops were offered in various South Asian languages such as Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, and Gujarati. South Asian cultural elements were also incorporated in several workshops. For instance, the Henna Postcards workshop highlighted the traditional practice of henna, which shares roots in many South Asian cultural identities. Another instance of interconnecting both cultural and linguistic aspects occurred in many of the workshops with children, in which Soch facilitators led games and music-based activities which involved participants sharing common words/ phrases in their South Asian language of choice. The external workshop facilitators were also from a diverse variety of backgrounds, in terms of South Asian ethnicity, languages, life experiences, age groups, gender and education. This allowed facilitators to connect with workshop participants on a deeper level, as there was a shared set of experiences as racialized individuals.





#### Logistics

The Summer 2021 Recreation Program was designed to be a 4-week program from July 5th 2021 to July 30th 2021. The programming was delivered virtually through platforms such as Zoom and Instagram, making it available to communities worldwide. The workshops were catered to three different streams or age groups; namely, children (ages 3-12), youth & adults (ages 12-65), and seniors (ages 65+). The program was free of cost and workshops were offered almost everyday at varying times. Workshops were offered at different frequencies and timings to match the intended audience for that particular workshop. For instance, since children were most likely to be off from school and their parents/caregivers were most likely to be at work during the day, early afternoons (around 1-2pm) were deemed to be the most appropriate time for childrens' programming. Originally, programming was offered to youth and adult groups separately. However, due to low participation across both groups and similarities in workshop content, the two groups were combined following the first week. Workshops for youth and adults were primarily scheduled during the evenings (around 7-8pm) due to other commitments during the day (ie work, summer school). For the seniors' age group, workshops were held during the late morning (around 10-11am) and on weekends, as these times were conducive to maximum engagement based on prior workshops held by the Soch Seniors' Volunteer Team.

#### **Evaluation**

A mixed-method approach was used to evaluate the program's engagement and impact. Additionally, evaluation was conducted at various levels to maximize data capture and provide a holistic understanding of the program's success. At the end of each workshop, feedback surveys were administered to all participants via the chat function on Zoom. The surveys for the childrens' groups had less questions and were structured more simpled to best suit the needs of that age groups. All feedback forms collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Facilitators also verbally guided the childrens' groups to complete the questionnaires at the end of each workshop. Additionally, the Soch team kept track of the attendance metrics, repeating participants and engagement levels throughout the program. Furthermore, during the last week of programming, two focus groups were conducted to capture participants' overall experiences with the Summer Research Program. The focus groups allowed attendees to informally share their thoughts, opinions and feedback.



#### Timeline

Although the recreational programming ran for a 4-week period, time was also allotted for planning, promotions and synthesizing the findings from this program evaluation. Figure 2 consists of a GANTT chart depiction of the timeline of the Summer Recreation Program. Each colour represents a different aspect of the recreation program and each box is indicate of a one-week period. As shown, two weeks were allotted for the planning phase, which mostly consisted of designing programs and seeking community collaborations. Promotion of the program started one week prior to the start of the workshops and continued throughout the program. As depicted by the red boxes, each week of programming corresponded to a specific dimension of wellness, and the workshops in that week were in alignment with that dimension. Finally, the evaluation period occurred concurrently with the workshops.

Figure 2: Timeline of the Summer Recreation Program

	Week 1 (Jun 14-Jun 18)	Week 2 (Jun 21-Jun 25)	Week 3 (Jun 28-Jul 2)	Week 4 (Jul 5-Jul 9)	Week 5 (Jul 12-Jul16)	Week 6 (Jul 19-Jul 23)	Week 7 (Jul 26-Jul 30)	Week 8 (Aug 2-Aug 6)
Planning ( program design, facilitator recruitment)								
Promotions (Radio & TV announcements, IG Lives, Social Media Posts)								
Workshops (40 in total)								
Week 1-Spiritual & emotional (10)								
Week 2-Intellectual (9)								
Week 3- Physical (9)								
Week 4-Social (8)								
Evaluation								
Wrap-up								



#### **External Engagement**

Collaborations with multiple community members and organizations contributed to the success of this inaugural Recreation Program. Throughout the program, the Soch recreation team promoted the program at several radio and television channels. The purpose of this type of media engagement was to expand our reach to individuals who may not be aware of Soch through social media platforms and start the mental health dialogue in spaces not dedicated solely to mental health awareness. Figure 3 summarizes all instances of such external media engagement.

