

Respecting Rights – “My Voice, My Choice” Final Evaluation Report

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Prepared by
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operating as



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Respecting Rights - “My Voice, My Choice” Final Evaluation Report

Introduction

This is the final evaluation report for the My Voice, My Choice initiative (MVMC). MVMC was led by and for people labelled with an intellectual disability and their support networks. MVMC focused on promoting rights for people labelled with an intellectual disability. This initiative was part of the Respecting Rights Project in collaboration with ARCH Disability Law Centre (ARCH).

The evaluation was conducted by the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies Inc., operating as Eviance (see Appendix 1). The evaluation was conducted from January 2019 to March 2020. The purpose of the evaluation was to track the evolution, activities, and outcomes of the MVMC initiative and share this information with the Respecting Rights Committee and ARCH.

This report begins with some background information on ARCH Disability Law Centre, the Respecting Rights project, and the MVMC initiative. We also provide some information about the evaluation. In the Findings section we provide answers to the evaluation questions that guided the research and support our conclusions. We also provide recommendations for sessions in the future and for future evaluations. Following the Appendix is a plain language summary of key findings and recommendations.

Background

ARCH Disability Law Centre

ARCH Disability Law Centre is a specialty legal clinic that practices exclusively in disability rights law. ARCH is dedicated to defending and advancing the equality rights, entitlements, fundamental freedoms, and inclusion of persons with disabilities in Ontario. ARCH lawyers have represented persons with disabilities and disability rights organizations in precedent setting cases at provincial and federal courts and tribunals. These include the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, and the Canadian Transportation Agency, as well as appellate courts, including the Court of Appeal for Ontario, the Federal Court, Federal Court of Appeal, and the Supreme Court of Canada.

ARCH has an extensive law reform practice and works on a variety of initiatives related to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities. ARCH provides public legal education to disability communities and conducts community development projects to support its law reform work. ARCH is primarily funded by Legal Aid Ontario, but also obtains project funding from other sources.

Respecting Rights project

Respecting Rights is a project at ARCH that is led by people labelled with an intellectual disability (self-advocates). Since 2011, the Respecting Rights project has worked to make developmental services better for people labelled with an intellectual disability. The Respecting Rights Committee includes self-advocates, advocacy staff and ARCH disability rights lawyers who work together in partnership with People First of Ontario. People First of Ontario is the provincial voice for people who have been labeled with an intellectual disability and focuses on a range of human rights that support freedom, choice, and equality for all.

One of the most important ways the Respecting Rights Committee does its work is by creating and delivering rights education workshops. The workshops aim to be accessible and meaningful to people labelled with an intellectual disability and their support networks. The Committee's rights education is delivered to self-advocates, service agency staff, family members and the community at large. Respecting Rights also does accessible law reform work.

ARCH received funding for the Respecting Rights project through the Special Projects Initiative, which was established as a result of the institutional abuse class action case against the Government of Ontario regarding the Huronia Regional Centre.

"My Voice, My Choice" (MVMC) initiative

"My Voice, My Choice" (MVMC) was an important part of the Respecting Rights Committee's rights education work. The MVMC team included self-advocates, lawyers from ARCH (Kerri Joffe and Hina Ghaus) and an ARCH social worker (Sue Hutton). The team worked together to develop and conduct education sessions about the decision-making rights of people labelled with an intellectual disability. To avoid confusion and unwanted associations from their past, self-advocates involved with MVMC requested that we use the word "sessions" instead of "workshops" to describe the MVMC gatherings. We have followed that request for the remainder of this report unless the word "workshop" has been quoted directly. The sessions took place in Ottawa, London, and Toronto, Ontario. Multiple sessions were held in these locations over several months, as described in the section of this report below on The Evolution and Scope of the MVMC Sessions (beginning on page 6.)

The MVMC sessions aimed to help people labelled with an intellectual disability get accessible information about decision-making. This included information about supports to help people make their own decisions. The sessions were meant to enhance the Respecting Rights public legal education sessions which ARCH had run in the past.

Evaluation overview

This report is mainly based on what self-advocates said about the MVMC sessions they attended. In addition to session participants' views, the evaluation is also based on interviews conducted with the ARCH social worker and three self-advocates, each of whom took part in one of the MVMC sessions in Ottawa, Toronto, and London. As well, the evaluation is informed by the observations of the Eviance evaluator who analyzed participants' feedback about the sessions, conducted interviews, and took part in many telephone and email conversations with the ARCH social worker about the evaluation and other aspects of the project. The evaluator also attended and presented at four project update meetings with the Respecting Rights Committee and other staff from MVMC in 2019.

This evaluation uses a developmental approach. Developmental evaluation is an approach to support projects working on complex issues such as human rights for people with disabilities. The evaluation was designed to be flexible and adapt to the needs and interests of the MVMC project team, including the Respecting Rights Committee. This means that the evaluation questions, methods for data collection, and analysis were created in consultation with the MVMC project team and the Respecting Rights Committee.

Evaluation Questions

The Respecting Rights Committee wanted answers to the following questions for the evaluation of MVMC, as set out in the Committee's Request for Proposal:

1. Is it possible to create sustainable supported decision-making circles for people labelled with intellectual disability?
2. Have people learned any new information or skills from the Respecting Rights workshop on supports in decision making? If yes, please give examples.
3. Does the Respecting Rights workshop about supported decision making help people? If yes, how?
4. Does the Respecting Rights workshop help people to be more involved in decisions about their life? If yes, how?

These questions guided the design of the evaluation and the research tools we developed to collect data. Next, we describe the tools we used to collect data to answer the evaluation questions

Data Collection

Data were collected using three kinds of research tools. These tools included:

- **Two-page questionnaires.** Questionnaires were distributed to all participants at each session in all three locations. The questionnaires included many of the same questions at all sessions but were adapted for the sessions' specific topics. For most sessions, the

questionnaire asked participants about knowledge gained, meeting new people and what participants liked most and least about the session. (See Appendix 2 for an overview of the questions in the questionnaire). Eviance received 151 completed participant questionnaires.

- **Participant drawings.** At one of the sessions, some participants chose to draw about their experiences instead of completing the questionnaire. In total, we received nine of these drawings. Some are shared throughout this report.

We also received four drawings from an artist who attended the MVMC sessions (Giuliana Barrow Lattanzio). She is respected by the participants and captured the mood and some of the sessions' themes. Members of the Respecting Rights Committee guided her in her work. We did not draw directly from those drawings as sources of data. However, members of the Committee requested that we include those drawings in the present report, which we have done.

- **Interviews.** We conducted a group interview with three MVMC participants, one from each of the Ottawa, Toronto, and London sessions. This interview collected information about participants' experiences during the MVMC sessions in each location. We also conducted an individual interview with Sue Hutton to reflect on the process and the outcomes and impacts of the MVMC initiative overall.
- **Observations, feedback, and verification meetings.** A member of the evaluation team attended and presented at four meetings with the Respecting Rights Committee and MVMC project team members in 2019. These meetings were used to explain the research, observe the project team process, and gather feedback on the evaluation for verification. This information was used to ensure the evaluation was meeting the needs and interests of the Respecting Rights Committee and MVMC project team.

