



THE AWAKENING PROJECT ORIENTATION 2021 REPORT

Tuesday July 13, 2021

Thursday July 15, 2021



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I. Purpose and Goals of *The Awakening Project* Orientation

Purpose of Orientation

- **Understanding** – Increase engagement, familiarity, and understanding with the content of The Awakening Project.
- **Discussion** – Empower students to host Zoom call discussions of their own, emulating the structure of dialogue that students witness and participate in at orientation.
- **Meet the Team** – Meet other members of the project and engage in meaningful conversation as a way to facilitate positive and collaborative team bonding.

Hopes of the Coordinators

This Orientation was made with quite a bit of hard work, dedication, and commitment from many different students, and we as the project coordinators are very excited to see our labour come to fruition in these coming days. We are very grateful for all the help and support students put into crafting this Orientation, and we hope that participants are able to derive meaningful skills for engaging in dialogue. We hope that in the two days, students will be inspired, empowered, and reminded of the wonderful leaders who came before us, the injustices that are taking place currently, and what our call to action is, in awakening ourselves and others to transformative change. We hope that participants take this Orientation as an experience to renew one's sense of hope for collective action and partake in discussion that is conducive to one's own critical thinking and understanding.

We hope that attendees do not only speak, but you also listen wholeheartedly and build upon the ideas of others to come to inclusive conclusions. We hope that everyone would be able to appreciate the viewpoints and experiences of others as a way of expanding their own worldview.

- *Dania Ahmed and Vincent Pham*
Summer 2021 Orientation coordinators

II. Coordinators, Student Leaders, Note Taker, Attendees

Orientation Coordinators

- Dania Ahmed
- Vincent Pham

Student Leaders

Day 1

- Dania Ahmed
- Fariya Ali
- Vincent Pham

Day 2

- Fariya Ali
- Deborah Nwabor
- Ivy Pham
- Neil Salac
- Sana Mahmood

Note Taker

- Hinna Ahmed

Day 1 Attendees

- Cole Sadler
- Dania Ahmed
- Daniel Choi
- Deborah Nwabor
- Fariya Ali
- Habiba Hameed
- Hinna Ahmed
- Ivy Pham
- Jayita Thanigaimail
- Jennifer Wan
- Jessica Asotie
- Lisa Li
- Malcolm Standing
- Marwan Mohamed (cont'd)

- Melody Li
- Mike Stouparenko
- Neil Salac
- Raine Zetazate
- Ryan Ponneri
- Saesha Kukreja
- Sana Mahmood
- Stefano Marchesano
- Vincent Pham

Day 2 Attendees

- Amiran Sultana
- Cole Sadler
- Dania Ahmed
- Deborah Nwabor
- Fariya Ali
- Habiba Hameed
- Hinna Ahmed
- Ivy Pham
- Jayita Thanigaimail
- Jennifer Wan
- Jessica Asotie
- Lisa Li
- Marwan Mohamed
- Melody Li
- Mike Stouparenko
- Neil Salac
- Raine Zetazate
- Ryan Ponneri
- Saesha Kukreja
- Sana Mahmood
- Stefano Marchesano
- Vincent Pham
- Yannie Mork

III. Day 1 of Orientation

a. Minutes

Slides for Day 1 can be found here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/188uyOrLF47cJwUv2mdRpePoKt5I6RhIz/view?usp=sharing>

- Most of the students came on time and it was so great to see a number of them already in the meeting room about 10 minutes prior to starting.
- Students gave introductions in the chat, and it was interesting to read through them as students quickly went on introducing themselves.
- We began orientation at 11:05am with Dania leading all in a "Land Acknowledgement," ever so needed especially in light of what we have been hearing in the news lately.
- After, we proceeded on to addressing some housekeeping items, including addressing the purpose of the orientation and Zoom etiquette.
- I think things got more exciting and interesting for students when we began to give summaries of the three prophetic voices: **MP Qaqaaq**, **Martin Luther King Jr.**, and **Rick Tobias**. There was a fair bit of movement in the chat with heartfelt comments and admiration for these figures.
- The general session in which we discussed Carol Off was amazing. It was a large group for a conversation, but there were personal insights as well as responses that sparked conversation as well. There were some students who wished to speak, but unfortunately unable to do so due to time constraints (but I think for the better as some of these points, at least in my room were discussed again in my own room in the Rick Tobias context). That way, the orientation program would be respectful of everyone's time.

In the general session, we discussed the following questions: (with Hinna Ahmed's notes)

1. Carol contends that the antidote for the ideals of Othering is to hear people's stories and connect with them - what do you think of this solution? Can you think of any other solution?

Some responses:

- Agree with Carol's solution. Hearing people's stories and connecting with them is a good antidote because it puts you in their shoes and you do not jump to judging them and seeing them as the "other"
- Really like this perspective because it is a way of learning about a person and seeing them more as an individual. As Carol Off said it's less about seeing them as a characterization or a mob or part of a group. They are their own person, and you can understand their experiences and everything about them as a person rather than a group
- Learning each other's stories helps with inclusivity and acceptance • Very interesting and important to listen to people's stories and connect with them because it leads to a shift in social norms and how we think about these people after hearing their stories. When moving into a new house you have new neighbors and either you can choose to introduce yourself or your neighbor and take the first step. Some of us live in very ethnically diverse neighborhoods where it is from healthy dialogue that we can understand each other

- Her solution stands out because it is easier to judge others and have misunderstandings about why someone may act a certain way so it is important to understand where they may be coming from. Listening to others' stories can help humanize us
- Have the mindset that generalization is always wrong since we all have different experiences and not to generalize a group because that group is created from individuals who have different stories
- Another solution can be to not have one single month or day allotted to talking about someone's identity or history because you can't encompass someone's identity in a day or a month so we should embed racialized groups in the curriculum so it can be easier to talk about and when events that happen that require social change, we don't need to put it off and wait until a certain day or month we can talk about it whenever

2. What does the role of the "Other" or the person who does not belong, play in society? Who do we as a society characterize as the "Other"?

