



Bridging the Gap

# Mental Health in Second Generation Asian Canadians

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## Background



Stigma and shame associated with mental health challenges in Asian cultures result in a **lack of dialogue** between immigrant parents and their children...

**Second-generation Asian immigrant youth** aged 14-25 in Greater Vancouver experience **unique mental health challenges** imposed by **acculturation**

...leading to **unhealthy coping strategies** in 2nd generation immigrant youth.

148!

### Our Research Methods:

- Academic Literature Review
- Government Publications
- 46 Qualitative User Interviews
- 88 Survey Responses
- 14 Expert Interviews



## Problem Landscape

What does the problem look like?

### Coping

2nd generation youth use unhealthy coping strategies: suppression, avoidance, and internalization



72%

...practiced unhealthy coping strategies when confronted with personal mental health struggles

Users and experts told us...

"Mental health **doesn't exist** to my parents"

"[Among] families and children, much of the **conflict is between different cultural understandings**"

Ilyambabazi Sebyeza, BA  
REACH Community Health Centre

### Understanding

a difference in understanding of mental health between 2nd generation youth and their families



86%

...said that their parents would "never understand" their mental health struggles

### Control

a lack of control surrounding traditional familial expectations of wealth, success, and career



91%

...identified parental expectations as a source of heightened levels of stress

### Debt

the internalization of parental burdens (eg. loss of credentials) and resulting feelings of debt or obligation



100%

...avoided creating stressors for their families by avoiding conversations about mental health



## Solution Landscape

What is currently out there?

### Cross Cultural Mental Health Services

Services address language barriers and cultural representation in mental health (eg. VGH Cross Cultural Psychiatric Clinic)



### Educational Institutions

Educational institutions have student led cultural groups and targeted mental health services



Users and experts told us...

"I [didn't] think my circumstances or situation were deserving of seeking counselling."

"[The system has] tended to **neglect** the importance of **culture and diversity** in experiences with **mental illness and approaches to treatment and care.**"

Dr. JILL Murphy, PhD, MA,  
UBC Department of Psychiatry

### Innovative Solutions

Includes advocacy and empowerment groups led by 2nd gen. youth, providing a positive space for young people and families



### Initial Immigration Settlement Services

Services target newcomer immigrants and offer aid in initial settlement and integration



## Gaps and Levers of Change

What opportunities are there?

For example: Educational Institutions as stakeholders

### Gaps

### Levers of Change



### Community Focus

Neglecting long-term care and services for 2nd generation immigrants

Increase student counselling and support services to provide culturally competent care



### Family Dialogue

Missing means to introduce mental health in Asian families

Utilize spaces (i.e parent conferences) where parents and students already congregate to introduce dialogue while respecting both views



### Research & Discovery

Lack of research in a Canadian context

School administration and Ministry of Education can host 2nd gen. youth focus groups to better inform curriculum changes and support programs



### Collaboration

Lack of collaboration between stakeholders

Schools can help extend the organizational goals of innovative responses by increasing youth opportunities