Ethics Review

Eviance's Community Ethics Review was conducted to safeguard the design of this research to protect the rights of participants. Consistent with ethical requirements, participants' involvement in the evaluation was entirely voluntary and participants were free to leave the MVMC sessions before the evaluation questionnaires were circulated as well as to decide whether to take part in interviews. Everyone who took part in the evaluation was free to skip questions they did not want to answer and to stop answering questions at any point. Where participants needed assistance to answer the evaluation questionnaires, support was provided by people the participants trusted who were not involved in organizing or facilitating the MVMC sessions. The Eviance research team minimized risks to participant confidentiality by ensuring the data collected were anonymized. This means that participants' names were not

used to tag information gathered from the questionnaires or interviews. The information was kept securely and confidentially in the Eviance password protected server. The reporting of information has not identified individual participants or provided information that would enable the reader to identify who said what.

Limitations

An important limitation of people filling in the questionnaires anonymously was that we could not track how each person answered their questionnaires over time. Because of that limitation, it was not possible to track a person's growth in knowledge and connections with others over the course of MVMC. Nor was it possible to cross information gathered at one session with information gathered at another session for the same person. However, many participants attended all or most of the sessions at a give location. For each session we were able to get 'snapshots' of information about whether people learned something or met someone new, as well as their other experiences and insights. Using this approach, we were able to capture a lot of useful information that shed light on people's connections, learning and other details related to MVMC.

Another factor that limited this project was that the COVID 19 pandemic broke out after about half the sessions took place in Toronto and after three sessions could be convened in London; all of the sessions took place according to schedule in Ottawa. (Beginning in the next section of this report, we have provided details of where and when the sessions took place.) While MVMC had to be brought to an end earlier than anyone anticipated or wanted, we are confident that the information and analysis reported here is similar to what we would have reported if COVID had not happened and if all the sessions had taken place.

Evolution and scope of the MVMC sessions

The MVMC sessions were designed to be flexible and to meet the needs and interests of participants. The sessions were also designed in accordance with the availability and capacities of partner organizations to co-host with ARCH in Ottawa, London and Toronto, Ontario.

The Respecting Rights Committee realized that, to cover the content the Committee wanted the sessions to address, eight sessions of at least two hours long would be needed in each city. It was felt that this approach would give participants time to get to know each other, and talk about decision-making in healthcare, relationships, and money. This approach would also allow the time needed for participants to talk about supported decision making and advocacy. The approach settled upon would also allow for time in the last session for participants to provide their reflections on the sessions overall.

Owing to the outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic, it was not possible to conduct face-to-face sessions after mid-March 2020. The project team considered using Zoom and other online technologies but were concerned that some self-advocates would be excluded from participating because they did not have access to computers, tablets, and smart phones. The project team was also concerned about participants' privacy and confidentiality (e.g., if living in group homes or family settings). Thus, online sessions were not conducted and the MVMC sessions were concluded after mid-March 2020. A total of 17 sessions were run by the MVMC team. These sessions included:

- Eight sessions in Ottawa from May 2019 to January 2020,
- Three sessions in London from July 2019 to February 2020, and
- Six sessions in Toronto from October 2019 to March 2020.

The sessions that were conducted are presented in the three tables below.

Table 1: MVMC Ottawa sessions

DATE	TOPIC	# OF PARTICIPANTS
May 14, 2019	1. Introduction	15
June 26, 2019	2. Healthcare decisions	9
July 23, 2019	3. Relationship decisions	9
August 27, 2019	4. Advocating about healthcare and relationships	10
September 24, 2019	5. Money decisions	10
October 22, 2019	6. Making decisions with support	11
November 26, 2019	7. Advocating about money and decisions	12
January 28, 2020	8. Wrap up	7

Table 2: MVMC London sessions

DATE	TOPIC	# OF PARTICIPANTS
July 20, 2019	1. Introduction	8
December 7, 2019	2. Healthcare decisions	7
February 1, 2020	3. Relationship decisions	9

Table 3: MVMC Toronto sessions

DATE	TOPIC	# OF PARTICIPANTS
October 2, 2019	1. Introduction	13
November 6, 2019	2. Healthcare decisions	14
December 4, 2019	3. Relationship decisions	10
January 8, 2020	4. Advocating about healthcare and relationships	11
February 5, 2020	5. Money decisions	12
March 4, 2020	6. Making decisions with support	14



Three members of the Respecting Rights Committee setting up a meeting room for an MVMC session.

As described in the interviews conducted for this research, while planning for the sessions the project team focused on important issues for participants to explore. Significant thought was given to fostering peer connections and to ensuring the sessions were fun and inclusive. Creative ways were found to ensure self-advocates were actively engaged in co-designing the sessions. This included their involvement in developing ideas for role playing, developing scripts for videos, and filming and co-directing the videos. The lead film director proved willing to work at an inclusive pace which ensured meaningful involvement of the self-advocates.

The planning process reportedly involved “lots of support and outreach, consistent engagement with self-advocates, and facilitating ways for self-advocates to express themselves in ways that were important to them – not stifled, not controlled.” Support staff “had to remain flexible and shift to where the group wanted to go. This meant constantly shifting the design of the sessions and facilitating their [self-advocates’] voices to be heard.” This brainstorming sometimes meant the team “had to throw out the MVMC curriculum because people wanted to talk about their own issues.”

Planning and running the sessions also meant that a lot of responsibility fell to the project team, and to the ARCH social worker. The project team was responsible for arranging the sound, video and audio equipment, sending the video and audio links to external participants, and other details for the sessions. The MVMC team almost always took care of refreshments, although the organization that hosted the event in Ottawa also contributed, as did the host organization in London occasionally. Other than providing space and some refreshments, however, there were no other contributions by the Associations for Community Living which co-hosted the sessions in the three cities.

Findings

The following discussion provides answers to the evaluation questions. To answer these questions, we have included direct quotes from what people told us in their answers in their questionnaires. These quotes give a good sense of what people learned and are doing because they took part in the MVMC sessions. Generally, we have left people’s spelling the way they presented it to us.

It was anticipated that some participants would like to complete their questionnaires without support. However, the MVMC project team and the Eviance research team also understood that some self-advocates have difficulties reading and writing. Accordingly, steps were taken to ensure that people who needed support to complete their questionnaires would be able to receive it from someone they felt comfortable with and trusted at the sessions. This may have been another self-advocate who attended the same session, or a support worker who was permitted to attend a given session. Personal support workers were admitted only when the people they were to be supporting, and other participants, felt comfortable with their presence. In a few cases where a participant had difficulties reading or writing their answers,

the person providing support read the questions or wrote out the answers based on what the participants said. Staff members of the MVMC project team (e.g., ARCH social workers and lawyers) were not present in the room when participants completed the questionnaires.

- Is it possible to create sustainable supported decision-making circles for people labelled with intellectual disability?

Yes, because some things were done very well through MVMC

Participants said many positive things about MVMC. The findings support the conclusion that people found MVMC a rewarding process and would welcome opportunities to continue coming together in this way in the future. The following are some highlights.

