



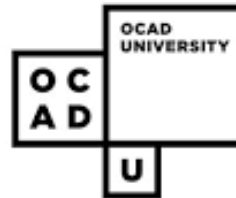
# **Thought Spot**

**Addressing Barriers to Access of Mental Health,  
Addictions and Wellness Services through  
Student-led Innovation**

# WHAT IS THE ISSUE?

- **70% of lifetime cases** of mental illness will emerge by age 24.
- While early detection and interventions can address approximately 70% of childhood cases of mental health problems, **only about 36% of those youth in need receive mental health support.**
- Transition-aged youth (16–25 years) experiences barriers in accessing appropriate services, information and advice because **the system is “fragmented, spread across several ministries and offered in a variety of care settings.”**

# MENTAL HEALTH INNOVATION FUND



# BY STUDENTS/FOR STUDENTS

- **\$1.134 million Mental Health Innovation Fund grant** through the MTCU (thank you!)
- **18-month project focused on engaging students to innovate solutions** to persistent problem of lack of access by transition-aged youth to mental health and addictions services
- **Aimed to create interactive, crowd-sourcable, web- and mobile-based maps to services in GTA**
- Project was framed around **promoting mental health and wellness**
- Goal was to allow students to seek out and access services, both on campus and in the community, through a digital platform **without the need for intermediaries.**

# THE MAPPING PLATFORM



# SEEDING THE MAP

**ConnexOntario**  
Health Services Information



# ENGAGING STUDENTS/ SHARING POWER

## Tala THE "CREATIVE"

**Gender:** Female  
**Gender Identity:** Cisgender  
**Age:** 26  
**Sexuality:** Straight  
**Religious Faith:** Spiritual  
**Type of Disability, if any:** None  
**Relationship Status:** Married  
**Number of dependents:** 0  
**Employment status:** Employed (Part-Time)  
**Citizenship:**

- First Nations status (Mohawk)

### Living Arrangements:

- Living in housing rented off-campus with spouse. All costs are paid by herself and her partner.
- Originally from a reserve in Brantford

### University currently attending:

- OCAD University (Domestic Student)

### Program – Field of Study:

- Undergraduate – Sculpture & Installation

### Year of Study:

- Third Year

### Transportation Arrangements:

- Does not have a car
- Mostly walks or uses public transportation
- Walks to school

### Financial Status:

- Total annual household income = Less than \$15,000
- Relies on bursaries and grant funding to go to school
- OSAP
- Band funding

### Involvement in campus activities:

- Bhakti Meditation Club, OCADU Mindfulness
- Enjoys Yoga and meditation activities.
- Peer Health Mentor at OCADU and is involved with the Health & Wellness Clinic on campus

### Personality Traits:

- Extraverted
- Confident
- Perceptive
- Outspoken
- Frugal

### Tasks:

- Finding financial aid for school
- Balancing school work with responsibilities of living independently
- Finding free time to relax
- Finding ways to be apart of the Aboriginal community in Toronto

### Needs:

- Quiet time to herself to do work
- Financial security to continue on with her education
- Social support and academic support from the university

### Problems:

- Marginalization
- Having difficulty connecting on a personal level with an Aboriginal community in Toronto after coming from a reserve in Brantford
  - contributed by being in a different environment amongst different people/different lifestyles
- Concerned about having sufficient funding to complete university education, may not have enough funds
- Concerned with limited funding and that the amounts provided by First Nations or Métis funding sources did not cover actual costs.
- Applied for OSAP because band has cut funds for her
  - Increased stress because she needs to apply for so many applications for funding and is worried about deadlines and the amount of funding she is eligible to receive. If applications are not completed properly, she will not get the funding that she needs and may not be able to attend school.
  - Could not afford to go to a previous institution because her Band funding was cut for the program she was enrolled in. Thus, she was forced to attend another institution.
- High school was on reserve
- Parents and friends (on reserve) do not live in city, so making new friends is a challenge
- The responsibility to take care of household duties adds to her stress
- Oftentimes, she comes into conflict with her husband when deciding on the division of household responsibilities
  - When she comes into conflict with her husband, she has no one to go to and no one to talk to.

### Map Needs

- Inclusion of services that are free
- Inclusion of services which are informed about the unique challenges of First Nations students



### Background Info:

Tala is a First Nations student studying Sculpture & Installation at OCAD University. She struggles with making ends meet financially for her and her husband and finding time to do her artwork as well as juggling other responsibilities. She deals with her stress by doing yoga, meditation and art but often gets sidetracked by her search for financial support.

### In Her Voice:

*"I'm constantly looking for outside resources to help. Education costs a lot and there just isn't enough money."*

*"Financial support is also limited – if you start to fall behind in school, band funding is cut."*

*"Going to school for a creative discipline can be difficult when you're constantly stressed over other things in life. You need time to relax and do your work but it's easy to get distracted."*

# BS/FS BECOMES THOUGHT SPOT!





# THOUGHT SPOT GOES LIVE!

The screenshot displays the Thought Spot website interface. At the top, the browser address bar shows the URL [www.mythoughtspot.ca](http://www.mythoughtspot.ca). The navigation menu includes links for Map, Spots, About, FAQ, Get Involved, Contact Us, and a LOGIN button. Below the navigation is a search bar with the text "Thought Spot" and a "SEARCH" button. A descriptive paragraph states: "Thought Spot is a live map designed by students, for students in the Greater Toronto Area. The map allows students to easily identify and access health and wellness services, and discover resources that are relevant to their experiences, situation, and location." Below this text are eight circular icons representing different categories: All Categories, Legal and Financial, Health and Social Services, Recreation and Culture, Family and Friends, Spirituality and Wellbeing, Work and School, and Sex and Relationships. At the bottom, a map of the Greater Toronto Area is shown with numerous circular markers, each containing a number and a small version of the multi-colored wheel icon, indicating the location and count of resources in that area.

# HACKATHOUGHT!!!



# TAKING THOUGHT SPOT MOBILE



# WHAT IS NEXT?

- The challenge of **sustainability**.
- The challenge of **currency**.
- The challenge of **scalability**.
- The challenge of **uptake**.
- The challenge of **engagement**.