

# **ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING ABORIGINAL YOUTH: A TOOLKIT FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS**

**2<sup>ND</sup> EDITION**

**Claire V. Crooks, Ph.D., C.Psych.**  
CAMH Centre for Prevention Science  
and The University of Western Ontario

**Debbie Chiodo, M.A., M.Ed.**  
CAMH Centre for Prevention Science  
and The University of Western Ontario

**Darren Thomas, BSc.**  
New Orators Youth Project  
and Wilfrid Laurier University

**Shanna Burns, B.Ed., M.Ed.**  
CAMH Centre for Prevention Science

**Charlene Camillo, B.A., B.Ed.**  
CAMH Centre for Prevention Science  
and Thames Valley District School Board

---

# COPYRIGHT

Production of this document has been made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada.

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency Canada.

Most of the quotes used in this manual have been provided by partners and colleagues in written or verbal communication to the first author. In all cases authors have approved the final quotes.

Quotes not obtained in this manner include the quotes from Chief Luther Standing Bear and Chief Dan George (pages 78 and 87 respectively), which were accessed online at the First People: Words of Wisdom site: [www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Wisdom/wisdom.html](http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Wisdom/wisdom.html). The quote from the AHF Regional Gathering participant on page 13 is from the Spring 2001 issue of *Healing Words*, a publication of the AHF available at [www.ahf.ca/pages/download/28\\_54](http://www.ahf.ca/pages/download/28_54). The quote from Roberta Jamieson on page 56 was taken from the website Famous Canadian Women at <http://famouscanadianwomen.com/quotes/quotes%20page.htm>. Finally, the quote from Dr. Peter Menzies was excerpted from his publication, *Longing to return home: From intergenerational trauma to intergenerational healing* in the CAMH journal, *Cross Currents: The Journal of Addiction and Mental Health*.

© Copyright 2010 Claire V. Crooks

## PREFACE

---

From coast to coast to coast in Canada, there is growing recognition that many youth programs do not adequately meet the needs of Aboriginal youth. Some programs have been developed without any thought to the unique circumstances of Aboriginal youth. Others have been superficially adapted with respect to program materials, but without a deeper consideration of the myriad programmatic, organizational, and evaluation factors that require fine tuning. Many program staff and community leaders are eager for guidance to more meaningfully adapt or develop programs that meet the needs of these youth.

This toolkit is our attempt to provide such a guide for front-line service providers, facilitators, educators, community partners, and researchers. We hope that individuals from all these groups will find something in this manual to help them improve their work with Aboriginal youth.

Claire Crooks and Debbie Chiodo are non-Aboriginal researchers and clinicians trained in health promotion, quantitative research, program development, and evaluation. We work at the CAMH Centre for Prevention Science in London, Ontario. Through our work at the Centre (along with colleagues Ray Hughes, David Wolfe, and Peter Jaffe), we have developed a range of school-based violence prevention initiatives. We are involved with several national research and NGO networks, including PREVNet and the Canadian Prevention Science Cluster. Darren Thomas is a motivational consultant and educator from Six Nations of the Grand River. He is Seneca Bear clan of the Haudenosaunee and has worked with communities around the country in a number of consulting capacities. Shanna Burns is a non-Aboriginal researcher and educator with experience in handbook development and program implementation. Charlene Camillo is an Aboriginal educator and project coordinator who has run a number of programs for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth. Collectively the authors have a wide range of experience in research, program development, and working with youth and community partners. Brief author biographies are provided in Appendix A.

In 2005, the first author was funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) to investigate the process of adapting programs for Aboriginal youth. This funding provided us with the opportunity to document strengths and challenges from our own programs and to connect with colleagues around the country and learn from their experiences. The first edition of this toolkit was distributed to a wide range of reviewers, many of whom contributed by providing additional case studies and materials. In some cases, reviewers connected the authors to other individuals who also became contributors. See Appendices B and C for a list of contributors and reviewers.

After publishing the first edition, we continued to receive suggestions for the toolkit. In addition, we became concerned that the amount of information in the toolkit might seem overwhelming to those in the early stages of enhancing their programming for Aboriginal youth. To address this concern, we developed a self-assessment guide that now constitutes Section 2 of the toolkit. This guide provides an opportunity to identify a general profile of strengths and weaknesses in your programming. To help you create a more detailed snapshot, we have included a number of other assessment tools new to the second edition. Other additions include more background information, additional case studies, and an expanded section on engaging parents in their children's formal education. We continue to think of this toolkit as a work in progress and welcome suggestions for future editions.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

---

The work represented in this toolkit is based on wisdom and experience generously shared by many individuals and groups. From the outset, we received invaluable guidance with the proposal from Cindy Blackstock (Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society), Jocelyn Formsma, and Ginger Gosnell (Youth Consultants).

We thank our original partner sites—the BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses (BCYSTH) and New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults and Families (ND)—with whom we obtained funding for the original PHAC-funded project in 2005. In British Columbia, the BCYSTH joined with Helping Spirit Lodge, Nuxalk Nation, the Vancouver School Board (VSB), the School-Age Children and Youth Substance Use Prevention Initiative (SACY), and the Urban Native Youth Association, each of whom provided valuable partnerships and experiences. In Ontario, The Fourth R partnered with the Thames Valley District School Board, a partnership that has been integral to the success of their school-based initiatives. The Fourth R has also benefitted immeasurably from the wisdom, humour, and patience of Darren Thomas, founder of the New Orators Youth Project from Six Nations. All of the sites have learned from other local and provincial partners too numerous to name, and the contributions of all these people have shaped this document.

We appreciate the assistance of those individuals who provided comments and feedback on earlier drafts of this toolkit. Collectively, they are leaders in Aboriginal health issues, programming with youth, research, and applied policy work, and we are exceptionally grateful for their time and assistance. The toolkit was strengthened immeasurably by these reviewers alerting the authors to other exceptional resources or, in many cases, writing additional sections and case studies themselves. Throughout the document, we have tried to acknowledge contributors who wrote particular sections.

We thank Mary Jane Crooks for her careful review of the first edition and Diana Brei for copyediting the second edition.

We are indebted to the financial support provided by PHAC through their Population Health Fund. We appreciate the hands-on guidance and feedback from the policy analysts (first David Allen, then Salena Brickey) throughout the course of the project, as well as the oversight by Yvonne Côté. Beyond funding the initial project, PHAC has generously provided funds for printing and distributing the toolkit, as well as for a French translation. In 2009, they provided an additional year of funding for knowledge translation, enabling us to conduct two large regional symposia and a webinar series, distribute the toolkit widely, and develop this second edition. We appreciate the vision that PHAC staff have shared with us to make sure that this toolkit is a resource that will be easily accessed and readily available.

Finally, we thank all the youth involved with the projects and organizations who contributed to this toolkit. Their energy, wisdom, and strength are an inspiration to all of us.

*Claire Crooks*

---

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>COPYRIGHT .....</b>	<b>II</b>
PREFACE.....	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	IV
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>SECTION 1: BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>1</b>
OVERVIEW: THE CASE FOR STRENGTH-BASED PROGRAMMING.....	2
THE PREVENTION/HEALTH PROMOTION SPECTRUM.....	6
INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA AND HISTORICAL LOSS .....	7
SIX COMMON MYTHS ABOUT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS .....	8
UNIVERSAL VERSUS CULTURALLY SPECIFIC RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH VIOLENCE.....	10
GENERAL BEST PRACTICE PROGRAMMING PRINCIPLES.....	11
PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMMING FOR ABORIGINAL YOUTH.....	12
OVERVIEW OF PRINCIPLES .....	13
SUGGESTED DVD RESOURCES ON ABORIGINAL ISSUES, IDENTITY AND HISTORY .....	14
<b>SECTION 2: ASSESSMENT .....</b>	<b>15</b>
SELF-ASSESSMENT: THE STARTING POINT .....	16
SELF-ASSESSMENT GUIDE .....	18
ADDITIONAL ASSESSMENT TOOLS .....	23
<b>SECTION 3: GUIDING PRINCIPLES .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>PRINCIPLE 1: UNDERSTANDING AND INTEGRATING CULTURAL IDENTITY.....</b>	<b>26</b>
ACCULTURATION VERSUS ENCULTURATION .....	27
THE ROLE OF ENCULTURATION IN PROMOTING HEALTHY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT .....	28
CULTURAL IDENTITY: WHOSE CULTURE?.....	29
LANGUAGE MATTERS.....	30
CULTURAL IDENTITY: 10 CONSIDERATIONS AND STRATEGIES.....	32
ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT FOR CULTURAL REPRESENTATION .....	34
PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: CANADIAN RED CROSS – WALKING THE PREVENTION CIRCLE.....	36
<b>PRINCIPLE 2: INCREASING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT .....</b>	<b>38</b>
THE HEART OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT: MEETING YOUTH WHERE THEY ARE.....	39
PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: NIMKEE NUPIGAWAGAN HEALING CENTRE .....	40
ENGAGING YOUTH AT THE PROGRAM LEVEL .....	42
PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: CRU YOUTH WELLNESS CENTRE .....	44
STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING YOUTH AT THE PROGRAM LEVEL.....	46
STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING YOUTH (CONT.).....	47
PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: NEW DIRECTION’S TERF PROGRAM .....	48
HOW DO WE INVOLVE YOUTH IN ORGANIZATIONS? .....	50
ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN ORGANIZATIONS .....	52
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL: WHAT IS THE ROLE OF ADULTS? .....	53

THE BENEFITS OF ADULTS AS ALLIES.....	54
<b>PRINCIPLE 3: FOSTERING YOUTH EMPOWERMENT.....</b>	<b>55</b>
CREATIVE IDEAS FOR YOUTH COMMUNITY ACTION .....	56
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONAL AUDIT .....	57
PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: NWAC VIOLENCE PREVENTION TOOLKIT PROJECT .....	58
FINDING YOUR VISION, FINDING YOUR VOICE: A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE ON CULTURALLY INFORMED EMPOWERMENT .....	60
PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: BCYSTH ABORIGINAL CAPACITY CAFÉ .....	62
YOUTH EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MENTORING .....	64
EXAMPLES OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT MENTORING PROGRAMS .....	66
PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: DND JUNIOR CANADIAN RANGERS PROGRAMME .....	68
PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: SEVEN MAGAZINE .....	70
THE IMPORTANCE OF RECOGNIZING YOUTH STRENGTHS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS .....	72
LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN ORGANIZATIONS WITH YOUTH GROUPS .....	73
PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: RCMP ABORIGINAL PRE-CADET TRAINING PROGRAM .....	74
<b>PRINCIPLE 4: ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS .....</b>	<b>76</b>
CONSIDERATIONS FOR DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS.....	77
PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION: ACCESSING ELDERS.....	81
PARTNERSHIP SATISFACTION SURVEY.....	82
CARING ACROSS THE BOUNDARIES INITIATIVE.....	84
<b>SECTION 4: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN SCHOOL-BASED PREVENTION PROGRAMMING .....</b>	<b>85</b>
WORKING WITH SCHOOLS.....	86
WHAT CAN SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL BOARDS DO?.....	87
WHAT CAN EDUCATORS DO TO BETTER ENGAGE ABORIGINAL YOUTH? .....	88
SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS .....	89
PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: THE FOURTH R: UNITING OUR NATIONS .....	90
CAPACITY BUILDING WITH EDUCATORS .....	92
WHAT CAN EDUCATORS DO? HONOURING ABORIGINAL LEARNING STYLES .....	94
LEVELS OF INTEGRATION OF MULTICULTURAL CONTENT.....	95
PROGRAMMING INTEGRATED INTO THE SCHOOL SETTING.....	96
CHECKLIST FOR IDENTIFYING AREAS OF ALIGNMENT WITH SCHOOL BOARD POLICIES AND INITIATIVES .....	97
PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: FOURTH R ABORIGINAL PERSPECTIVES CURRICULUM.....	98
TEMPLATE FOR ADAPTATION OF FOURTH R ABORIGINAL PERSPECTIVES .....	100
PARENT ENGAGEMENT SURVEY.....	102
ENGAGING ABORIGINAL PARENTS IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM .....	104
BARRIERS TO PARENT ENGAGEMENT .....	106
STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING BARRIERS .....	108
PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: VIOLENCE IS PREVENTABLE PROJECT AND ABORIGINAL STUDENTS.....	110
<b>SECTION 5: RESEARCH AND EVALUATION .....</b>	<b>113</b>
WHAT ARE INDIGENOUS METHODOLOGIES IN COMMUNITY RESEARCH? .....	114
CONSIDERATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS: THE BIG PICTURE.....	116

EIGHT PRINCIPLES OF ABORIGINAL RESEARCH .....	117
ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS .....	118
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS: OCAP PRINCIPLES.....	119
RESEARCH AND EVALUATION CONSIDERATIONS .....	120
THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF AN EVALUATION .....	121
IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERVIEWERS .....	122
ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH RESEARCH .....	123
CHALLENGES IN IDENTIFYING THE IMPACT OF PREVENTION PROGRAMS.....	124
TOOLKIT SUMMARY .....	137
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>143</b>
APPENDIX A. ABOUT THE AUTHORS .....	144
APPENDIX B: PROJECT CONTRIBUTORS .....	146
APPENDIX C. TOOLKIT REVIEWERS .....	148
APPENDIX D. PROGRAM CONTACT PAGE – CASE STUDIES .....	149
APPENDIX E. GLOSSARY .....	150
APPENDIX F. ACRONYMS .....	155



---

## SECTION 1: BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

## OVERVIEW: THE CASE FOR STRENGTH-BASED PROGRAMMING

---

*Not a week goes by without a negative news story about the rates of problem behaviours among Aboriginal youth in Canada. Violence, substance use, suicide, gangs... rates of these behaviours are higher among Aboriginal youth than among their non-Aboriginal peers. However, these statistics do not tell the whole story. Rather than focusing on these negative statistics, we must shift our whole paradigm of intervention to a strengths-based approach. A strengths-based approach focuses on developing assets that are known protective factors, such as strong relationships, life skills, and school connectedness.*

### WHY DO WE NEED PROGRAMS AT ALL?

***“It’s where our parents are coming from. It’s where our grandparents are coming from. By the time you get to my generation, we have all the baggage and we don’t know where it comes from.”***

*Kristen Hendrick, Elected Councillor,  
Chippewas on the Thames*

A strengths-based approach is critical for Aboriginal youth because it takes the Canadian historical context into account. If we view the high rates of violence, substance abuse, and poverty experienced by Aboriginal families in the context of colonization and assimilation, we are able to shift the responsibility for the perceived deficits away from the individual and focus instead on the resilience many of these youth have demonstrated. Within this broader context of colonization and assimilation, it can be seen that the deliberate suppression and elimination of culture has left a legacy of intergenerational trauma (page 7). Although it is difficult to quantify direct effects, the long history of cultural oppression and marginalization has contributed to high levels of social, emotional, spiritual, and mental health problems in many Aboriginal communities. This history continues to affect Aboriginal people today due to the racism and discrimination that they face. These challenges are compounded by higher rates of poverty and substandard housing.

Knowledge production is another important element of our shared post-colonial history. Simply put, colonization has everything to do with who gets to define reality and write the textbooks! As a result, indigenous knowledge and worldviews are absent from mainstream education and dialogue. When they are presented, these views tend to be relegated to a less valuable position. There is a significant need to find ways for mainstream organizations to integrate cultural wisdom and views into their programs.

***“Intergenerational trauma requires the counsellor to review the person symptomatically from a historical perspective. We need to consider the individual as a member of both an extended family and a community, with a distinct social and political history.”***

*Dr. Peter Menzies (2006, p.12)  
Manager Aboriginal Services, CAMH*

For youth, lack of connection to culture has been identified as a clear risk factor for violence. Thus, promoting youth assets within a framework that emphasizes cultural connection is a good fit for Aboriginal youth. Shifting from seeing youth “at risk” to “at promise” requires a fundamental shift in how we approach programming. We need to promote strong youth within a holistic framework, rather than target single risk or problem behaviours in isolation.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF NON-ABORIGINAL INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS?

Given the historical context in which we are working, many people have legitimate questions about the role of non-Aboriginal individuals and organizations. How do mainstream organizations help support Aboriginal youth, families, and communities without further entrenching the existing power structures? We think the answer to that lies in how the work is approached. When youth are approached from a place of respect, a place that recognizes historical context, and a place of partnership, then this work can be achieved in a way that honours all participants. Furthermore, in light of our shared history of colonization and assimilation, individuals and organizations in the dominant culture have an obligation to find ways to offset historical wrongs by helping to bring about wider recognition of the immense value of indigenous knowledge and practices.

## OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMMING

Although the initial focus of our project was on adapting specific programs and program materials, we have come to realize that working effectively with Aboriginal youth requires a unique approach. Changing manuals and program materials is only one small step of the process. By using our understanding of the hallmarks of effective programs and consulting current literature and policy reports, we have identified four guiding principles for successfully working with Aboriginal youth. The extensive review process that we undertook in developing this toolkit reassured us of the validity of these principles, as our reviewers confirmed that these principles matched their own observations about effective programs.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMMING

1. UNDERSTANDING AND INTEGRATING CULTURAL IDENTITY
2. INCREASING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT
3. FOSTERING YOUTH EMPOWERMENT
4. ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

This toolkit offers lessons to help individuals and organizations follow their own paths to adaptation and enhancement of their programs. Section 1 offers **introductory materials** that provide a context for working with Aboriginal youth. We have included information about the historical and current context, the role of culturally specific protective factors, and the spectrum of programs from prevention to tertiary (treatment) initiatives.

Section 2 includes a **self-assessment guide** new to this edition. This survey was developed to guide organizations and programs in identifying their strengths and areas for improvement. Numerous other assessment tools have been added to the toolkit in this edition, and these are briefly outlined in Section 2.

In Section 3, we describe **specific program strategies**. We have organized our considerations and strategies around our four guiding principles for successful programming. In each section, we have attempted to balance broad guidelines and specific strategies.

Section 4 is devoted to **working with schools**. We have been working with schools to develop and implement programs for a number of years, and like many others engaged in this work, have found that the uniqueness of the education system requires particular strategies.

In Section 5, we address **research issues**. This section includes information for organizations undertaking self-assessment and program evaluation, as well as information for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal academic and community-based researchers.

We have interspersed several case examples throughout the toolkit that demonstrate the application of our guiding principles. Contact information for the organizations described in the case studies is available in Appendix D. We have also provided the glossary from the Reconciliation Movement website ([www.reconciliationmovement.org](http://www.reconciliationmovement.org)) and a list of acronyms to assist readers (Appendices E and F, respectively). For the non-Aboriginal members of this project, these are the lessons we wish we had known at the outset of our work and the ways in which our awareness has developed over time. For the Aboriginal members of the project, these are lessons we have shared and think would assist other organizations. For all of us, these are the principles and experiences that we identify as fundamental to our successful partnerships and programs. In conducting our work in this area, we encountered resources that were helpful to us, particularly those created by Aboriginal organizations. We have included some of these resources in this toolkit in the hope that others may find them similarly helpful. This borrowing of resources and templates has been done with appropriate permission and acknowledgement.

## THERE ARE A FEW CONSIDERATIONS THAT REQUIRE COMMENT:

First, we have ***used the term Aboriginal with the knowledge that there is not a consensus about whether or not it is an appropriate term.*** Some of our partners like the term because it is inclusive (of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit groups). Others do not like the term because it was imposed by others and suggests a homogeneity that does not exist. We acknowledge that there is a movement across the country for Indigenous Peoples to reclaim their original names in their own languages and recognize that this is an important step toward empowerment and a step closer to decolonization. At the same time, we have chosen to use the term Aboriginal in this document because we feel that the general principles and strategies are useful regardless of which communities are involved. We use this term with respect for individual preference in language and with recognition that there is no one Aboriginal culture or set of traditions. We also offer some guidelines and suggestions with respect to language and terminology because we know this is a daunting area for many service providers.

Second, ***some readers may find parts of this toolkit elementary and obvious and others may find some of the strategies impossible to weave into their work at this time.*** We recognize that there is a continuum of culturally relevant and empowering programming for Aboriginal youth. Our goal in writing this toolkit was to have something for everyone so that those beginning this process can find simple starting strategies and those who have been working closely with community partners to provide culturally relevant programming can find suggestions to further their success.

Third, ***we are clear about the limitations of program-based services for Aboriginal youth and recognize that true healing and empowerment will come from the communities themselves.*** As much as programs can do, there are significant underlying structural and socioeconomic issues that need to be addressed. At the same time, our mainstream programs are encountering Aboriginal youth in schools, community agencies, and treatment settings, and we need to improve the quality and cultural appropriateness of our services for these youth.

Fourth, ***the Aboriginal community is broad and diverse.*** Just as there are the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, there are also the urban, rural, on-Reserve and off-Reserve. Each young person, parent, program participant, social worker, program coordinator, or teacher will have a different level of belief in and understanding of his or her culture as well as other Aboriginal cultures.

Finally, one of the most important lessons we learned over the course of this project is that ***a cookie-cutter approach to enhancing services for Aboriginal youth will never succeed.*** The path an organization travels will depend on the population of youth with whom they work, their pre-existing relationships with community members, and their particular mandate. We offer the strategies and lessons in this toolkit as possible starting points for others wishing to enhance the quality of the services they are providing to Aboriginal youth, but we recognize that each organization will need to find their own path with their partners.

## THE PREVENTION/HEALTH PROMOTION SPECTRUM

---

Different types of prevention and health promotion activities exist along a spectrum. Approaches differ in terms of the extent to which the youth involved are already experiencing significant challenges and the focus of activities.



### HEALTH PROMOTION

The Canadian Red Cross *Walking the Prevention Circle* program (see the case study on page 36) takes a health promotion approach by engaging all members of the community in a dialogue and naming and understanding violence within a historical context. It builds on the strengths of community leaders and provides opportunities for those struggling with violence and other issues to become part of the community solution.

### PRIMARY PREVENTION

Primary prevention initiatives focus on targeting factors that might potentially cause difficulties among all Aboriginal youth, regardless of whether individuals are showing any signs of difficulty. *The Fourth R: Uniting Our Nations* (see the case study on page 90) classroom-based curricula that address violence, substance use, and unsafe sexual behaviour are examples of primary prevention.

### SECONDARY PREVENTION

By developing and delivering services for Aboriginal youth who have been exposed to domestic violence, the BCYSTH approaches violence prevention at the secondary prevention level. Through the VIP program (see the case study on page 110), they deliver services to youth who are at increased risk for violence due to their family history but may not be exhibiting violence at the present time.

### TERTIARY PREVENTION (TREATMENT)

The *Transition and Education Resources for Females* (TERF) program at New Directions (see the case study on page 48) provides tertiary prevention by focusing on youth who have already been victimized by their involvement in the sex trade. At TERF, prevention is conceptualized as meeting youths' most basic needs and helping them to get off the street and develop skills for alternative careers. By achieving these goals, youth are at lower risk for experiencing violence.

## INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA AND HISTORICAL LOSS

The history of negative treatment of Aboriginal peoples through policies and programs that were designed to culturally suppress, oppress, and marginalize has created many risk factors. In addition, it has neutralized protective factors that were a natural part of traditional aboriginal cultures.

### WHAT IS INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA?

Intergenerational trauma is the transmission of emotional injuries from one generation to the next. This passing of trauma occurs at the interpersonal level (from parent to child) and expands to the intergenerational level (from a generation of parents to a generation of children). If enough individuals are affected by a trauma, then the impact can be evident at the group or community level. Intergenerational trauma may be transmitted directly or indirectly.



### WHAT IS HISTORICAL LOSS?

Aboriginal peoples have experienced a significant number of losses over a long period. Many Aboriginal communities have been forced to undergo radical changes and displacements in response to colonization and aggressive Federal assimilative policies. These atrocities resulted in the following historical losses:



Historical loss has contributed to higher rates of various emotional and behavioural problems among Aboriginal peoples, including feelings of sadness, shame, anxiety, loss of concentration, isolation from and avoidance of other people, loss of sleep, and rage. Historical losses are very much on the minds of the current generation of Aboriginal peoples, and many mental health problems may be symptomatic of difficulties coping with this historical legacy. Coping difficulties among people who have been directly or indirectly traumatized can result in overwhelming feelings of fear, anxiety, and helplessness, leading to the behaviours underlying alcoholism, family discord, and high suicide rates.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bryant-Davis 2007; Duran 2006

## SIX COMMON MYTHS ABOUT RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

---

In 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized on behalf of the federal government to survivors of residential schools, which helped to raise awareness of residential school abuses. Although many people learned for the first time about residential schools and some of the negative impacts, there are still many myths and misconceptions regarding the nature and purpose of these schools. Here are several myths that we encounter when conducting training and information to counter these myths.

### MYTH #1: Residential schools existed a long time ago

- The majority of residential schools began closing in the 1970's
- The last federal residential school closed in 1996 in Saskatchewan
- The Aboriginal Healing Foundation estimates that there are 75,000 survivors of residential schools alive today

### MYTH #2: Residential schools were not around for long

- The Mohawk Institute Residential school opened in Brantford, ON in 1831 and became the longest operating residential school in the country (closing in 1969)
- Residential schools emerged in different parts of the country at different times
- Residential schools existed in some form in Canada for more than 150 years

### MYTH #3: Churches were responsible for residential schools

- It is true that several religious institutions played a major role in building and operating residential schools and religious indoctrination was a significant priority for those operating schools
- However, residential schools were funded through contracts with the federal government
- The policies and standards for residential school were developed and monitored by the federal government
- Legislation that required attendance was adopted at the federal level

### MYTH #4: Residential schools were intended to educate

- The policies governing residential schools were those of aggressive assimilation
- The highest priority of residential schools was to "civilize" children by erasing their cultural identities and connection to their heritage
- Many residential schools were essentially work farms that used the children for labour

#### **MYTH #5: Residential schools were only harmful to those physically or sexually abused**

- There has been much (and important) publicity about the sexual and physical abuse experienced by many residential school survivors
- Physical and sexual abuse were rampant in many schools and deserve national attention
- At the same time, it is important to realize that the residential school experience could be devastating even without these abuses
- Children were subjected to cultural abuse and stripped of their identity and language, both of which are additional forms of trauma
- When youth left the schools they were not accepted in the dominant society, but many felt they did not belong in their original communities either

#### **MYTH #6: Only those who attended were affected**

- The legacy of residential schools extends far beyond those who attended
- The nature of the trauma and loss of culture directly affected families and the larger community through many avenues, including:
- Residential school survivors lacked positive parenting role models and as a result many struggled with parenting when they had their own children
- Many survivors developed self-destructive methods of coping with their trauma through the use of substances or by repeating patterns of violence, thus affecting their intimate partners and families
- The longevity of residential schools devastated generation after generation of families and communities
- The impact of intergenerational trauma is still evident among many families and communities

#### ***Recommended resources:***

Aboriginal Healing Foundation website: [www.ahf.ca](http://www.ahf.ca). Publication section.