**Figure 3:** External media engagement throughout the Summer Recreation Program

Name	Туре			
Ramz Punjabi (The Harjinder Gill Show)	South Asian Radio Station based in Toronto, Ontario, Canada			
Radio Sargam	South Asian Radio Station			
OMNI TV	South Asian TV Channel			
PTC Punjabi	South Asian TV Channel			
Connect FM	South Asian Radio Station based in Surrey, British Columbia, Canada			
Channel Y	South Asian TV Channel			





#### **Community Stakeholders**

Moreover, a large part of the program included community collaborations with individuals external to Soch who facilitated individual workshops. In addition to bringing perspectives from a diverse range of skills, experiences and demographics to the program, these collaborations also amplified the voices of community members, growing small businesses, certified professionals and influencers from the South Asian community. Following are all the workshops facilitators for this program:



Shaninder Virdi (@yogishaninder)



Mom Ladies (@themomladies)



Manmeet Narang (@hameenasto\_)



Suzanne (@naachforfun)



Bani Ahuja (@selfcare4thewin)



Iman Grewal (@imantdot)



Bhavini Mistry (@themistryshop)



Monica Prajapati (@foodby\_monica)



Sonya Dey (@dancebydey)



Anuradha Grover-Tejpal (@anuradhagrovertejpal)



Chanelle (@lifeofalotus )



Manjit Rai (@maitriyoga5)



Amrit (@noyzhiphop)



Aman (@preetfit)



Sandy Lion (@thesandylion)



Tanvir Mann (@tanvirrose)



Shivi Darubra (@shivster\_)



Rafia Shafiq (@dhaga.art)



Sharon Dosanjh (@pttruefitness)



Jashan Pannu (@jashan.beauty)



#### **Attendance & Engagement**

Figure 4 depicts an overview of the number of workshops and number of registrations compared to actual attendance. As shown, 43 individuals took part in the Summer 2021 Recreation Program, which represented 30.4% of the registrants. Among all age groups, children's participation was the highest and they comprised close to half of the total participants in the program. Moreover, a total of 40 households were reached through the Summer Recreation Program. Additionally, 58.1%(25/43) of all participants of the Summer Recreation Program attended more than one workshop. Specifically, 76% (19/25) of the participants from the childrens' stream and 35.3% (6/17) from the youth & adults' stream attended more than one workshop.

	Number of workshops	Number of registrations	Attendance	Turnout rate	# households impacted
Total	40	141	43	30.4%	40 (3 households with multiple participants)
Childrens'	13	50	25	50%	23
Youth & Adult	14	67	17	25.4%	16
Seniors	5	24	1	4.2%	1

Figure 4: Overview of attendance throughout the Summer Recreation Program

However, it is important to note that these numbers only reflect workshops that were conducted via Zoom. Three workshops were conducted over Instagram Live, and thus, the attendance and number of households impacted shown in the table are higher in actuality. Figure 5 depicts the engagement metrics for the three workshops conducted over Instagram Live. As shown, there is an instant increase in reach upon using this method, as well as an upward trend in the number of views for each subsequent workshop, which may indicate a potentially alternative method of conducting workshops at Soch. Moreover, all workshop materials, including a recreation workbook were emailed to all participants who had registered for the program.

**Figure 5:** Engagement metrics for workshops conducted via Instagram Live

Workshop Name & Facilitator	Date of workshop	Views	Shares	Saves
Youth & Adults' Fitness Workshop Facilitator: Amar (@_preetfit)	July 22 2021	531	2	4
Discussion on culture, mental health & fashion Facilitator: Sandy (@thesandylion)	July 28 2021	1082	3	14
Discussion on beauty standards, self-care & mental health, coupled with a makeup tutorial Facilitator: Jashan (@jashan.beauty)	July 29 2021	2106	11	55

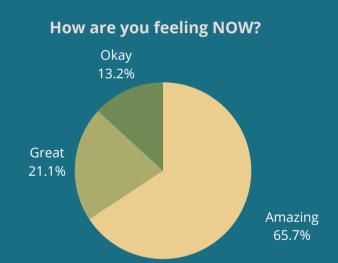


#### Quantitative Feedback

For the childrens' stream, data was captured from 38 observations. Since responses from repeating individuals were not collected, this may not represent 38 different individuals. However, the findings provide a holistic view of the overall acceptability of the workshops. As shown in Figure 6, attending a workshop generally improved childrens' overall wellbeing. About 10.5% of the participants indicated feeling "Not that good" before the workshop, whereas none of the participants reported this after the workshop. On the other hand, participants who felt "Amazing" increased from 18.4% before the workshop to 65.8% after the workshop.