Meeting new people

- Overall, 7 out of 10 participants met someone new at their sessions (69%).
 - Everyone in London said this (100%). In Ottawa and London, 2 out of 3 participants said this (67% in both cities).



- The sessions where people were most likely to meet someone new were the 1st and 7th ones.
 - In the first one (the Introduction), almost everyone said they met someone new (97%) and in the 7th one (on Advocacy about Money and Decisions), everyone got to meet someone new.
 - Participants were least likely to meet new people in session 3 on Relationship Decisions. Here, only about 4 out of 10 people (37%) met someone new.

Getting to know people better

- Overall, 8 out of 10 participants got to know someone better than before as a result of MVMC (78%).
 - Everyone in London said this (100%). So did 8 out of 10 in Toronto (83%) and 7 out of 10 in Ottawa (70%).
 - Participants were most likely to feel they got to know someone better than before in the 1st and 7th sessions.
 - In the first one, almost everyone (more than 9 out of 10 people or 92%) said they got to know someone better.
 - At the seventh session, everyone felt that they got to know someone better.
 - At the other sessions, from about 6 out of 10 to 8 out of 10 people felt they got to know someone better.

Becoming better known by others

- Overall, 8 out of 10 participants felt that other people got to know them better than before as a result of MVMC (79%).
 - Everyone in London felt this way (100%). So did 8 out of 10 in Toronto (81%) and 3 out of 4 in Ottawa (75%).
 - The sessions where people were most likely to say that someone got to know them better than before were the 1st and 7th sessions.
 - In the first one, almost everyone said someone got to know them better (97%) and in the seventh session everyone said this.
 - People were least likely to feel someone got to know them better at session 6 on Making Decisions with Support. Even here, however, nearly 6 out of 10 people (57%) felt that someone got to know them better.



Ottawa My Voice, My Choice participants and a few members of the Respecting Rights Committee.

What people liked most

We asked people what they liked most about the sessions they attended. We received 120 answers. The session on healthcare decisions was the only session we didn't ask this question about.

- One of the most common answers that people gave was that they liked *"everything"*, or words that seemed to indicate they liked everything; about 1 in 5 people said this (17%).

- One person summed up what they liked most this way: “everything, the food, learning, role play, getting to write something on a board. - I liked the snacks!” Another person said, “I loved everything, but the most is we have our own decisions.”
- Another participant said, “role play was cool, sharing group, loved the video.”
- The next-most widely given answers to the question about what people liked most about the sessions clustered around *sharing, discussing, and listening to others*. For example:
 - About 1 in 5 people (17%) said they liked taking part in *small groups and discussions*.
 - Nearly 1 in 10 (8%) said they liked *speaking out for themselves and being understood* by others.
 - Others said they liked *listening to people’s stories* (6%).
 - A few people said that what they liked most was asking questions (2%), talking about feelings (3%), and getting advice from other participants (2%). For instance, one respondent said that what they liked most was the “... chance to talk about my situation and come up with solutions as a group.”



My Voice, My Choice participants discussing and listening together in a small group.

- Some people described the specific activities they enjoyed most.
 - These included *role play* for about 1 in 10 participants (10%).
 - Some people said what they liked most was watching videos/movies (4%) and other activities such as drawing and music (4%).

- What some people enjoyed most about MVMC was *learning*. For example:
 - Nearly 1 in 10 people said that what they liked most was *learning about the subject being discussed at the session* they attended that day, e.g., decisions about relationships, money, etc. (8%).
 - For instance, one participant said that what they liked most was, “Learning about the law, the choices that I have... gives me freedom to make better choices.”
 - Nearly the same number said that what they liked most was *learning about their rights* (7%).
 - For instance, one person said, “what I like about today session is that I learned about my rights.” Indeed, one person said that what they liked most was, “The fact that we have rights.”
 - Some said that what they liked most was that the sessions they attended were interesting (3%), taught them about the importance of advocacy (1%), or that things were well explained (1%).

- What some people liked most was that their *personal choices and decisions were affirmed* at the sessions (3%).
 - For one person, this meant “My right to choose who I live with.”
 - For another person, it meant learning about the importance of “Talking about making my own decisions when there is a problem.”

- For some people, the *social aspects* of MVMC were what they liked most. For instance, what some people liked most was:
 - Meeting new people (6%) and being with friends and experiencing their support (6%).
 - As one person put it, “I loved feeling important and needed with my friends.”
 - Several people said that what they liked most was the people who attended the sessions, including MVMC staff.
 - One person put it this way: “You people do amazing. I really like all of you.” Another said, “The staff was amazing.” Another said that what they liked most was, “Everybody friendly - not nervous.”



*Small groups of self-advocates talking at an MVMC session.
Artist - Artist - Giuliana Barrow Lattanzio.
Done with direction from Respecting Rights Committee self-advocates.*

Other observations

- In addition to what participants said about the sessions, we also observed the following:
 - Attendance at MVMC sessions was strong. It ranged from 7 to 15 people per session. On average, about 11 people attended each session.
 - Participants continued meeting and connecting between meetings. One of the interview respondents felt that the ongoing connections have been particularly helpful during the COVID-19 pandemic and in view of the personal struggles several

participants have been dealing with. For example, some participants have been using to Facebook Messenger and other video chat websites to stay connected. These methods are only available to people who have regular access to the technology, however.

- We also observe that none of the MVMC participants complained about the following, which could have detracted from their generally positive experiences:
 - Expense / cost of attending (e.g., for transportation, food, beverages, supplies, etc.)
 - Convenience of location
 - Accessibility of premises
 - Availability of support for people who needed it

As can be seen in the previous examples, several features of the MVMC sessions made it rewarding for those participants who attended. These include the opportunities the sessions provided for participants to meet new people and get to know one another better than before. MVMC also created opportunities for participants to share, discuss and listen to others, to role play, to learn about rights in general, and to learn about some rights in more detail. People appreciated that their personal choices and decisions were affirmed and that they had opportunities to socialize with one another.

We consider that the effective practices that were put in place through MVMC can be continued and built upon. We also consider that it would be quite possible in the future to adopt several of participants' suggestions for improving the sessions, which are presented in the Recommendations section. If these recommendations were implemented in future sessions, it is our view that it would indeed be possible to continue and expand the supported decision-making circles that MVMC helped to create for people labelled with an intellectual disability. Such circles of support would enable people to continue learning and doing the kinds of things that are discussed in the following sections.

- Have people learned any new information or skills from the sessions?

Yes, most people learned something new

- Most MVMC participants (more than 8 out of 10) said they learned something new in the sessions (83%).
 - More than 9 out of 10 people in London (93%) said they learned something new.
 - More than 8 out of 10 people in Toronto (85%) said the same.
 - So did nearly 8 out of 10 people in Ottawa (78%).
- People usually said they learned something new, regardless of the session they attended.
 - In sessions 2, 4 and 5, about 8 out of 10 people said they learned something new (from 80% to 81%). These were the sessions on Healthcare Decisions, Advocating about Healthcare and Relationships, and Money Decisions.
 - Almost everyone (9 out of 10) said they learned something new in session 1, which was the Introduction (89%).
 - Everyone said they learned something new in session 3 on Relationship Decisions (100%).
 - The two sessions where people were least likely to say they learned something new were in session 6 on Making Decisions with Support (about 2 out of 3 people, or 65%) and session 7 on Advocating about Money Decisions (half the people, or 50%). However, the results for session 7 should be treated with caution because only 2 people answered this question on the evaluation questionnaire.