Some of the responses were:

- When we have the other it is helpful for us to be able to distinguish our own identities. As a society, we characterize the "other" as the vulnerable and the marginalized and separate from us and not on the same level as us. This gives us a sense of identity and kind of creates those boundaries of inclusion and exclusion and from there we get into social stigmatization. The role of the other as a society has been embedded into us but now that we can recognize it and speak about it and see that it is happening, we try and deconstruct the othering notion, but it's been around for a long time. If you have read Edward Said's book on Orientalism and Othering the East from the West you can see how all these notions have been historically constructed
- I feel the other is different for everyone and it's often the type of people that are judged because they either don't look like you or they live a different lifestyle than you.
- We generalize the "other" as the person who is indifferent from the rest of the group. In a way, everyone is considered the "other" since there is so much to categorize people from. From religions to hobbies, so everyone is considered an "other"
- Consider, which groups do we put a tag on?

3. Have you had an experience with being the "Other" or feelings of not belonging? What did this experience teach you about social acceptance and inclusion?

Some responses:

- Being a young Black woman in Canada there are many times when you experience not belonging because of the color of your skin.
- Coming to Canada at a young age with no understanding of English, there was a lot of bullying and hardships
- These experiences make us more relatable to those who have been bullied or marginalized
- These experiences make us stronger

4. What does it mean to belong? Who belongs in Canada? And what role does the Canadian multicultural identity play in this conception?

Some Responses:

- We are all human, we have the same blood, so we all have the right to belong in society. In Canada, many people have immigrated from different countries, so we all belong. No one has the right to say we don't belong since Canada has accepted us all
- Canada has helped those who have come from war torn countries. Lots of new movies and films are starting to talk about these tags and categorization (e.g. The movie *IT* and *Jaws*)

Students then moved off to breakout sessions with their respective student leaders who discussed the readings that were pre-assigned well before Orientation.

When we regrouped, we had brief **group presentations**, given by all three group leaders as well as some input from other members. of which the following points were made (presented here, with Hinna Ahmed's notes):

MP Mumilaaq Qaqqaq:

- Structural Change, reconciliation on the systematic level
- Discomfort, if you are feeling discomfort it exposes you to different experiences that you can grow from

Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

- Unjust treatment and inequality of all people
- MLK would not approve of the way our world is now because there is still so much racial violence (ex. England Euro Cup)

Dr. Rick Tobias

- Acknowledge mistakes and make change
- Education system needs to change (e.g. History class needs to have more perspectives of Canadian history)

- The breakout sessions seemed fruitful based on the ConceptBoards created by the groups to display the information they discussed in the breakout groups (see part *b.* of this chapter)
- The coordinators had closing remarks and parted ways exactly at 1:00pm. The students were grateful - many "Thank you" messages in the chat which were great to see as they were indicators that there is appreciation from the students for the day's program.

b. ConceptBoards

All groups created a ConceptBoard to recap the main points of their group's notes and discussions. The ConceptBoards can be located here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jcvP4F1v3mUljK2sXz7NtRKXGhmqph4e/view?usp=sharing>

c. Discussion Questions

The discussion questions used the breakout room can be accessed using the following links:

- MP Qaqaq:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1o54jPDNhmXLjqKfRBQv3CRaYHDQhLB6U/view?usp=sharing>
- Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ddCrn-VBz0fkjFzFJnKbFVqYLomQLRDQ/view?usp=sharing>
- Dr. Rick Tobias:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Zn4Tly4w1gJjWBDyleWRthlh-zAzzhIT/view?usp=sharing>

IV. Day 2 of Orientation

a. Minutes

Slides for Day 2 can be found here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fXtNK-akl4rlzoHyCeehWmBG1A47pvVE/view?usp=sharing>

- Most attendees came in on time. Dania was the "MC" for the event, moderating, ensuring that the orientation was running on time according to schedule, respectful of everyone's time.
- We began with the land acknowledgement, led by Ivy Pham and Vincent Pham
- After, Dania lead everyone in a check-in to see how everyone's day was going - the activity was fun! Check-in always help us gauge where people in the day.
- Dania then went over the Agenda for the day
- Student leaders Deborah and Sana then lead everyone through the five issues to be discussed in the various breakout rooms, **(1) Racism and Discrimination, (2) Religious tolerance, (3) Homelessness, (4) Truth and Reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples, and (5) Environmental Issues**. The presentations captured the key points of each topic of assigned readings very well in my opinion, in a concise format.

Deborah and Sana present the following slides to aid in their presentation of the five topics:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HsoddvFnpPkFSOd0RBKNoKKNkiX6-RG/view?usp=sharing>.

The topics presented by Deborah and Sana has been summarized as follows (with Hinna Ahmed's notes):

Religious Freedom

- The ability to practice the Religion one chooses
- The right to act and live according to their religious beliefs publicly
- More than being able to worship at ones place of worship, but also to make sure no one has to go against their core beliefs in order to conform to culture or Government
- In recent years, the Government's actions have taken away religious freedom and are less concerned about religious intolerances • Just because Canada is very multicultural and diverse does not mean there is no Islamophobia, anti-semitism, and other issues
- Indigenous Peoples sent to Residential schools and forced to be Christian as the only way to be Canadian is to Christian
- Christian privileges. Sunday is the Holy day; this is not the same for every religion
- Important to remain attentive to these issues present in our communities

Environmental Justice

- Climate justice
- Human belief that we can bend nature to our will without any repercussions. Meaning extracting fossil fuels, cutting down trees, overfishing, putting factories everywhere without the belief that anything could be happening to us, or nature wouldn't respond

- In order to get rid of the climate crisis we need to change our mindset as it harms the marginalized groups the most as they do not have the resources or money to overcome these challenges known as Environmental racism
- Environmental racism is when laws or policies negatively impact groups based on race, age or other factors. E.g., Lack of clean water on Indigenous reserves, not holding hearings in areas where marginalized groups can easily attend to
- Lack of representation
- Environmental justice is important! Partnering with non-profits, have community consultations about new environmental laws, addressing healthcare inequalities