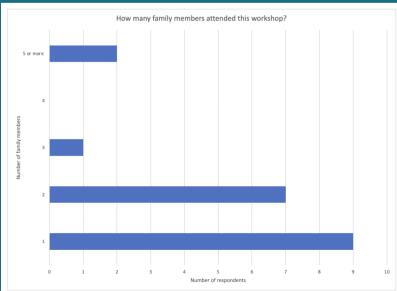
Figure 6: Pre and post indications of overall well being for the children's workshops





For the youth & adults' stream, data was captured from 19 observations. The graph in Figure 7 shows that in 10 of 19 instances, individuals attended the workshop with one or more of their family members. This demonstrates these workshops' potential as family-based programming.

**Figure 7:** Number of respondents who attended workshops with their family members

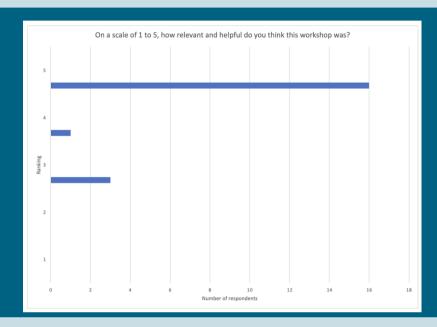




#### **Quantitative Feedback continued**

Moreover, Figure 9 shows individuals' rating of the workshop experience as "relevant and helpful". As shown, an overwhelming majority of respondents' (16/19) found the workshop to be very relevant and helpful.

**Figure 8:** Respondents ranking of how relevant and helpful they thought the workshop was



Furthermore, Figure 9 shows that over half of the respondents were struggling with mental health and/or addiction.

# Are you or someone in your home struggling with mental health and/or addiction?

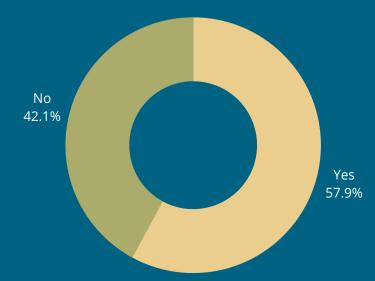


Figure 9: Participants' indications of whether or not they or someone in their home is struggling with mental health and/or addiction



# **Qualitative Feedback Qualitative takeaways from feedback forms**

At the end of each workshop, participants were also asked to complete feedback forms that were sent as Google Form links via the Chat function on Zoom. A thematic grouping of the recurring themes from the feedback surveys was carried out and common themes are graphically displayed in Figures 10 and 11.

**Figure 10:** Common themes in participants' response to the feedback prompt "Why did you attend?"



**Figure 11:** Common themes in participants' response to the feedback prompt "What would you like to see in future workshops?"





## Qualitative Feedback Qualitative takeaways from feedback forms

Since childrens' qualitative feedback tended to be more direct and single-worded in nature, a word cloud (Figure 13) was generated to visually display common, recurring themes. Words that are larger in size indicate repeating responses and thus, more prominent takeaways. As shown, future programming targeted towards children should aim to incorporate games, music and discussions of their feelings and emotions.

**Figure 12:** Word cloud of children's responses to the feedback prompt "What was your favourite part about today's workshop?"





# Qualitative Feedback Focus Groups

Two focus groups were conducted during the last week of the recreation program. The focus groups were held right after a workshop during the last week; specifically, they were conducted by two Soch Recreation team members on July 28th 2021 and July 29 2021. The focus group lasted about 10-15 minutes each and consisted of five questions that were posed to the entire group. Participants were encouraged to answer in a popcorn-style and engage in meaningful discussion. The first focus group had 8 participants and the second focus group had 7 participants. The last week of the program was open to all age groups, however the majority of the focus group participants were children. The following sections depict the key takeaways from each of the questions posed in the focus groups.