Examples of what people learned

We asked participants to indicate one or two things they learned in the sessions that were important to them. We received 113 answers.

- 1 in 5 participants said they learned *about their rights in a general sense* (20%). For example, people said they learned the following:
 - “People have rights.”
 - “I’m important. What I think matters.”
 - “Respecting other people and to learn about my rights.”

- “We have the right to speak about how we feel. And no judgement.”



A law student with ARCH providing information about rights and complaints to My Voice, My Choice participants.

- Another 1 in 5 participants said they learned *about specific rights* (19%). These people said they learned the following kinds of things:
 - “Seeing other people [that is, the right to visit with others]. We have the right to take care of our money.”
 - “I have the right to choose my roommate.”
 - “Relationships are important and we need to be heard.”
 - “That I have a right to be in a relationship.”
 - “I can make my own decisions even with my parents. We get to choose who we have relationships with.”
 - “1. Learning about the new lawyer 2. Rights about living in a group home.”
 - “I have the right to make decisions about my health. I can ask for help.”
 - “That some cases doctors can decide if you need support. I did not know about that, but nice to know.”

- “We are allowed to be lesbian or gay and not be judge by our decision.”
- “People to understand me. Do not control me.”
- About 1 in 5 people said they learned about *subjects related to topics covered in the sessions* (19%), such as the following:
 - “That there is an organization with lawyers and self advocates get together and try to make changes for the better for everyone.”
 - “1. To save my money 2. And to do my budget.”
 - “Hear about other people's problems. Helped me deal with my problems.”
 - “Lawyers and government.”
 - “Ombudsman... Taking care of people.”
 - “Control – relationship.”



*A couple in love. Artist - Artist - Giuliana Barrow Lattanzio.
Done with direction from Respecting Rights Committee self-advocates.*

- Nearly one in 10 people learned about the importance of *speaking up, telling their story and telling others what they want (or don't want)* in life (7%). In the words of several participants:
 - “I need to speak up to my family to let them know what's important to me.”
 - “That we're aloud to complain about financial problems.”
 - “I learned that you can advocate and stand up for yourself and support about your wishes, goals, decision making.”
 - “Listen and learn. Don't be afraid to tell someone about problems.”
 - “1 - to have respect. 1 - and to talk all the time.”
 - “Tell your story.”



As if in a jail cell: Feeling trapped and under someone else's control.
 Artist - Giuliana Barrow Lattanzio.
 Done with direction from Respecting Rights Committee self-advocates.

- About 1 out of 10 people said they learned about *how other people can provide support* (4%) and *the importance of talking with others* (5%). For example:
 - “I learned I can have other people in my appointments to listen to me.”
 - “Trying to have a real conversation between me and my girlfriend about our relationship ...”
 - “Spend time with my friends and hang out.”
 - “To talk with people.”
 - “[Name of person] can help with different things, like companionship so I don't get lonely and depressed. [This] Includes outside of house & inside of house... Go to activities with me.”

- People were also reminded that support is a two-way street; *treating others respectfully* was an important message that MVMC reinforced (for 6%).

- *Specific communication skills* that 1 out of 20 participants (5%) said they learned included the following:
 - “1. I learned to talk more 2. and to make me the first property [priority].”
 - “Talking about your feelings is very important.”
 - “Learning to listen to others better. Developing more patience when people are talking.”

- “How to understand a person's story. How to analyze a person's story.”

As discussed in this section, most people who took part in MVMC learned something new. This was a consistent outcome for all the sessions regardless of location. Key things people learned were about their rights in general and about specific rights in the areas of healthcare, relationships, and money. They learned about subjects related to topics covered in the sessions, about the importance of speaking up, how to tell their stories and let others know what they want (and don't want) in life. They learned about how other people can provide support in decisions and the importance of talking with others. Participants learned specific communication skills and were reminded of the importance of treating others respectfully when communicating with them.



Red, yellow and green "stop light" cards that tell someone who is speaking to please slow down, or stop and use plain language, or that their pace is just fine.

- Has MVMC helped people to be more involved in decisions about their life? If yes, how?

Yes, this seems to be happening

Because we did not track people's level of involvement in everyday decisions from one session to the next, it is hard to say to what extent and how the MVMC sessions helped people be more involved in decisions about their life. A few things are clear, however. As a result of MVMC, many people are more aware that they have rights and that they have specific rights in the areas of healthcare, money and relationships. Many also said they learned about the importance of making their preferences and wishes known to others, and that they can ask others for help with decisions where these are difficult.

Only 16 people had a chance to answer a question about their level of say in personal decisions about relationships. Among the people who said they make only a few or none of those decisions, all said they learned something from MVMC (100%). Most who said they make only some of the decisions about their relationships also said they learned something new from MVMC (83%). This compares with 2 out of 3 people who learned something new among the people who said they make most or all decisions about their relationships (67%).

Based on the answers of people who attended the last session in Ottawa, more than half said they felt "a lot more confident" to advocate after attending the MVMC sessions (57%). More than 1 out of 4 said they were "a little more confident" to advocate after attending the sessions (29%). Only 1 out of 7 said their confidence level was about the same as it was before (14%). No one said they felt less confident after attending the MCMV sessions.



A Respecting Rights self-advocate speaking to the Toronto My Voice, My Choice group.

Quite a few people who took part in MVMC are already advocating for themselves or others because of the sessions. For instance, we asked, “Since we started these sessions on My Voice, My Choice, have you done any advocating for yourself (or for someone you know) based on what you’ve learned? If so, what have you done to advocate?” We received 26 answers.

- Nearly one in four participants said they had done something to advocate, recently, but did not provide details (23%).
- Another 1 in 4 said they spoke out, expressed themselves or asked for help with an issue that concerned them (23%). For instance:
 - “Yes, I try at day program. I express my situation with staff.”
 - “Spoke up about getting water fixed.”
 - “She talked to her mom about it.”
 - “Yes. I spoke up for myself.”
- About 1 in 5 said they helped or advocated for someone else (19%):
 - “Yes. I advocated for my friends to help them speak up for their selves.”
 - “Yes. I have advocated for my friend M....”
 - “For my friends who need help.”
 - “We advocated for our peers during the group by offering ideas.”

- A few people said they communicate differently as a result of MVMC (12%):
 - “Yes. I have used the red, yellow and green stop, slow down and go cards so I can understand things better.”
 - “Yes. Learned to tell people how I feel.”
 - “To talk slowly.”
- A couple of people said they did something positive for themselves as a result of what they learned at MVMC (8%):
 - “Yes, to get new glasses.”
 - “Started on a path to improve my living situation with the help of staff and peers.”
- Others made general points about rights and advocacy or said they would like to help someone in the future.