Racism and Discrimination

- Systematic racism: Procedures or processes that disadvantage black people. This creates inequality
- Racial profiling and police brutality has destroyed many black lives
- George Floyd's death has caused a huge emotional toll on the black community. It is scary for members of the black community to know that someone was killed because of their skin colour
- Important to understand that this issue does not only exist in the United States, but in Canada and other countries too!
- In Canada, a black resident is 20 times more likely to be shot dead than a white resident
- Micro-aggressions, biases, inadequate access to healthcare and mental health services, less opportunities to pursue highly respected career choices, many mistreatments for having black skin
- Micro-aggressions are everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages. E.g., stereotyping. These take away a sense of belonging for the black community
- Micro-aggressions are non-black people thinking black people are second class citizens when they are not
- Only 3% of students labeled as "gifted" are black
- Racism does exist. Non-black people need to educate themselves on this issue by becoming involved in movements such as Black Lives Matter

Truth and Reconciliation

- Residential schools were institutions funded by the Canadian Government and associated Churches where Indigenous children were forced into Western Culture
- At Residential schools Indigenous Children were treated horribly with beatings, toxic chemicals used in baths to get rid of the "Indigenous scent", and exposure to diseases such as Tuberculosis and more
- Canadian Government apologized in 2008, however words are not enough. Action is required • Through the IRS settlement agreement, some reparations have begun to be made. The Indian Residential School system settlement agreement was the biggest class action lawsuit in Canadian history
- A lot of financial reparations were given to those directly impacted by the Residential schools. This includes those who attended Residential schools, and the inter-generational trauma that impacted members of the Indigenous community

- Those who attended a Residential school for 1 year received \$10,000 and \$10,000 for every other year they attended the schools' Memorial reparations were also given.
- For those who lost their lives due to Residential schools and not given a proper funeral
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was another aspect of the IRS settlement agreement. This is for people like us who can become educated about the atrocities that occurred at Residential schools
- Curriculum changes are needed to talk more about Indigenous history

Homelessness

- The city of Toronto has the largest population of homeless citizens and youth make up 28% of the homeless population
 - 74% of youth in homeless shelters identified as being part of a racialized group
 - 24% of youth in homeless shelters identified as being part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community
 - 77.5% of homelessness cases are caused by family breakdowns
 - 65% of homelessness cases are caused by families with substance abuse problems
 - 43% of youth experiencing homelessness have had child welfare systems involved • Some live through foster and group homes before being forced to live on the streets • Some are evicted from being unable to pay rent
 - Homelessness can cause lack of nutrition, greater involvement with police, lack of education, difficulty of getting a job, greater risk of substance abuse, greater risk of not being able to obtain physical and mental health resources
 - COVID-19 has caused homelessness to become a life and death issue. There is no easy access to sanitation services, homeless shelters reaching full capacity, no home for them to stay in
 - Canada has failed to implement the right to housing which entails the right to security, safety, and dignity
 - Federal government is not taking charge
-
- We went into **breakout rooms** to discuss the various issues, based on the assigned readings with group leaders Deborah, Sana, Neil, Ivy and Fariya.
 - The Canva infographic activity created by the groups were fun, interactive and informative (see part *b* of this chapter).
 - When we regrouped after 40-minutes of group discussion, the groups collectively presented their infographics along with the points raised in the groups. It was very insightful to hear the students' voices.

The **group presentations in the main session** has been summarized as follows (with Hinna Ahmed's notes):

Group 1: Racism and Discrimination

- Talked about implicit biases and micro-aggressions. Talked about an article where a black male with his child and a white male came up to him and said "it's so nice to see you playing with your child". This comment from the white male made it seem like black fathers

are never in their children's lives. These stereotypes impact the black community physiologically and physically

- Subconscious biases, non-black people reacting quickly in one way when approached by or passed by a member of the black community. Ex. clutching their bag when passed by a black person

Group 2: Religious Tolerance

- Quebec's Bill 21 does not allow workers to wear religious symbols in the workplace. Government needs to oversee laws that jeopardizes religious freedom
- Those who practice their faith more publicly are looked down on and face a disadvantage at times
- There are no equal opportunities for each religion
- Government officials are not doing enough to combat this issue. Religious freedom is being overlooked by the media. E.g., burning of Churches, killings in Mosques

Group 3: Homelessness

- Most homelessness cases are not the actual homeless persons fault. There are other factors such as family breakdowns, substance/childhood abuse, violence, failed foster system, etc.
- COVID-19 has proven the Canadian Government's failure in protecting and helping those without a home
- The NHSA (National Housing Strategy Act) promotes the idea that housing is essential to human dignity and well-being
- There is enough funding and space in Canada to help the homeless, yet they are choosing not to help them
- Funding cuts have taken place so the few resources that are available to help the homeless are losing the money to
- The Government needs to install more porta potties, and porta showers. There needs to be a permanent solution to this issue
- Where are our tax dollars going if not to the members of our community who need it most?

Group 4: Truth and Reconciliation

- Due to the negative impacts of Residential schools it has caused more social justice issues including lack of clean water, lack of mental health resources, and extreme poverty due to overpriced grocery items in places such as Nunavut for the Indigenous communities
- The statement made by the Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs, where he said he wants to "get rid of the Indian problem" dehumanizes and devalues Indigenous Peoples and their culture. There needs to be more awareness and changes to the education curriculum so more people can be aware of the Indigenous Peoples history
- Without awareness of the issue, it makes room for history to repeat itself and violate more of their human rights
- To make sure this doesn't happen again to any community it is important to use our digital resources to spread awareness and support the marginalized groups so they know that their community will stand with them

Group 5: Environmental Justice

- Environmental justice is exploring different strategies that can remedy Environmental racism and bridge the gap that marginalized groups face because they are the ones who feel the most impact of environmental racism
 - In Sarnia Ontario, there is a place called Chemical Valley where an Indigenous Community resides. The reason it is called “Chemical Valley” is because of the amount of pollution in the area. One of the highest polluted areas in all of Canada and no coincidence that a marginalized group lives there
 - They can not just get up and move because they have ties to the land that can't be cut. This is the wrong approach. The Government needs to act on this and make changes
 - There are serious health problems caused by the pollution in these areas
 - Important to have Indigenous led Environmental assessments as they have a lot of knowledge
 - Maximum penalty for throwing garbage is from \$2000-\$1,000,000 whereas throwing garbage on Indigenous reserves has a maximum penalty of \$100
 - Nova Scotia introduced an Environmental Racism bill (has not been passed yet) which is a huge step in the right direction that each province and territory needs to have as well
-
- The general session discussion was shorter than the previous day it seemed, since the presentation took some time, but there was a good balance of group and larger group discussion for both days.