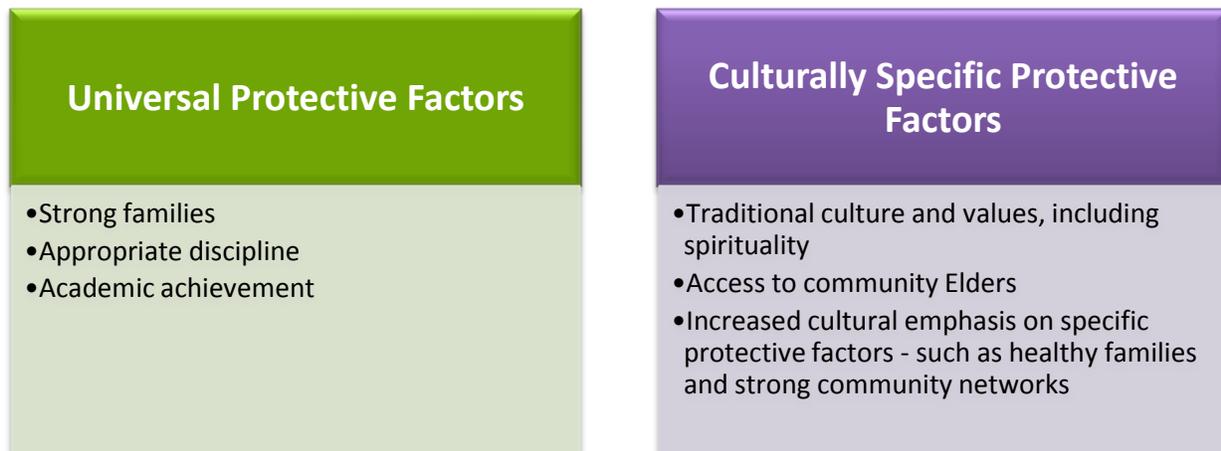
Milloy, J. S. (1999). *A national crime: The Canadian government and the residential school system 1879 to 1976*. Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press.

## UNIVERSAL VERSUS CULTURALLY SPECIFIC RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH VIOLENCE

---

Risk factors raise the likelihood of a negative outcome for an individual and protective factors reduce this likelihood. There are some risk and protective factors that appear to work the same way across cultures.<sup>2</sup> For example, universal risk factors for violence include deep poverty, poor mental health, and drug and alcohol abuse. These universal factors are important to address in any prevention program. Others protective factors may be culturally specific, or particular protective factors may have culturally specific relevance. Programs designed for Aboriginal youth can be strengthened by strengthening universal and culturally specific protective factors.

### UNIVERSAL AND CULTURALLY-SPECIFIC PROTECTIVE FACTORS



Given the overlap of risk and protective factors across cultures, it is not necessary to throw out everything we have learned about effective prevention programming with non-Aboriginal youth. Rather, the challenge is to incorporate this awareness of culturally specific protective factors into existing practices.

---

<sup>2</sup> For an excellent review of risk and protective factors for delinquency among Native Americans, see Pridemore, W. A. (2004). *Review of the literature of risk and protective factors of offending among Native Americans*. Although written based on research in the United States, it makes a sound argument equally applicable in the Canadian context.

## GENERAL BEST PRACTICE PROGRAMMING PRINCIPLES

---

Successful prevention programs tend to share a number of features. Although not all programs can achieve all these goals, they are an important starting place for thinking about best practice violence prevention programming. Research tells us that the most effective approaches have the following characteristics:<sup>3</sup>

### Holistic

- Effective programs target multiple levels of influence, such as individuals, parents, school climate, and teacher training. They can also be comprehensive with respect to addressing overlapping risk behaviors. By definition, a comprehensive approach suggests a reasonable duration and cannot be achieved through single activities, such as a guest speaker or assembly, alone.

### Skill-based

- Communication and problem-solving skills are taught in effective programs. These programs use interactive, skill-based strategies (such as role play) and do not rely solely on information and lecturing approaches to transfer skills. Life skills training is considered an effective intervention across cultural groups, particularly for individuals who face multiple risk factors.

### Pick appropriate targets

- Effective programs focus on factors known to be related to the problem behavior. Attitudes and skills, school connectedness, and coping skills are examples of appropriate prevention targets because they are all implicated in the development and use of violence. Bystander involvement is another excellent target because of the role played by bystanders in violence (particularly bullying).

### Engage peers

- Effective programs may include peer facilitators, a peer mentoring component, or a youth committee. The use of peers is important because youth identify more readily with these role models.

### Include parents and guardians

- Although the extent and nature of appropriate parental involvement depends on the age of the youth, parental involvement is regarded as a critical component of effective prevention programs.

### Change the environment

- Effective programs recognize the complex ecology of youths' lives and work to change these environments. For example, school-based programming may attempt to alter norms about help seeking and build the capacity of educators to respond to violence, thus altering the school environment.

---

<sup>3</sup> See Wolfe, D. A., Jaffe, P.G., & Crooks, C. V. (2006). *Adolescent risk behaviors: Why teens experiment and strategies to keep them safe*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

## PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMMING FOR ABORIGINAL YOUTH

After reviewing the work of numerous groups around the country, lessons learned from other organizations and researchers, and the existing research and policy literature, we identified four major principles for enhancing youth programs. These principles supplement the best practice principles that apply more generally and were described in the previous subsection.



## OVERVIEW OF PRINCIPLES

---

Subsequent sections of this toolkit address the guiding principles in detail and provide specific strategies for applying them. A brief overview of the principles is offered below.

### Principle 1: Understanding and Integrating Cultural Identity

- Substance use and suicide prevention research has shown that a strong cultural identity can be a powerful protective factor for youth.
- The concept of *enculturation*, or the extent to which individuals are embedded in their traditional cultural identity and practices, has emerged in recent research as an important protective factor for Aboriginal youth and adults.

### Principle 2: Increasing Youth Engagement

- Youth who are engaged in prosocial activities, their schools, and their communities exhibit fewer risk behaviours than peers who are not connected.
- Youth who are engaged culturally and participate in cultural activities exhibit fewer risk behaviours. Cultural engagement is an important protective factor against a range of negative outcomes.

### Principle 3: Fostering Youth Empowerment

- There are two types of empowerment that are important for youth, particularly those who belong to a culture that has been marginalized: personal empowerment and social empowerment.
- Personal empowerment stems from individual youth having the necessary skills and opportunities to meet personal goals and develop into well-adjusted adults. Social empowerment refers to having power to positively change the environment through work with the community, school, or larger social arenas.
- To target youth empowerment, programs must provide opportunities and support for youth to become agents of social change.

### Principle 4: Establishing and Maintaining Effective Partnerships

- Partnerships are important because of the emphasis on extended family and social networks in traditional cultures.
- Partnerships are the source of cultural teachings and priorities, particularly when program developers and evaluators are not from the same communities.
- Partnerships increase buy-in from youth and communities.

## SUGGESTED DVD RESOURCES ON ABORIGINAL ISSUES, IDENTITY AND HISTORY

---

There are many DVDs available to help you further your understanding of Aboriginal issues, identity, and the shared history of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The resources listed below are provided as a starting point, but they are not intended to exclude other excellent resources.

### MOVIES AVAILABLE ON DVD:

#### **Tkaronto (2008)**

**100 min. drama**

*Tkaronto* is a reflective and provoking exploration of two Aboriginal 30-somethings, Ray and Jolene, who make an unexpected connection at the pinnacle of a common struggle: to stake claim to their urban aboriginal identity. Métis director Shane Belcourt conveys the loss and struggle of the two lead characters in a film that is moving and, at times, humorous. ([www.tkaronto.net](http://www.tkaronto.net))

#### **Muffins For Granny (2008)**

**88 min. documentary**

Distributed by Mongrel Media, "*Muffins For Granny* is a remarkably layered, emotionally complex story of personal and cultural survival. McLaren tells the story of her own grandmother by combining precious home movie fragments with the stories of seven Elders dramatically affected by their experiences in residential schools. McLaren uses animation with a painterly visual approach to move the audience between the darkness of memory and the reality that these charismatic survivors live in today" (from YouTube trailer). Available from [amazon.ca](http://amazon.ca).

#### **Three Nations One Story Part I: The Aftermath of Assimilation (2008)**

**45min. documentary**

Produced by Crossing Borders Productions, *Three Nations One Story* reflects on the raw reality of the struggles young people face in the post-residential school era, with Chippewas of the Thames, Munsee-Delaware Nation and Oneida Nation of the Thames being the profiled communities. *Part I: The Aftermath of Assimilation* takes a close look at the internal struggles people deal with and how three communities came to be plagued with addictions, violence, and funerals. With the residential school era coming to a close in the late 1960s (though the last one did not close until 1996), generations of families were left with trauma, dysfunction, poverty, and violence. Raw interviews symbolically parallel a youth-driven garbage clean-up to reveal deep issues and show some simple things people can do to help themselves. ([www.crossingbordersproductions.com](http://www.crossingbordersproductions.com)).

#### **Where are the Children? Healing the Legacy of Residential Schools (2008)**

**27 min. documentary**

Describes, through interviews with former boarders, the conditions and state of the residential aboriginal schools from the late nineteenth century to the 1990s. The conditions were harsh and children were forced to forget their Aboriginal heritage. Produced by the Legacy of Hope Foundation. ([www.legacyofhope.ca](http://www.legacyofhope.ca)).

FNCFCs has an excellent list of suggested resources at [www.fncfcs.com/pubs/recommendReading.html](http://www.fncfcs.com/pubs/recommendReading.html)

---

## SECTION 2: ASSESSMENT

## SELF-ASSESSMENT: THE STARTING POINT

---

We recognize that different organizations and programs are at different points of the journey toward providing engaging and culturally relevant programs for Aboriginal youth. If you are at the beginning of this process—either in terms of enhancing your existing programs or designing a new program—the number of considerations can be overwhelming. Even if you have been working in this area for a number of years, there may be components of your program that could be improved. The purpose of this section is to assist organizations to identify their specific strengths and weaknesses in order to enhance their programs for Aboriginal youth.

### PURPOSE OF THE SELF-ASSESSMENT

The self-assessment is a tool to gather information about your current youth programming with respect to the four main principles outlined in this toolkit: cultural identity, youth engagement, youth empowerment, and partnerships. It has been designed to facilitate discussion and thinking about how to enhance the quality and nature of the programming you currently offer. Using this self-assessment enables people to identify needs and next steps. The results of this assessment can help organizations continue to grow from their strengths and also identify areas where specific action may be required. Because it provides a profile of strengths and weaknesses with respect to the toolkit's organizing principles, it can direct you to specific sections of the toolkit for possible strategies.

### COMPLETING THE SELF-ASSESSMENT

The self-assessment guide can be completed in three different ways. One individual (typically the program director or a supervisor) can complete the assessment. Alternatively, a group of individuals can complete the assessment by consensus. Or, a group of individuals can complete the assessment individually and the results can be averaged across responses. There are benefits and limitations to each of the three approaches. It is important that you choose the best method for your particular organization and community.

The first way to complete the guide involves one individual. If there is one person who has extensive knowledge and several years of experience at the organization, it may be useful to have that person complete the guide as the starting point for further discussion. The benefit of this approach is efficiency. The limitation to this approach is that support for change will be greater if all interested parties contribute to the discussion and identification of priorities for improvement. Furthermore, other stakeholders might not share the individual's views of the organization or program's strengths and weaknesses.

As noted, the other two ways to use the assessment involve groups of people. Copies of the assessment can be provided to various members of a team who complete them individually or as part of a group. The results can then be analyzed to outline an overall assessment and build consensus on the results. This process leads to a higher level of awareness among informants as

individuals explain their points of view. Although it takes more time than completion by a single informant, it will help build momentum and commitment through the consensus-building process.

As a variation, each member of a group could complete the guide and all the results could be compiled to get an average for each response. This method provides more representative data than can be generated by one informant, but it does not offer the same motivational benefit as the consensus-building approach. In addition, this approach provides a range of views. Of particular interest is the identification of areas where there is the most variation, as there will need to be some reconciliation of views before action planning can commence.

No matter how you complete the self-assessment, it will provide a good overview of your relative strengths and weaknesses in different areas. Used annually, it can assist with tracking progress and identifying areas that continue to be troublesome over time, and these results can be integrated into your overall improvement plan.

As you determine your needs and strengths to enhance youth programs, you can further define your goals by using multiple assessment methods such as surveys, focus groups, and checklists that address more specific areas. A list of additional assessment measures is included in this document on page 22.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT GUIDE

Please indicate your response by placing a ✓ beside the descriptor that characterizes your level of agreement for each item. In order to identify strategies that address your unique programming needs, it is important that the questions are answered accurately and honestly. If an item is inapplicable, then leave it blank.

Disagree

Agree

### Principle 1: Understanding and Integrating Cultural Identity

Our programming includes elements of Aboriginal culture and traditions that may have been lost to the new generation.				
Our programming enhances the personal resources of youth such as a sense of well-being, belonging, security, identity, and self-esteem.				
Opportunities are presented that facilitate the development of meaningful relationships between youth and the older generations.				
Our programming encourages youth to bridge the gap between Aboriginal culture and its non-Aboriginal counterpart.				
Our programming includes teachings on cultural identity from various cultural backgrounds.				
When culture is addressed in our programs, it is clear where the traditions, symbols, and teachings are coming from.				
Awareness of cultural identity is woven into every step of our activities and programs.				
In our materials, historical and contemporary cultural images are balanced.				
Generations of families are involved in our programming or initiatives.				
Culturally appropriate teaching tools are used in our programs.				
<b>PRINCIPLE 1: Total number of checks for each column</b>				

### Principle 2: Increasing Youth Engagement

Youth have meaningful involvement in decisions affecting their programming.				
There are opportunities for youth to re-initiate contact with our program after a period of absence.				
Activities or programs that affect youth are youth driven and often youth led, balanced with appropriate adult support.				
We offer opportunities to connect with cultural traditions as a way to engage youth.				
Opportunities are present for youth to be involved in programs that meet their specific needs and interests.				
Emotional wellness and healing from historical trauma has been taken into consideration in designing programs.				
Opportunities and programs of varying intensity and duration are provided.				
Challenges and barriers are accounted for in our programming (e.g., transportation, attitudes, child care demands).				
Choices are emphasized in activities and programs to encourage engagement.				
New staff receive instruction in youth engagement strategies as part of their orientation.				
<b>PRINCIPLE 2: Total number of checks for each column</b>				

Please indicate your response by placing a ✓ beside the descriptor that characterizes your level of agreement for each item. In order to identify strategies that address your unique programming needs, it is important that the questions are answered accurately and honestly. If an item is inapplicable, then leave it blank.

Disagree

Agree

### Principle 3: Fostering Youth Empowerment

Our programming creates opportunities for youth to take on leadership roles.				
Our programming provides leadership and life skills, plus opportunities to apply these skills to make a difference in the lives of others.				
Youth have meaningful access to positive role models.				
Significant adult support is incorporated in our programs to help youth move into empowered leadership roles.				
Our initiatives provide a framework for youth to become involved in community action.				
Our programs help youth create new strategies to find a path to healthy living.				
Our programming includes strategies for youth to effect change in their families and communities.				
Our programming provides a forum for youth to be the experts of their own experience.				
Mentoring is part of our programming.				
Our programs foster youth empowerment through the acquisition of skills.				
<b>PRINCIPLE 3: Total number of checks for each column</b>				

### Principle 4: Developing and Maintaining Effective Partnerships

There are specific strategies in place for increasing and maintaining partnerships.				
Elders are included in our existing partnerships.				
Partners are valued for the specialized expertise they bring to any initiative.				
Our organization partners with a variety of stakeholders (e.g., researchers, funders, community, family, educators, service providers).				
We have a commitment to collaborate with partners over a specific period of time.				
Partners are selected on the basis of their credibility within their communities.				
Strong communication plans have been established with our partners.				
Roles and responsibilities of the partnerships are clear.				
There is a variety of influence and representation in our partnerships and on our team.				
All partners feel respected.				
<b>PRINCIPLE 4: Total number of checks for each column</b>				

## CALCULATING YOUR SCORE

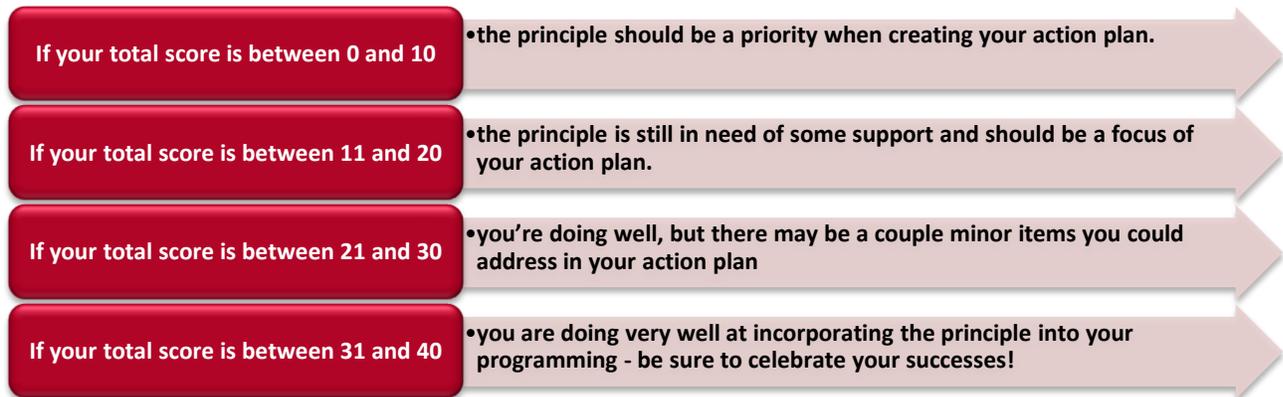
In order to get a more complete picture and to identify the next steps, you need to complete the scoring exercise shown below.

- For each of the four principles, count the number of check marks in each column and enter them in the summary rows in the table.
- Transfer your totals from the principle summary boxes into the spaces indicated in the table below.
- Multiply the total for each column by 1, 2, 3, or 4 as shown below.
- Add the 4 scores to get a total score for each principle.

<b>Principle 1: Understanding and Integrating Cultural Identity</b>		
Number of checks in column 1 (disagree)	= ____ x 1 = ____	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b> <input type="text"/>
Number of checks in column 2	= ____ x 2 = ____	
Number of checks in column 3	= ____ x 3 = ____	
Number of checks in column 4 (agree)	= ____ x 4 = ____	
<b>Principle 2: Increasing Youth Engagement</b>		
Number of checks in column 1 (disagree)	= ____ X 1 = ____	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b> <input type="text"/>
Number of checks in column 2	= ____ X 2 = ____	
Number of checks in column 3	= ____ X 3 = ____	
Number of checks in column 4 (agree)	= ____ X 4 = ____	
<b>Principle 3: Fostering Youth Empowerment</b>		
Number of checks in column 1 (disagree)	= ____ X 1 = ____	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b> <input type="text"/>
Number of checks in column 2	= ____ X 2 = ____	
Number of checks in column 3	= ____ X 3 = ____	
Number of checks in column 4 (agree)	= ____ X 4 = ____	
<b>Principle 4: Developing and Maintaining Effective Partnerships</b>		
Number of checks in column 1 (disagree)	= ____ X 1 = ____	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b> <input type="text"/>
Number of checks in column 2	= ____ X 2 = ____	
Number of checks in column 3	= ____ X 3 = ____	
Number of checks in column 4 (agree)	= ____ X 4 = ____	

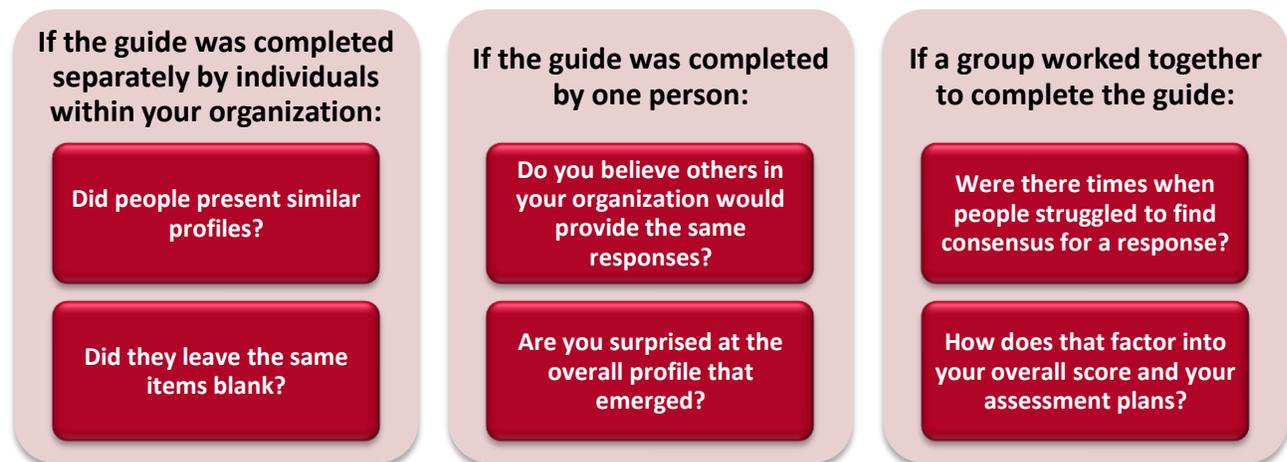
## USING THE SELF-ASSESSMENT GUIDE SCORES

Compare your total score for each principle with the chart below to determine your level of assessed need in that area. You can then use the information to draft a profile of your organization's current ability to provide effective programming for Aboriginal youth.



## DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

Although the scores for your self-assessment are very important, it is also essential to consider some implications of how the guide was completed. Taking time to reflect on both the process and the resulting profile will serve you well in choosing your next steps for improving your program.



### CONSIDERATIONS AND NEXT STEPS:



Once you have developed your profile, you can begin to set goals and develop action items to address the areas you have identified as needing improvement. You can work on a particular principle (e.g., youth engagement), or perhaps items on the assessment survey will give you some specific ideas (e.g., including Elders in your programming). It is important to both build on strengths and also address challenges and deficits identified by the guide. A good action plan includes objectives and activities that are clearly defined with a timeline, identified lead, and clear outcomes (see the Action Plan Template below).

**ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE:**

Objectives	Activities	Timeline	Lead Responsibility	Expected Outcomes and Dates
<b>1. Increase youth engagement in programs by offering opportunities to connect with cultural traditions.</b>	Invite Elder to attend program and offer a traditional teaching	Identify appropriate individual and extend invitation by April Have session with youth by June	Program coordinator to contact community partners for referrals and contact Elder	Elder to attend program and teach youth once by end of June
<b>2.</b>				
<b>3.</b>				

This toolkit was designed such that you can start in any section. Some people choose to read it from start to finish, while others may choose to begin in the section of the principle on which they received the lowest score. Going through sections that correspond with your weaker areas might give you some specific ideas for your action plan. However you decide to proceed from here, the process of assessment will help you refine your goals and provide a benchmark against which you can measure future progress.

## ADDITIONAL ASSESSMENT TOOLS

---

Our self-assessment tool provides an overall profile of the strengths and weaknesses of your program or organization with respect to cultural identity, youth engagement, youth empowerment, and effective partnerships. Throughout the toolkit there are a number of assessment tools to assist you in taking a closer look at these different principles:

### **ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT FOR CULTURAL REPRESENTATION** (page 34)

We developed the Environmental Audit for Cultural Representation for our school board partners to assess the representation of Aboriginal peoples and cultures in schools. It has been adapted to be used by community organizations and service providers as well.

### **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONAL AUDIT** (page 57)

The Youth Engagement Organizational Audit was developed by youth consultants Jocelyn Formsma and Ginger Gosnell to assist organizations in evaluating their efforts at youth engagement and empowerment across a range of activities. It includes questions about how youth are involved in an organization as well as possible barriers to furthering youth engagement.

### **PARTNERSHIP SATISFACTION SURVEY** (page 82)

The Partnership Satisfaction Survey was developed from questions in the Public Health Agency of Canada's reporting tool (the PERT) that assess partnership functioning. Some items relate to the vision and objectives of a partnership or team and others measure satisfaction with work processes.

### **CHECKLIST FOR IDENTIFYING AREAS OF ALIGNMENT WITH SCHOOL BOARD POLICIES AND INITIATIVES** (page 97)

The Checklist for Identifying Areas of Alignment with School Board Policies and Initiatives is based on our school-based violence prevention work with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth and educators. It includes a number of considerations in the areas of policies, partnerships, links to curriculum, role of school personnel, and role of youth that may have an impact on the implementation success of a school-based initiative.

### **PARENT ENGAGEMENT SURVEY** (page 102)

The Parent Engagement Survey can be used to identify barriers to parent engagement that may be specific or unique to your community and stakeholders. We developed it to identify barriers to parent engagement in their children's education, but it can be used in other programs.

### **RESEARCH AND EVALUATION ASSESSMENT TOOLS**

A number of research and evaluation tools are included in Section 5 of this toolkit (starting on page 126). These include specific surveys as well as general guidelines for focus groups, etc.



---

## SECTION 3: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Principle 1: Understanding and Integrating Cultural Identity

Principle 2: Increasing Youth Engagement

Principle 3: Fostering Youth Empowerment

Principle 4: Developing and Maintaining Effective Partnerships

---

## PRINCIPLE 1:

# UNDERSTANDING AND INTEGRATING CULTURAL IDENTITY

Cultural identity is fundamental to how we see ourselves and the world. The impact of systematic attempts to destroy culture has resulted in many Aboriginal youth, their families, and communities being disconnected from traditional values and teachings. Cultural identity is a complicated area that means different things to different people. Aboriginal youth in particular need to reclaim a healthy sense of identity and what it means for them to be Aboriginal living in Canada. In the absence of such an understanding, identity may be equated with rejecting anything seen as part of the dominant culture. Too often that means a rejection of institutions, such as school, that will provide important skills and opportunities for youth in the long run. Thus, incorporating healthy and positive messages about cultural identity is a critical part of providing good service to Aboriginal youth. Culture-enhancing activities can help reconnect youth to protective influences from which they have become disengaged and help them develop a sense of pride in who they are.

*"When I was growing up, when I was in the residential schools, I was lost for a very long time...I didn't hear the drum beat, I heard the organ. It took me 36 years to find out who I am."*

AHF Regional Gathering  
Participant, November 9,  
2000

***The right of children to know their culture and language is protected by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.***

## GOALS OF CULTURE-ENHANCING ACTIVITIES

Culture-enhancing activities can serve a number of purposes. The following five goals of cultural enhancement activities are identified by the Centre for Suicide Prevention in their document *Aboriginal Youth: A Manual of Promising Suicide Prevention Strategies*:<sup>4</sup>

- Share elements of Aboriginal culture and traditions that may have been lost to the new generation.
- Enhance personal resources of youth such as a sense of well-being, belonging, security, identity, and self-esteem.
- Provide youth with alternative options they can rely on when in need.
- Facilitate the development of meaningful relationships between youth and the older generation.
- Help children and youth bridge the gap between Aboriginal culture and its non-Aboriginal counterpart.

---

<sup>4</sup> White, J. and Jodoin, N. (2007). *Aboriginal youth: A manual of promising suicide prevention strategies*. Calgary, AB: Centre for Suicide Prevention. Available online at [www.suicideinfo.ca/csp/assets/promstrat\\_manual.pdf](http://www.suicideinfo.ca/csp/assets/promstrat_manual.pdf)

## ACCULTURATION VERSUS ENCULTURATION

Aboriginal youth and adults vary widely in terms of how connected they are to their traditional cultures and identity. Much of the research on Aboriginal cultural orientation has focused on acculturation, or the extent to which Aboriginal peoples are influenced, assimilated, or adopted into the mainstream culture. Different degrees of cultural orientation are observed among Aboriginal peoples, ranging from the traditionally oriented to the fully acculturated.