A towering figure warns someone to be silent and not complain.

Artist - Giuliana Barrow Lattanzio.

Done with direction from Respecting Rights Committee self-advocates.

Quite a few people who took part in MVMC have thought about advocating in the future. For example, we asked, “Is there one thing you think you might do to advocate for yourself (or for someone you know) as a result of today’s workshop? If so, what do you think you might do?” We received 22 answers.

- Nearly half of the people who answered said they would ask questions or speak up for themselves (45%). For instance:

- “Say what’s on my mind more often.”
- “Maybe talk to my residential staff about having control of my money.”
- “Defendre no droit” [i.e., “Defend our right.” The respondent’s support person wrote, “He would talk to a social worker or a close friend.”]
- “I always speak up for myself and

advocate for myself.”

- “I would talk about my feelings to advocate for myself.”

- “I would ask about relationships.”
- About a quarter of the people who answered the question said they would try to help others who need support (23%). For instance, they said:
 - “Help other people with their problems.”
 - “Yes. If the person has trouble advocating for themselves at appointments, I would offer to go with them to help them.”
 - “The staff want kick people out for stealing. Advocate for pepole who steels and lie, being rude.”
 - “Help like you did today.”
 - “Give the phone number of ARCH for support.”
- Most of the remaining people who answered the question about advocating in the future said they would communicate differently or learn more about advocacy (10%). For example:
 - “To speak more slowly.”
 - “I will try to advocate more for my friends. I will learn more about how to advocate for myself.”

- Have the sessions helped people? If yes, how?

Yes, because of the things that were done well through MVMC and for the other reasons discussed in this report

As discussed in the previous sections, most people learned something new through the MVMC sessions, including about rights in general, about specific rights at the focus of the sessions, and about subjects related to the topics covered in the sessions. They learned about the importance of speaking up, telling their stories and letting others know what they want (and don't want) in life. Participants learned about how other people can provide support for decision-making, the importance of talking with others, the importance of treating others respectfully and how to be better communicators.

Furthermore, most people met someone new through MVMC. Based on the answers of people who took part in the last session in Ottawa, about half of the participants met 1 or 2 new people and about half met "quite a few," that is, more than 5.

In addition, most MVMC participants said they got to know someone better than before at the sessions, and felt that others got to know them better, too.

Of some interest – but perhaps not a real surprise – is that the vast majority of people who met someone new at a session also said they got to know someone better than before (85%). They also felt that others got to know them better (84%). The people who said that others got to know them better than before were also very likely to say they learned something new at the



A member of the Respecting Rights Committee (centre) and two MVMC participants.

sessions (87%). That detail points to the connection between opening up to others and learning new things.

MVMC also helped people become more aware of their rights, especially people who do not have much control in the decisions that affect them. Most people who participated in MVMC through to its last session came away feeling more confident to advocate than they did before MVMC. Some

have already begun to advocate for themselves and for others. In light of all these findings, it makes sense to conclude that MVMC has indeed helped people.

Participants also gave MVMC a positive endorsement. Among the evaluation questions for the concluding session in Ottawa, we asked, "Would you encourage a friend to take part in sessions like these?" Everyone who answered that question said, "Yes."

Recommendations

For sessions in the future

Great work! Keep it up!

We asked participants what could be done to improve the sessions. We received 121 answers to the question.

- A little more than half of the answers were "*nothing*" or answers that seemed to indicate the same thing (52%).
 - One person said, "Nothing needs to change!"
 - Another said, "not much that I can think of at this time".
 - One person said, "Everything was awesome, fun and interactive and informative."



Some of the London participants in My Voice, My Choice and a self-advocate from Toronto having fun in a role play about relationship decision making rights.

Allow participants enough time for small group work and discussion

- Where people did see how some improvements could be made, the most frequent suggestion (9% of answers) was for there to be *more time for small group sharing and discussion*.
 - The project team recognized this need and partway through running the sessions, MVMC extended the length of the sessions from 2 hours to 3 hours.

- Among the few people who said some sessions were boring or so-so, the main problem was feeling rushed and that there wasn't enough time for discussion.

Ensure translation is available when needed

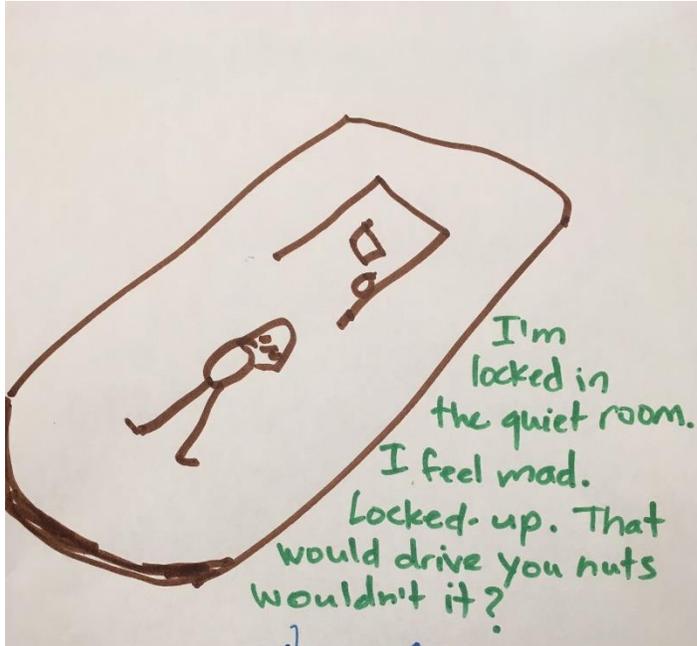
- The next-most frequent suggestion for improvement was for the sessions to be *conducted in French* (6%). (Two of the people who rated a session as boring or so-so said the main problem was that it was not conducted in French.)
 - The issue of translation was addressed after the first session in Ottawa and did not resurface after that point.
 - Ensuring the availability of translation that may be needed will be an important consideration for future sessions. This will include addressing the need for ASL or QSL for Deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing people who require such service.

Other considerations

- A few people made suggestions about *methods, resources, and other considerations* for the sessions, such as:
 - More visuals and movies (3%)
 - More role play (3%)
 - Ensuring people listen (or do not interrupt) when others are speaking (3%)
 - More chances to ask questions (2%)
 - Clearer explanations and information (2%). This point was also raised by one of the self-advocates who was interviewed.
 - Addressing technology issues such as the need for good quality audio or the use of web cams to link people into sessions who cannot physically attend (2%)
 - Addressing room size and seating (a few people said they found the room too hot or crowded – 2%)
 - More discussion (1%)
 - More activities (1%)
 - Taking a brief break during the session (1%)

In addition, several participants expressed their wishes for specific topics to be at the focus of MVMC sessions. Aside from topics that were going to be covered and which the participants may not have been aware of yet, other topics they suggested included the following:

- “Group homes don't give us enough money. Can we talk about this?”
- “The staff are mean, they abused us most of the time.”
- “We need to talk about bullying [by] other people and co-workers.”