The **larger main group discussion** was about **environmental justice** and the points could be summarized as follows (with Hinna Ahmed's notes):

- Environmental racism is a new term that many of us have not heard of. The media does not do a good job in covering these issues to bring awareness of the problem
 - Climate refugees, where people are forced to leave their homes because of natural disasters and temperature changes due to climate change
 - Increase in xenophobia makes climate refugees suffer more with not receiving help from other countries
 - These topics are not talked about enough!
-
- We had a Kahoot which recapped the main points of the past two days and it was a great interactive activity in which everyone participated in.
 - We concluded with closing remarks, and thus concluded a beautiful Two-Day orientation.

b. Infographics

All groups created their own infographics to recap the main points of the issues discussed in their groups. The infographics could be located at the following link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eMND3TaD3V55F0-1GDBpeaYQBTkMDz_P/view?usp=sharing

c. Discussion Questions

The discussion questions used the breakout room can be accessed using the following links:

- Racism and Discrimination:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/197xITsaxPSIjLjSDxcAPmIFiR1_Lc4-4/view?usp=sharing
- Religious tolerance:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/12wq_bDIAu8rldk0gK49cRHa07aFz4UUUm/view?usp=sharing
- Homelessness:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/197xITsaxPSIjLjSDxcAPmIFiR1_Lc4-4/view?usp=sharing
- Truth and Reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/12wq_bDIAu8rldk0gK49cRHa07aFz4UUUm/view?usp=sharing
- Environmental Issues:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1s9iLmCv_NU8uPTcUxcjLfVWnFeMerGG_/view?usp=sharing

V. Reflection Questions

After each of the orientation days, two reflection questions were assigned to all students by means of Google Form. These questions served as a means for students to reflect and critically think about what they learned and heard during the day. A sample of quality responses are anonymously provided here.

1a. Day 1 Question re. Prophetic Voices

1. Today (Day 1), we focused on the first of the two hinges of *The Awakening Project*, prophetic voices. Upon concluding today's session, how would you define "prophetic voices" to someone who was new to *The Awakening Project* and wanted to know what prophetic voices were? Who is one Prophetic Voice you encountered today (or know of from prior) that really encompasses this framework?

* The following are a sample of the 20 responses received. The responses in their entirety can be found here: [TAP Day 1 Orientation Reflection Questions \(Responses\) - Google Sheets](#)

- I would define "Prophetic Voices" as individuals who use their voice for the betterment of society. All 4 Prophetic Voices talked about during day 1 of the orientation have done amazing things for society in attempt to better our community as a whole. One Prophetic Voice that I believe truly encompasses this framework is Martin Luther King Jr. Until the end of his life, he used his voice to change the mindset of society. His words are so powerful that they still live on today.
- To me, a prophetic voice is someone who delivers a message to help a marginalized group of people or to help spread awareness for a cause. A prophetic voice is a person or people that you can always look up to and can help guide you into the path of righteousness. They provide you with information on how to help people and tell you their goal on how they want to make the world a better place. Anyone can be a prophetic voice no matter your age, race or, background. One prophetic voice I encountered is Mumilaaq Qaqqaq. Mumilaaq is an Indigenous woman who shed light on the many injustices that the Indigenous community experienced and how all of us can make a change. She explains to us how we can learn from all of this and stop treating the world like it is black and white.
- "Prophetic voices are diverse voices that help us understand the importance of inclusivity. By carefully listening to prophetic voices we learn new things and form a fresh perspective because we finally get to see the world through another person's eyes. This allows us to open the discussion of race, privilege, geographic location, and a plethora of factors that influence one's life.
A prophetic voice that I encountered was Dr. Rick Tobias, who has done a lot to improve the current landscape of Black and Indigenous people within Canada. He has helped me learn about the importance of listening to not only his voice but also other prophetic voices in order to spread awareness and become educated. He mentioned in the podcast I listened to "Silence is violence", we cannot continue to normalize bad behaviour, and instead should work on diminishing current prejudice and also prevent it from happening in future generations.
- A prophetic voice is anyone who speaks up about injustice in an empathetic and compassionate manner. Prophetic voices speak about social justice using religious and spiritual language. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is an example of a prophetic voice that we

discussed today. We can see that Dr. King was motivated by compassion in his speech "I've been to the mountaintop" in which he describes how the fight for equality will not end with him. Dr. King voices the reality that true equality between races will not be accomplished in his lifetime, but he continues to forge on in the hope that equality can be achieved in future generations. Dr. King uses religious language in his address to help establish the fact that not only is segregation unjust, it is also immoral and does not reflect the truism that all men are created equal in the eyes of God. Through compassion and spirituality, Dr. King encompasses what it means to be a prophetic voice.

- A prophetic voice is one that intends to achieve community and social outreach in the form of social activism and religious values/insights. The leaders that have these voices strive to achieve equality, acceptance and overall freedom for today's generation and every future generation thereafter. MLK encompasses this framework as they fought for Black workers' rights and improved labour laws during the civil rights movement. He was not only concerned with the rights and freedoms of the generation/society he was in but also every future society and generation.

1b. Day 1 Question re. Call to Action

2. What 'call to action' were you able to extract from at least one of the prophetic voices you discussed today, and in what ways can you enact on that 'call'?