In contrast to acculturation, enculturation is manifested by practicing the traditional culture and self-reported cultural identity. Enculturation has typically been viewed as consisting of three intertwined dimensions: participation in traditional activities, identification with the Aboriginal culture, and degree of traditional spirituality.



**Traditional activities** include participation in traditional Pow-wow activities, knowledge and use of the tribal language, and involvement in activities such as listening to Elders, collecting medicinal plants, and beading.

**Identification with the Aboriginal culture** refers to the degree to which individuals participate in their culture and integrate it into their life, the extent to which their family lives by the Aboriginal culture, and their sense of pride in their cultural heritage.

A high degree of **traditional spirituality** is reflected in individuals' participation in spiritually charged ceremonial activities such as the sweat lodge, how often they participate in such activities, and the importance of traditional spiritual values to how they lead their lives.

## THE ROLE OF ENCULTURATION IN PROMOTING HEALTHY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

---

There has been increased interest in the role of enculturation as we move away from deficit-focused approaches and toward strengths-based programming with Aboriginal youth. However, the concept of enculturation as a source of resilience is not a new one—Aboriginal leaders and Elders have long recognized the importance of the connection to culture and have historically used traditional knowledge and healing practices in various treatment settings.

More recently, researchers have begun to document the connection between enculturation and healthy outcomes. Research is emerging that suggests that the degree to which Aboriginal peoples are embedded in their own culture, as opposed to the mainstream culture, is a resiliency factor against adversity.

Although research in this area is still quite new, enculturation has been shown to have considerable influence on physical and mental well-being among Aboriginal youth and adults, whereas more mainstream acculturation levels have been related to physical and mental health risks for Aboriginal peoples.<sup>5</sup> Preliminary research has shown that enculturation

- is associated with prosocial behaviour in adolescents;<sup>6</sup>
- increases values of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity in youth;<sup>7</sup>
- discourages risky health behaviours and encourages generally stable and positive health practices;<sup>8</sup>
- combats the effects of stress and negative health outcomes;<sup>9</sup>
- buffers depressive symptoms and alcohol abuse in adults;<sup>10</sup> and
- protects against alcohol misuse, the impact of discrimination, and suicide.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Bates, Beauvais, & Trimble, 1997; Dana, 1993; Deloria, 1969; Duran & Duran, 1995; French, 2000; Locust, 1988; Manson, 2000; Phinney & Rotheram, 1987; Reynolds, Quevillon, Boyd, & Mackey, 2006; Tolman & Reedy, 1998; Whitbeck, McMorris, Hoyt, Stubben, LaFromboise, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> LaFromboise, Hoyt, Oliver, & Whitbeck, 2006; Whitbeck Hoyt, McMorris, Chen, & Stubben, 2001; Whitbeck et al., 2002

<sup>7</sup> Brendtro, Brokenleg, & von Bockern, 2001

<sup>8</sup> Koenig, 2009

<sup>9</sup> Walters & Simoni, 2002; Austin, 2004

<sup>10</sup> Whitbeck, et al., 2001, 2002; Perez, 2008

<sup>11</sup> Fleming & Ledogar, 2008; Whitbeck, Chen, Hoyt, & Adams, 2004

## CULTURAL IDENTITY: WHOSE CULTURE?

---

The term *Aboriginal* does not describe one particular cultural group. It is a legal term, defined in the Constitution to encompass individuals of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit backgrounds. These groups differ widely in terms of culture, history, language, and beliefs, and to group them together as a cultural entity is misleading. Furthermore, *Aboriginal* is not a term that Indigenous People chose for themselves, and most individuals have more specific and accurate cultural identifiers that they prefer. Within the three large groups defined as Aboriginal, there are important distinctions, as each Nation has its own rich culture and history. For example, there are more than 600 registered bands in Canada, and at one time there were hundreds of distinct languages, although many of these are now extinct. Today there are 50 to 60 indigenous languages (belonging to 11 major language families) spoken in Canada.<sup>12</sup> Thirty percent of these remaining languages have been placed on the endangered list.

Keeping this context in mind, we offer the following considerations about cultural identity:

1. Be clear which First Nation, Inuit, or Métis community you are enhancing your program for and incorporate the traditions, stories, and teachings of that community.
2. It is not always possible to gear a program to one specific culture because we are often working with individuals of various cultural backgrounds, particularly in urban settings. In these cases, the following suggestions can be considered:
  - a. If you combine traditions and teachings, be clear about where these traditions come from (group or individual perspectives). It is disrespectful to mix and match them into one mythical pan-Aboriginal cultural tradition.
  - b. There are some traditions that are more universal and will resonate with a wider range of people. For example, the Seven Grandfather Teachings (right) are subscribed to in some form by a range of Aboriginal groups (e.g., Anishinaabe; Seven Virtues among the Cree; also used by the Mi'kmaq). Furthermore, the universality of these values is such that they can be incorporated into a program to benefit all youth.

### *SEVEN GRANDFATHER TEACHINGS*

1. *Wisdom*
2. *Respect*
3. *Love*
4. *Bravery*
5. *Honesty*
6. *Humility*
7. *Truth*

---

<sup>12</sup> This figure is taken from the National Resources Canada atlas website and is based on 1996 data. Available at: [atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/maps/peopleandsociety/lang/aboriginallanguages/bycommunity](http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/maps/peopleandsociety/lang/aboriginallanguages/bycommunity). For a more complete report on trends in Aboriginal languages based on 2006 Statistics Canada data see [www.visions.ab.ca/res/ablangincanada2007.pdf](http://www.visions.ab.ca/res/ablangincanada2007.pdf).

## LANGUAGE MATTERS

---

The issue of appropriate language can cause stress and anxiety for non-Aboriginal service providers and researchers. You may not be sure of the difference between First Nations and Aboriginal and not know who to ask. You may be embarrassed or afraid to say the wrong thing. You may have been told that the word *Native* is not appropriate, and then at your first meeting with a new community partner, that is how they refer to themselves. You may unknowingly be disrespectful due to a lack of knowledge. Use of language is critical, not merely as an issue of “political correctness,” but because language is fundamental to people’s sense of identity. It is also very rooted in *who* gets to define people or communities. The following considerations and lessons have been shared by Aboriginal partners<sup>13</sup> with the non-Aboriginal members of our team and provide a starting point:

**Some things can be learned from a good glossary.**

- Some language issues are factual and can be gleaned from a good reference source. For example, every Canadian should know that there are reserves in Canada, not reservations. An excellent glossary is found on the Touchstones of Reconciliation website at <http://www.reconciliationmovement.org/resources/glossary.html>. It is included as Appendix F in this toolkit.

**Partnerships provide the best opportunities to learn about language.**

- Although a glossary will define some basic terms, your Aboriginal partners are much more valuable in your learning process. Express an openness to learn and a willingness to be corrected. Listen carefully to terms used by people in the group you are working with so that you can use the same terms. Ask individuals about their terminology preferences.

**Some terms generally considered outdated have particular legal meanings.**

- For example, the term "Indian" is generally considered outdated but is used in certain foundational legal documents and government ministries. The Indian Act and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada are two examples. Indian status (as defined in the Indian Act) still determines which Aboriginal people are accorded certain rights.

**Feeling anxious about terminology and language choices is a natural part of this process.**

- Knowing what language to use can be a source of great anxiety for many non-Aboriginal partners. Not wanting to offend other partners or be embarrassed is a natural and predictable reaction to engaging in this work. It is important to remember that these barriers are experienced by most non-Aboriginal individuals at some point in their work. Similar to learning a second language, it is only with practice, feedback, and opportunities to learn that you will become more comfortable with terminology.

---

<sup>13</sup> Although these lessons come from conversations with many people, we are particularly grateful for guidance from Cindy Blackstock, Marie Battiste, and Sarah Longman in this regard.

**There is a national trend to replace post-colonial tribal names with traditional names.**

- Some English language names for specific tribes were based on derogatory terms and bestowed either by English or French speaking colonists or other First Nations tribes who were traditional enemies. Many groups have gone through a process of reclaiming their traditional names. For example, the commonly used term *Sioux* is an insult that comes from a French version of an Ojibwa word meaning *snakes*. The preferred term is Dakota/Nakota/Lakota, which means *allies*. Reclaiming traditional names has been an important symbol of empowerment for many communities.

**There are regional and individual differences in terminology preferences.**

- Just as you would not expect a non-Aboriginal person to represent his or her entire culture with respect to language preferences, it is important to recognize that there are regional and individual differences. Even within a single community there may be differences in the acceptability of specific terms. For example, the use of the term *Aboriginal* continues to be hotly debated within various organizations. Some like the term because of its inclusivity, while others object to it as overgeneralizing and imposed by non-Aboriginal people. Again, learn from your partners and engage in discussions about the reason for these language debates to better understand the range of viewpoints. As another example, some communities prefer the term *Nation* to *Reserve*.

**Youth may use terms you have been advised are disrespectful.**

- Sometimes youth will self-identify with terms that you have been told are disrespectful. These occurrences fall into two categories. The first is when youth use outdated terms like *Indian* or *Native* that, for the most part, are being replaced. The manner in which you respond might depend on the situation. For example, in an early encounter or an interview setting, it may be more important to mirror the youth's terminology to build rapport and comfort. In the context of a more well-developed relationship, there might be opportunities to talk about the issue of language and the associated politics. These conversations can help youth become more aware of issues of cultural identity. The second type of situation involves youth using a term (either to describe another youth or themselves) that is clearly derogatory and racialized. In these cases, it is important to label the language as harmful and inappropriate.

**Language is about more than terminology.**

- There are many important issues with respect to language, beyond the choice of single terms. For example, the phrase *Canada's Aboriginal Peoples* denotes a possessive relationship that many Aboriginal people do not recognize. The phrase *Aboriginal Peoples of Canada* has the same identification geographically, without the possessive connotations. Again, your partners are your best teachers for becoming sensitive to these distinctions.

## CULTURAL IDENTITY: 10 CONSIDERATIONS AND STRATEGIES

---

Integrating culture into a program is a process. Similarly, establishing a sense of cultural identity is an ongoing process for the youth and adults involved. The following considerations and strategies are offered as starting points.

### 1. AWARENESS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY NEEDS TO BE WOVEN INTO EVERY STEP OF OUR ACTIVITIES.

Cultural identity is woven through the very fabric of our work. It is not merely a lesson in a curriculum or an activity in a program. It is also about using teachable moments to help youth explore positive and healthy notions of culture and what it means to be a First Nations or Métis or Inuit youth. Incorporation of cultural identity needs to be considered during every step of program development, implementation, delivery, assessment, and evaluation.

### 2. POSITIVE ROLE MODELS FROM YOUTHS' CULTURAL GROUPS ARE AN INCREDIBLE ASSET IN DEVELOPING A HEALTHY CULTURAL IDENTITY.

All youth turn to their peers for issues of identity, and this process is amplified among youth who are not part of the dominant culture. Positive peer role models are incredible assets in this regard.

### 3. CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHINGS ARE BEST IDENTIFIED BY COMMUNITY PARTNERS.

Community partners, cultural advisors, and Elders are best able to determine the cultural teachings that should be incorporated into a program. Strong and equal relationships with these people provide the foundation for this transfer of knowledge.

### 4. CULTURAL IDENTITY NEEDS TO BE REFLECTED IN THE PROGRAM ENVIRONMENT.

All youth need to see themselves reflected in positive ways in the media and around them. For example, Aboriginal students need to see posters in the hallways that reflect their heritage. Culturally diverse posters should not be used only for cultural topics but for any positive images (e.g., work placements, student leaders; see page 34).

### 5. CULTURAL COMPETENCE NEEDS TO BE FOSTERED AMONG PROFESSIONALS.

Non-Aboriginal youth and adults working with Aboriginal youth have an obligation to become educated about history, culture, and current events. Program deliverers must be culturally sensitive to effectively respond to the needs of the individual and community. This professional and personal development can include formal activities such as attending conferences, ceremonies, and cultural events and reading books, but it is also achieved through informal learning with partners.

6. TRADITIONS AND SYMBOLS ARE IMPORTANT COMPONENTS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY (BUT THEY ARE NOT THE SUM OF IT).

There is an important place for rituals and symbols, but incorporating these into your program does not mean you have met your obligation to culturally enhance your services. Utilize these symbols carefully because misappropriating a tradition or symbol is disrespectful.

7. DIFFERENT WAYS OF KNOWING NEED TO BE INCORPORATED INTO PROGRAMS.

Culture is also about process in terms of traditional ways of knowing. Notions of teacher and student and learning are different than in the more narrowly defined roles held by Western cultures. For example, the use of a sharing circle reflects equality in some First Nations and Inuit cultures and may be more appropriate for Aboriginal youth than a lecture format.

8. HOLISTIC WORLDVIEWS ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF MOST INDIGENOUS CULTURES.

One way to make almost any activity or program more culturally relevant is to incorporate a more holistic worldview of health and balance. Attending to intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical needs will make a program more consistent with traditional Aboriginal values. A holistic program strives to incorporate a wellness model that balances all four needs. Spirituality in particular (often misunderstood as religion) is frequently absent from programs.

9. YOUTH NEED ACCESS TO CULTURALLY RELEVANT MATERIAL AND ALSO OPPORTUNITIES FOR SELF-REFLECTION.

Incorporating cultural information is not simply about providing youth with particular materials and experiences. It is also about providing them with opportunities to reflect and consider the traditional teachings and to consider the relevance and role of these teachings in a personal way.

10. HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL IMAGES NEED TO BE BALANCED.

Too often, attempts to integrate cultural information and images rely solely on antiquated images that reinforce stereotypes. There is a need to maintain a balance between historical and contemporary representations of Aboriginal people (see page 34).

***"I didn't realize it at the time, but it was my culture that got me through the rough times... it all comes down to culture."***

*Kristen Hendrick, Elected Councillor, Chippewas of the Thames*

## ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT FOR CULTURAL REPRESENTATION

The Environmental Audit for Cultural Representation is designed to inventory and provide an opportunity to reflect on the inclusion of Aboriginal culture in a particular setting, primarily schools and community agencies. This audit can be completed individually or by a group of administrators, teachers, students, counsellors, and others working at the facility.

Questions are designed to assess the variety and type of Aboriginal culture that is present and identifiable in your facility. The questions addressing contemporary and historical representations are intended to ensure that there is a balance between these two types of cultural representation.

### PART 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Who is completing the audit?       Individual                       Group (#) \_\_\_\_\_
- Administrator(s)                       Teacher(s)                       Staff Member(s)
- Students                                       Counsellor(s)                       Community Partner(s)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### PART 2. ABORIGINAL CULTURE

1. In your facility, are there cases or wall areas primarily designated for Aboriginal issues and displays?
- Yes       No      Comments: \_\_\_\_\_
2. If music is played in your facility, do you include Aboriginal music?
- Yes       No      Comments: \_\_\_\_\_
3. At your facility, are there opportunities for performances or presentations that reflect Aboriginal culture?
- Yes       No      Comments: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Identify where Aboriginal cultural content is visible in your facility.

✓	Location:	How Many?	Historical (#)	Contemporary (#)	Description: (e.g., degree of representation, type of cultural content)
<input type="radio"/>	Front foyer				
<input type="radio"/>	Common areas (e.g., hallways, lounges)				
<input type="radio"/>	Individual offices/classrooms				
<input type="radio"/>	Specific Aboriginal-identified space				
<input type="radio"/>	Other: _____				
<input type="radio"/>	Other: _____				

5. Identify where Aboriginal individuals are visible in inspirational or leadership roles in your facility.

✓	Location:	How Many?	Historical (#)	Contemporary (#)	Description: (e.g., degree of representation, type of cultural content)
<input type="radio"/>	Front foyer				
<input type="radio"/>	Common areas (e.g., hallways, lounges)				
<input type="radio"/>	Individual offices/classrooms				
<input type="radio"/>	Specific Aboriginal-identified space				
<input type="radio"/>	Other: _____				
<input type="radio"/>	Other: _____				

### PART 3. REFLECTION AND EVALUATION

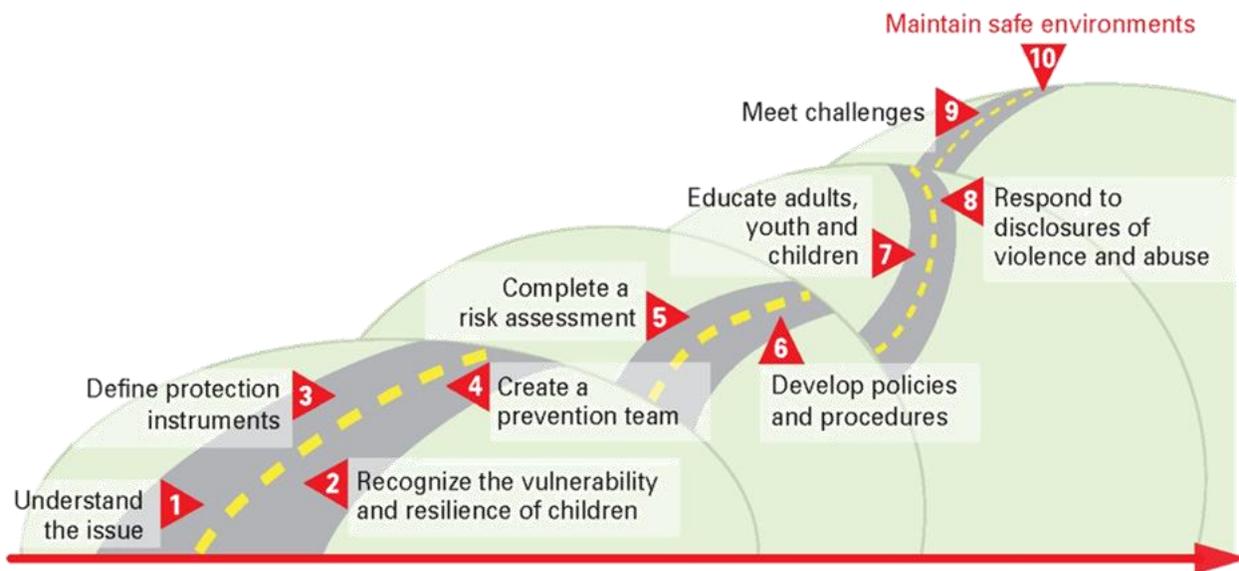
Based on the completed audit, please answer the following questions.

- Overall, where is the Aboriginal cultural content located?
  - Integrated throughout facility      OR       Clustered in a few specific locations
- If the Aboriginal cultural content is clustered, please indicate the specific locations in which it is found. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- Where do you see the greatest need for representation of Aboriginal cultural content in your facility? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- Provide suggestions to increase and/or enhance the Aboriginal cultural content in your facility. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- Include any additional comments. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: CANADIAN RED CROSS – WALKING THE PREVENTION CIRCLE

The Canadian Red Cross *Walking the Prevention Circle* (WTPC) is a program that provides a community with a framework and roadmap for preventing abuse and violence. WTPC is a capacity-building model that trains prevention educators in their own communities. A critical part of this framework involves providing communities with the language and context to look at really difficult experiences they are facing in order to be able to find healing and a healthy future path. For example, by placing current experiences of violence and abuse in a historical context that looks at contact factors, the Indian Act, and residential schools, a community is better able to understand where their experiences of violence have come from and, in turn, better able to be empowered to find solutions.

WTPC takes the form of an intensive three-day community-based program. In addition to introducing a language and context for violence and abuse, this workshop helps to develop a roadmap consisting of 10 steps toward creating safe communities. These steps are shown in the diagram below. The depiction of the process as a winding and bumpy road is done intentionally to note that it is not a linear and smooth process.



To date, WTPC workshops have been offered in more than 100 communities from coast to coast to coast. There is a manual to help guide the process. Recent efforts by the Red Cross have focused on increasing the number of Aboriginal workshop facilitators available to conduct the workshops. It is noteworthy that the significant uptake of this program has occurred with virtually no attempts to advertise the program, suggesting that the process is one that the communities experience as very positive and helpful. A more formal evaluation is currently underway.

The Walking the Prevention Circle program demonstrates the four guiding principles in the following ways:

### **Understanding and integrating cultural identity**

- ✓ Comes from a historical perspective including contact factors, the Indian Act, residential schools, government systems, and popular culture
- ✓ Uses culturally appropriate teaching tools
- ✓ Weaves together the principles of the Red Cross with traditional Aboriginal teachings
- ✓ Support systems include both traditional and formal systems
- ✓ The WTPC workshop is adjusted to reflect the community's history, traditions, and reality; appropriate Elders are incorporated into the teachings

### **Increasing youth engagement**

- ✓ Youth receive relevant prevention education from community-chosen facilitators who have been selected by the Red Cross and community
- ✓ Incorporates fun, culturally based activities and crafts into the workshops to facilitate youths' participation

### **Fostering youth empowerment**

- ✓ Ties into UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international agreements that underscore children's rights to be safe and connected to their culture
- ✓ Youth and adults are provided with a language to help them name experiences, sort through confusion, and let things go to move forward
- ✓ The community owns both the problem and solution to violence in their community
- ✓ Youth receive education on how and where to report and how to help a friend

### **Developing and maintaining effective partnerships**

- ✓ Process initiated by a request from the community
- ✓ Dialogue with the community on needs, capacity, support systems, and strengths to ensure they are clear about what the Red Cross does offer and does not offer
- ✓ Participants attend a 3-day WTPC workshop and may then be selected by their communities for further training to become prevention educators
- ✓ Prevention educators are trained and supported by Red Cross
- ✓ Flexibility based on the community's needs in terms of the structure of the workshop and the language in which it is delivered

---

## PRINCIPLE 2: INCREASING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

### WHAT IS YOUTH ENGAGEMENT?

Youth engagement is the meaningful participation and sustained involvement of a young person in an activity, with a focus outside of oneself. Appropriate and meaningful youth engagement supports individual development and can serve as a vehicle for community contribution and change.

### SUCCESSFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

When engaged, youth gain a sense of empowerment as individuals and make healthy connections to others, which is associated with a reduction of risk behaviours and increases in positive activities. In addition to the social benefits of these behavioural changes, the community benefits from the energy and ideas that youth bring to organizations, activities, and their relationships with adults (see [www.engagementcentre.ca](http://www.engagementcentre.ca)). If done properly, youth engagement is a promising strategy for improving outcomes for youth, strengthening organizations, and creating systemic community change.

### THE SPECTRUM OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement describes youth engagement as involving a variety of roles for youth at both the program and organizational level. At an organizational level, successful youth engagement involves shared decision making and collaboration with adults.

At an **organizational level**, genuine youth engagement moves beyond tokenism toward a process in which youth have meaningful involvement in decisions affecting their welfare, in an environment where they can learn from the experience and expertise of adults. Activities or programs within an organization that affect youth are youth driven and often youth led, balanced with appropriate adult support. Adults play a critical role in helping youth find their voice and influence in the organization.

At a **program level**, youth engagement means meaningful participation and sustained involvement in an activity. Youth involved in programs or services that affect them are, at the very minimum, interested in the program and continue to maintain their involvement in ways that benefit them. For Aboriginal youth, this may involve engaging them in programming by connecting them to their cultural traditions and by creating opportunities for them to be involved in ways that meet their specific needs. Signs of engagement at this level would include consistent attendance and participation, as well as youth reports of finding the program satisfying and meaningful.



CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE FOR CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING

Youth Engagement

## THE HEART OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT: MEETING YOUTH WHERE THEY ARE

Programs should be developed with flexibility to meet youth where they feel comfortable. Youth may present in programs with a wide range of needs and motivations that bring them to the service or program. Youth will present with different needs in terms of the following:

### Basic Physical Needs

Empowerment is difficult to attain when basic needs are not being met. At times, program developers or service providers will need to meet the basic needs of youth before they can help youth build competencies necessary for successful adolescent and adult life. However, these different levels of needs are not linear, and youth may become engaged in meaningful activities even while facing challenges around basic needs.

*Meeting youth where they are in terms of needs, motivation, and interests requires flexibility in strategies!*

### Emotional Wellness and Needs for Healing

Youth may need to heal from their emotional and psychological trauma before engagement can be maximized: ***"The greatest issue facing youth participants in the Violence is Preventable project is the need to heal from the painful experience of witnessing violence, before they can feel safe enough to trust the processes they are participating in."*** Shahnaz Rahman, BCYSTH.

### Spiritual Trauma

Spiritual trauma refers to the intergenerational impact of residential schools and other assimilation policies and practices. It skews and distorts people's spiritual connections and their cultural beliefs and practices.

### Interests

Youth programming needs to match the interests of youth and it needs to be fun! Integrating culturally relevant material is important, but turning everything into a history lesson will not be engaging for youth. Different youth have different interests and different levels of awareness with respect to their cultural heritage.

### Commitment to an Initiative

An important component of engagement is being able to welcome youth who may differ in terms of their commitment to an initiative at the outset. Providing opportunities of varying intensity and duration will help engage a broader spectrum of youth. In addition, allowing youth to re-enter a program after a period of absence can increase engagement, although the ability to facilitate this will depend on the nature of the program.

## PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: NIMKEE NUPIGAWAGAN HEALING CENTRE

---

Nimkee NupiGawagan is a 10-bed residential treatment program for youth aged 12 to 17 who are dealing with solvent abuse. In addition to solvent abuse, clients tend to have many other significant challenges. Nimkee provides a 4-month residential treatment program in gender-specific cohorts. It is located in southwestern Ontario and provides service to youth from Ontario, Quebec, the Maritimes, and Nunavut. The name translates to “Thunderbird’s Necklace,” which is a metaphor for the youth’s healing journey in that the cleansing work of the centre allows the spirit of youth to shine, similar to a rainbow after cleansing rain.

The philosophy of the program is to build strengths to facilitate resiliency. It is holistic in its approach. The program combines the best approaches and principles of addiction treatment with traditional teachings and medicines. There are numerous components to the program:

***Assessment and Treatment Planning*** – Youth undergo a comprehensive and holistic assessment to identify both strengths and challenges in a range of areas. Treatment plans include individual and group counselling and are holistic in addressing all of the youth’s needs (i.e., grief and trauma, behaviour).

***Recreation*** – Youth engage in a variety of Western and traditional recreation, including gym-based activities and cultural dancing and drumming.

***Learning Centre and Work or Volunteer Placements*** – Youth attend the Learning Centre daily to work on math and literacy. There are opportunities for work and volunteer placements.

***Cultural Program*** – Traditional teachings are woven into every aspect of the program. The philosophy of the program encourages youth to focus on their spirit and reclaim a healthy spirit. Specific activities (such as sweats) are voluntary, in order to meet youth where they are in the process of reclaiming a cultural identity. Youth are required to learn about the options, but they do not have to participate until they are ready. They have the opportunity to do a 2-day wilderness fast at the end of their 4-month stay, in preparation for rejoining their communities.

***Nutrition Program*** – A nutritionist helps plan and oversee the diet and tailors meals to the youth’s needs (i.e., whether they need to increase their weight or decrease it for optimum health).

***Health Care*** – Physical health is addressed both on-site and through community partnerships with an adjacent medical centre. Western and traditional methods of healing are combined.