This picture was drawn by an MVMC participant. It shows someone in a room and a door. It says, "I'm locked in the quiet room. I feel mad. Locked up. That would drive you nuts wouldn't it?"

Other issues that participants flagged, which will require broad-level advocacy to address, included:

- "Making business wheelchair approved."
- "Get[ting] more help for people in group homes."

In the concluding session in Ottawa, we asked if there was anything participants had not been able to do at the sessions that they wished they could have done. Three out of seven people said "no." Three said they wished the sessions were less rushed and that they had more time for discussion. One person said they wanted to, "Learn more about institutions - talk to more people who

had come from institutions."

In reflecting on their experiences with MVMC, one of the interview respondents said that one of their key learnings was about the need to "keep more time open for people just to talk and allow more space for people to determine what they want to talk about." Thinking about the future, this person also said, "Stay flexible and allow folks to identify what they want to talk about. Don't force the curriculum on people." Another interview respondent said, "I would have liked to see a full day instead of 2 hours [for the sessions]. There was a LOT of ground to cover. We couldn't cover everything in 2 hours. Otherwise, people were able to speak, ask questions, ask for and receive support. Lots of learning happened. The material [we] left with was useful to help learning about rights."

We also asked for people's parting recommendations at the concluding session. The only ideas that were presented that have not already been discussed in this section were from a person who said, "Go for a picnic. Keep in touch."

Based on the interviews, we discovered that people are indeed staying in touch with one another. Reportedly, several MVMC participants had been connecting with one another between sessions before the COVID-19 pandemic struck and continued to stay in touch with one another through Facebook Messenger and video chats. Two MVMC participants are reportedly playing a significant role in reaching out to and supporting other self-advocates by phone through offering emotional support and additional information. We observed that

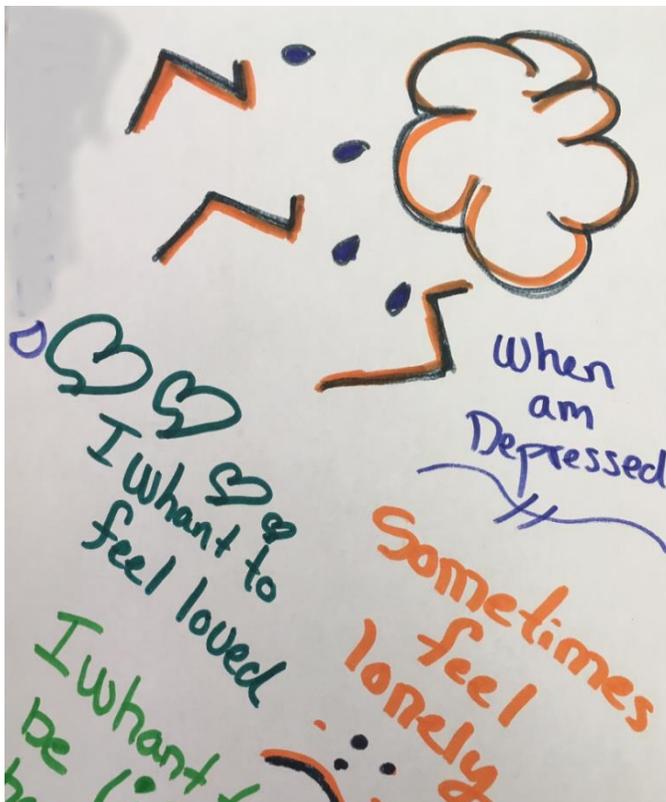
several of the people we met during the research process who participated in MVMC seemed very enthusiastic about the program and being with one another. Photos included in the present report were provided by an attendee and retrieved from the Respecting Rights Facebook page¹ and speak to the social connections and positive emotional tone people enjoyed at the sessions.

A final thought about ensuring successful sessions in the future is the need to find ways of bringing partner organizations more fully “onside” with the aims of MVMC and engaging their willingness to contribute to organizing and running the sessions.

For future evaluations

The following are three key messages which we believe will be helpful for the Respecting Rights Committee to consider when thinking about future evaluations.

- Develop a “theory of change” that sets out:
 - What the Committee hopes to achieve from each of the sessions and overall,
 - The steps and resources that will be needed to obtain those results, and
 - The questions that need to be asked and answered to gauge whether the results are being achieved.
- Continue to co-design with the evaluators the questionnaires, other research tools and procedures that will be used to gather information. This will help to make sure the evaluation captures the information that will be most useful to the Committee.
- Continue making sure that participants who may need some support to answer evaluation questions receive the support they need from people they trust and feel



This picture was drawn by an MVMC participant. It has clouds with rain and lightening. It says, "I want to feel loved. I want to be happy. When I'm depressed. Sometimes feel lonely."

¹ The photos were retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/respectingrights/photos>.

comfortable with. This will help ensure that people who may feel shy or without “voice” will be able to indicate how they feel about the sessions, what they are learning, what they like most and their suggestions for improvement.

Summary and conclusion

This report is based mainly on what self-advocates said about the MVMC sessions they attended. The report also draws from information obtained through selected interviews with staff and participants who are familiar with MVMC and from the observations of the evaluator who wrote the present report.

In answer to the research question, “Is it possible to create sustainable supported decision-making circles for people labelled with intellectual disability?”, we affirm that, yes, this is indeed possible. We found that several features of MVMC made it rewarding for the people who attended. These include the opportunities the sessions provided for participants to meet new people and get to know one another better. MVMC created opportunities for participants to share stories, listen to others, and have discussions as well as to role play, watch videos, learn about rights in general and receive additional information from lawyers and other content experts on the law. Participants appreciated that their personal choices and decisions were affirmed and that they had opportunities to socialize with one another. The effective practices that were put in place through MVMC to support such learning and social connections can be continued and built upon. It would also be quite possible in the future to adopt several of participants' suggestions for improving the sessions. If these suggestions were implemented, it is our view that it would indeed be possible to continue and expand the supported decision-making circles that MVMC helped to create for people labelled with intellectual disability. Such circles of support would enable people to continue meeting new people, getting to know one another better, and learning about personal rights and freedoms that are often not taught or elaborated upon in detail in group homes or family settings

To the research question, “Have people learned any new information or skills from the sessions?”, the evidence we reviewed clearly indicates that, yes, most people who took part in MVMC learned something new. This was a consistent outcome for all the sessions regardless of location. Key things people learned were about their rights in general and about specific rights in the areas of healthcare, relationships and money. They also learned about other subjects related to topics covered in the sessions, and about the importance of speaking up, telling their stories and of letting others know what they want (and don't want) in life. Participants learned about how other people can provide support in making personal decisions, the importance of talking with others, and the tools to acquire specific communication skills.

As to whether MVMC helped people become more involved in decisions about their life, we found that this seems to be happening and provided examples. Among the people at the sessions who said they usually make only a few or none of the decisions about their relationships, all said they learned something from MVMC. Most people who said they make only some of these decisions, and even those who said they make all the decisions, also said they learned something new. Most people who answered our question about their confidence

to advocate since becoming involved in MVMC said they felt more confident after attending the sessions.

