

Statement: Purpose of Groundbreakers

April 2021

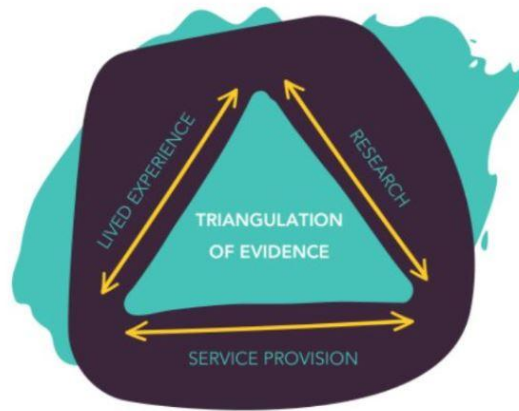
Overview

At Frayme, we know that it is critical to include individuals with lived expertise as partners in the design, planning, implementation, and evaluation of mental health and substance use services and supports. Frayme’s mandate is to ensure that the perspectives and learnings generated by lived expertise are integrated into efforts to improve the quality and responsiveness of services across the system. Thus, infrastructure within Frayme has been created to ensure that there are mechanisms and processes in place to support the meaningful and equitable engagement of youth, caregivers and advocates through *Groundbreakers*, Frayme’s National Lived Expertise Network. The underpinning to this work is that of knowledge equity, a social justice approach concerned with the power and privilege associated with knowledge production and consumption.

Rationale

Our society’s predisposition to regard only discursive knowledge as evidence has led us to, among other things, underestimate the capabilities of people who live in Canada and allowed us to dismiss the lived expertise of local knowledge and wisdom produced over centuries (Jaffe, 2017). In turn, this has created a systemic bias toward pedagogical or “official” knowledge holders —those who have the credentials and have been given authority to say what is really real, creating gross inequities (2017). As a result, individuals outside of this “official” knowledge holder group have been underestimated and even disrespected within evidence gathering circles, further perpetuating the divide among various forms of critical expertise.

In an effort to reconcile the inequity surrounding perceived knowledge authority, Frayme is working to create an ecosystem wherein there is a deep respect for many different forms of critical knowledge and wisdom, which is fundamental in our quest to create a fuller system of care within the Youth Mental Health and Substance Use space - see figure 1. Frayme uses a triangulation of evidence as a guide to understanding what the organization considers as evidence. The triangle is important conceptually because, without either side or the bottom, the triangle will collapse; All forms of evidence are needed. In order to actualize this approach, the Frayme secretariat works integratively with one another, as well as various external stakeholders, including but not limited to researchers, healthcare providers and folks with lived expertise to facilitate meaningful and lasting change within the Child and Youth Mental Health Sector.



Frayme's Triangulation of Evidence.

In an effort to meaningfully engage folks with lived expertise within organizational and systemic work, Frayme launched Groundbreakers, a National Lived Expertise Network concerned with amplifying voices to change the future. Aligned with the Social Justice movement of Knowledge Equity, the goal of Groundbreakers is to expand upon what is valued as knowledge and wisdom by partnering with youth, caregivers and advocates to amplify their voices in spaces where they may have historically been disregarded or excluded due to imbalanced structures of power and privilege. This work seeks to disparage issues pertaining to knowledge justice; who has a right to speak and be heard, who can create knowledge and whose way of understanding the world is granted the status of truth, what we create knowledge for and about, who benefits from knowledge, and whose vision can be allowed to set the agenda for the future (Jaffe, 2017). Knowledge equity focuses on creating, mobilizing and consuming transformational knowledge, hence the utilization of the 'Groundbreakers' term to capture the progressive efforts engaged in by Frayme and its lived expertise partners.

For more information about Groundbreakers, please contact Frayme.Engagement@theroyal.ca or Micaela Harley, Frayme's Sr. Engagement and Knowledge Equity Lead at micaela.harley@theroyal.ca

References:

Jaffe, JoAnn (2017). "Knowledge Equity is Social Justice: Engaging a Practice Theory Perspective of Knowledge for Rural Transformation: Knowledge Equity is Social Justice". *Rural Sociology*. 82 (3): 391-410. doi:10.1111/ruso.12143.