***Aftercare Planning and Follow-up*** – The program works with families and Social Services in youths’ communities to build the capacity for a successful return home.

Nimkee has collected outcome data from their clients at 3-month, 6-month and 12-month follow-up intervals. These data indicated positive outcomes across a range of indicators. There is strong evidence that in addition to reducing substance use (of all types), the program is achieving its goal of increased resiliency, as shown by improved school attendance, work achievement, family relations, and cultural connectedness.

*The Nimkee program for youth addicted to solvents demonstrates the four guiding principles in the following ways:*

### **Understanding and integrating cultural identity**

- ✓ Cultural awareness is incorporated into every facet of the program.
- ✓ The program is largely staffed with Aboriginal people.
- ✓ The Medicine Wheel is used to deliver holistic programming and encourage youth to address all their needs.
- ✓ There are opportunities for weekly sweats and other cultural events (such as feasts and celebration).
- ✓ Youth learn about traditional medicines, and these are used in the program (e.g., teas to help youth through the detox phase).

### **Increasing youth engagement**

- ✓ The program meets youth where they are – individual choice is emphasized in activities.
- ✓ Youth can choose whether to engage in cultural activities.
- ✓ When youth come from remote communities, the program attempts to admit them in pairs so they have a peer from the same community. This pairing helps decrease isolation, particularly if there are language barriers, and provides a support for youth post-discharge.

### **Fostering youth empowerment**

- ✓ The program helps participants develop job skills and improve academic outcomes.
- ✓ Work placement opportunities and community service hours (for graduation requirements) are offered.
- ✓ The program has a strengths-based philosophy that emphasizes youth as the future and their capacity to bring healing to their communities.

### **Developing and maintaining effective partnerships**

- ✓ Family members attend a section of the program at the midpoint to participate in parent education classes, recreation, and cultural events.
- ✓ Community members are accessed as supports to the youth through community feasts and ceremonies.
- ✓ A partnership with a nearby family-based treatment program ensures that efforts can be coordinated if a youth is at Nimkee and the rest of his or her family are in the other program.
- ✓ A local trained equine therapist oversees a half-day/week program at her farm where the youth learn about relationships and trust by working with horses.
- ✓ Nimkee is part of a national group (Canadian Youth Solvent Addiction Committee), which facilitates national coordination for programming, research, and advocacy.
- ✓ Staff at the centre provide training to other community organizations.

## ENGAGING YOUTH AT THE PROGRAM LEVEL

---

*Young people who participate in programs that strive to engage youth on a number of different levels feel empowered, connected, and valued by adults and their communities. If we look carefully at the heart of all successful youth engagement efforts, we will find strong partnerships with adults who recognize and support the inherent value that young people bring to the success of any program.*

*Centre of Excellence for Youth  
Engagement*

Research in community and program development has consistently shown that people of all ages are more likely to make a commitment to a program when they are involved in meaningful ways in the decisions about programming that affects their lives. Because young people are such a diverse group, and this is especially true for Aboriginal youth, there is no easy way to define youth engagement, nor is there one strategy that will consistently engage all youth in the same way. Youth engagement in programming means that youth become committed and stay involved in meaningful ways in programming over time. Engaging youth in programming is a process that needs to be constantly evaluated and monitored and flexible enough to meet the needs of a particular group of youth. For Aboriginal youth, having positive role models and engaging them in leadership activities ensures that youth can become more culturally active, feel proud about their accomplishments, and become more involved in their broader community. Youth develop a sense of ownership.

### CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Described below are some common barriers that prevent meaningful youth engagement. These barriers can prevent youth from being involved both as participants and as leaders.

**Competing Goals and Demands.** Youth are busy people. The energy, strengths, and desires of today's youth means they are likely to be involved in multiple activities related to employment, school, peer relationships, and community. For Aboriginal youth in particular, family commitments may be significant and take priority over everything else. Sometimes youth need the opportunity to be involved in smaller ways before they can make a long-term commitment. Flexibility is key to ensuring that youth's participation and engagement in programming is optimized.

**Lack of Trust.** It is unlikely that successful youth engagement will emerge in the absence of a trusting relationship between an adult and a young person. Engaging youth in programming can be a challenge because of the stereotypes that both adults and young people have about each other. By creating an environment where youth feel safe and respected, trusting relationships with adults and other youth will flourish. As relationships build among youth and adults, youth are more likely to commit to greater challenges and opportunities.

**Youth's Individual Histories.** Some will find it particularly difficult to develop trusting relationships with adults because of their own histories of abuse and trauma. In some cases, trust may develop over a period of time. In other cases, youth may need the opportunity to get support with respect to their victimization and healing before they are able to develop these relationships. It might be appropriate to make youth aware of other available services or facilitate a referral if necessary.

## CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO YOUTH ENGAGEMENT (CONT.)

**Range of Cultural Connectedness among Youth.** In the first principle described in this section, we discussed the importance and benefits of youth being connected to a healthy and positive sense of Aboriginal identity. We believe that exposing youth to cultural tradition and practices is a positive way to connect them to their past, but also a way to nurture their spiritual selves. At the same time, we recognize that youth differ greatly in terms of the extent to which they have been exposed to traditional cultural practices and their comfort with these. For youth who have grown up in assimilated households, these issues of Aboriginal identity may be something they have not explored at all. Some may be very resistant to embracing traditional culture. Depending on their readiness to explore these issues, they may perceive the traditional parts of a program as a barrier to getting involved. One way to address this spectrum of consciousness and readiness is to require youth to learn about traditions, but ensure that it is up to them whether they participate. For example, it is reasonable to expect youth participants (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) to learn about the purpose and philosophy behind smudging, but it is also important to honour their decisions whether or not to partake.

**Poverty.** For many youth, limited access to financial resources greatly reduces their ability to participate in programs and activities. Consider waiving costs or finding resources to offer bursaries for youth who could not otherwise participate.

**Transportation.** Transportation challenges may prevent youth from participating fully in programming, especially when programs are held in remote areas or after school. Providing youth with transportation options, such as bus passes, taxi cabs, or driving youth yourself, will help remove the significant barriers to transportation that prevent youth from fully engaging in programming. Ensure that decisions to transport youth yourself are consistent with the guidelines of your organization, due to legal ramifications.

**Childcare.** Youth may not become engaged to the full extent in a program because of a lack of childcare. Organizations should consider providing childcare (and snacks) as part of their programming to reduce these barriers to participation. As with transportation, building these costs into program and project budgets is an important step in resource allocation.

**Adult Attitudes.** Sometimes adults think that they want to engage youth in a partnership, but they may not have done much self-reflection on their attitudes about the roles of youth and adults in these partnerships. The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement has an excellent resource available online that includes questions for adults to ask themselves to help create self-awareness about attitudes and beliefs that may interfere with being an effective adult ally ([www.engagementcentre.ca/files/alliesFINAL\\_e\\_web.pdf](http://www.engagementcentre.ca/files/alliesFINAL_e_web.pdf))

## PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: CRU YOUTH WELLNESS CENTRE

---

*Connections and Resources for U* (CRU) was established in 1999 and the name CRU was selected by youth for the new Youth Wellness Centre in Saskatoon. Youth and many agencies expressed a need for a centre where youth could access resources and people who would help address various important issues in their lives. Thus, youth from Saskatoon and representatives from various agencies, including the Saskatoon Health Region and the Youth Resource Centre, came together to create CRU. They identified physical fitness, emotional and spiritual well-being, personal safety, having something fun to do, and having someone trustworthy to talk to as important components of youth wellness.

CRU programs have been developed to promote

- ✓ leadership development,
- ✓ sexual and reproductive health and sexuality,
- ✓ recreation and leisure,
- ✓ healthy lifestyles,
- ✓ cultural awareness,
- ✓ mental health, and
- ✓ healthy relationships.

Although CRU is open to all youth, 90% of participants are of Aboriginal ancestry, between the ages of 13 and 19, and live in the core neighbourhoods. The program staff members are all young Aboriginal individuals. The program assistants are young, not much older than the participants, and are therefore able to connect and identify with the youth and the issues they face. Together these factors have greatly enhanced the success of CRU's programming.

CRU currently receives funding from the Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centre (UMAYC) program.

CRU is committed to the Youth Engagement and Youth Leadership Model. Working within this model has allowed the centre to develop a "CRU Community" where youth feel welcomed, respected, trusted, appreciated, and valued. This positive environment encourages youth to share their experiences, ideas, and opinions freely. Youth feel that their voices are being heard and that they have a chance to be involved and to make decisions while gaining leadership skills. CRU is a place where youth feel a sense of ownership and positive control. As a result, CRU has established itself as a leader in youth engagement in Saskatoon.

By working together, the CRU team of youth and adults create programs and opportunities that are meaningful to the participants. The CRU Youth Wellness Centre Inc.'s Board of Directors believes in health through the holistic model, which encourages balance in all aspects of one's life. CRU has developed some key goals: assisting with the development of young people and promoting healthy choices through prevention and intervention, building positive and supportive relationships in the community and allowing youth to develop leadership and responsibility, being proactive and recognizing the youth engagement model of community development, and increasing awareness and involvement in Aboriginal youth issues and culture.

*The CRU program for youth demonstrates the four guiding principles in the following ways:*

### **Understanding and integrating cultural identity**

- ✓ Recognizes diversity and understanding.
- ✓ Supports positive relationships with self and with others.
- ✓ Promotes various opportunities for young people to become active in their culture through art, dance, stories, crafting, and conferences.
- ✓ Provides safe places to discuss issues that are culturally relevant to youth.
- ✓ Includes activities such as arts and crafts with Elders, field trips, drumming, and workshops.

### **Increasing youth engagement**

- ✓ Creates an environment where youth feel respected, valued, and trusted.
- ✓ Provides free activities for youth to participate in physical activity and life skills training (CPR training, food safety certification, conflict resolution, open gym—basketball, volleyball, dance).

### **Fostering youth empowerment**

- ✓ Enables youth to create their own guidelines.
- ✓ Engages young people by creating opportunities for them to take on leadership roles.
- ✓ Provides Youth Leadership Development training and Youth Facilitator training.
- ✓ Offers resumé workshops.
- ✓ Connects youth with paid or volunteer work experience.
- ✓ Creates opportunities to develop, implement, and deliver workshops to other young people.
- ✓ Provides accurate information that supports healthy choices.

### **Developing and maintaining effective partnerships**

- ✓ Enables access to a sexual health nurse.
- ✓ Presents young people with accurate and appropriate information regarding healthy sexuality.
- ✓ Delivers numerous workshops, discussions, and presentations on sexual health/healthy sexuality and healthy relationships.
- ✓ Provides young people with information services and support to manage personal and social obstacles.

## STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING YOUTH AT THE PROGRAM LEVEL

---

The following strategies and suggestions are a collection of practices that our partners and, more important, our youth have identified as successful engagement tools.<sup>14</sup>

### Start off on the right foot

- Youth are more likely to commit to a program when they are approached by groups or individuals who already have relationships with them.
- Youth need to understand expectations and commitments up front and be given time to think them over.

### Be youth centered

- Engaging youth at the program level requires a balance of work and fun. For example, a peer mentoring program can include specific structured exercises as well as unstructured time to play board games. Youth who work on youth council should be offered the opportunity for fun outings or events in addition to their work.
- Program activities should be youth-friendly, with incentives for participation.
- Youth need appropriate adult support to become engaged and stay involved in programming.
- Engage youth in ways that are meaningful to them and in things that will interest them. The best way to discover youths' interests is to ask them and let them have input into activities!

### Incorporate culture

- Incorporating cultural traditions, such as sharing circles or smudging ceremonies, and including adult mentors or Elders are important components of youth engagement.
- Aboriginal community partners play a big role in this area and can make the integration of cultural traditions and teachings more authentic than may otherwise be the case.
- Integrating cultural activities should be done with care. For example, smudging should be introduced by an Elder or cultural advisor if the facilitator is not aware of the protocols for this custom.
- By practising these traditions, youth experience a greater sense of commitment and belongingness.

### Build trust

- Youth engagement emerges from a mutually beneficial relationship between adults and youth.
- Create an atmosphere where youth feel comfortable speaking for and about themselves.
- Ongoing communication will help build trust and respect.

### Be flexible

- Schedule convenient program meeting times and allow flexible structures. Decisions about scheduling may depend on numerous factors, such as transportation, availability of facilities, and other commitments of the youth.
- Program scheduling may need to change from one group of youth to the next, depending on these other factors.
- Provide a range of opportunities that facilitate different types or duration of commitment to increase the likelihood of a diverse group of youths becoming involved.

---

<sup>14</sup> Although many of our partners contributed ideas for this section, we wish to acknowledge the written materials submitted by Kesha Larocque of *Youth Launch* program at the CRU in Saskatoon.

## STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING YOUTH (CONT.)

---

### Actions speak louder than words

- Program facilitators need to be reliable and punctual.
- This consistency will set the stage for youth to develop trusting relationships, which in turn increases engagement.

### Set the right tone as a facilitator

- Youth will pick up on a lack of enthusiasm or genuine commitment.
- Facilitator behaviour and attitude provides important modelling and sets the stage for youth to be active participants. Youth will notice if facilitators are saying one thing but acting in a different manner.
- Part of setting the proper tone is to convey an attitude that is nonjudgmental, even when participants disclose behaving in potentially dangerous ways.

### Provide training and specific strategies for facilitators

- Facilitators need training and support in engaging youth. These skills go beyond delivering a particular program or curriculum and can be difficult to attain.
- Consider providing facilitators with a manual that outlines concrete steps for engaging youth. For example, the *Youth Launch* program at the CRU in Saskatoon (see case study on page 44) uses a youth facilitator manual that addresses issues such as setting the tone of the group, checking in with the group, and setting an agenda in a manner that increases engagement.

### Consider sex-segregated groups when indicated

- In many types of activities, youth may feel more comfortable and safer participating without the other sex present. For example, the *Youth Launch* program separates males and females for activities such as swimming.
- Other sensitive topics, such as relationships and sexuality, may best be approached in a combination of sex-separated and co-ed groups. Youth may benefit from being able to discuss sex in a safe all-girl or all-boy space, but they will also appreciate the opportunity to hear from the other sex in a larger group format.

### Try to avoid the one-hit wonder

- In an ideal world, youth involvement is not just for the short-term and they can count on adults being involved as allies over time. Long-term relationship building helps youth grow and develop and helps them stay engaged and committed to programming.
- The reality is that many programs rely on funding availability from year to year, and youth age out of programs. It is important to address these issues with youth and look for opportunities for them to be involved in similar positive activities after a particular program ends.
- Youth can remain involved as peer facilitators or advisory committee members. At the very least, make the effort to inform youth of other opportunities available to them at the end of your program.

## PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: NEW DIRECTION'S TERF PROGRAM

---

The *Transition and Education Resources for Females* (TERF) program is a unique and comprehensive program for girls who want to exit the sex trade. It is housed at New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults and Families in Winnipeg, Manitoba and has existed since 1987.

Sexually exploited girls who wish to exit the sex trade face many challenges. They tend to have been sexually exploited at an early age, typically by multiple perpetrators. They have faced significant challenges in their families of origin. The exploitation and violence to which they have been exposed have left significant negative impacts. They experience much emotional distress, have significant physical health challenges, and use and abuse both soft and hard drugs. Their academic achievement tends to be lagging way behind their age-expected level when they enter the program. They face poverty and difficulties accessing safe housing. Given these massive barriers, it is no surprise that it typically takes multiple attempts for an individual to make this transition. The TERF program works with girls participants to attend to all these needs. The program philosophy combines a holistic approach with a harm reduction model and an understanding of the stages of change. The program has four components:

*Case management:* Girls meet with a case manager at the outset of the program for an assessment that will serve as the basis for goal setting. Case managers undertake myriad roles for girls, including assessment, counselling and support, referral and advocacy, as long as girls stay connected to the program.

*Classroom component:* Girls have a classroom component every day to help them complete their Grade 8 credits, at which time they transfer to an Alternative Education program. Two of their courses—Roots of Empathy and Family Studies—are directly pertinent to their transition process. The classroom component uses a Medicine Wheel format. Other non-credit activities—Transition Group, Substance Awareness, and Cultural Teachings—provide an important forum for addressing all of the girls' needs.

*Support component:* Although support is integrated throughout the program, there are three designated support workers, at least one of whom is always available by cell phone for crisis intervention. An Elder is also a core part of the team and an important source of support.

*Health component:* A part-time on-site nurse attends to participants' physical health. In addition, participants are taught self-care through healthy nutrition and exercise.

Finally, it should be noted that the TERF program is not solely available to Aboriginal girls, but approximately 90% of the participants share Aboriginal heritage. This percentage is in line with data on the ethnicity of sexually exploited youth in Manitoba. Given these demographics, the program was designed to incorporate cultural relevance from the beginning.



*The TERF program for girls exiting the sex trade demonstrates the four guiding principles in the following ways:*

### **Understanding and integrating cultural identity**

- ✓ Cultural awareness is incorporated into every facet of the program and is not seen as an add-on.
- ✓ The program expends significant energy recruiting and retaining Aboriginal staff.
- ✓ The classroom component is modeled on the Medicine Wheel and taught in four-week segments that represent each of the four directions.
- ✓ The program includes an Elder as a core part of the staff who provides cultural teaching and connection on a weekly basis.
- ✓ Celebratory events such as feasts and Pow-wows embrace traditional practices.

### **Increasing youth engagement**

- ✓ Meets youth at their state of readiness for change and helps them set realistic goals to keep themselves safer, rather than expecting all changes to be made at once.
- ✓ Is designed to allow multiple starts for an individual (i.e., they are not terminated from the program because of a lengthy absence).
- ✓ Provides cash incentives and academic credit for youth who attend.

### **Fostering youth empowerment**

- ✓ Helps participants develop job skills.
- ✓ Helps prepare youth go on to further education in the Red River College program for experiential workers.
- ✓ Translates input from participants into changes in subsequent service delivery.

### **Developing and maintaining effective partnerships**

- ✓ The program plays a leadership role in the multisectoral provincial strategy to reduce sexual exploitation of youth.
- ✓ TERF staff liaise with a number of organizations to increase access to basic needs such as health care and housing.
- ✓ Partnerships facilitate youth being in the program even when incarcerated.
- ✓ Staff played a significant role in the development of the Red River College program for experiential workers.
- ✓ TERF staff have worked with a university-based research centre to undertake a comprehensive evaluation<sup>15</sup>.

---

<sup>15</sup> For an excellent overview of the program and multifaceted evaluation, see E. J. Ursel, J. Proulx, L. Dean. & S. Costello (2007). *Evaluation of the TERF Youth and Adult Programs*. Winnipeg, MB: RESOLVE. Available at [www.umanitoba.ca/resolve/publications/](http://www.umanitoba.ca/resolve/publications/)

## HOW DO WE INVOLVE YOUTH IN ORGANIZATIONS?

---

Although virtually all organizations agree that youth engagement is important, there are differences in the level of involvement and types of roles that they may envision for youth. Furthermore, the term *youth engagement* means different things to different people. An important starting point is an understanding of the different possible roles when deciding which youth role(s) best suit the needs of your organization. The following description was prepared by Jocelyn Formsma as part of her document *First Steps in Youth Engagement* (2002).

### YOUTH COUNCIL

- Is its own functioning body, sometimes separate from the larger group.
- Has explicit roles and responsibilities, constitution, policies and procedures, etc.
- Has a clear method of selection of Youth Council members.
- Requires structure, resources, and dedicated staff.

*Example: An Aboriginal Student Council at a secondary school.*

### YOUTH COMMITTEE

- A part of a larger group.
- Can be a part of the overall organization or a certain department within an organization.
- Not as structured as a council.
- Fewer resources required.
- Staff works with the committee, but as part of larger responsibilities.

*Example: A youth committee at a recreation centre that provides input into activities.*

***For youth to be meaningful partners, they need to have a voice in all matters, not just for issues pertaining to youth or Aboriginal in nature.***

*Carey Calder, Native Women's Association of Canada*

## YOUTH ADVISORY

- Could be ad-hoc or standing.
- Could be an individual, more than one individual, established group, or different group every time.
- Gather sporadically to discuss certain issues or provide input/feedback as requested by the organization.

**Example:**

*Convening a group of youth to advise on the planning of a conference or other special event.*

## YOUTH PARTICIPANT

- A youth who has participated in a project, program, or initiative.
- Could be a client or volunteer.
- Could also sit on the board or advise certain programs/projects.
- No accountability to a larger group.

**Example:** A youth invited to sit on a committee to review funding proposals or a regular attendee at a youth program or drop-in centre.

## YOUTH REPRESENTATIVE

- Term *representative* implies that the youth represents the youth membership.
- This designation means that the youth has an extra responsibility to gather information from the membership (e.g., youth council, board of directors).

**Example:** A youth representative from the local youth council on the Board of Directors for a Friendship Centre.

## YOUTH ORGANIZATION PARTNERSHIP

- Creating a partnership with an existing youth organization, youth council, etc., and requesting the services of their structure for youth consultation and input.

**Example:** Inviting the youth council from a local Friendship Centre to provide input into the design of a new youth program at a community centre.

***I am a leader of today, not just tomorrow.***

*Jocelyn Formsma, Youth Consultant*

## ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN ORGANIZATIONS

---

In considering ways to increase youth engagement at the organizational level, there are a number of issues. The following ethical principles were jointly prepared by the Child Welfare League of Canada and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society and provide important considerations for increasing youth engagement.

### Youth engagement is not a program

- Youth engagement should be viewed as a natural way of working in the organization, rather than as a special program.

### Contributions match the organization

- Young people and adults who are working with an organization should be recruited for their knowledge, skills, interests, and commitment to the organizational mission.

### One person cannot represent the many

- A young person should not be considered “the youth voice” at the table—it should be acknowledged that everyone at the table brings different perspectives to the issue.

### Debate as a learning tool

- Debate is a key element of personal and organizational growth.

### Dignity and safety

- Under no circumstances should young people or adults in the workplace feel that placing themselves in an emotionally, spiritually, physically, or cognitively unsafe space is expected or required by the organization.

### Avoiding false expectations

- It is important to be honest about the changing role of youth within an organization, including recognizing that there are limitations that correspond to age, experience, education, and training.

### Balance and accessibility

- Most people, including young people, require workplace accommodations in order to support them in making the optimal contribution to the organization.

*(Complete document can be accessed at [www.fncfcs.org/docs/declaration\\_accountability.pdf](http://www.fncfcs.org/docs/declaration_accountability.pdf))*

## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL: WHAT IS THE ROLE OF ADULTS?

---

These suggestions are offered from the perspective of a youth leader who has worked in a variety of roles with a variety of organizations.<sup>16</sup>

### Assistance with setting up meetings

- Adults can assist by arranging meeting space, utilizing computers and Internet for information purposes, printing agendas, and obtaining refreshments.

### Guidance in making big decisions

- Although youth need to be the guiding force in decision making, sometimes it is necessary for mentors to step in with advice and/or guidance, especially when dealing with finances. This must only be done with respect for the youth process and at the request and approval of the youth decision makers.

### Advocating for a youth voice where there currently is none

- Adults sit at a lot of tables or on a lot of committees where youth do not. They have relationships with the current decision makers and can advocate for youth more effectively sometimes than the youth can. Adults also have knowledge of upcoming meetings and can link the value of youth involvement to the possible outcomes of the meeting.

### Mentorship – the value of spending time with young people

- Mentorship is time consuming and takes a lot of effort. Spending time with youth and finding out what they think, what they want, and teaching them how to do their work better is not easy. However, one of the most important ways to engage, train, and develop young leaders is to simply spend time with them.

### Translating youth ideas into action

- Youth have the ideas, the strategies for success, and the enthusiasm. However, they don't always have the resources or the experience to translate those ideas into action. Adults who have the knowledge and access to resources can assist by providing insight and the opportunity to utilize those resources.

---

<sup>16</sup> Adapted from *First Steps in Youth Engagement*, by Jocelyn Formsma (2002).

## THE BENEFITS OF ADULTS AS ALLIES

---

When adults engage youth (i.e., work as allies), numerous benefits occur. The following benefits are outlined in the *Adult Allies in Action* publication developed by the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement ([www.engagementcentre.ca/files/alliesFINAL\\_e\\_web.pdf](http://www.engagementcentre.ca/files/alliesFINAL_e_web.pdf)).

### INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

## ...Youth

Involving young people in decision making provides

- Challenge
  - Relevancy
  - Voice
  - Cause-based action
  - Skill building
  - Adult structure
  - Affirmation
- 
- Mastery
  - Increased social awareness
  - Critical thinking skills
  - Knowledge application
  - Problem solving
  - Health
  - Compassion

## ...Adults

There are also vital benefits for adults in adult-youth partnerships.

- Enhanced commitment and energy
- Increased confidence in their abilities to work with youth
- Better understanding of young people's concerns
- Increased sharing of their new knowledge with others outside the organization
- Strengthened sense of connection to their community
- Changed perceptions and stereotypes of young people by experiencing youth as competent, legitimate, and crucial contributors

### SOCIAL LEVEL

Youth benefit at the social level from

- Supportive personal relationships
- Expanded social networks
- Opportunities to meet and develop relationships with youth from outside their original peer network
- Opportunities to network with adults and learn about positive relationships with adult role models
- Greater social capital
- Greater peer, family, and school attachment

## PRINCIPLE 3:

# FOSTERING YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

***We had had a number of deaths of young men in the community and there was a group of boys that everyone was worried about—boys that were going to go either way. I got them together and told them that I was going to clean up a dump on our community—not an official dump, just a spot where everybody had got into the habit of dumping their trash—and that I wanted their help. In undertaking this, we were going to be taking care of Mother Earth and that was a model for them to use respect and care in their other relationships. I told them that we weren't going to go to the Band Council and we weren't going to get a grant because you don't need permission from anybody to do the right thing. The sense of accomplishment and pride these boys showed about their involvement in this project was amazing, and all it cost me was a couple of pizza dinners.***

*Jode Kechego, Policy Analyst and  
Film Producer,  
Chippewas on the Thames*

*\*For information on Jode's documentary about this community action progress, see the listing on page 14.*

When you give youth your respect, attention, support, and time and they are engaged in the process and outcome, you are setting them up to apply their abilities and skills, to address some of their own issues, and to develop new positive opportunities; this is youth empowerment at its best.

When youth experience success and feel trusted and gain some confidence and have a clear understanding of their role, they are more likely to be committed and engaged in a program or activity. Beyond engagement and commitment, they become part of a movement or change process and become role models to their peers and adults around them.

How do we foster youth empowerment? It can be achieved by providing leadership and life skills and opportunities to apply these skills to making a difference with others. Youth need a voice in the issues that matter to them and the decisions that affect them. Youth need meaningful access to positive role models. They need to see viable alternatives for leading a meaningful life, regardless of the challenges they have experienced.

These opportunities can occur in formal program-based ways (such as in a structured mentoring program like the ones described in this section). They can also occur in more informal and youth-driven ways such as community action. It is important to remember that *youth-driven empowerment initiatives* does not mean leaving youth to figure things out on their own. Successful youth-driven empowerment initiatives typically have significant adult support. Youth need this adult

support to move into empowered leadership roles. If they are forced into these roles before they are ready, their experience will be less fulfilling and meaningful.