Overall, did MVMC help people? Our findings support the conclusion that it did indeed help in many ways. The participants in the final sessions would all seem to agree that they would encourage their friends to take part in sessions like these.

This report has drawn attention to things that were done well in MVMC and provides recommendations for building on those many strengths. Key among these are that:

- Adequate supports will be available to the people who need them, including various forms of translation,
- Partner organizations are onside with the organization and running of the sessions,
- Self-advocates continue to be substantially engaged in designing and running the sessions,
- The sessions employ a variety of activities to engage participants,
- Participants have enough time for discussion,
- The “curriculum” is kept flexible and adaptable to participants’ needs and interests, and
- The sessions are fun, interactive, and informative.



Three members of the Respecting Rights Committee who helped organize My Voice, My Choice.

Appendix

1. Eviance

Eviance is a national, not-for-profit consumer driven organization, and a knowledge hub on disability issues in Canada and internationally. As a change-driven organization, Eviance seeks to help build more inclusive, equitable and accessible societies that are sustainable for all. We facilitate strategic partnerships, collaborations and capacity building to co-create effective approaches to address the social, political and economic issues that reflect the needs and interests of diverse people with disabilities. Our work explicitly responds to the expressed needs and interests of diverse disability communities with a particular interest in the needs of grassroots organizations. (See www.disabilitystudies.ca and www.eviance.ca, our new website, for selected examples of our work.)

As a hub of knowledge on local, regional, national, and global cross-disability issues, we seek to realize behavioural and system level change. Our work is guided by and furthers the social justice intent of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and other international social justice frameworks. Our mission is realized through the following actions:

- We use community-based research, education and development;
- We seek strategic partnerships and collaborations with institutions, governments, organizations, businesses, and the public to the benefit of all;
- We are dedicated to the use of high-quality evidence in disability, and inclusive broader sector, policies, programs, and practices;
- We include persons with disabilities in constructive and meaningful ways in all our activities; and,
- We use methods that include intersectionality, reflexivity, innovation, and excellence.

2. Topics covered by the evaluation forms for MVMC sessions, by session and location

	Introduction			Healthcare decisions			Relationship decisions			Advocating - Healthcare and relationships			Money decisions			Making decisions with support			Advocating - Money and decisions			Wrap up		
Session number >>	1			2			3			4			5			6			7			8		
Location >>	O*	T*	L*	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L
Topics covered v																								
General topics																								
How was the session? (3-point pictorial scale: "boring", "in-between/so-so" and "interesting")	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	
Overall, how did the workshop (session) make you feel? (More easygoing and positive than usual; More tense or upset than usual; About the same as usual)	✓	✓	✓																					
Did you meet anyone new at the session?	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓					
Did you get to know someone better than before?	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓					
Someone get to know you better than before?	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓					
Did you learn anything new?	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓					
What are one or two things you learned that are important to you?	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓				✓	
What did you like most about the session?	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓				✓	
What didn't you like or think could be improved?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓				✓	

	Introduction			Healthcare decisions			Relationship decisions			Advocating - Healthcare and relationships			Money decisions			Making decisions with support			Advocating - Money and decisions			Wrap up		
Session number >>	1			2			3			4			5			6			7			8		
Location >>	O*	T*	L*	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L
Topics covered v																								
Is there one thing you think you might do to advocate for yourself (or for someone else) as a result of this workshop? If so, what do you think you might do?								✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓									
Since starting MVMC, done any advocating for yourself or someone you know?								✓	✓	✓						✓	✓		✓				✓	
Healthcare																								
Do you feel like your doctor listens to your choices? (3-point scale, ranging from "not so well" to "yes, very well")				✓	✓	✓																		
Does someone usually go with you to your doctor's appointments (such as a support worker or family member)?				✓	✓	✓																		
How many of the decisions about your health care do you make (3-point scale, ranging from "none or a few" to "most or all").				✓	✓	✓																		
Relationships																								
Besides you, is there another person who has a lot of say about your relationships? (If so, who?)								✓	✓															
Thinking about the things we talked about in the workshop today, do you feel this person								✓	✓															

	Introduction			Healthcare decisions			Relationship decisions			Advocating - Healthcare and relationships			Money decisions			Making decisions with support			Advocating - Money and decisions			Wrap up		
Session number >>	1			2			3			4			5			6			7			8		
Location >>	O*	T*	L*	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L
Topics covered v																								
listens to your choices about relationships? (3-point scale, ranging from "not very well" to "yes, very well".)																								
Thinking about the things we talked about in the workshop today, is there one thing you wish this person would do differently? If so, what would that be?								✓	✓	✓														
Healthcare and relationships																								
Did you learn anything new about the rights at the focus of this session?				✓	✓	✓												✓	✓					
What did you learn about these rights?				✓	✓	✓												✓	✓					
Making decisions with support and advocacy in the areas of money and making decisions																								
... [Recently] has a staff, family member or someone else told you weren't allowed to do something that you wanted? (For example...) OR ... [has someone] controlled your money without allowing you to be involved?																		✓	✓			✓		
How often someone else controls the person's money without allowing them to be involved (4-point scale, ranging from "never" to (all the time or a lot"))																					✓			

	Introduction			Healthcare decisions			Relationship decisions			Advocating - Healthcare and relationships			Money decisions			Making decisions with support			Advocating - Money and decisions			Wrap up		
Session number >>	1			2			3			4			5			6			7			8		
Location >>	O*	T*	L*	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L	O	T	L
Topics covered v																								
What weren't you allowed to do (by this person)?																								
Reflections on MVMC as a process																								
How many people have you met and talked with as a result of these sessions?																								
Things you wish you could have done as a group (in the sessions) but didn't.																								
Your recommendation for the best kind of activity for future sessions like this.																								
Why you recommend that kind of activity																								
Your confidence to advocate as a result of these sessions (4-point scale, ranging from "less confident" to "a lot more confident".)																								
Would you encourage a friend to take part in sessions like these?																								
Any other recommendations or comments?																								

* O = Ottawa; T = Toronto; L = London

The images below provide examples of the kinds of questions in the questionnaires.

6. Did you learn anything new?

a. No. Not really b. Yes

7. If yes, what are one or two things you learned that are important to you?

~~I~~ I can make my own
Decisions even with my parents.

we get to choose who we have
relationships ~~with~~ with.

Was it boring? Interesting? Or was it in between ... just so-so?

 a. Boring  b. In between. So-so.  c. Interesting

2. What did you like most about today's session?

I loved feeling important and needed with
my friends

Plain language summary

The following pages tell the results of an evaluation of My Voice, My Choice. An evaluation is where you find out what happened in a program and if it got the results it was supposed to get. Eviance did the evaluation. Eviance is a knowledge hub on people with disabilities. It provides research and information. It is driven by the experiences of people with disabilities and listens carefully to their voices.

Background

My Voice, My Choice was a program run by the Respecting Rights Committee. The Committee is connected with ARCH Disability Law Centre. The Committee's aims are to make developmental services better for people labelled with an intellectual disability. People labelled with an intellectual disability are on the Committee and lead it. ARCH is a legal clinic that works to advance the equality rights, freedoms, and inclusion of people with disabilities in Ontario. ARCH lawyers, a social worker, and other staff are also on the Respecting Rights Committee.