#### **Question 1**

What was your favourite session in these workshop series and why?

Two participants said they liked the Jalebi Baby dance workshop because they love dancing. Another participant said their favourite workshop was the on in which they were dancing to the Indian version of Jingle Bells because the song was funny. The following workshops were also mentioned by multiple participants as their favourite parts of the program: charades, guessing emojis of food and places, sourdough workshop, henna design workshop. A couple participants also commented that they liked them all but the treasure hunt was their favourite because they've never had the chance do a treasure hunt with all their friends and it was the last day to share ideas. A participants also said at the very end that they're going to miss everyone.



#### **Question 2**

What are some topics or activities you want to see next time?

A couple children mentioned that they would like to see more workshops that incorporate drawing. The youth and adult participants expressed an interest in the following components for future workshops: art, doodling, puzzle sessions, dancing, exercise and stretches, engineering, short Bollywood films and movie nights.



#### **Question 3**

Are you noticing anything different about your everyday life?

Multiple participants expressed that the energy of the groups were really fun and this encouraged them to do something fun outside of the session as well. A participant also indicated that as a result of the workshops, they are doing more activities, drawing and making more of a mess at home. Another participant indicated that attending the workshops and doing various activities opened more communication with their family, as they talked to them about what they are doing in the program. Another participant also indicated that they are doing more things at home as a result of the workshop and their favourite thing about the workshop is that they are able to see everyone, which makes them less bored. An additional participant said that they are being more creative at home now and are excited about what the next day brings. Others reiterated the aforementioned sentiments by saying that the workshops have been a learning experience for them and that they had a lot of fun while learning how to make posters and art.



#### **Question 4**

What didn't you like about the program or activities you did and why?

Participants indicated that they'd be interested in having access to recorded clips of the workshops, should they miss one. An individual also pointed out that many parents might not realize how fun the workshops are for children and the parents are missing out if they aren't experiencing this. Participants also indicated that they would like to see more cooking classes and more workshops that focused on art-related subjects such as dance and art. They also indicated that they would attend these workshops in-person.







#### **Question 5**

Do you have any other feedback for us?

The adult and youth participants conveyed a preference for holding workshops during a lunchtime session and that evening sessions seem too tiring. There was also a suggestion to consider other time zones. Moreover, some participants said that they'd prefer weekends while others preferred weekday workshops. Additionally, there was a recommendation for holding a "relaxing club", as well as an online movie night.

## Discussion



#### **Implications**

Overall, the inaugural Summer Recreation Program was well received by the larger Soch community. Taking into consideration registrations for the Zoom workshops as well as IG Live viewers, a total of 3860 individuals were reached. The workshops for children in particular were the ones with the highest engagement and there was a steady increase in the number of children attending each workshop. This positive response was also reflected in the quantitative feedback, which showed that the number of child participants who indicated feeling "amazing" increased from 18.4% before the workshops to 65.8% after the workshops. Moreover, the qualitative data collected from feedback form and focus groups show that children were very attentive in the workshops and found them to be fun, interesting, engaging and culturally informative. It was also apparent from the evaluations and repeating attendance that the children had very valuable takeaways from the programs that impacted them beyond the workshop space. Thus, this establishes the need and feasibility of further proactive mental health programming for children, through a recreational lens.

Furthermore, a majority of participants from the youth and adult age groups found the workshops to be relevant and helpful, with qualitative feedback revealing that the most common reason for attending a workshop was learning a new skill. Moreover, a large majority of participants indicated in the qualitative feedback that future workshops should include arts and crafts components. This provides valuable insight for future Soch programming, as it proves the need to be more intentional with workshops for the youth and adult age group. Moreover, 57.89% of workshop attendees indicated that they or someone in their home were struggling with mental health and/or addictions. Additionally, data from the Zoom workshops indicates that individuals from at least 40 different households took part in the recreation program. Moreover, for a majority of the instances, participants attended the workshops with one or more family members, which demonstrates the potential for family-centered mental health programming.