In this section of the toolkit, we address a number of approaches to empowerment, including ideas for community action, mentoring programs, formal recognition of youth accomplishments, and youth leadership in formal committees and groups.

***One of the things that struck me as a child was that my own people were not in positions of authority, and I thought that was unacceptable, and I guess in a way I felt that in some small way I would be able to change that by going on to higher education.***

*Roberta Jamieson (1953-), First  
Aboriginal woman lawyer in  
Canada*

## CREATIVE IDEAS FOR YOUTH COMMUNITY ACTION

---

The Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) has an excellent *Violence Prevention Toolkit* available online (see the case study on page 58). This toolkit has the dual goals of providing materials for specific violence prevention workshops and also providing a framework for youth to become involved in community action. Strategies are accompanied by detailed how-to plans for youth to undertake various initiatives. For example, the toolkit offers the following suggestions for youth community action projects:

1. PRESENT NWAC YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION WORKSHOPS.
2. ORGANIZE COMMUNITY MEETINGS.
3. PRESENT MATERIAL FROM NWAC YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION WORKSHOPS OR ANY OTHER VIOLENCE PREVENTION MATERIAL AT CONFERENCES AND EVENTS.
4. CREATE AWARENESS AND EDUCATION PROJECTS.
5. ORGANIZE YOUTH WALKS TO RAISE AWARENESS.
6. PUT ON A PLAY OR MAKE A VIDEO TO RAISE AWARENESS OF VIOLENCE ISSUES.
7. FORM A YOUTH COMMITTEE OR JOIN AN EXISTING ONE.

***Use your imagination and creativity to think of many other ways to get involved in violence prevention work in your community and beyond.***

For each of these suggestions, the *Violence Prevention Toolkit* offers detailed steps for planning and implementation.

## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONAL AUDIT

---

It is important to have a snapshot of youth engagement in your organization before undertaking ways to increase it. The following questions were developed by Jocelyn Formsma and Ginger Gosnell (Youth Consultants). These questions will give you an idea of your starting point and possible barriers.

### YOUTH AND ADULT ROLES

What has the role of youth been in the project?

- Youth as decision makers for the project's development
- Youth as decision makers for the project's delivery
- Youth as advocates/speakers/liaisons on behalf of the project
- Youth consulted for advice on the project
- Youth assigned specific roles for the project
- Youth as participants

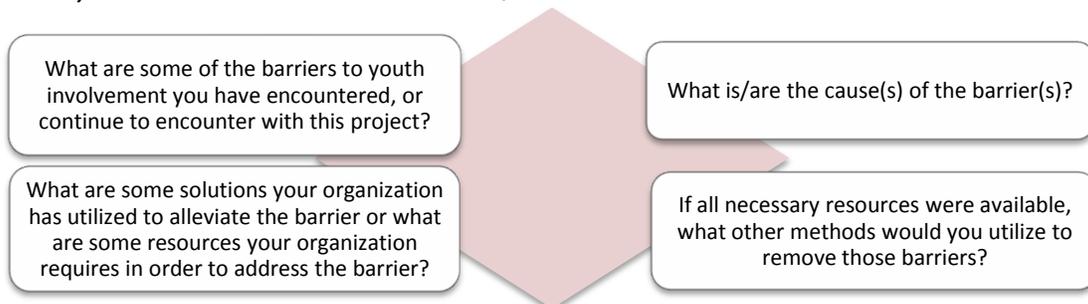
How have young people been involved in the following?

- Design of the project's initial development
- Have held paid positions for the project
- Been involved as volunteers in any aspect of the project
- Received honorariums for their contribution to the project
- Youth are participants in the project

What has the role of adults been in the project?

- Mentors to youth participants
- Mentors to youth volunteers/employees.
- Decision makers for the project's development
- Decision makers for the project's delivery
- Adults as advocates/speaker/liaisons on behalf of the project
- Supports to youth, but as ultimate decision makers
- Supports to youth, but with limited decision making
- Supports to youth, but with no decision making
- Staff solely dedicated to youth initiatives
- Staff dedicated part-time to youth initiatives

### BARRIERS, CHALLENGES AND GAPS: QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION



## PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: NWAC VIOLENCE PREVENTION TOOLKIT PROJECT

---



Native Women's Association of Canada's (NWAC) *Violence Prevention Toolkit* is a manual-based approach to empowering youth to raise their own awareness about violence and also to be leaders in violence prevention in their communities. The NWAC Youth Council and the Youth Department developed the toolkit in the spring of 2007, and it was officially launched in December of that year. This initiative is geared toward youth and service providers in a "train the trainer" workshop format. The objective is to enable trainers to deliver these workshops in their own communities. In 2008, a national train the trainer tour across Canada included training with more than 350 participants. The toolkit and training initiative has been made possible by funding from the Status of Women Canada and an extensive and growing network of community partnerships.

Workshop participants are trained in five comprehensive youth-focused workshops that were developed by NWAC youth: Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Date Violence, Emotional Violence, and Bullying. There is a facilitator guide that instructs users on how to deliver the workshops. There are fact sheets and handouts that provide information on all five topics, including community action (which teaches youth and communities how to get involved in violence prevention). The toolkit also contains evaluation forms for delivering the workshops and a CD for electronic versions of all toolkit materials.

The workshops were created to be delivered interactively in a variety of creative ways. There is significant room for flexibility. For example, facilitators can easily incorporate their own cultural teachings into the workshop or include games using the tools provided.

### Project Objectives

- ✓ To encourage and promote the use of the NWAC Youth Council Violence Prevention Toolkit in communities as part of a violence prevention strategy targeting Aboriginal youth.
- ✓ To provide young Aboriginal women and youth in general with a prevention tool that will alert them about possible types of violence they can encounter, ways to recognize their early signs, and ways to empower themselves and break from the victim roles within the recurring violence cycles.
- ✓ To empower youth, communities, and community organizations to combat all types of violence that affect the lives of Aboriginal youth in Canada and decrease the risk of their experiencing and witnessing violence in their lifetime.
- ✓ To raise awareness about the ways violence affects young Aboriginal women in Canada.
- ✓ To empower youth and girls in particular to work on decreasing violence in their communities.

The full toolkit is available at [www.nwac-hq.org/en/vpk.html](http://www.nwac-hq.org/en/vpk.html).

*The Violence Prevention Toolkit initiative demonstrates the four guiding principles in the following ways:*

### **Understanding and integrating cultural identity**

- ✓ It is strongly encouraged that Elders are involved in the training workshops and workshops in general. A community action insert gives tips on how to approach an Elder.
- ✓ Each community or organization hosting a workshop is encouraged to incorporate their own cultural teachings in their agendas. Smudging or a Healing Circle are two examples.
- ✓ Includes resources to incorporate historical context (e.g., a Community Action Fact Sheet on Residential Schools).

### **Increasing youth engagement**

- ✓ NWAC's Youth Council was instrumental in creating the toolkit.
- ✓ A limited survey was conducted with youth across Canada to represent youths' voices.
- ✓ NWAC has sponsored a number of youth at all training workshops.
- ✓ As of the end of 2008, 138 youth have been trained at the workshops.
- ✓ Training emphasizes a safe and comfortable environment and includes meals.

### **Fostering youth empowerment**

- ✓ NWAC's Youth Council has been trained to facilitate the workshops across Canada, thus championing the initiative.
- ✓ Experienced facilitators mentor first-time facilitators in the majority of the workshops provided.
- ✓ Youth community action activities are built into the workshops.
- ✓ There are detailed protocols to support youth-empowering activities such as applying for a grant or conference.
- ✓ 40% of the participants in the training workshops have been youth.

### **Developing and maintaining effective partnerships**

- ✓ The toolkit offers specific strategies for increasing partnerships in violence prevention, such as how to involve Elders.
- ✓ Status of Women, Canadian Heritage, and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada have all contributed to the initiative.
- ✓ The Provincial/Territorial/Member Organizations (PTMOs) have worked closely with NWAC in promoting and coordinating some of the workshops.
- ✓ The City of Ottawa Police assisted in the development of the toolkit by providing expertise and videos for the toolkit.

## FINDING YOUR VISION, FINDING YOUR VOICE: A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE ON CULTURALLY INFORMED EMPOWERMENT<sup>17</sup>

---

One of the significant empowerment movements in the past decade has been the healing and wellness movement. This movement has signalled an acknowledgement that many situations of grief have to be dealt with before individuals can find a path to living a more empowered life. This healing and wellness movement is unique because many Aboriginal communities can find relative success in dealing with the situations of grief that result from a high-risk lifestyle, but find it difficult to deal with sustainable growth for individuals. When an individual is going through the healing process, it may be relatively easy to help him or her find a path to release the issues of grief, anger, shame, and guilt for the experiences that they have witnessed. However, healing and wellness strategies for Aboriginal people have to also deal with grief that is the result of intangible loss.

Intergenerational trauma is an intangible loss. The British Crown and the Canadian government deliberately and thoughtfully created several extermination and assimilation policies from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. These policies created grief that is due to loss of identity, loss of language, loss of land, and loss of culture. One of the most significant policies was the residential school movement. These schools were designed specifically to interrupt the process of passing on traditional Aboriginal culture to the children of Aboriginal communities. Many residential schools have been well-documented as institutions where the children were sexually, physically, spiritually, and emotionally abused. Many survivors have conveyed that these institutions were guilty of deliberate torture. Survivors not only carry the grief associated with such victimization but also the intergenerational trauma previously mentioned. The pain and hurt that these survivors carried with them into adulthood has been transferred to their children; they raised them the only way they knew how, without kindness, nurturing, safety, security, and compassion. The patterns present in these dysfunctional families have since transcended several generations, and now there are very dysfunctional communities.

This is why there is such a need to develop innovative processes to circumvent these patterns of dysfunction. The challenge is how to develop the means of sustainable, transformative change. If we examine grief for a moment, grief is such an amazing emotion. Nothing else on this earth quite makes us feel the same way. Grief is such a powerful emotion because it makes us feel so full and so empty at the same time. When an individual is experiencing an intense amount of grief, he or she feels loss, hopelessness, powerlessness, and anger. This time of great sorrow is described as “having a loss of vision.” Our eyes are so full of tears we cannot see. We cannot see opportunity; we cannot see a path to living a good life; we do not see what lies ahead; our only focus is on the immediate. An individual in this state does not always make wise choices; a person in this state is not worried about the impacts her decisions are having on herself or anyone else. Most strategies for empowerment deal

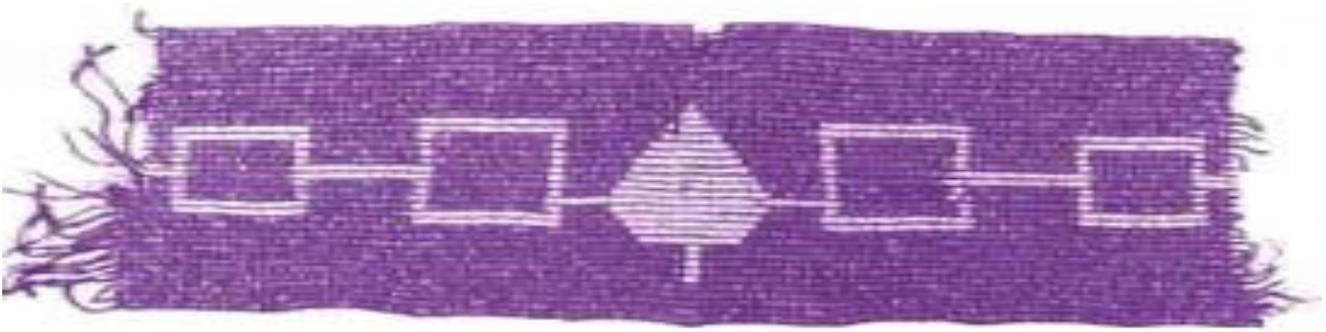
---

<sup>17</sup> Darren Thomas, co-author, has written this section from a first-person perspective to share his personal philosophy on empowerment. Darren firmly believes that true empowerment for Aboriginal youth, families, and communities must be based on a transformation of existing grief. For more about Darren and his work, see his biography on page 144.

with helping individuals get their sight back. Deal with the tears; dry them. Create new strategies to enable individuals to find a path to healthy living.

However, for sustainable empowerment, you must go deeper and address how these individuals may endure grief. Grief is a part of life, and if you send an empowered individual back into a self-defeating environment, his empowerment will eventually fade away. Strategies for these individuals must contain a process by which they can help effect change in their families and communities as well. Individuals must find a process to maintain their empowerment. This is when you have to help a person “find his or her voice.” Many individuals can tell you exactly what needs to change in Aboriginal communities; they can intensely share with you about what went wrong in their life. Yet they continue to do nothing to make the change happen. Some of these individuals are sitting in jail, some of them are dependent on drugs or alcohol, and some are just sitting at home. What good is having “vision” and not having any power? To really effect change, to truly empower Aboriginal communities, you must combine “vision” and “voice.” Development of strategies that help individuals to clean their eyes is not enough; we have to help them find their voice as well. Their voice is what will drive their vision.

When examining strategies for the entire community, you have to find a collective voice and vision. This voice is created through collaboration with others. If you create a collective vision and voice, then you will ultimately create a truly transformative change because when you have everyone “buying in,” you will see empowered individuals begin to empower their families, which will in turn empower entire communities.



*Ayenwatha or the Unity Wampum Belt*

## PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: BCYSTH ABORIGINAL CAPACITY CAFÉ

---

In [what year?], the BCYSTH Violence is Preventable Project Coordinator and the Aboriginal Education Curriculum Consultant of the Vancouver School Board (VSB) invited SACY representatives to collaborate on, plan, and conduct an event that would engage Vancouver urban Aboriginal youth and their parents and caregivers on the issue of violence and substance use in everyday teen life. They were subsequently joined by representatives from the Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA). The resulting event was an Aboriginal Capacity Café, which is an open space for community members to engage in a conversation with youth who have experienced substance abuse, violence, and the realities of teen life. The Café is now an ongoing initiative. Youth who participate in a Café feel empowered, valued, and listened to. As a result, the community feels better able to understand the experiences and backgrounds that may have been factors in the youths' life choices. For both parties, a Capacity Café creates understanding, appreciation, value, and respect.

The Aboriginal Capacity Café has the following objectives:

- ✓ Provide Aboriginal youth with opportunities for youth engagement and leadership.
- ✓ Honour and give voice to Aboriginal adolescent views and perspectives, particularly regarding substance use and related issues such as violence.
- ✓ Promote among the Aboriginal youth their self-awareness, leadership skills, and giving back to the larger community.
- ✓ Increase understanding of youth culture among the students' parents, caregivers, community members, and service providers.
- ✓ Reduce the stigma and shame often associated with substance use and violence.
- ✓ Celebrate and build on existing strengths within the Aboriginal community.
- ✓ Enhance participants' awareness of drug use and violence issues, including resources for additional help.

The structure of the Café is as follows:

- ✓ Pre-briefing to develop appropriate questions for students and establish clear confidentiality guidelines and boundaries for all participants.
- ✓ Two simultaneous Capacity Cafés with two facilitators and Aboriginal Youth Advocates, to create an open and frank dialogue and maintain confidentiality between Aboriginal students and possible friends and family members.
- ✓ In each Café, participants sit in a circle and 10 Aboriginal youth are spread among the audience in pairs (creating safety). The two experienced facilitators in each Café are one male and one female, one being Aboriginal and one non-Aboriginal.
- ✓ Following the Capacity Café, a healing process is conducted in each group.
- ✓ Evaluation with adult and student participants.
- ✓ Two youth engagement workshops and one post-event youth workshop are facilitated by youth staff. Workshop topics include cultural identity, cultural protocols and teachings, self-esteem, coping mechanisms, and preparation for the Aboriginal Capacity Café.
- ✓ The two groups then come back together for testimonials, a quick debrief of what happened in each group, and a celebration.

*The Aboriginal Capacity Café initiative demonstrates the four guiding principles in the following ways:*

### **Understanding and integrating cultural identity**

- ✓ The cultural tone of the events is set by a feast, traditional smudging ceremony, and an acknowledgement of whose territory the activities are taking place on.
- ✓ Use of the holistic healing approach and oral tradition by facilitating an informal talking circle.
- ✓ Four generations attend each event: Elders, grandparents, parents, and children.

### **Increasing youth engagement**

- ✓ Youth are recruited by Substance Abuse Prevention workers, UNYA, and VSB staff who have built rapport and trust with students, which is critical for gathering enough youth to participate.
- ✓ Provides transportation, free childcare, and a meal to facilitate the involvement of both youth and adults.
- ✓ Includes a celebration consisting of awards, honoraria, recognition, and door prizes to acknowledge the hard work, commitment, and knowledge of everyone who participated.

### **Fostering youth empowerment**

- ✓ Provides a forum for youth to be the experts of their own experience.
- ✓ Provides participating youth with a half-day session to prepare them for their role with the larger group.
- ✓ The event is structured so that youth are not singled out but are seated with a peer and in a circle that did not necessarily include their immediate family.
- ✓ Through the involvement of UNYA, youth representatives play a role in the design and implementation of the event.

### **Developing and maintaining effective partnerships**

- ✓ The event is a partnership between BCYSTH, the VSB, SACY, and UNYA.
- ✓ This partnership made it possible to have 22 trained staff on hand for the event.
- ✓ Each partner brings specialized expertise to the initiative:
  - SACY – café model, facilitation, youth recruitment and preparation
  - UNYA – cultural aspects, youth recruitment and preparation
  - VSB – promotion of event to Aboriginal parents, caregivers, and students
  - BCYSTH – administrative and event planning assistance

## YOUTH EMPOWERMENT THROUGH MENTORING

---

***It is vital in today's modern society to not only tell our youth you care and are concerned about them.... you have to show them."***

*Darren Thomas, Community Educator and Motivational Consultant, Six Nations*

### THE VALUE OF MENTORING

Mentoring is an excellent way to empower youth, whether they are taking the role of mentor or mentee. Through the power of a positive and healthy relationship, youth being mentored have access to a strong role model, someone with whom they can discuss plans and worries and celebrate successes. Working in the role of mentor, youth have the powerful experience of helping a peer make good choices and feel connected, which in turn builds the mentor's sense of himself or herself as a leader and role model. Mentoring is not a unidirectional enterprise; both parties gain valuable experience and skills in the process.

***Mentoring is giving a person the freedom to understand what it is they could possibly choose for self. The mentor gives them ways to look at an object to gain some understanding or knowledge of the object, identify the responsibilities for taking care of the object, and know that their choice is solely their responsibility. You as the mentor empower them to take responsibility for their choices rather than this person coming back and saying, "It's your fault for getting me into this mess I'm in right now."***

*Randy Johnson, Storyteller from Mohawk Six Nations, cited in Traditional Lifestyles Mentoring Report for the New Orators Youth Project, Grand River Employment and Training, 2002*

### CULTURAL FIT

Personal or social mentoring fits well with the values of many Aboriginal cultures in several ways:

- Mentoring recognizes that all individuals can learn from each other and that teaching is not limited to those with a formal designation.
- Including activity-based mentoring in addition to talking incorporates different ways of knowing.
- Mentoring, by definition, is a more holistic approach than focusing on one area of skill. It is also a means of transferring knowledge from a traditional perspective.
- Traditionally, mentoring relationships with specially designated "aunties" and "uncles" were formalized in many Aboriginal cultures.
- The type of relationship that emerges as a result of mentoring provides an excellent forum for teaching and strengthening cultural practices.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPING MENTORING PROGRAMS

The following recommendations were provided in a paper titled “Mentoring Programs for Aboriginal Youth,” published in *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health*.<sup>18</sup> The authors of this paper undertook a series of 10 interviews with Aboriginal program developers and a focus group with 5 participants. Through this process, they identified three guiding principles:

1. Mentoring should not be seen as a stand-alone, narrowly targeted program, but rather as an activity that is entirely supportive of community values and goals and that is fully integrated with other community education, healing, and capacity-building activities.
2. Mentoring should be embedded in existing programs.
3. A community advisory group should be established at the outset of any mentoring program to inform and guide the development, evolution, and maintenance of the program.

***We have these things where we understand each other and we talk about school and other important things.***

*Mentee, Uniting Our Nations Peer Mentoring Program*

## PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to the guiding principles, there are practical strategies that can increase the success of a mentoring program:

- Mentoring in groups instead of on an individual basis may be a good fit culturally and can also address the potential difficulty of recruiting enough mentors for one-on-one mentoring.
- All mentors, whether adults or other youth, require some training and orientation to the mentoring process.
- The extent to which program organizers can look after the logistics (such as meeting time and place, inclusion of meals) will facilitate regular and productive mentoring sessions.
- Allowing sufficient time for the recruitment and selection of both mentors and mentees and choosing appropriate candidates will increase the likelihood of the program’s success.

---

<sup>18</sup> Klinck, J., Cardinal, C., Edwards, K., Gibson, N., Bisanz, J., & da Costa, J. (2005). Mentoring programs for Aboriginal youth. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health*, 3, 109-130. Available at [www.pimatisiwin.com](http://www.pimatisiwin.com). Although this article was written in reference to mentoring programs, it offers excellent recommendations that are more broadly applicable to any type of program development.

## EXAMPLES OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT MENTORING PROGRAMS

---

### SCHOOL-BASED MENTORING BY COMMUNITY ADULTS:

#### NEW ORATORS AUNTIES AND UNCLES MENTORING PROGRAM

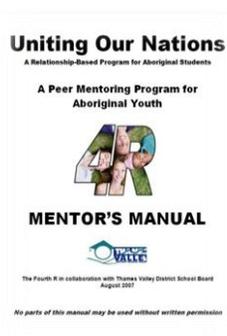
The Aunties and Uncles mentoring program uses adult community mentors. It focuses on children aged 10 and older, with the goal that the Aunties and Uncles (mentors) can secure positive relationships with the participants before they begin the transition to young adulthood. The community mentors engage in a range of programming, from cultural teachings to traditional arts, crafts, and games, and developing a positive relationship is primary. Understanding adolescence as a rite of passage is central to the organization of the program. It has been offered primarily through elementary schools on the Six Nations of the Grand River, although there are extension activities offered at the local secondary schools as well. There are typically 15 to 20 students involved at a time, but logistics of the program have differed to meet the needs of a particular site and the local support. For example, at one site the administration really believed that this work was vital to student social development, so they provided time during school. At other sites, most of the programming was done after school or as summer camp sessions.

In many Aboriginal cultures, raising children was the responsibility of the entire community. It was believed that many carried the responsibility of assisting the parents. The extended family as well as any member of the community, if they were older, would be acknowledged as auntie, uncle, or grandparent. This was understood and all Elders were respected. In modern times, concepts such as these are being lost due to families and communities losing touch with their original teachings.

When a young man's voice started to deepen and when a young woman started her moon time (i.e., commenced menstruation), a rite of passage would be performed. The Uncles and Grandfathers would sit the young man down and describe his future responsibilities as a man, walking with him through the challenging years of adolescence, spending time with the young man and challenging him about his role and responsibilities. The Aunties and Grandmothers would take on the responsibility of guiding the young woman into womanhood by teaching her about her connection to the natural world and the responsibilities she carries as a woman. The purpose was to ensure that values, traditions, and identity were seen as a source of courage, strength, honour, and pride for the future. In modern society, this rite of passage is very rarely performed. Families send their young men and women to school to figure out for themselves what they are good at, what they want to be when they grow up, and to learn on their own what their responsibilities and values should be. Because many educational institutions do very little to empower Aboriginal people about their identity, young people struggle a great deal with the challenging years of adolescence. Mentoring helps support youth during this time of transition.

## SCHOOL-BASED MENTORING BY OLDER PEERS: UNITING OUR NATIONS PEER MENTORING PROGRAM

The Uniting Our Nations peer mentoring program supports the development of healthy and positive relationships between younger secondary students and peer mentors from older grades. Students meet weekly at school during lunch time and engage in a range of activities together, sometimes cultural activities and other times general activities enjoyed by youth in this age group. The initial time commitment is once a week during the common lunch period for one school semester, although most students choose to be involved for the whole year. The link with older students helps smooth the transition from elementary to secondary school for the younger individuals and connects people with similar interests and backgrounds. Although the program began as a paired mentoring strategy, it has evolved to group-based mentoring, which the students seem to enjoy and is a structure that helps minimize the impact of absenteeism. Mentors receive a full day of training prior to the program starting and a manual to assist them in their role.



A unique aspect of the peer mentoring program is the involvement of an Aboriginal adult mentor from the community who comes into the school several times per semester, typically to facilitate a teaching circle with the mentoring participants. Unlike most programs that are two-tier (mentee-mentor), mentors and mentees can learn from the stories, examples, and actions of the community mentor. Having a community mentor has helped affirm traditional cultural values with youth and places some ownership of and responsibility for the program on the community. This community mentor supports the school mentors, incorporates cultural teachings into the program, provides a role model to all the youth involved, and provides the opportunity

for the youth to become connected to another healthy adult in their community. For other Uniting Our Nations programs, see the case study on page 90 or go to [www.youthrelationships.org](http://www.youthrelationships.org).



*Mentoring training. Printed with permission*

## PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: DND JUNIOR CANADIAN RANGERS PROGRAMME

---

The Department of National Defence Junior Canadian Rangers (JCR) program emerged from the observed need to provide meaningful activities for young people in isolated communities. The JCR program offers young people (aged 12 to 18) in remote and isolated communities across Canada a unique opportunity to participate in a variety of fun and rewarding activities in a formal setting. The JCR program strives to strengthen remote and isolated Canadian communities through an altruistic, responsible, and practical youth program that embraces culture and tradition, promotes healthy living and positive self-image, and reflects the proud military legacy of the Canadian Rangers. There are three components to the training the JCR receive:

- ✓ **Traditional Skills:** Traditional skills are those that expressly take into account the background and culture of the JCR in any given community. Elders are often involved in teaching these important skills where applicable, and community members are sometimes invited to participate. JCR learn the significance and relevance that traditional skills still have today, at the personal and community levels. Skills that risk being lost are reinforced through teachings that strengthen connections among youth, adults, and Elders. Traditional skills include hunting, fishing, local language, traditional music and dance, traditional cooking, and spiritual ceremonies.
- ✓ **Life Skills:** Life skills provide JCR with important lessons that help them to become healthy, well-respected, and responsible members of their communities. This part of the curriculum is also adaptable according to the particular needs of the local community. In certain communities with high-risk youths, for example, qualified facilitators might teach suicide prevention and intervention, while others focus on staying drug free or speaking in public. Examples of life skills include good nutrition, staying in school, drug and alcohol abuse awareness, and citizenship. The PHASE (Preventing Harassment and Abuse through Successful Education) program could also be taught to all JCR as part of the Department of National Defence's commitment to providing a safe learning environment. PHASE is facilitated via the Community PHASE Facilitator utilizing a facilitator guide in conjunction with a 51-minute video that is broken down into 11 sections or vignettes, along with games and youth activities that promote dialogue. A sharing circle is regularly employed to provide JCR with a safe and familiar forum to express themselves and to feel accepted for their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and comments.
- ✓ **Ranger Skills:** Ranger skills offer JCR the training required to become capable, skilled, and active members of their communities. This training provides valuable “real life” experience on the land, where mastering the core skills of travelling, surviving, and communicating helps create confident and resourceful youth. Ranger skills are taught by experienced individuals and involve practical exercises and hands-on training. It is here that JCR learn about the important role their instructors serve in the Canadian Forces and become acquainted with the customs of the military, including marching, saluting, and care for their uniforms and equipment. Although the instructors are part of the Canadian Forces, the JCR are not.