My Voice, My Choice was an important project for the Respecting Rights Committee and ARCH. The Committee designed MVMC to help people labelled with an intellectual disability to get accessible information about decision making. This included information about supports to help people make their own decisions. Self-advocates had major say in designing all the sessions. They also had major say in designing the evaluation.

My Voice, My Choice sessions took place in three communities. These were Ottawa, London, and Toronto, Ontario. They ran from May of 2019 to March of 2020. The idea was that eight sessions of about two or three hours long would take place in each community. Topics to be covered were:

1. An introduction
2. Healthcare decisions
3. Relationship decisions
4. Advocating about healthcare and decisions
5. Money decisions
6. Making decisions with support
7. Advocating about money and decisions
8. Wrap up

All eight of these sessions took place in Ottawa. But because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the sessions were ended before they could all be carried out in Toronto and London. Six sessions took place in Toronto and three in London. In all, 17 My Voice, My Choice sessions were run.

Results

The results are based on:

- What participants labelled with an intellectual disability told us about the sessions;
- What we saw and heard at the Respecting Rights Committee meetings we attended;
- The telephone phone conversations we had with the ARCH social worker;
- An hour-long telephone interview we did with that person; and
- A ninety-minute group interview we did with three members of the Respecting Rights Committee. These people all participated in My Voice, My Choice.

On the pages that follow, we have presented the results to answer the research questions this paper was to answer.

- Is it possible to create decision-making circles for people labelled with an intellectual disability?

Answer: Yes. Through some things were done very well in My Voice, My Choice to help people meet one another, get to know each another and learn new things. For example ...

- 7 out of 10 participants met someone new.
- 8 out of 10 got to know someone better than before.
- 8 out of 10 feel others got to know them better than before.

When asked what people liked most...

- About 1 out of 5 said they liked *everything* about the sessions.
- About 1 out of 5 said they like sharing, discussing, and listening to others.
- Nearly 1 out of 5 said they liked the activities, especially role play, watching videos/movies, drawing and music.
- Lots of people liked learning about the subjects discussed at the sessions and learning about heir rights.
- Some people really liked that others at the sessions respected their personal choices and decisions.
- Quite a few liked getting together, socializing, and having fun at the sessions.

- Have people learned anything new or developed new skills through My Voice, My Choice?

Answer: Yes. More than 8 out of 10 learned something new that was important to them. For instance ...

- About 1 in 5 said they learned more about their rights in general.
- Another 1 in 5 said they learned about the rights discussed at the sessions.
 - This includes rights about taking care of money, making healthcare decisions, who to live with, choosing a roommate, and other rights about relationships.
- About 1 in 5 said they learned about other subjects related to the sessions.
 - This includes where to go to find a lawyer, how to budget and save money, how to deal with personal problems, hearing about other people's problems, and how to have more control in relationships.
- Nearly 1 out of 10 said they learned how to speak up, tell their story and tell others what they want – and don't want – in life.
- About 1 out of 10 said they learned how other people can provide support and why to talk with others.
- Some people said they learned new communication skills, like how to talk more, tell about their feelings, and listen better to others.
- Quite a few said they are thinking about advocating in the future. These people said:
 - They would ask questions or speak up for themselves.
 - Try to help others who need support
 - Communicate differently or learn more about advocacy.

- Has My Voice, My Choice helped people to be more involved in decisions about their life?

Answer: Yes. This seems to be happening because...

- Many participants are aware that they have rights, now.
- Many are aware that they have rights in the areas of healthcare, money and relationships.
- Many said they learned about the importance of speaking up and letting others know what they want and don't want.
- Many learned they can ask others for help with hard decisions.
- Almost everyone said they learned something new.
- More than half who were asked in the 8th session said they feel a lot more confident to advocate after attending My Voice, My Choice. Another 1 in 4 said they feel a little more confident, now. Only about 1 out of 7 said they are about as confident now as they were before getting involved in My Voice, My Choice.
 - Nearly 1 out of 4 said they have done something to advocate, recently. They didn't give any of the details.
 - Another 1 out of 4 said they spoke out, expressed themselves or asked for help with an issue that concerned them.
 - About 1 out of 5 said they helped or advocated for someone else.
 - More than 1 out of 10 said they communicate differently because of My Voice, My Choice.
 - Nearly 1 out of 10 have done something positive *for themselves* as a result of My Voice, My Choice.

- Have the sessions helped people? If so, how?

Answer: Yes. Here's why.

- Most people learned something new. The new things people learned include:
 - About rights in general and about the rights that were discussed in the sessions.
 - About other subjects related to the topics covered in the sessions.
 - The importance of speaking up and letting others know what they want and don't want in life.
 - How others can help with hard decisions.
 - The importance of talking with others and treating them with respect.
 - How to be better a communicator.
- Most people met someone new through My Voice, My Choice.
 - About half met one or two new people.
 - About half met more than five new people.
- Most people got to know someone better than before.
- Most people feel others got to know them better.
- Most people who participated to the last session came away feeling more confident to advocate than they did before My Voice, My Choice.
- Some people are now advocating for themselves and for others.
- Everyone who got a chance to answer in the 8th session said they would encourage a friend to take part in sessions like My Voice, My Choice.

- What can be done to improve these sessions in the future?

The general message from My Voice, My Choice participants was, “Nothing. Great work. Keep it up!”

- Some people did see a few things that might improve the sessions. The ideas they talked about most often were:
 - Allow enough time for small group work, questions, and discussion.
 - Do more activities.
 - Ensure translation is available for people who will need it.
 - People could maybe listen better without interrupting.
 - There could be some clearer explanations and information.
 - There could be better audio, and web cams for people who can't attend the sessions personally.
- A small number of people also presented a few other ideas about the meeting room and breaks.

Conclusion

My Voice, My Choice was an important project run by the Respecting Rights Committee and ARCH Disability Law Centre. My Voice, My Choice ran in three communities: Ottawa, Toronto, and London. It ran from May of 2019 to March of 2020. It was designed to help people labelled with an intellectual disability to make their own decisions. It included information about supports to help people make those decisions. Self-advocates had major say in designing My Voice, My Choice.

We found that My Voice, My Choice achieved the following things:

- It showed that it is possible to create decision-making circles for people labelled with an intellectual disability.
- People learned many new things and developed new skills through My Voice, My Choice.
- The sessions helped people to be more involved in decisions about their life.
- The sessions helped people in many other ways.

Our recommendations for building on My Voice, My Choice for the future are to:

- Keep doing all the things that people liked most.
- Be sure to:
 - Keep the sessions fun and interactive.
 - Use lots of different activities to involve people.
 - Stay flexible and do the kinds of things participants want to do.
 - Allow lots of time for discussion.
 - Ensure people have the supports they need to participate fully.
 - This includes making sure people who need translation and sign language interpretation will have this support.
 - Try to get partner organizations to help more with running the sessions.
 - Be sure self-advocates continue to have major say in planning and running the sessions.