## **Discussion**



#### Limitations

That being said, there were some limitations in the data collection for this program. A large number of participants did not complete feedback questionnaires. Additionally, detailed and anonymous feedback could not be collected from individuals' who attended the workshops delivered via IG Lives. This may potentially have provided an incomplete picture of the program's overall impact and effectiveness, especially if participants' reasoning for not completing a questionnaire was related to the program/ workshop itself. Furthermore, responses from recurring participants were not collated. Thus, the individual level feedback is actually reflective of a smaller sample size, which weakens the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, although the primary aim of the summer recreation program was to deliver workshops, the health promotional impact and changes in mindset among individuals who did not attend workshops may not have been captured in totality. For instance, a South Asian community member may have learned about recreation and its connection to mental health for the first time, through a team members' speech on a radio or TV channel.

Furthermore, since participants were able to choose which workshops to attend, selection bias may have impacted the findings of this report, and the types of individuals that attended this program. In particular, individuals with a high baseline understanding, acceptance and appreciation of the importance of recreation and mental health may have been more likely to attend programming (and encourage family members to do so). That being said, the team's marketing narrative placed an emphasis on the program being a collation of fun, creative and skill-enhancing activities, which may have contributed to a destigmatizing dialogue and encouraged increased parcipationm, in comparison to other mental health interventions.

Moreover, since the timing of this program coincided with the easing of COVID-19 public health restrictions in Ontario, community members may have been more inclined to attend in-person activities over virtual programming during the summer. This may have been reflected in the overall low levels of attendance in several workshops for this program. Community members' availability due to other competing commitments (i.e. work, summer school) may also have been a majour factor impacting their participation in workshops. This may explain why adults and seniors had the lowest participation in the program, as adults may have been working during weekdays and seniors' may have required assistance from their caregivers to use the virtual platform. Several workshops were accordingly rescheduled for weekend time slots to accommodate such restrictions.

#### **Discussion**



#### **Next Steps**

That being said, this pilot program was an overall success as it demonstrated high feasibility and acceptability of recreational programming among the South Asian community. It also established that children are a feasible target for mental health promotion and programming, which was an underexplored target group for Soch's prior activities and other similar community initiatives. The receptivity and engagement of the childrens' group, combined with their quantitative and qualitative feedback show that children are willing to learn about mental health and participate in preventative mental health programming.

Based on the findings and lessons learned from the summer pilot program, next steps for the Soch team include a continuation of recreation programming during the fall, winter and spring months. With changing availabilities and increased stress levels from school and work, there may be a greater need for a recreational program. Thus, there may be higher turnout. Moreover, as COVID-19 restrictions continue to further ease, inperson programming may be possible and will be preferred over virtual workshops. This may increase attendance and engagement, as many participants expressed that offering the same workshops in-person would've enhanced their experience.

Furthermore, there is currently a scarcity of literature that directly involves the mental health of South Asian communities in the context of the canadian population and health care system. Thus, findings from Soch's inaugural summer recreation program will be disseminated to the research community via publication in an academic journal, conference presentations and social media posts. Findings will also be disseminated via outreach to various mental health organizations, professional communities (i.e. Therapeutic Recreation Ontario, Ontario Nurses Association) to advance community-based approaches to mental health and cultural contextualization of mental health service.



## **Conclusion**



The Summer Recreation Program aimed to provide the South Asian community with recreational programming to heal from the mental health impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to addressing the lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate mental health resources for this population. Five of the eight dimensions of wellness guided the development of regular recreational programming throughout July 2021. Soch partnered with a wide diversity of community members and stakeholders to facilitate culturally appropriate virtual workshops over a 4-week period for all age groups; namely, children (ages 3-12), youth (ages 12-18), adults (ages 18-65) and seniors (ages 65+). A total of 40 workshops were delivered over Zoom and Instagram Live, with a total reach of 43 individuals for Zoom workshops and 3719 views for the Instagram Live workshops. Forty-three different participants attended the Zoom workshops through the program, with children being the highest engaged age group.

Both qualitative and quantitative feedback was collected from Zoom workshop participants and indicated positive takeaways from the workshops. About 57.89% of the youth and adult participants indicated that they or someone in their home was struggling with mental health and/ or addiction. Findings from this pilot program evaluation will be disseminated via an academic publication and research conferences. The next step for Soch is to deliver recreational programming during the fall, winter and spring months using the feedback collected from the inaugural pilot implementation.



## **Acknowledgements**



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## **Partnerships & Supporters**

## **Grants**





## **Partnerships**















## Soch Mental Health Summer 2021