There are approximately 3,400 Junior Canadian Rangers in 119 remote and isolated communities across Canada. Many of these youth are Aboriginal and some speak a language other than English or French.

*The Junior Canadian Rangers Program demonstrates the four guiding principles in the following ways:*

### **Understanding and integrating cultural identity**

- ✓ One-third of the program is specifically devoted to teaching traditional cultural values and skills that are relevant to the particular community.
- ✓ There is a strong emphasis on skills required to live off the land.
- ✓ There is significant flexibility to accommodate the needs and traditions of the particular community.
- ✓ Elders and other cultural leaders are included in the program's design and delivery through the Adult Committee.

### **Increasing youth engagement**

- ✓ The JCR program offers an option for structured and fun youth programming in areas where there are few alternative programs.
- ✓ The JCR program incorporates fun, culturally based activities and skills development to increase youths' participation.
- ✓ There is no cost for participation, to reduce barriers for interested youth.
- ✓ JCR are encouraged to take an active role in the Patrol decisions, and the youth elect their own peer leaders within their Patrol.

### **Fostering youth empowerment**

- ✓ Youth empowerment is developed through structured teaching of meaningful skills. Skill development is seen as the primary tool to enhance the positive self-image of the JCR: to create a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging, and control of their futures.
- ✓ The life skills and ranger skills portions teach specific skills that will be applicable to later employment roles.
- ✓ There is an emphasis on healthy and safe decision making in a range of areas.
- ✓ JCR have extensive opportunities to expand their personal experience, face and overcome challenges, and to try out new roles and responsibilities in a safe environment.

### **Developing and maintaining effective partnerships**

- ✓ The JCR program was developed as a partnership between the DND and INAC.
- ✓ JCR are taught by qualified Canadian Rangers with the assistance of adult volunteers and other members of the Canadian Forces.
- ✓ Each JCR program patrol is overseen by a local Adult Committee of approximately 8 members. Members typically include respected community members such as the tribal council Elder, the mayor, the local RCMP officer, social workers or teachers, and Canadian Rangers.
- ✓ Specific modules have been developed in conjunction with partners who have special expertise; for example, all PHASE modules on the prevention of harassment and abuse were developed with the Red Cross RespectEd team.

## PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: SEVEN MAGAZINE

---

In 2007, the first issue of SEVEN Magazine was launched as a newsletter, and it has since grown to a full-colour glossy magazine. SEVEN Magazine is a bi-monthly magazine produced in partnership with Oshkaatisak: the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Young People's Council and Wawatay News, one of the largest and most recognizable sources of Aboriginal media since its inception in 1974.

Creator Grace Winter envisioned a place for youth to “share their views, imagination, and creative spirit”. Everything in SEVEN Magazine is “by youth, for youth.” The ideas for articles and profiles are brainstormed and discussed by a youth advisory committee and written by youth. The magazine's audience is youth aged 13 to 30. In each issue, Canadian Aboriginal youth are profiled for their accomplishments in different areas including the arts, athletics, and academics. For the most part, the youth profiled are between the ages of 13 and 24. The magazine also includes stories submitted by Aboriginal youth examining various life experiences including living in isolated communities, traditional marriage, moving to urban centres, achieving life goals, drug addiction, and teen pregnancy.

In SEVEN Magazine, youth contributors offer updates on opportunities for youth including information from the Oshkaatisak: the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Young People's Council and contests such as fitness challenges. SEVEN Magazine follows the seven grandfather teachings as each issue is published with love, honesty, wisdom, respect, bravery, humility, and truth in mind.

SEVEN Magazine is part of the SEVEN Youth Media Network, which also includes SEVEN Youth Radio and a website that offers free downloads of SEVEN Magazine and live radio broadcasts. SEVEN Youth Media Network was created to represent and make an impact on the Seventh Generation. The name is influenced by the Seven Sacred Teachings and a Nishnawbe prophecy that said the Seventh Generation would be the one to turn things around for Aboriginal people. The SEVEN Youth Media Network have also initiated the “Directors of Change” program, which involves working with the youth of selected communities. The youth are encouraged to select an area in their community they would like to see improved and SEVEN provides media equipment and skills training to help the youth document their process.

SEVEN Magazine and the SEVEN Youth Media Network promotes

- ✓ Leadership development
- ✓ Suicide prevention
- ✓ Healthy lifestyles
- ✓ Cultural awareness
- ✓ Sharing of voice and creativity
- ✓ Goal setting

More information and magazine issues can be accessed at [www.sevenyouthmedia.com](http://www.sevenyouthmedia.com).

*SEVEN Magazine and the SEVEN Youth Media Network demonstrate the four guiding principles in the following ways:*

### **Understanding and integrating cultural identity**

- ✓ Offers magazine articles and radio broadcasts in traditional languages
- ✓ Recognizes diversity and understanding
- ✓ Aligns the production of the magazine with traditional teachings (the Seven Grandfather Teachings in particular)
- ✓ Promotes various opportunities for Aboriginal youth to become involved in media
- ✓ Provides opportunities to highlight youth from different Nations across Canada

### **Increasing youth engagement**

- ✓ Offers personal stories from Aboriginal youth across Canada
- ✓ Offers access to role models through profiles of successful Aboriginal youth
- ✓ Has branched out from original format as a written magazine to include radio and website formats to engage a larger number of youth
- ✓ Interactive online opportunities for youth to become involved through blogging and social networking platforms (such as Facebook)
- ✓ Provides free online access to magazine articles
- ✓ Provides free media skills training through the “Directors of Change” program

### **Fostering youth empowerment**

- ✓ Enables youth to share their voices with other youth across the world
- ✓ Provides an online tutorial for youth who are seeking to develop skills in writing, photography, or film for ideas about how to get started
- ✓ Engages young people by creating opportunities for young people to take on leadership roles
- ✓ Offers information for youth to be able to help others in dangerous situations

### **Developing and maintaining effective partnerships**

- ✓ Enables youth to work with adults and other youth across Canada
- ✓ Provides young people with opportunities that contribute to their job experience
- ✓ Offers information about getting involved in youth councils and conferences
- ✓ Has successfully blended for-profit activities (such as selling advertising) to provide a secure funding base



## THE IMPORTANCE OF RECOGNIZING YOUTH STRENGTHS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

---

Recognizing youth in ways that are meaningful to them can make a lasting impact beyond their involvement in a program. Consider ways to recognize youth publicly within their peer group settings or at school and privately by taking the time to get to know them. Recognizing youth for their successes tells them they are important, significant people. Try to look at the award through the eyes of the young person to determine what would be meaningful and important to them. Programs and services can recognize and celebrate youth talents and accomplishments in a variety of ways:

- \* Youth who graduate from programs or reach certain milestones should receive a certificate of accomplishment for their successes. These certificates may be particularly meaningful for youth who are not on track to receive a high school diploma.
- \* Have a final recognition ceremony or party for youth participants and invite their family and close friends. Cultural components can be built into these ceremonies (e.g., inviting a drumming group to sing an honour song).
- \* Recognizing youth for their successes by publishing their names in a newsletter, website, or in the local newspaper after completion of the program is a positive way to recognize participants. Remember to get consent before publishing identifying information.
- \* Write youth a letter of reference or nominate them for a larger community or agency award.
- \* Don't forget to ask youth themselves what a meaningful recognition for participation may be. Try to avoid using generic awards that may be convenient or because you have a large supply on hand. Interests and preferences of young people change from one developmental stage to another, so it is important to keep that in mind when selecting appropriate recognition awards.
- \* Youth can be nominated for numerous awards to recognize their accomplishments more formally. A number of awards are listed on the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation website at [www.naaf.ca/html/home\\_e.html](http://www.naaf.ca/html/home_e.html). Another award is the Lead Your Way! Program administered by the National Aboriginal Health Organization. This Program selects a number of youth each year who are positive role models to others and honours them for their achievements, leadership, and innovation. In turn, these youth conduct numerous community visits and presentations. More information is available at [www.naho.ca/rolemodel/English/nomination\\_generalinfo.php](http://www.naho.ca/rolemodel/English/nomination_generalinfo.php). Youth can be encouraged to talk to student services at their schools to learn more about other local awards programs.

## LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN ORGANIZATIONS WITH YOUTH GROUPS

Youth seeking to improve their leadership skills and experiences may wish to seek involvement with the youth council of an organization. For example, Friendship Centres typically have either a youth council or a youth representative on their boards. Encouraging youth to seek out and apply for these positions (with your support) is one way to foster the development of these leadership skills.

Most National Aboriginal Organizations have their own national youth councils, and they all have individual processes for selecting their members. To find out more about these youth councils go to their websites:

- Assembly of First Nations (AFN) - [www.afnyouth.ca](http://www.afnyouth.ca)
- Métis National Council (MNC) - [www.metisnation.ca/youth](http://www.metisnation.ca/youth)
- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) - [www.niyc.ca](http://www.niyc.ca)
- Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC)– [www.nwac-hq.org/en/youthcouncil.html](http://www.nwac-hq.org/en/youthcouncil.html)
- Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) - [www.abo-peoples.org/youth.html](http://www.abo-peoples.org/youth.html)
- National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) - [www.nafc-aboriginal.com/ayc.htm](http://www.nafc-aboriginal.com/ayc.htm)



***“Youth have to be invited, encouraged, and supported before they can feel comfortable in leadership roles.”***

*Hazel Cardinal, Executive Director, Helping Spirit Lodge Society, Vancouver, B.C.*

## PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: RCMP ABORIGINAL PRE-CADET TRAINING PROGRAM<sup>19</sup>

---

The Aboriginal Pre-Cadet Training Program (AFTP) offers Aboriginal youth the opportunity to work as sworn peace officers with the RCMP and the First Nations Chiefs of Police Association (FNCPA). Youth (aged 19 to 29) undergo 3 weeks of training at the RCMP Depot in Regina followed by a 14-week posting at a detachment near their community. The program provides selected candidates with hands-on experience in the RCMP's training program, an inside look at the life of a police officer, and ample opportunity to do meaningful work in the community. AFTP assists Aboriginal youth to develop discipline, confidence, self-respect, teamwork, and adjustment to a non-Aboriginal environment.

The three-week portion at the RCMP Depot in Regina includes training in

- ✓ collaborative problem-solving skills,
- ✓ law enforcement,
- ✓ public speaking,
- ✓ cultural diversity, and
- ✓ facilitation of Safe Community Workshops in communities.

There are also elements of physical fitness and drill, which promote teamwork and provide students with long-term strategies to meet personal fitness goals. Graduates leave the Academy with a greater appreciation of policing and the role of Aboriginal people in the RCMP.

***"AFTP creates a better understanding of the RCMP in Aboriginal communities and in gaining the interest and attracting Aboriginal applicants as regular members of the RCMP. For many participants, the program is the first step in the applicant process and has encouraged many past participants to pursue a career in the RCMP."***

*Sgt. Ed Jobson  
National Recruiting Program*

After graduation, the duties and activities the student engages in are at the discretion of the detachment commander, who ensures that students are not exposed to any hazardous situations. Activities and duties vary depending on the needs of each region, but the students will get a first-hand look at a career in policing.

---

<sup>19</sup> In 2009, the name of this program was changed from the Aboriginal Youth Training Program to its current name.

*The Aboriginal Pre-Cadet Training Program demonstrates the four guiding principles in the following ways:*

### **Understanding and integrating cultural identity**

- ✓ The Depot component integrates traditional culture and practices (e.g., youth participate in sweats during the program).
- ✓ There is an emphasis on raising awareness of the role of Aboriginal officers in the RCMP.
- ✓ The program promotes careers in law enforcement for Aboriginal youth, which in turn leads to more Aboriginal people in the RCMP. The increased representation adds to the knowledge of the organization and also enhances the way that the RCMP can respond to the needs of Aboriginal communities.

### **Increasing youth engagement**

- ✓ Participants have the opportunity to get hands-on experience that will be relevant for a career in policing.
- ✓ The APTP offers a stipend for participants.
- ✓ The program offers youth an opportunity to get an inside look at the RCMP, reducing barriers to those who might be interested in pursuing a career with the RCMP.

### **Fostering youth empowerment**

- ✓ Youth empowerment is developed through the acquisition of skills.
- ✓ Beyond the specific law enforcement skills taught, there are also general employment skills (such as conflict resolution and public speaking) that will be applicable to any field.
- ✓ The community-based portion helps participants gain important experience as community leaders by facilitating safety workshops and other activities.
- ✓ Many of the youth participants have gone on to have careers with the RCMP or other law enforcement agencies.

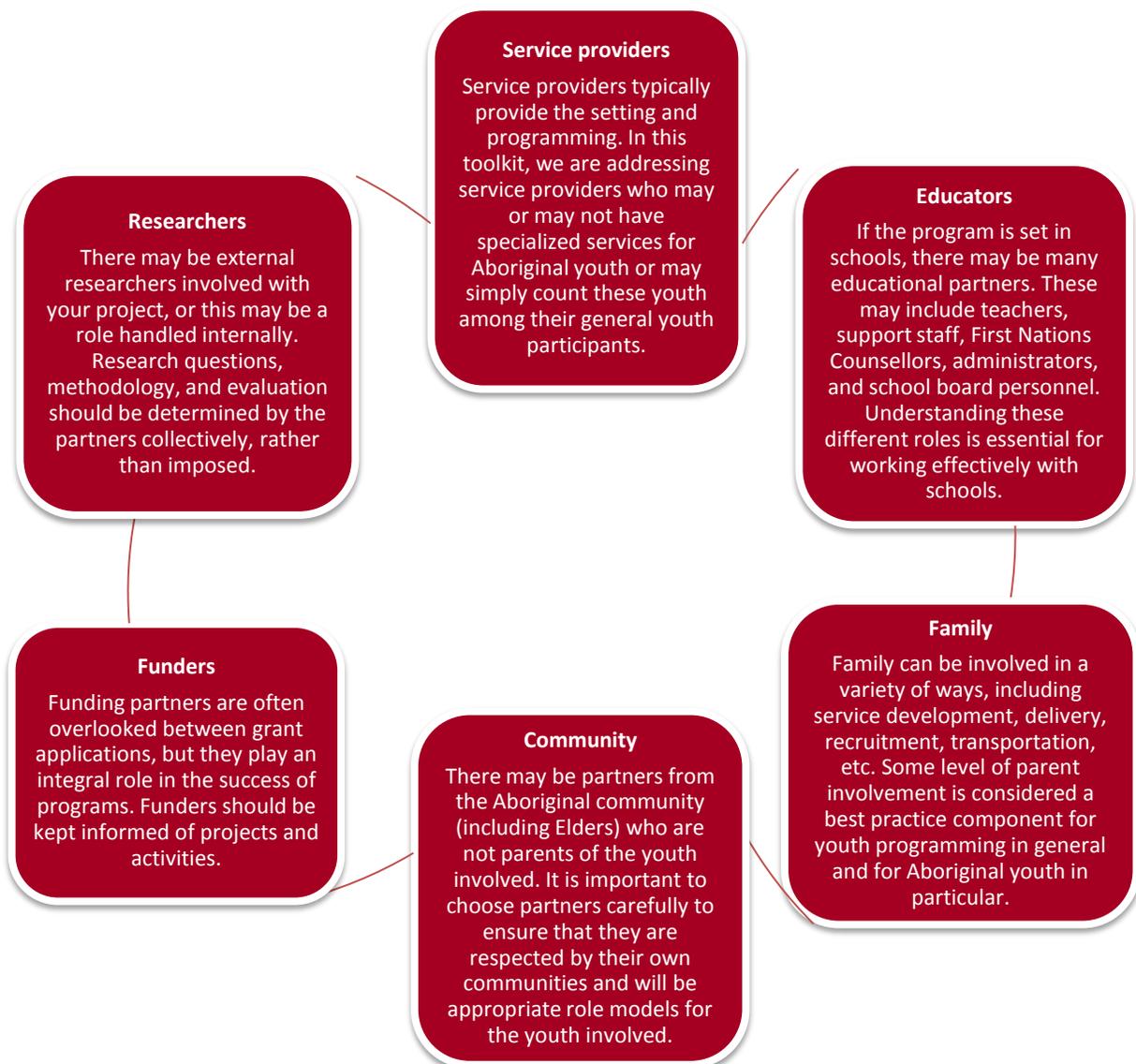
### **Developing and maintaining effective partnerships**

- ✓ The APTP is a partnership between the RCMP and the National Aboriginal Policing Services.
- ✓ Youth are specifically taught skills for collaborative approaches to resolving community problems.
- ✓ Detachments who host APTP participants receive support from the Program Managers, Divisions, and other National Policy Centres to increase the success of the participants during the community policing portion of the program.

---

## PRINCIPLE 4: ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Effective partnerships are perhaps the single most determinative factor in providing enhanced services for Aboriginal youth. Although the stakeholders involved will differ from project to project, there are different types of partners typically involved. Some of these partners may be more or less involved at different stages of a project, but giving careful consideration to roles and communication is essential for successful program planning and delivery. Partnerships typically include the following:



## CONSIDERATIONS FOR DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS

Much of the future success of partnerships depends on selecting appropriate community partners and getting these partnerships off to a good start. The following considerations have been shared by Aboriginal partners to offer some starting points for non-Aboriginal individuals and organizations seeking partnerships with members of Aboriginal communities. Partnerships and teams must reflect the community they serve.

### RECOGNIZE THAT BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS TAKES TIME

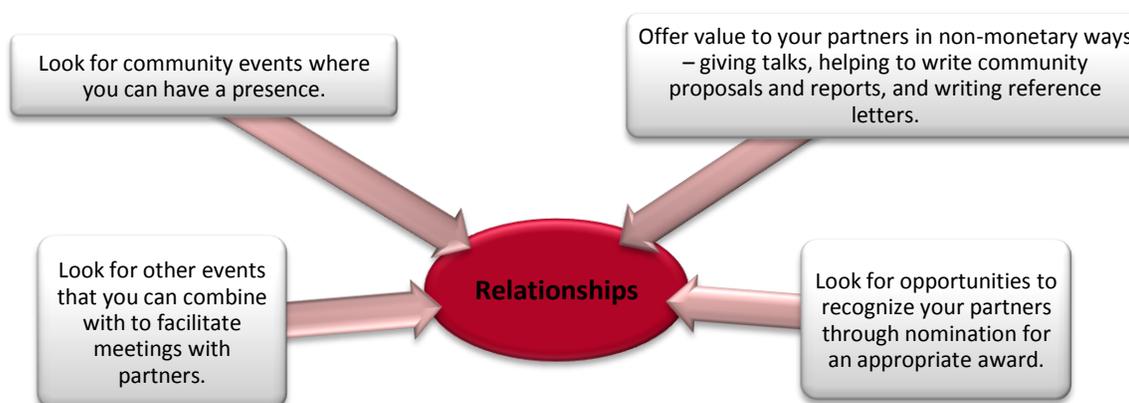
All partnerships have to start somewhere. Although good work can come out of new partnerships, established partnerships emerge over the course of years of collaboration. Committing to collaborate over a period of time sets the stage for the development of these relationships.

### ACKNOWLEDGE DIFFERENCES IN MANDATES AND CONFLICTING PRIORITIES

Each partner brings different perspectives and mandates to the table, and acknowledging them up front and appreciating these differences will strengthen your partnerships. For example, when planning a school-based youth engagement initiative, there may be a number of different stakeholders with different views and concerns. The school-based First Nations support staff may want to open the opportunity to as many youth as possible, while the facilitators may have an optimum number in mind to foster group dynamics. The school administrators may be most concerned about how much school youth will miss. If the program is being funded by research dollars, then researchers may face other pressures due to financial constraints. Acknowledging these sources of potential tension and brainstorming solutions as a group can help build trust and prevent misunderstandings.

### MAKE RELATIONSHIP BUILDING A PRIORITY, NOT AN AFTERTHOUGHT

Relationship building takes resources to accomplish. Try to set aside the necessary resources in terms of time and budget. Try to include these activities in your funding proposals when possible. There are ways to build relationships that do not require a lot of expense:



## RECOGNIZE THAT THERE WILL BE BUMPS ALONG THE ROAD

As in any relationship, individuals and organizations working together will encounter stressful times and misunderstandings. Recognizing that these bumps are inevitable will go a long way toward not abandoning a project in the face of tension among partners. A commitment to work through these differences and retain a focus on the youth you are trying to support can help you through these difficult periods with partners.

## BE MINDFUL OF DIFFERENCES IN TIMELINES AND WORKING STYLES

***“Praise, flattery, exaggerated manners, and fine, high-sounding words were no part of Lakota politeness. Excessive manners were put down as insincere, and the constant talker was considered rude and thoughtless. Conversation was never begun at once, or in a hurried manner.***

***No one was quick with a question, no matter how important, and no one was pressed for an answer. A pause giving time for thought was the truly courteous way of beginning and conducting a conversation.”***

*Chief Luther Standing Bear (1868-1939)  
Oglala Lakota Chief, writer and actor*

Community partners, educators, and researchers often have different timelines, which affects the pacing of the collaborative work. Researchers may suddenly need input and support letters to apply for a grant, while community partners would like more time to consider the request. Community partners and researchers may want input from educational partners, but they may find it difficult to contact them at particularly busy times during the school year or during holidays. Researchers and non-Aboriginal community partners may be looking for immediate input on an issue at a meeting, while their Aboriginal partners would prefer an opportunity to reflect on the issue and potentially seek input from others. Acknowledge these challenges up front and recognize when you are asking people to make a decision or provide input without sufficient time. It is also important to recognize that there will be times when you are unable to apply for a grant or meet a deadline because of the realities of these community partnerships. Scheduling regular meetings may help anticipate some of the crises of having no time to submit something.

## SELECT COMMUNITY PARTNERS BASED ON THEIR CREDIBILITY WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITIES

Community credibility is the single most important characteristic of your community partners. Often, role models and leaders in the community may not be the individuals with a particular job or title. Once you have positive relationships with members of the community, ask their advice for identifying other partners.

## INVOLVING YOUTH AS PARTNERS REQUIRES A CONSCIOUS COMMITMENT

Youth are important partners in all aspects of programming. A large part of this section of the toolkit is devoted to engaging and empowering youth. It is also important to involve youth in research, as discussed on page 123 in Section 5.

## THINK ABOUT THE TYPES OF INFLUENCE YOU NEED ON YOUR TEAM

In addition to establishing credibility, it is important to think about the type of expertise and authority you may need on your team. For example, the Red Cross Walking the Prevention Circle program addresses the following questions when working with a community to develop a prevention team. Depending on the nature of your organization and program delivery, some or all of the following questions may be important to consider:

- Who are the decision makers?
- Who has knowledge of legal systems?
- Who determines budget allocations?
- Who is responsible for communications?
- Who oversees programs and services for children?
- Who will hold the group accountable?

## BE AWARE OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BUILDING RAPPORT AND BEING OVERLY INTRUSIVE

In an effort to seem friendly and interested, it is possible to inadvertently be intrusive in the types of questions you ask. For example, asking someone you have just met, “Why don’t some Aboriginal people consider themselves Canadian?” is inquiring into a deeply personal and political area. These types of conversations may be more appropriate once you have established a relationship of trust and openness over time, but not in the early rapport-building phase of a relationship.

## UNDERSTAND THAT YOUR INITIAL WORDS AND FORMAL CREDENTIALS WILL MEAN VERY LITTLE TO THE WAY IN WHICH YOU ARE PERCEIVED AS A POTENTIAL PARTNER

Your credibility in working with Aboriginal partners will be based on how you conduct yourself at meetings and how your actions match your words. Your formal credentials and job title mean very little compared to your integrity and the extent to which you meet your commitments. There is a historical context to meaningless promises being made by non-Aboriginal individuals (often in the context of extending “help”), and your partners may be understandably wary.

## KNOW THERE IS DIVERSITY OF ABORIGINAL POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS AND VIEWPOINTS IN CANADA

There are numerous Aboriginal political organizations in Canada, and there may be areas of significant disagreement among these groups (just as there are among non-Aboriginal political organizations!). It is respectful to have at least a preliminary understanding of the different organizations and affiliations when you begin to work with Aboriginal partners, or ask your partners to help you understand this landscape.

## SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS REQUIRE STRONG COMMUNICATION PLANS

Open and ongoing communication provides an essential foundation to healthy and respectful partnerships, but it is difficult to maintain. It is important to recognize that communication with various stakeholders requires different approaches. For example, e-mail updates may work well with educators, but a community-based face-to-face meeting might be more effective with parents. Scheduling regular meetings that coincide with important junctures of a project or key decision-making times can help keep things on track. It is also important to create a variety of ways for individuals to provide input into the project (e.g., not requiring written submissions).

## TALK ABOUT THE TYPE OF PARTNERSHIP YOU ARE SEEKING AND CLARIFY ROLES

Be clear about the extent to which partners are being asked for input, will have decision-making power, or are merely expected to rubber stamp decisions that have already been made. Asking people to serve in an advisory capacity when they do not have a true voice can lead to resentment and relationship difficulties. Not all partnerships will include equal responsibility, decision-making, and involvement, and that is okay. The important part is to clarify these roles as much as possible at the outset (while recognizing that partnerships and projects are ever-evolving).

## ENSURE THAT WOMEN'S VOICES ARE REPRESENTED

Women are key decision makers in many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. They are role models for youth and need to be given a voice in committees and partnerships.

## DEVELOP SPECIFIC STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Many community organizations recognize the importance of parental/familial involvement in youth programming but have difficulty engaging families. This issue is not unique to programming for Aboriginal youth; it is faced by service providers and educators in general. It is important to remember that parents may not get involved for a variety of reasons, so do not assume a lack of interest. There are a number of strategies that can be used to increase parent engagement:

- Be flexible about when you schedule events and meetings with parents. If most parents work during the day, choose an evening or weekend. If possible, arrange for childcare and refreshments to encourage attendance at events.
- Go to the parents and community if possible; for example, set up a booth at a Fall Fair on the local reserve or partner with local Friendship Centres on and off the reserve.
- Consider bestowing exceptional youth with a violence prevention leadership award. Community members often enjoy attending an event where youth are honoured.
- Use multiple parent engagement strategies to engage a wider range of parents.
- Recognize the unique circumstances of parents from urban versus reserve communities and adapt your engagement strategies for each group.
- For specific ideas, see *Engaging Aboriginal Parents in the School System* on page 104.

## PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION: ACCESSING ELDERS

---

Elders play important roles in traditional cultures, as advisors, mediators, mentors, and knowledge keepers. They are an important partner for effective programming. The following advice was written for youth who are approaching Elders, but it contains helpful advice for both youth and adults wishing to access this valuable community resource. It is reprinted with permission from the NWAC *Violence Prevention Toolkit* (see the case study on page 58).

### TOOL

#### HOW TO APPROACH AN ELDER

Whereas different communities have their own unique ways of approaching their Elders and incorporating traditional teachings, the following is some general advice provided by Elder Irene Lindsay who was helping the young women of NWAC's Youth Council on their journey in developing the Violence Prevention Toolkit for Aboriginal girls.