** The following are a sample of the 20 responses received. The responses in their entirety can be found here: [TAP Day 1 Orientation Reflection Questions \(Responses\) - Google Sheets](#)*

- Rick Tobias was discussing listening deeply to others, more specifically, the voices of marginalized populations; the poor, indigenous, black people, refugees, et cetera. We cannot try to fix these issues before listening. With this information, I can enact this call by making an effort to speak to people who may experience injustices that I may not fully understand. More specifically, I may reach out to people in my community who are indigenous, or practice faiths other than Christianity (i.e Islam, Sikh etc.) and listen to their experiences. Also, I may do more research on my own. As well, he mentions that silence is violence. This calls me to always speak up when someone is being unjust as one must be the solution to the problem. Saying nothing would be just as bad as being the unjust person. For example, if one of my classmates were being excluded because of who they are, I would speak up for them. Or, if someone says something very racially biased or ignorant about marginalized communities. I would take the time to explain to them why it is wrong.
- 'Call to action', refers to what we are asked to do and to reflect upon ways we can contribute to social justice issues. From what I learned, change starts within ourselves; we must be open to understanding the issue, being more educated on it and then activism. Some of the ways we can enact it is by doing more research and being interested in a certain topic. This way we can understand the issue better. Spreading awareness especially on social media is easy and gets the message to people faster. Volunteering and donating time or money can help the change take place and show our efforts. Also, getting involved in organizations can help make a noticeable change and collaborating with others who are interested in the same issue can be powerful. Furthermore, writing letters to politicians, going to protests, making charity events and even signing petitions are good ways to carry out a 'call to action'.

- The general 'call to action' is to raise awareness about the issue/situation through a variety of means. For Inuk MP Mumilaaq Qaqqaq on the need to talk about the "grey area" and to come to a compromise in terms of sensitive issues affecting Aboriginal Peoples, this means through educating Canadians, looking for her on social media (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook) and reposting/retweeting her content, and/or e-mailing or calling The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, PM Justin Trudeau, The Honourable Dan Vandal, The Honourable Marc Miller, etc. All these are done to try and make sure that Inuit voices are heard.
- MP Qaqqaq calls us towards open gray space conversations. She talked about discomfort as being a good thing. The call to action I heard was to speak up for marginalized groups and people's in situations there I previously would have been uncomfortable. I am used to being as agreeable as possible and letting others have their own opinions, but I realized that in doing so I may be enabling their ignorance and not letting them grow. I am going to enact that call in finding new ways of sharing important topics and opinions in a loving but truth-telling ways, especially to those close to me.

1c. Day 1 Question re. Cindy Blackstock Podcast

Students were invited to take time and listen to this podcast (<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/sunday/the-sunday-edition-for-june-28-2020-1.5624927>), featuring Indigenous leader Cindy Blackstock, speaking with Michael Enright on the final episode of the Sunday Edition – June 26, 2020. The interview with Cindy Blackstock is 16 minutes – from the 7 minute mark to the 23 minute mark.

What was one thing you found interesting or relevant in this podcast segment?

* The following are a sample of the 20 responses received. The responses in their entirety can be found here: [TAP Day 1 Orientation Reflection Questions \(Responses\) - Google Sheets](#)

- One thing I found interesting in this podcast segment was when Cindy Blackstock mentioned how the Canadian Government is choosing not to do better when it knows better. This really stuck out to me because there is a lot of talk about Indigenous Peoples and many people know the history and the trauma they have encountered in their lives from the Canadian Government yet there has been little to no change. Many people know and the Canadian Government especially knows that they are not treated the same yet they choose not to change. Cindy also mentioned that all they want is to be treated like everyone else but no one seems to listen or understand that.
- What I found relevant is the way the pandemic has affected the Indigenous community. Cindy Blackstock says that Indigenous people are more vulnerable to Covid-19 due to the government shorten their supply of water, housing, and healthcare. Although some Indigenous communities have seen greater results as they lock up their communities, this is a different story for Indigenous living on off reserves. They are drowned in deep poverty which has made it very difficult to social distance, have nutritious foods, or even have healthcare. Although there has been a slight "change" from a few years back, there is still that small flame of racism that still to this day has never been extinguished.
- "It saddens me to hear about all the things that I, like many other Canadians, take for granted, but Indigenous peoples still have to fight for. I find it difficult to accept that there are people whose basic human rights and necessities, such as clean water and housing, are still being denied in a developed country in the 21st century. I found it eye opening to

hear that as a result of this inequality, Indigenous communities suffered more than other communities at the hands of the pandemic. I hope that their struggles will not be in vain, and that the hardships they endured during the pandemic will prompt the government to finally implement the changes that these communities have been calling for such a long time. I do, however, find some relief to hear that there has been some improvement. It gives me hope that Indigenous peoples will soon no longer suffer from the inequalities they continue to fight against today."

- I like what Cindy Blackstock said "in order to keep any country on the right track of respecting human dignity and respecting human values and good governance, the citizens have to ask hard questions and embrace these truths so that we can ensure everybody in society is treated fairly". It is easy to see strong criticisms against the country as unpatriotic, such as the movement against Canada Day in the last few years. However, these messages are necessary to bring the country back on to the right path. We need both justice and transparency to have a country we can be proud of.

2a. Day 2 Question re. Importance of discussing Social Justice issues

Today (Day 2), we zoomed in on various social justice issues featured in The Awakening Project. Some issues discussed may be uncomfortable to discuss, but must be addressed if we are to move towards a more just society. After today's session, how important is it for you as a youth/young adult to discuss such social issues, including uncomfortable ones?

* The following are a sample of the 22 responses received. The responses in their entirety can be found here: [TAP Day 2 Orientation Reflection Questions \(Responses\) - Google Sheets](#)