- 1) Bring a pouch of tobacco or a little rock to an Elder as a way to approach them
- 2) Ask if they can meet with you
- 3) Consider Elders as alternatives to other options
- 4) Think about the ways in which an Elder can help
- 5) Give Elders respect and time
- 6) Elders can introduce you to traditional aspects - ask the Elder about traditional ways of dealing with the problem
- 7) Understand the value of Elders in your culture and your community
- 8) There are some things out there - there is an Aboriginal community you should be proud of
- 9) Don't forget - TRADITIONAL APPROACH WORKS!

For a more in-depth guide, see *Interviewing Elders: Guidelines from the National Aboriginal Health Organization* at [www.naho.ca/english/documents/InterviewingElders--FINAL.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/english/documents/InterviewingElders--FINAL.pdf).

## PARTNERSHIP SATISFACTION SURVEY<sup>20</sup>

Strong relationships among partners provide a key foundation for successful work. The extent to which partners have clear objectives and work well together can be a critical factor in determining the progress of the activities they are undertaking.

If you have a formal steering committee or group of partners who work together over time, it might be useful to conduct a brief survey of the members to look at these issues. The results of this survey can help identify challenges experienced by partners in working together and also can be used to track changes over time (e.g., by asking partners to complete this annually). It also serves as a useful blueprint for partners by identifying indicators of healthy partnerships. The following survey was developed from indicators in the Public Health Agency of Canada's performance reporting tool.

### PART 1. TEAM VISION

How much do you agree with each of the following statements? Check the box that best applies.

The objectives of our partnership	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
are clear	<input type="radio"/>				
are realistic	<input type="radio"/>				
are worthwhile	<input type="radio"/>				
can be achieved	<input type="radio"/>				
are useful and appropriate	<input type="radio"/>				
are understood by all team members	<input type="radio"/>				
are consistent with my own personal vision	<input type="radio"/>				
if met, will contribute positively to our society	<input type="radio"/>				
if met, will contribute positively to our organization	<input type="radio"/>				
have been agreed upon by all team members	<input type="radio"/>				
have been committed to by all team members	<input type="radio"/>				

<sup>20</sup>Adapted from a survey based on the Public Health Agency of Canada's performance reporting tool (PERT). The authors acknowledge Dr. Caroline McIsaac's assistance in this regard.

## PART 2. TEAM WORK

How much do you agree with each of the following statements? Check the box that best applies.

Members of our partnership	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
build on each other's ideas	<input type="radio"/>				
are open/responsive to change	<input type="radio"/>				
influence each other positively	<input type="radio"/>				
listen to each other's viewpoints	<input type="radio"/>				
share information with each other	<input type="radio"/>				
monitor each other's progress/work	<input type="radio"/>				
help each other develop new ideas	<input type="radio"/>				
have a "we are in it together" attitude	<input type="radio"/>				
are always seeking out new information	<input type="radio"/>				
have a lot of "give & take" with each other	<input type="radio"/>				
feel accepted & understood by each other	<input type="radio"/>				
work together to achieve the best outcomes	<input type="radio"/>				
seek out new ways of looking at a problem	<input type="radio"/>				
work together to develop/apply new ideas	<input type="radio"/>				
take time to develop new ideas that come up	<input type="radio"/>				
offer practical support when new ideas come up	<input type="radio"/>				
make real attempts to keep each other informed	<input type="radio"/>				
share resources to help put new ideas into practice	<input type="radio"/>				
help each other do their job to best of their abilities	<input type="radio"/>				
can critically appraise weaknesses of the project	<input type="radio"/>				
are committed to achieving excellence in our work	<input type="radio"/>				
know what is expected of them to do the job well	<input type="radio"/>				

## PART 3. REFLECTION AND EVALUATION

Please note any suggestions you have for improving how our partners work together.

---



---



---

## CARING ACROSS THE BOUNDARIES INITIATIVE

---

Many of the partnership strategies discussed in this section are based on the assumption that organizations have at least a few partners in the Aboriginal community with whom they can collaborate. For some organizations, collaborating with Aboriginal partners might be a completely new area and one where you do not feel you have any expertise at all. There is an excellent initiative called *Caring across the Boundaries* that can provide support to organizations in this regard.

*Caring across the Boundaries* is an interactive workshop that facilitates collaboration between First Nations child and family services agencies and the voluntary sector. The program was developed based on research that found that First Nations children and youth on reserve have almost no access to the broad range of prevention and quality of life services provided by the voluntary sector.<sup>21</sup> A key finding of the research was that both First Nations child and family services providers and voluntary sector agencies want to ensure First Nations children and youth are able to access culturally appropriate voluntary sector supports. Identified barriers to collaboration expressed by voluntary sector and First Nations agencies include the following:

- Lack of time
- Lack of networking opportunities
- Hesitancy to initiate contact
- Lack of funds
- Lack of knowledge, information, and understanding about each other

During the *Caring across the Boundaries* workshop, participants work together to identify strategies to overcome these barriers. This activity quickly reveals that the vast majority of the barriers cited can be readily overcome. *Caring across the Boundaries* provides a process for participants to make new connections and create joint visions of future collaboration.

The curriculum is designed to help First Nations and the voluntary sector learn more about each other in a safe, supportive environment and begin breaking down barriers to collaboration. The training provides space for participants to make new connections, network, and create joint visions of future collaboration. The program is intended for individuals working for nonprofit, public service, philanthropic, and government agencies engaged in activities related to child, youth, and family services and individuals working with First Nations social services agencies both on and off reserve. Training is offered in 1.5-day workshops consisting of a half day primer session and a full day collaboration session.

More information about the initiative can be accessed at [www.fncfcs.com/projects/touchstones.html](http://www.fncfcs.com/projects/touchstones.html) or [www.fncfcs.com/events/caring-across-boundaries.html](http://www.fncfcs.com/events/caring-across-boundaries.html).

---

<sup>21</sup> FNCFSC, 2003

---

## SECTION 4: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN SCHOOL-BASED PREVENTION PROGRAMMING

## WORKING WITH SCHOOLS

---

Many organizations and groups work with schools to offer prevention programming and other services to youth. There are many advantages to partnering with schools and other educational settings:

**Access to many youth:** Although the highest risk youth are not typically found in a mainstream school setting, it is an efficient way to offer services to large numbers of low- to medium-risk youth.

**Sharing of resources:** Providing services in the schools can result in shared resources and logistics, such as the use of space and possibly transportation (e.g., if your group meets at lunch).

**Increasing school engagement through school-based programming:** For many Aboriginal youth, school is a difficult place and may not feel very welcoming. Providing a different type of experience in the school setting can lead to more positive feelings about school in general. School connectedness increases the likelihood that youth will attend regularly and experience success.

### OUR PROJECTS USED THE EDUCATIONAL SPHERE IN DIFFERENT WAYS AND TO VARYING DEGREES

**Universal prevention in a school setting:** The Fourth R: Uniting Our Nations (see the case study on page 90) provides youth in mainstream school settings with a variety of opportunities to be involved in violence prevention, including an extracurricular peer mentoring program, a number of for-credit course opportunities, and a transition conference for Grade 8 students preparing to start secondary school.

**Capacity building with educators:** Partnering with educators can increase their awareness of violence and its impacts. See page 77 for considerations when conducting professional development with educators.

**Liaising with schools to provide access to services for youth:** The Violence is Preventable (VIP) Project of the BCYSTH works with schools to link children and youth who have been exposed to domestic violence to appropriate provincial Children Who Witness Abuse programs run by transition homes and women-serving organizations (see the case study on page 110).

**Creating educational opportunities in a specialized service setting:** The TERF program at New Directions (see the case study on page 48) helps youth who are exiting the sex trade to attain academic success by offering courses and credit opportunities integrated with counselling, job skills, and life skills.

## WHAT CAN SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL BOARDS DO?

---

*My nation was ignored in your history textbooks. They were little more important in the history of Canada than the buffalo that ranged the plains.*

*Chief Dan George (1899–1981)  
Salish Chief, actor, and author*

### *HONOURING ABORIGINAL WAYS OF KNOWING CAN BE INITIATED IN SCHOOLS BY MAKING SEVERAL CHOICES:*

- Develop new initiatives and strengthen current policies related to cultural affirmation and school climate.
- Encourage healthy and meaningful relationship-building opportunities among all school community members.
- Develop and strengthen partnerships to facilitate shared decision making.
- Support access to and development of practical, relevant, and authentic resources reflective of traditional and cultural knowledge.
- Support teachers and students in efforts to actualize Aboriginal content and perspectives and the perspectives of diverse cultures in learning experiences.
- Learn from and about Aboriginal peoples.
- With partners, develop long-term, comprehensive plans to support language and culture programs, such as Aboriginal languages and Native Studies.
- Establish goals and monitor desired progress toward ensuring teaching and learning as culturally affirming and appropriate, and practice equitable employment reflective of the school community at all levels (i.e., administration, staff, governance, volunteers).
- Diversify the traditional membership in high schools to include Aboriginal Cultural Advisors and Elders.

This requires increased awareness of and respect for local traditions and protocols and increased flexibility when these role expectations and responsibilities differ from the roles of others in schools.

Adapted from a Saskatchewan Ministry of Education document available at [www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/pol\\_eval/community\\_ed/docs/hs2004splus.pdf](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/pol_eval/community_ed/docs/hs2004splus.pdf)

## WHAT CAN EDUCATORS DO TO BETTER ENGAGE ABORIGINAL YOUTH?

Research demonstrates that a number of factors contribute to the academic success of Aboriginal students:

- Educators who have high expectations and truly care for Aboriginal students.
- Classroom environments that honour Aboriginal students' culture, language, worldview, and knowledge.
- Teaching practices that reflect Aboriginal learning styles (see next page for examples).
- Schools that have strong partnerships with the Aboriginal community.

How can classroom teachers integrate culture into the classroom? The following table shows how the seven Grandfathers (also known as the Good Life teachings or Seven Virtues) can be operationalized in a classroom setting.<sup>22</sup>

*Table 1  
Ojibwe Good Life Teachings and Implications for Education*

Teaching	Implications for Education
Respect	Having high expectations for the Aboriginal student and honouring their culture, language, and worldview in our schools
Love	Demonstrating our belief (as educators) that all Aboriginal students can and will succeed through our own commitment to their learning/teaching styles
Bravery	Committing to changing our school curriculum by including the contributions, innovations, and inventions of Aboriginal people
Wisdom	Sharing effective practices in Aboriginal education through ongoing professional development and research that focuses on imbuing equity
Humility	Acknowledging that we need to learn more about the diversity of Aboriginal people and accessing key First Nations resources to enhance that state
Honesty	Accepting that we have much to learn from one another and reviewing the factors involved to encourage change in the education system (e.g., increased parental-guardian involvement, teacher education)
Truth	Developing measurable outcomes for Aboriginal student success and using them as key indicators of how inclusive our curriculum and pedagogy really are

*Note: The seven good life teachings are values/principles that are central to the Anishinabek*

<sup>22</sup> The information on this page and the figure on the next page are taken from a document on the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training website, available at: [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/Toulouse.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/Toulouse.pdf)

## SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

---

### **SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL LEARNING: REFLECTIONS FROM THE VOICES OF YOUTH (DVD)**

*Supporting Aboriginal Learning: Reflections from the Voices of Youth* was created to highlight the unique experiences of Aboriginal youth during the transition from elementary school to high school. The purpose of this DVD is to help educators and other professionals working with youth to understand some of the challenges Aboriginal students face as they transition from elementary to secondary school. The DVD presents Aboriginal students discussing the successes and challenges they have encountered in their experiences in school. The students explain the various experiences, activities, and events that have helped ease their transition into high school and suggest advice and strategies that are beneficial to Aboriginal students during this time.

[www.youthrelationships.org/curriculum\\_resources.html](http://www.youthrelationships.org/curriculum_resources.html)

### **UNICEF’S “LEAVING NO CHILD BEHIND” CAMPAIGN – REPORT ON ABORIGINAL KIDS IN CANADA**

Aboriginal children are among the most marginalized children in Canadian society. Despite some advances, by almost any measure of health and well-being, Aboriginal children—First Nations, Inuit and Métis—are at least two or three times worse off than other Canadian children. UNICEF’s campaign addresses these marginalities, provides factors and consequences, and outlines solutions to ensure policies, funding, and service delivery models promote equal access to the rights inherent to all children in this country.

[www.unicef.ca/portal/SmartDefault.aspx?at=2063](http://www.unicef.ca/portal/SmartDefault.aspx?at=2063)

### **WHAT I LEARNED IN CLASS TODAY: ABORIGINAL ISSUES IN THE CLASSROOM**

What I Learned in Class Today: Aboriginal Issues in the Classroom is a research project that explores difficult discussions of Aboriginal issues that take place in classrooms at the University of British Columbia. Students frequently report troubling and sometimes traumatic discussions of cultural issues in class. These situations often affect their ability to function in their coursework and even their ability to return to class. The project looks at how the challenges around talking about race work as an educational barrier at the classroom level. This is something that has not been sufficiently addressed in educational institutions but desperately needs to be discussed.

[www.whatilearnedinclasstoday.com](http://www.whatilearnedinclasstoday.com)

### **CANADIAN COUNCIL ON LEARNING – ABORIGINAL LEARNING KNOWLEDGE CENTRE REPORTS**

The Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre was created to provide a collaborative national forum that would support the development of effective solutions for the challenges faced by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit learners. The Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre is composed of a Consortium and a National Advisory Committee of more than 80 organizations and individuals from across the country working together to create a path for the improvement of Aboriginal learning in Canada.

[www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/AboutCCL/KnowledgeCentres/AboriginalLearning/?Language=EN](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/AboutCCL/KnowledgeCentres/AboriginalLearning/?Language=EN)

## PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: THE FOURTH R: UNITING OUR NATIONS

---

There are many challenges facing Aboriginal youth in the current education system. The residential school system played a large role in negating the protective factors of culture and community for many youth, resulting in widespread mistrust of the formal education system. This history laid the foundation for youth being disconnected from school, but the lack of engagement is propagated by the current system in several ways: youths' culture is not reflected in the curriculum, there are few Aboriginal adult role models in the school system, and there is a lack of awareness about relevant historical and cultural issues among educators. As a group, these youth continue to experience early departure from high school at disproportionate rates.

Over the past four years, our team of researchers and educators has worked closely with Aboriginal youth, educators, community members, and the Thames Valley District School Board to develop a number of strengths-based programs. Collectively, we refer to these initiatives as *Uniting Our Nations: Relationship-Based Programming for Aboriginal Youth*.<sup>23</sup> These initiatives have two goals. First, by making changes in the school setting (by incorporating culturally relevant curricula, developing mentoring and supports, and raising educator awareness), we have worked to change the salience of school as a place of learning for Aboriginal youth. Second, by providing these youth with opportunities to explore their leadership capabilities, engage in culturally enhancing activities, and be connected to role models in their schools and communities, we have worked to foster their learning spirits and empower them. The individual components of *Uniting Our Nations* include the following:

- ✓ A peer mentoring program for secondary students that involves older Aboriginal students mentoring younger ones to develop a positive relationship and assist the younger students make a successful transition to secondary school. (For more information on the *Uniting Our Nations* mentoring program, see page 67.) A mentoring program for youth in Grades 7 and 8 was piloted during the 2008–2009 school year. The elementary program uses young adult mentors to work with small groups of youth.
- ✓ A First Nations Cultural Leadership course that places Grade 9 and Grade 11 students in the same classroom to work on one of two credits (Grade 9 general study skills or Grade 11 peer leadership). This class incorporates peer mentoring, cultural enhancement activities (such as drum making and community outings), and relationship skills. The students are encouraged to work together, learn from each other, and develop strong relationships.
- ✓ Twice-yearly Grade 8 transition conferences that bring together students from urban and reserve elementary schools to engage in culturally relevant activities, discuss concerns about high school, and connect them to positive supports available in the high schools they will be attending. Senior students from the peer mentoring program and First Nations Cultural Leadership course play a primary role in planning and hosting the conferences.

---

<sup>23</sup> *Uniting Our Nations* was developed as part of Strategies for Healthy Youth Relationships, featuring the *Fourth R* school-based programs. More information about these programs is available at [www.youthrelationships.org](http://www.youthrelationships.org). A DVD resource featuring youth reflecting on their school experience and issues of identity is forthcoming.

*The Uniting Our Nations initiatives demonstrate the four guiding principles in the following ways:*

### **Understanding and integrating cultural identity**

- ✓ Cultural teachings are incorporated in the secondary peer mentoring program through the involvement of adult community mentors who share traditions.
- ✓ Peer mentoring training includes traditions such as smudging and a component on cultural identity.
- ✓ Culturally enhancing activities are built into the classroom-based courses, such as drum and mask making, community guest speakers, and culturally relevant videos.

### **Increasing youth engagement**

- ✓ Youth are recruited for potential involvement through pre-existing relationships with First Nations counsellors and other youth.
- ✓ Twice-annual Grade 8 transition conferences are held to help prepare elementary students for high school and to begin the process of engaging them with the culturally relevant opportunities available.
- ✓ School engagement and success is increased as a result of opportunities to gain academic credit in culturally relevant study skill and peer leadership courses.
- ✓ The program addresses barriers for involvement by providing transportation and meals.

### **Fostering youth empowerment**

- ✓ Youth in high school are trained to be mentors to younger youth and supported in this role.
- ✓ Older youth in the mentoring program and First Nations Cultural Leadership course are encouraged and supported in taking leadership roles to plan and conduct the Grade 8 Aboriginal Transition conferences.
- ✓ Youth have been hired as consultants on projects when possible.
- ✓ Youth have been invited to attend conferences and co-present with program developers.
- ✓ Youth involved in the projects have presented on a youth panel at educator training events and in a DVD developed for similar purposes.

### **Developing and maintaining effective partnerships**

- ✓ The programs are the result of a partnership between the Thames Valley District School Board and the Fourth R team at the CAMH Centre for Prevention Science.
- ✓ Adult Community Mentors come into the schools to support the Peer Mentoring program.
- ✓ An Advisory Committee of First Nations counsellors and administrators meets regularly to discuss future directions and problem-solve challenges.
- ✓ Teacher training activities are developed and conducted to increase educator awareness of Aboriginal cultures and history and to assist teachers in better supporting Aboriginal students.
- ✓ Community-based parent engagement activities are delivered to coincide with local community events.

## CAPACITY BUILDING WITH EDUCATORS

---

Schools can be supported to provide a more welcoming and engaging environment for Aboriginal youth in a variety of ways. Programming and resources are important, and external organizations can play a leadership role in developing culturally relevant materials and assisting in developing culturally responsive environments. Equally important are initiatives that increase educator capacity to respond to the needs of Aboriginal youth by increasing educators' training, awareness, and comfort with Aboriginal perspectives. If your organization wants to help foster this professional development of educators, the following may be useful:

### Work closely with partners from the educational system.

- The educational system is a very structured system with specific policies, protocols, procedures, and guidelines. Learning to work with the educational system can be like learning a foreign language and culture.
- Working with educational partners from the outset, rather than presenting a finished idea to the local board, can increase the likelihood that a program will be adapted and used.
- Having educators on any planning committee can help you shape your initiatives in a way that maximizes the likelihood of their success.

### Provide opportunities for educators to process new information that may be uncomfortable to them.

- Learning about the history and context of Aboriginal peoples in Canada is not simply learning dates and facts.
- It involves coming to terms with a national history that includes systematic attempts to colonize, assimilate, and, at times, extinguish the peoples who are indigenous to the land.
- Many Canadians do not have accurate information about the reality and extent of residential schools, for example, and learning about this part of our shared history can cause feelings of denial, overwhelming sadness, and shame.
- Learning opportunities for educators need to balance the provision of information with the ability to process the information emotionally.

### Balance history and context with specific strategies for educators.

- Supporting educators to become more responsive to Aboriginal students requires them to have a greater awareness of shared history and cultural traditions, but at the end of the day, they also require specific, action-oriented strategies.
- An understanding of history and context helps educators understand the importance of incorporating Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom, but many educators have no idea how to accomplish that goal.
- Specific strategies, lesson plan ideas, and resources will support educators in applying their new awareness to the students in their classroom.

**Raise awareness about the daily realities of Aboriginal youth.**

- There is much diversity among the lived experiences of Aboriginal youth.
- Educators would benefit from learning more about the strengths and challenges of the particular community with which they are working.
- For example, in some northern communities, youth may be attending high school hundreds of miles from their home and be billeted with non-Aboriginal families.
- An awareness of these types of stressors will help educators connect with youth in a caring and compassionate manner.

**Provide self-reflection opportunities for educators.**

- Many non-Aboriginal Canadians have not thought much about their relationship to Aboriginal peoples.
- Dr. Susan Dion (York University) refers to this position as the "perfect stranger": If you have no relationship to a group of people, you also have no obligation to learn more or play a role in redressing historical injustices.
- Dr. Dion argues that educators need some awareness about their position of perfect stranger before they can learn more about Aboriginal peoples in an ethical way.
- See Dion, S. (2007). Disrupting molded images: Identities, responsibilities, and relationships--teachers and indigenous subject material. *Teaching Education, 18*, 329-342.

**Help educators understand the importance and relevance of incorporating an Aboriginal perspective.**

- Some educators think they do not have a role to play because they are not Aboriginal themselves or do not teach a particular type of course.
- Encourage a shared sense of responsibility by framing the lack of awareness of Aboriginal perspectives as a social justice issue.
- In addition, tying the professional development to school board and Ministry mandates can help impart a sense of importance and obligation.

**Provide instruction in how to integrate content.**

- Once educators recognize the need to better integrate Aboriginal perspectives into their classroom, they may still benefit from specific instructions and guidelines.
- The framework for levels of integration depicted on the following page is a useful paradigm for educators and may help prevent situations in which well-meaning educators contribute further to the general lack of awareness by only addressing the first level of integration.

## WHAT CAN EDUCATORS DO? HONOURING ABORIGINAL LEARNING STYLES

While it is inappropriate to make generalizations about the learning styles of *all* Aboriginal students, there are learning styles that fit with traditional styles of education among many Aboriginal peoples.

### *Appreciating the Learning Styles of Aboriginal Students*



Values and traditions of Aboriginal peoples support holistic learning approaches that do not rely solely on written modes of communication. There are a number of considerations when matching the learning styles of Aboriginal students.

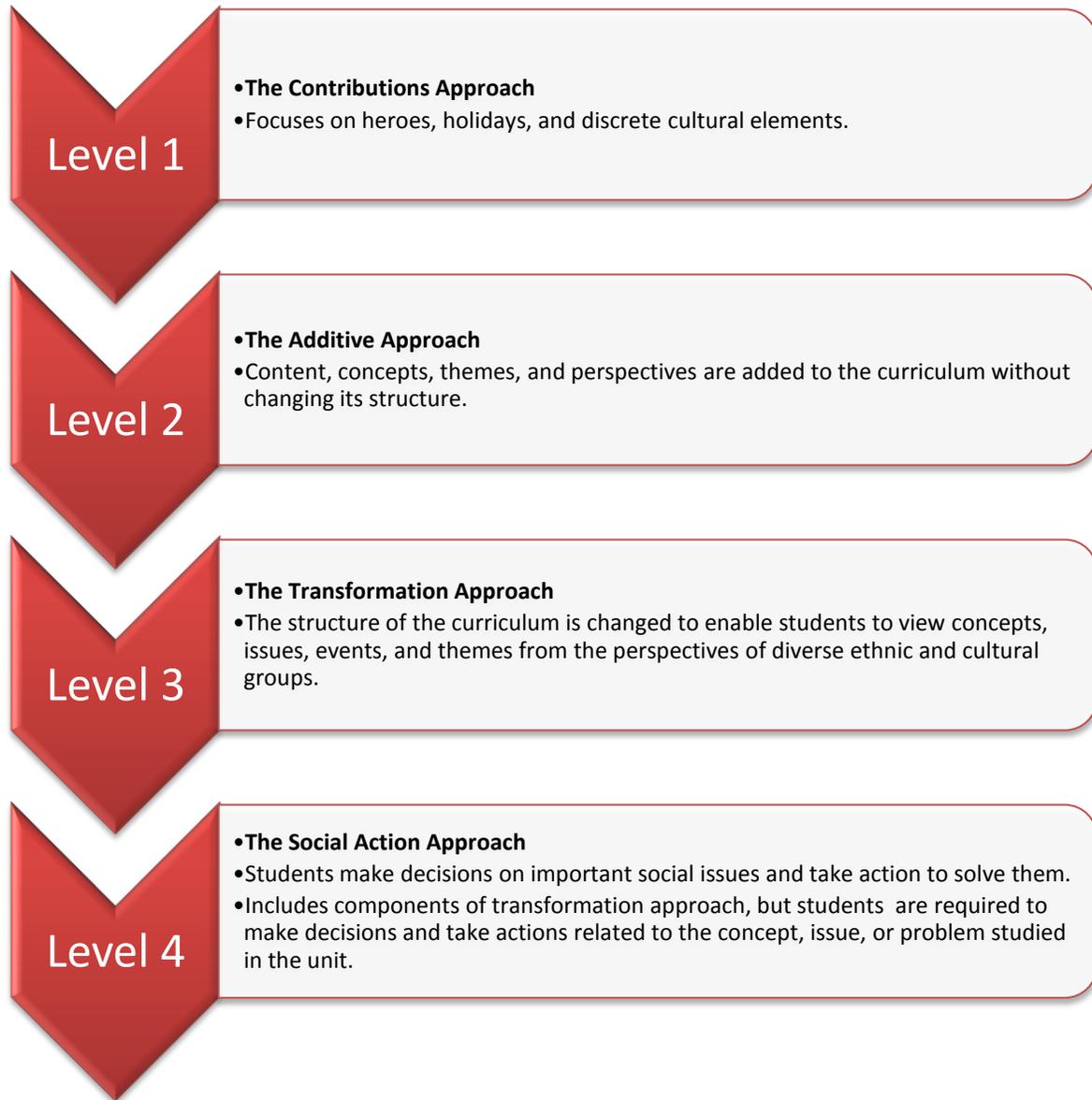
***“Much of Canadians’ day-to-day lives involve contributions from Aboriginal people. Without indigenous knowledge, Canada would not be Canada. There are numerous contributions including a variety of foods, forms of government, materials, transportation routes, and inventions. If even more indigenous knowledge had been adopted earlier, women would have had the vote, medicines would have been available, and clean water and air would be the norm. Much in Canada would be different if society embraced some traditional Aboriginal values. A whole community would be involved in looking out for all children, we would value knowledge more than information, and our goal would be to grow old and wise so we could teach our children. People wouldn’t be in retirement homes; they would be in the classroom.”***

*Cindy Blackstock  
Executive Director, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society*

## LEVELS OF INTEGRATION OF MULTICULTURAL CONTENT

---

Educators can integrate multicultural content into their classrooms and lessons in a number of ways. The level of integration exists along a continuum from superficial to truly integrated.<sup>24</sup>



---

<sup>24</sup> This information has been adapted from a summary prepared by James A. Banks. The entire document is available at <http://resources.css.edu/DiversityServices/docs/LevelsofIntegrationofmuticulturalcontent.pdf>.