- I think it is very important for two reasons: (1) discomfort moves people to action and change. My age group are a demographic that are starting to vote and make decisions that impact our policies. When we are passive and unconcerned, the status quo will continue. (2) discussion brings education. Social justice issues are often disconnected from our daily lives and realities, so some live ignorant of how others are being affected. Having uncomfortable discussions can lift that veil.
- I think that it is crucial to educate the youth and young adults about these social issues that happen in many communities. For instance, homelessness is an ongoing social issue throughout many cities and hits close to home in Toronto. There are many streets in Toronto lined with homeless people. We should care about these people and see them as equal, not a "nuisance" or "lesser". This issue is ignored daily as many people cross paths with the homeless on a day-to-day basis. I think that it is important to also educate those on the uncomfortable issues also because the more we talk about it and educate it becomes more mainstream. Eventually it becomes comfortable to talk about.
- It is important for me as a young adult to discuss such social issues, including uncomfortable ones because these issues are major issues which might possible be a huge problem in the future, and I believe that I should be well educated about them for the near future when these issues need to be resolved, whether it is a issue in my community or an issue in my city or an issue in my country. As long as I am educated about these social issues and I am well informed about them I could always help and bring out ideas to help the situation.
- I believe that it is extremely important to speak about social issues, especially as a part of the younger generation. We are the future of our society and need to ensure we act and

spread awareness towards issues plaguing our world. Spreading awareness about these problems allows for us as a society to become more comfortable coming forward about how these social issues affect us and how we can act on preventing them. On the topic of uncomfortable issues, it is still extremely important to speak about them. If a topic makes people uneasy or uncomfortable and they decide to avoid it, then the issue becomes less well-known and more harmful because people refuse to act on it. When we speak about a large variety of problems, we set an example for all current and future generations to make an effort towards spreading awareness and becoming more comfortable speaking about social issues. Discussing social issues is the first step towards creating a more just society. As part of the youth, when we are aware of the social issues plaguing our society, we are able to mature into adults that can act towards these issues.

2b. Day 2 Question re. Critical Thinking

To critically think, is to go beyond face-value of what you consume and really dive deep into the core of what is behind what you read, watch or hear. We live in a world where brevity in headlines may become misleading and possibly lead to tensions and division. Context therefore becomes important in what we consume, especially when it comes to discussing prophetic voices and social justice issues. A more personal reflection question: Have you been able to be a "critical thinker"? Have you seen yourself grow throughout these two days of orientation? What other areas do you look forward to improving when reading and discussing prophetic voices and social justice issues?

* The following are a sample of the 22 responses received. The responses in their entirety can be found here: [TAP Day 2 Orientation Reflection Questions \(Responses\) - Google Sheets](#)

- I have heard all about critical thinking since I began highschool. It's something my grade 9 teacher really beat into my brain, because it's easy to just read something and take it for exactly what it says. However, when you critically think, you see how you can grasp so much meaning out of a single phrase, sentence or paragraph. I think that I have been able to critically think a lot these past few days. A lot of the discussion questions that were prompted really made me think. For example, I remember we were discussing "what it means to belong" and "what does it mean to be the other" and "what does it mean to listen deeply". I could write a 5-page essay on each of those short phrases alone. I have definitely seen myself grow, I have actually learned a few new things about the indigenous people's history and about environmental justice. I definitely consider that growth in my own journey of learning more about the serious issues happening on this place we call earth. I also feel that I grew in through this orientation because I got to better understand what the Awakening Project is about and meet members of the project and hear about their stories.
- I have always been a bit of a scatterbrain with a short attention span; being guilty of drawing conclusions after only skimming a headline and a portion of an article is no stranger to me. Critical thinking is therefore something I don't do enough of. After the past two days, I think I am more appreciative of the small facts I miss in my skimming. Hearing what Carol Off had to say, and applying it to the social justice issues we studied today, I now realize the power of taking the time to recognize the humanity and individuality of each person. I don't want to jump to conclusions based off the kind of thinking I exhibited in preparation for and during the two days of orientation, and say that I have grown. I do, however, believe that the seeds of potential for growth have been planted. If I can remind

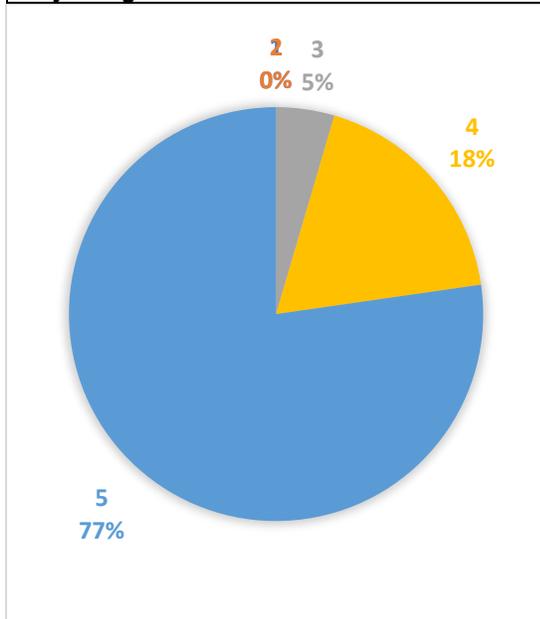
myself to put in the effort to take my time and look for the details before drawing conclusions or forming judgements, especially if they are about other people or if they are rooted in a generalized perception I have of a group of people, I will be able to say that I have grown as a person. That is something that I can only determine with time.

- I think I have been able to critically think about the various topics we talked about. In regards to misleading, clickbait headlines, I have learned from my peers that there are always multiple sides to a story; more often than not, headlines tell a story for clicks as opposed for education. I've grown in the aspect of becoming more aware of what information I believe in the media, especially in regard to social justice issues. Social justice headlines are biased as opposed to impartial more often than not, which only increases the need to dive deep. Before, I would just read headlines and consider myself informed. However, that skews the news I view to not be impartial, but extremely biased. I've learned that I need to dive deeper in order to get a better understanding of the news and information I seek; reading the whole article, fact checking via multiple sources and understanding who the authors are some of the ways I can implement this growth going forward.
- These two days of orientation have given me a better understanding of prophetic voices and issues. Most importantly, the reflection questions given during the meetings helped me think critically. I am a critical thinker as I like to analyze and make connections to what I have read. By increasing my knowledge on social justice issues, I can start making an effort in helping the community. In the two days of the orientation, I dedicated myself looking through the perspective of prophetic voices and learning about how to take action on social justice issues. I really hope to deepen my understanding by reading more articles, listening to more podcasts and more. I wish to learn more about people's experiences and read more statistics to help me get a sense of what we need to improve and the main impact of these issues. In conclusion, the orientation really helped me reflect upon faith, social justice and what these leaders are doing to make an impact in the world!
- Here are some ways I have been able to be a "critical thinker", as well as some habits that I believe will allow me to grow further as a person:
 1. I will continue to make sure I do my own research before trusting headlines: As mentioned, headlines can be both misleading and problematic at times, therefore, I try to do my own research before trusting articles that have been designed for people to click on them due to their 'shock value'. Sometimes the truth is boring, but it is incredibly important to filter out the lies to really understand what is going on.
 2. I will talk to others to educate myself: Discussing my ideas with others will help me consolidate, challenge, and rethink my beliefs, pushing me to look at every side of an argument.
 3. I will self-reflect: After talking to people and doing my own research I will let myself evaluate each piece of information and each opinion. This thorough process will allow me to hear different perspectives and tie them to facts that can either support or take away from someone's viewpoint.

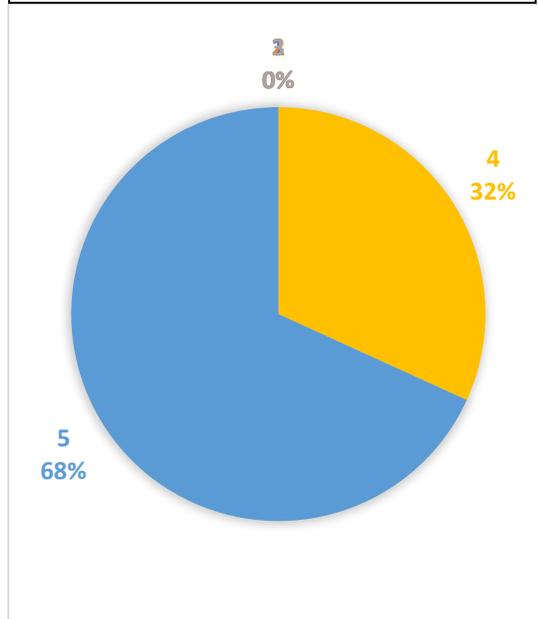
VI. Survey and Feedback

Upon completion of the reflection questions of Day 2, students were asked to fill out some survey questions that would help the coordinators improve on future orientation sessions. Students were asked six questions, in which the first five, students were asked to rate their responses on a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being the worst and 5 being the best. The last two questions were text-based responses.

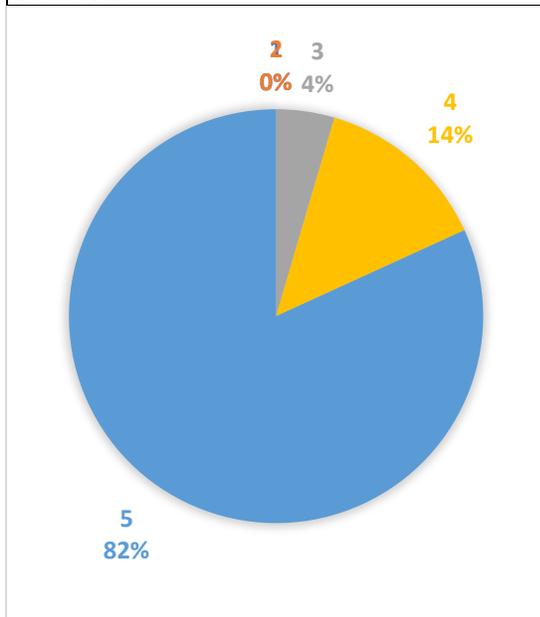
Please rate the quality of the orientation days in general.



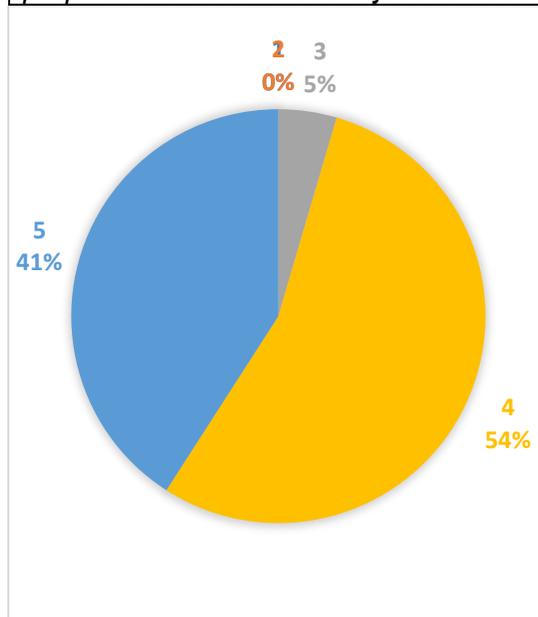
Please rate the quality of the content of the orientation.



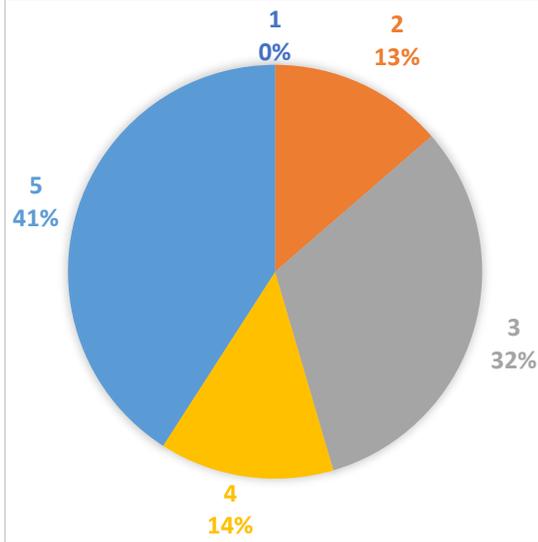
Please rate the quality of the orientation leaders.



Please rate your ability to listen and think critically about prophetic voices and social justice issues after the orientation



Please rate your confidence to host a Zoom conversation with a group of young people after the orientation



What were some things that you liked or appreciated about Orientation?

* The following are **all the responses** received from the survey.

- I liked the interactive aspect of the orientation, it was actually really fun to create an infographic with a team and present it, as well as seeing the other groups infographics which were all very unique and educational!
- I really like how we had games at the end such as the scavenger hunt and Kahoot!
- I really liked the Kahoot! Also, I loved how everyone is so proficient in using Canva, I really need to work on my own skills!! Overall, orientation was fun. It was engaging, it was interesting and it was just a really fulfilling few hours.
- I liked being able to hear other people talk about prophetic voices and social justice issues, especially since there were a lot of people that were more knowledgeable than myself
- I really liked the activities following the breakout discussions (e.g virtual scavenger hunt, Kahoot). It added a nice variety of different activities throughout the days.
- I liked the interaction between the members (Kahoot, scavenger hunt, breakout room discussions)
- I really enjoyed the Kahoot activity, a healthy competition is always super fun! I also really appreciated how everyone had their cameras on!
- I appreciated the freedom and opportunities for discussion. The leaders were very kind and respectful.
- The conversations were fruitful, and everyone was respectful of other's opinions and experiences.
- The organization, discussions, and group activities.
- I really loved how there was detailed explanations of prophetic voices and social justice. I really liked the Kahoot and the breakout rooms. Also, sharing our thoughts on the podcasts/articles and listening to what others learned was interesting! Overall, the orientation was awesome, especially the leaders!

- I really enjoyed the breakout rooms in each of the sessions. I found that smaller groups are much more conducive to free-flowing conversations.
- I really appreciated the opportunity of getting to talk to so many new people and discussing some topics/people that I had previously not heard about!
- Some things I liked about the orientation is how engaging and informative it was. I also liked how almost everyone had their cameras on so that I could put a face to a name. I loved how we were all able to collaborate and speak about some sensitive topics with everyone being very mature.
- I really liked how there was a mix of both large and small group discussions to engage with the material relevant to The Awakening Project. I liked how we started off in the main Zoom room to answer a few questions before heading into a breakout room assigned by our Orientation leaders to discuss a particular topic (prophetic voice on Day 1 and social justice issue on Day 2). I really liked the questions that were asked of us, as it really got us to think critically about all the issues that were discussed. The group presentations were fun too. :)
- I loved the open discussions.
- I liked hearing so many people's thoughts on important topics! And the presentation of important issues, some of which I thought about, some of which I have not
- What I really like about the orientation was the overall style and format. It flowed really well and was seamless
- Being able to hear the diverse views from the various individuals.
- Talked about important social justice issue
- I like how all the hosts are nice and inclusive
- I liked the topics we talked about and truly Dania and Vincent are amazing at facilitating this! Props to them.

<p><i>What are some things you think could have been improved?</i></p>
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** The following are **responses with feedback** that we received from the survey. A number of them were simply compliments, with no feedback at the current moment.*

- I don't think there were any major flaws or things to be improved but I have a suggestion to have a large full group discussion at the end, which was attempted today [Day 2] but didn't go that far into the group.
- I think it could have been better if we opened up the floor for people to ask questions about things they may not have understood.
- I think a break at the halfway point was something that could have been used during Day 1, however I was happy to see one implemented during Day 2! I also think that more time could have been used for the breakout room discussions. I felt they were a bit rushed, even with choosing only 2 questions to discuss.
- If there was more time for more discussion on topics the group felt more strongly about.
- I was actually really content with how everything went for both sessions. If I had to pick on one improvement, it would be VERY minor. For future, we can perhaps have each leader have a slide on a PowerPoint and have them introduce themselves to the larger group in session 1. I think this will foster even closer connections very early on!
- One of the things that I believe could have been improved, were the time limits set for the discussions. As an example, we had to cut off the Carol Off discussion to remain on

schedule, which of course is reasonable, but granting more time for the group discussions in case we want to continue speaking would be beneficial. As well as for the breakout rooms, more time would have helped.

- I think the presenters and moderators did a great job in hosting and facilitating the Zoom calls. I was satisfied with how smoothly everything went.
- The use of one program since Canva had a few problems here and there but it was still good.
- It would have been great if more about The Awakening Project itself was explained in a bit more details like how it was founded etc. Also, I wish that there were more sessions as there would be more time to discuss other issues and it would be nice to collaborate again. Besides, the orientation doesn't need any major improvements :).
- I think that spending more time in the breakout rooms would have added to the experience. the breakout rooms make the Zoom call feel more like a conversation and help to open up dialogue between members of the team.
- Possibly a different timing: I had to miss a bit of my morning class so a more convenient timing would be helpful!
- A longer break: Because the session is 2 hours, I think having a 10 minute break would be helpful to refresh. Alternatively, the session could also be a bit shorter. "
- To be honest, I'm not so sure myself since I believe you guys have done a wonderful job in facilitating both Orientation sessions virtually. When it comes to orientations, such as this one and those for 1st year undergraduate students, we are all used to having them in-person, but the fact that all the activities were so organized and well-timed even when they were held completely online is definitely worth a big thumbs-up to you two. I guess one suggestion for future sessions is to incorporate more social justice-relevant games or icebreakers so we could know more about each other in a way that would allow us to tie in the prophetic voices, social justice issues, and common themes found in The Awakening Project. (I do not have an example off the top of my head though.)
- In-person would be nice
- I think it was great! Maybe encouraging more discussion in chat? Or using different applications to get people's opinions would be fun Also I think it would be cool if people could introduce themselves before discussion
- It was excellent for a beginning orientation: things will always improve over time as folks get to know each other.
- The discussion was somehow awkward.
- Honestly, I love how things are going right now, nothing major I would change
- Everything from the facilitating side went well, Personally, I could have been more organized or should've asked more questions before the Zoom call.

VII. Conclusions

The 2021 Orientation of The Awakening Project was the first of its kind. It began with humble beginnings in the Summer of 2020 Zoom conversations and with new recruits for this second summer, this Orientation allowed for greater participation of other young people across Ontario in these conversations.

While the overall goal was orientation for new recruits of The Awakening Project, the conversations, critical thinking skills and awareness of prophetic voices and social justice. We were very happy with the over all orientation. We are proud of the attendees and happy to work with other youth and young adults our generation who are invested in the mission and vision of The Awakening Project.

For future summers of The Awakening Project, we hope that the Orientation will continue with other Student Leaders. The potential of the newly recruited Student Leaders this year was amazing!

*- Dania Ahmed and Vincent Pham
Summer 2021 Orientation coordinators*