## PROGRAMMING INTEGRATED INTO THE SCHOOL SETTING

---

*“If school boards would mandate staff to deliver in-house programs for First Nations youth, there would be greater participation and sustainability for the projects than the research model, which depends on the irregularity of funding agencies. The challenge for some research-based projects is that they are essentially run off-site from where the program is implemented and cannot be woven in tightly into the fabric of the school.”*

*Ray Hughes, Fourth R National Education Coordinator*

Programs that are integrated into the educational system tend to be more sustainable in that the responsibility for funding and conducting these services is shifted from the community to the school, or at least shared between the two. Community organizations still play a critical role in the development and delivery of these services, but the shared sense of responsibility increases the likelihood of success.

Many community organizations develop programs and services hoping that their program will become firmly established in schools. Designing programs with an understanding of the realities of the school system from the outset will increase the likelihood of the implementation and eventual adoption of a program, rather than trying to make the program fit after it has been developed.

For example, all of the provincial Ministries of Education have curriculum documents that standardize what is taught in a particular course at each grade level. The purpose of these documents and guidelines is to ensure that students throughout a province or territory are receiving comparable levels of education. The implication is that teachers may be resistant to teaching material and objectives that do not match the curriculum expectations of their course. Teachers will be more receptive to an activity or initiative if you can show them how it supports the government-mandated curriculum. Activities that can be shown to support literacy and numeracy will also be more positively received.

The checklist on the following page was developed to identify areas that may be useful to address when designing programs that you want to be successfully implemented in schools. Obviously, it is not necessary to be able to answer each of the questions in a particular way, but thinking about these areas will help you plan your program and service delivery.

An awareness of the different areas covered here will also better prepare you to meet with school board personnel.

## CHECKLIST FOR IDENTIFYING AREAS OF ALIGNMENT WITH SCHOOL BOARD POLICIES AND INITIATIVES

POLICIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Have you checked the provincial Ministry of Education policies on Aboriginal education and aligned your objectives to match their policy statement?</li> <li>○ Are you familiar with any school board policies or initiatives underway with which you could align?</li> <li>○ If you are working with a particular school, are you aware of the school’s policies or initiatives?</li> <li>○ Are there teacher federation mandates or requirements that align with your work?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is there a local school board committee responsible for Aboriginal Education initiatives? If so, can you present your ideas to this committee early in the process to assess interest and feasibility and potentially identify appropriate partners?</li> <li>○ Is there a superintendent/consultant with a portfolio for Aboriginal Education? Can you get in touch with this person early in your planning?</li> <li>○ Are there other community organizations already successfully partnering with the school board that you could use as a resource or mentor? Ask them about their failures in school-based programming as well as their successes.</li> <li>○ Can you recruit an educator to be on your advisory committee or project development team? This individual will be able to assist you with the alignment process throughout all phases of development and delivery.</li> <li>○ Is there someone at the school or board level who is known to be a “champion” of this type of initiative?</li> </ul>
PARTNERSHIPS	
LINKS TO CURRICULUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Have you decided which grade levels and areas you will be targeting with your initiative? Can you identify particular Ministry curriculum expectations that your initiative matches?</li> <li>○ If your initiative involves community-based individuals doing presentations or facilitating activities, can you develop follow-up activities that teachers can deliver that match specific curriculum expectations?</li> <li>○ Can you utilize recognized literacy strategies in your materials or the follow-up activities?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Have you met with school administrators to determine the school’s current programming?</li> <li>○ Are administrators on board with your programming, and will they support their teachers and staff in these initiatives?</li> <li>○ Do teachers have a role in the delivery of the program? As supervisors? Co-facilitators?</li> <li>○ Will teachers require specialized training and/or resources? If so, who will pay for them?</li> </ul>
ROLE OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL	
ROLE OF YOUTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Do youth have a role in the delivery of the program?</li> <li>○ Will they require training? Support? Resources?</li> </ul>

## PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: FOURTH R ABORIGINAL PERSPECTIVES CURRICULUM

---

The Fourth R is a comprehensive school-based program that aims to develop healthy relationships and reduce risky behaviours among youth, including violence (bullying, peer, and dating violence), substance abuse, and unsafe sexual behaviour. Most of the risky behaviours that youth engage in occur in the context of relationships, and the Fourth R was developed with the contention that relationships (the fourth “R”) should be taught in schools with the same emphasis as reading, writing, and arithmetic. Students are engaged in interactive, skills-based classroom activities that help them to develop effective and reasoned responses to various social scenarios. Evaluation of the original Fourth R curriculum has shown that it is effective in reducing dating violence as well as increasing condom use.<sup>25</sup>

The Fourth R Aboriginal Perspectives Curriculum was developed to provide an expanded, more culturally relevant curriculum for use with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. It retains the skills-based focus of the original program, but it has several important additions and distinctions:

- ✓ The entire curriculum is embedded in a cultural identity framework
- ✓ Relevant traditional teachings are woven into the lesson plans
- ✓ Suicide prevention is specifically addressed
- ✓ The historical context of high rates of risk behaviours among Aboriginal youth is examined (i.e., the role of residential schools and intergenerational trauma)
- ✓ Opportunities are presented to bring elders and community members into the classroom
- ✓ There is a focus on both individual and community strengths to build resiliency, and safety planning is conducted that enables youth to identify their connections and resources in the community
- ✓ Traditional teaching tools, such as sharing circles, complement conventional Western teaching strategies
- ✓ There are opportunities to bring traditional practices such as smudging into the classroom (if it is appropriate to the local community)
- ✓ Role-play examples have been developed to include situations relevant to Aboriginal youth (e.g., racism at school)
- ✓ A DVD was developed with Aboriginal youth to demonstrate healthy and nonviolent ways to respond to conflict and peer pressure
- ✓ Numerous DVDs produced by Aboriginal filmmakers are interspersed in the materials for optional use

Since its initial implementation in Ontario, versions of the Aboriginal Perspectives Curriculum have been developed for Saskatchewan, NWT, and Alaska. It has been used in small alternative education settings as well as conventional education settings. It has been taught with groups comprised entirely of Aboriginal youth as well as in groups of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth.

---

<sup>25</sup> Wolfe, D.A., Crooks, C.C., Jaffe, P., Chiodo, D., Hughes, R., Ellis, W., Stitt, L., & Donner, A. (2009). A School-Based Program to Prevent Adolescent Dating Violence. *Journal of Adolescent Medicine*, 163, 8, 692-699.

*The Fourth R Aboriginal Perspectives Curriculum demonstrates the four guiding principles in the following ways:*

### **Understanding and integrating cultural identity**

- ✓ Integrates cultural elements into every part of the Fourth R relationships curriculum, from curriculum development to role-play scenarios
- ✓ Provides opportunities to bring Elders and other community leaders into the classroom
- ✓ Incorporates traditional teaching methods into the curriculum (e.g., sharing circles, smudging, the medicine wheel)
- ✓ Provides a template for adapting the materials to fit the local community (see page 100 for abridged version of the template)

### **Increasing youth engagement**

- ✓ The initial development of role-play scenarios involved Aboriginal student consultants, increasing the relevance and importance of the situations for youth
- ✓ Opportunities for student feedback using surveys is a key component of ongoing program evaluation effort
- ✓ Uses interactive and practical teaching methods such as role plays and group discussions to encourage youth to get excited and participate in the classroom
- ✓ Skill development is broken down into small manageable steps to lower barriers to involvement by students

### **Fostering youth empowerment**

- ✓ Healthy relationship and leadership skills are explicitly taught in the program
- ✓ The curriculum is supported by a mentoring program in which senior students act as role models for junior students

### **Developing and maintaining effective partnerships**

- ✓ The Aboriginal Perspectives Curriculum was developed in partnership with Aboriginal educators, leaders, and youth
- ✓ Teachers who implement the Fourth R curriculum are provided with training and often become advocates for the program and their students in the school and wider community
- ✓ The curriculum meets provincial Ministry of Education curriculum requirements
- ✓ There are opportunities built into the curriculum to assist educators in utilizing community partners and resources



# TEMPLATE FOR ADAPTATION OF FOURTH R ABORIGINAL PERSPECTIVES

This template outlines seven areas that should be considered when undertaking adaptations to the Fourth R Aboriginal Perspectives Curriculum for your community. Although it was developed specifically for the Fourth R curriculum, it can provide a starting point for considering areas of any program that might require adaptation. The first three areas to be reviewed and revised are the most important. These revisions should be conducted prior to implementing the program, if at all possible: (1) language and terminology; (2) integration of specific traditions and indigenous knowledge, teachings, and protocols; and (3) historical context.

## 1. Language and Terminology

- Language and terminology are critical issues and need to reflect the local realities and preferences.
- **SUGGESTED PERSONNEL:** Language is such an important issue that several people should be involved with this process, preferably a mix of educators, community partners, and cultural advisors. The Advisory Committee should discuss this matter as well.

## 2. Integration of Specific Traditions

- Relevant cultural traditions and teaching are included in a number of places (e.g., the Seven Grandfather teachings, the Medicine Wheel, Dene Laws of Living).
- Teachings that are relevant to the students and that emphasize positive values and a holistic worldview will need to be integrated to replace them.
- It is also important to explain where these teachings or ideas come from (i.e., whose tradition it is).
- **SUGGESTED PERSONNEL:** Lessons can be drafted by an educator based on the traditions selected by the cultural advisors/Advisory Committee.

## 3. Historical Context

- The historical context of colonization is described largely in terms of residential schools in Canada. This history is linked to rates of problem behaviors in both the substance use and sexual health units.
- This context may need to be adapted to fit the local colonization experience.
- **SUGGESTED PERSONNEL:** Someone familiar with regional history, but lessons should be reviewed by or discussed with the entire Advisory Committee.

The remaining four areas are more straightforward to revise, and these revisions can be made during or after the first pilot implementation: (4) matching to state or provincial curriculum guidelines; (5) resource listings; (6) relevance of role-play scenarios; and (7) additional resources.

#### 4. Matching to State/Provincial Curriculum Guidelines

- If provincial or state curriculum expectations exist (for healthy living, social skills, etc.), then the links between the program and the guidelines should be identified.
- Marking templates/rubrics may need to be adapted to reflect curriculum changes.
- **SUGGESTED PERSONNEL:** This linking is best accomplished by an experienced educator who is familiar with the guidelines.

#### 5. Resource Listings

- There are a number of places where community resources and websites are provided for students and teachers.
- These listings need to be updated to reflect the local community.
- **SUGGESTED PERSONNEL:** A community partner can undertake this and the local school board or public health organization may already have such a list available.

#### 6. Relevance of Role-Play Scenarios

- Role plays and skill building are an essential part of the Fourth R curriculum.
- It is imperative that the role-play scenarios seem genuine to the youth.
- Many of the issues addressed are universal (e.g., bullying, peer pressure).
- There may be specific local issues that could be included or some scenarios that do not fit the context.
- **SUGGESTED PERSONNEL:** If possible, convene a small group of students to review the role-play scenarios in each unit and suggest revisions or additions. The educator overseeing the adaptations in general will need to integrate these into the document.

#### 7. Additional Resources

- There are a number of lessons that refer to videos produced by indigenous filmmakers.
- All of these are offered as options and can be replaced with other videos that may be preferred or seen as more relevant.
- **SUGGESTED PERSONNEL:** These videos can be reviewed by the Advisory Committee, or it can be left up to individual teachers to decide whether to use them.

## PARENT ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

---

Your gender:      Male                              Female

Aboriginal ancestry:      First Nations (status or non-status)      Métis      Inuit

Do you live:      In a First Nations community/on reserve      Not in a First Nations community

Where do your children currently attend school?

- In a First Nations community/on reserve
- Outside a First Nations community/off reserve

***IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN AT BOTH TYPES OF SCHOOL, ANSWER THE REST OF THIS SURVEY WITH RESPECT TO THE SCHOOL NOT IN THE FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITY.***

1. Have you attended any of the following **IN THE PAST YEAR**? Check all that apply.

- Awards ceremony/graduation                      Sports event
- Parent-teacher interviews                              Information event
- Social/community event                                  Dance/music/drama event
- Counselling/support                                          Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. How often do you do the following school-related activities? Please **circle** the best response.

- |                                                 |       |           |       |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| a. Help with homework                           | Never | Sometimes | Often |
| b. Attend parent-teacher interviews             | Never | Sometimes | Often |
| c. Support school events such as food fairs     | Never | Sometimes | Often |
| d. Volunteer in the classroom                   | Never | Sometimes | Often |
| e. Volunteer on school trips                    | Never | Sometimes | Often |
| f. Be a guest speaker in the classroom          | Never | Sometimes | Often |
| g. Participate on school council                | Never | Sometimes | Often |
| h. Help plan school-related events for families | Never | Sometimes | Often |

3. **IN THE PAST YEAR** was there a school event that you wanted to attend but did not?

- Yes                       No

If you answered **yes**, did any of the following stop you from being able to attend a school event that you wanted to go to? **Check** all that apply.

- |                                                                 |                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Could not arrange for childcare           | <input type="radio"/> Had no way to get there                    |
| <input type="radio"/> Work schedule                             | <input type="radio"/> Not sure where the school is               |
| <input type="radio"/> Did not feel welcome in the school        | <input type="radio"/> Do not feel safe in the school             |
| <input type="radio"/> My children did not want me to attend     | <input type="radio"/> I did not find out about the event in time |
| <input type="radio"/> Poor experiences with schools in the past | <input type="radio"/> I wasn't invited                           |
| <input type="radio"/> Fear of facing racism                     | <input type="radio"/> Other: _____                               |

4. For each question, please **circle** the option that best captures your opinion

**My child's school**

- |                                                |            |       |           |
|------------------------------------------------|------------|-------|-----------|
| a. Feels welcoming to all parents              | Not at all | A bit | Very much |
| b. Makes it easy for parents to get involved   | Not at all | A bit | Very much |
| c. Has staff who understand Aboriginal culture | Not at all | A bit | Very much |
| d. Treats parents as partners                  | Not at all | A bit | Very much |
| e. Is interested in my opinions as a parent    | Not at all | A bit | Very much |
| f. Is interested in my child as a person       | Not at all | A bit | Very much |
| g. Has high expectations for my child          | Not at all | A bit | Very much |
| h. Treats all parents with respect             | Not at all | A bit | Very much |

*Thank you very much for your time in completing this survey.*

## ENGAGING ABORIGINAL PARENTS IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

---

Engaging Aboriginal parents<sup>26</sup> in their children's formal education continues to be an area of challenge for many communities, educators, and policymakers. There are a number of barriers, both historical and current, that contribute to the observed low levels of engagement. Provincial and territorial education ministries have identified parent engagement as a critical priority for improving educational outcomes among Aboriginal children.

### PARENT INVOLVEMENT VERSUS PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Many educators refer to involving and engaging parents interchangeably. However, there may be important reasons to differentiate between the concepts because they refer to different types of partnerships and shared responsibility.

*Involvement* can be seen as opportunities for parents and educators to come together in the school setting. These opportunities are usually led by educators, who are also responsible for communicating with parents. Parents who are involved in school may attend school events such as concerts and sporting events or may be visible in the school as help in a classroom or fundraising assistants. Involvement also includes being a positive parent by helping with homework and supporting the goals of the school. Educators decide what activities parents are involved with and how parents can help the school. Parent involvement leaves knowledge, voice, and decision making with the educators.<sup>27</sup>

*Engagement* differs from involvement in that it recognizes and welcomes the knowledge of parents in determining the goals and vision of a school. Engagement removes the hierarchical structure in which educators make the decisions in the school and includes input from parents in the decision-making process. Examples of parent engagement opportunities include parent trustee positions and parent advisory councils.

Parent involvement and engagement are both important for the success of students and schools. Involving parents can be seen as a stepping stone to engagement, and engaging parents is essential for schools with Aboriginal students. Although parent engagement is important for all students, it is particularly important for Aboriginal students. Historically, parents and families were the education system for Aboriginal youth, and engagement is a better fit with the holistic approach to life in Aboriginal culture. Furthermore, the legacy of residential schools has left many Aboriginal families with a sense of alienation from the formal education system, and specific strategies are required to bridge this gap.

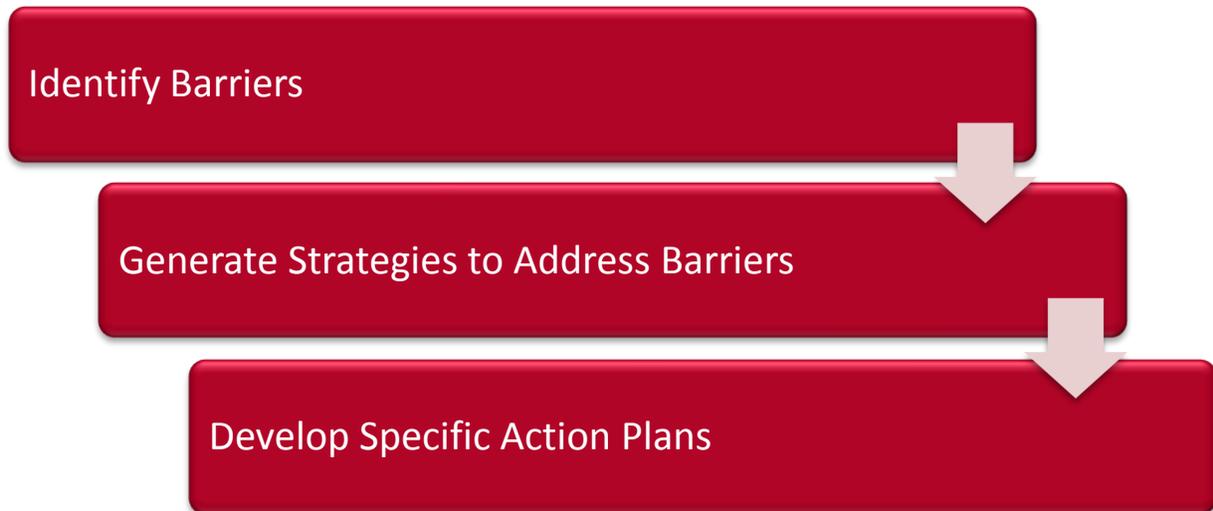
---

<sup>26</sup> Although we refer specifically to Aboriginal parents in this section to align with other research and policy work, we acknowledge the need to involve and engage extended families.

<sup>27</sup> Pushor, D. 2007. Parent engagement: Creating a shared world. Invited research paper. Available online at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/research/pushor.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/research/pushor.pdf).

## PARENT ENGAGEMENT CONSULTATION PROCESS

In 2009, our team developed and piloted a consultation process for multi-stakeholder groups of educators, parents, students, and community partners to develop action plans to increase parent engagement. This consultation process was designed to be as interactive as possible and to provide a safe environment for all stakeholders to contribute their opinions and ideas. The details of the process are documented elsewhere,<sup>28</sup> but there are three key steps in the consultation process:



Charting a path to improved parent engagement requires an understanding of barriers from the viewpoints of educators, Aboriginal parents, Aboriginal students, and community partners. As a result, this path will look different for every community depending on its unique strengths and challenges. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to increasing parent engagement. By identifying barriers specific to your community, you can develop strategies and articulate these in an action plan in a manner that increases the likelihood of success both for the initiatives and for the impact you desire (i.e., increased parental engagement).

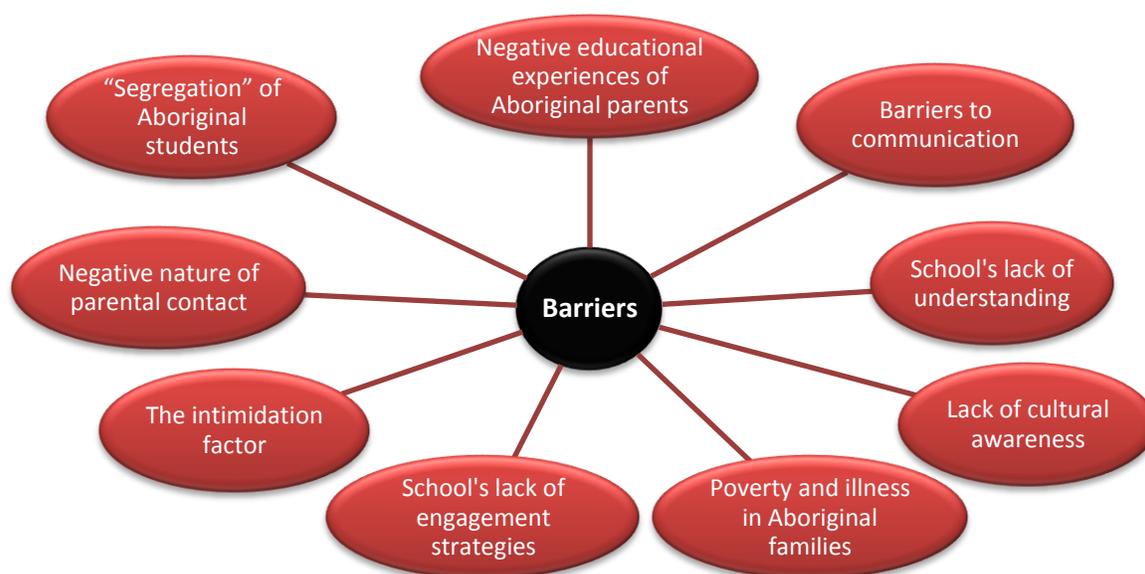
The barriers specific to your community can be assessed in a number of ways, such as by conducting focus groups or undertaking a formal consultation process. Alternatively, a questionnaire could be administered to a larger number of parents than might be possible to include in focus groups or a consultation. We have included a questionnaire for assessing barriers on page 18.

---

<sup>28</sup> Crooks, C.V., Camillo, C., & Hughes, R. (2010). *Increasing participation and engagement of Aboriginal parents and families in schools*. London, ON: CAMH Centre for Prevention Science.

## BARRIERS TO PARENT ENGAGEMENT

A number of barriers have been identified that interfere with Aboriginal parents being engaged and involved partners in the educational system. Some of these relate to the parents' situations and experiences, and others relate to characteristics of the school system:<sup>29</sup>



Different stakeholders will have different perspectives on barriers (although there may be significant overlap), and it is important to gather these various viewpoints. In our multi-stakeholder consultation process,<sup>30</sup> the following barriers were identified:

**Parents identified the following barriers:**

- Lack of communication
- Poverty: lack of transportation, phone, childcare
- Racism
- Negative feelings about the system
- History and past experience, family experience
- Respect
- Self-esteem, shame, lacking education
- Sense that schools are superior
- Time commitments: busy family schedules, disorganization

**Educators identified the following barriers:**

- Logistics: transportation, childcare
- Lack of trust
- Relationships
- Responsibilities: need for shared leadership and clear roles
- Communication: comfort, eye contact, sense of inferiority
- Apathy/lack of interest
- Past experiences
- Time frames/scheduling
- Extended family/parenting
- Language barriers

**Community partners identified the following barriers:**

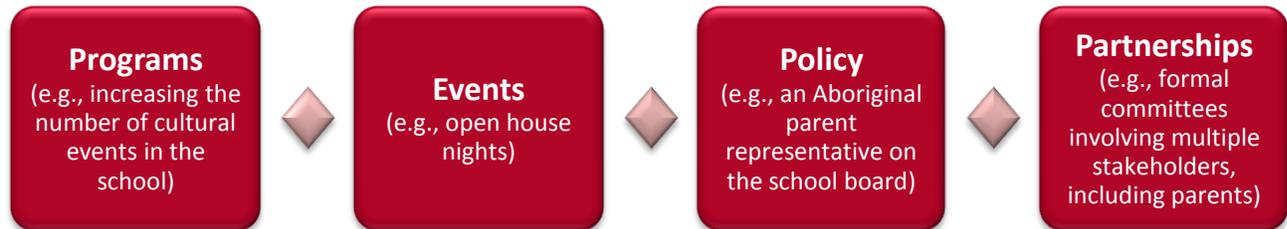
- Parents being busy, job demands
- Fear of kids being labelled
- Health, mental health issues
- Expectation: parents unsure, or unrealistic expectations on both sides
- Apathy
- Involvement of multiple social agencies
- Poverty
- Comprehension problems
- Feeling intimidated
- Not being informed/communication

<sup>29</sup> Malatest and Associates, 2002

<sup>30</sup> Crooks et al., 2010

## DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO INCREASE PARENT ENGAGEMENT

There are a number of engagement activities that can be considered once you have a better sense of the barriers present in your community. In our work with school boards, we have found that most initiatives fall into one of the following categories:



## DEVELOPING STRATEGIES

For each barrier that you choose to address, your parent engagement team can brainstorm a range of possible strategies. Ideally, your strategies involve a variety of people (rather than making parent engagement the responsibility of one person). It is also a good idea to think about multiple approaches, such as programs and events. The more diversified your plan is in terms of approaches and involvement, the more likely that parents will find one of the approaches engaging.

### INEFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

In addition to thinking about effective strategies, it is useful to avoid strategies that others have found to be ineffective. The following strategies have been characterized as ineffective.<sup>31</sup>

- Meeting with no reason
- Limited duration programs / initiatives
- “Tokenism” – such as having one parent represent the “Aboriginal point of view” on a committee
- Insufficient promotion of strategies and initiatives

---

<sup>31</sup> Malatest and Associates, 2002

## STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING BARRIERS

---

When barriers are more closely explored, a number of specific strategies can be developed to overcome them. The following examples highlight strategies to counter barriers in communication and relationships, two of the barriers that are identified in almost every consultation or research project we have undertaken. The following lists were generated by actual participants in multi-stakeholder consultations. What is important to note about these lists is that (a) there are numerous strategies for each barrier; (b) the strategies are specific and practical; and (c) they involve different stakeholders. Once these lists have been developed, they can be fine-tuned and turned into specific action plans (see page 21 for an example).

### STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS

#### *Use a daily agenda/planner to facilitate communication between home and school.*

- Planners can be effective, particularly when they are customized for individual schools and communities and started from the time children enter school. Engaging students in writing in their planners also supports literacy.

#### *Contact every family during the course of the year.*

- Personal contacts from school are an important strategy, and contact by more than one school employee is preferable. For “high risk” youth, this personalized and frequent contact is critical.

#### *Use multiple forms of media to communicate.*

- Use a variety of media to advertise events, initiatives, and school programs, such as community newspapers and radio. Have a radio call-in show where parents and community members can ask questions of educators.

#### *Engage students in helping parents understand why the school is contacting them.*

- Talking to students about *why* teachers and other school personnel want to talk to parents (i.e., that they have youths' best interests at heart, that youth are not in trouble) may improve response rates.

#### *Form a parent advisory group.*

- A group of parents could meet in the community (reducing transportation challenges) and serve as a liaison between the board and the larger community.

## STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS

### *Join the events already underway.*

- Initiatives may be more successful in engaging parents when they are timed to coincide with community initiatives such as events at the Friendship Centre and fall fairs.

### *Use the school as a centre for other activities.*

- Schools can offer a range of community-centred resources, such as having an Elder available to families. One team at our consultation held a sports clinic and BBQ at a school on a reserve, which rapidly grew into a community-wide event that brought together families, community members, post-secondary athletes, and educators.

### *Incorporate traditional teachings in a cross-curricular manner.*

- Traditional teachings are often limited to specific First Nations Studies courses and could be better integrated into other courses and programming.

### *Use community partners to promote events.*

- Community partners can offer ideas about how to engage members of the community.

### *Issue personal invitations to events and celebrate successes.*

- A specific invitation from an educator is a highly effective relationship-building tool; similarly, a thank you note might be equally appreciated, particularly if it is the first time a parent was involved in a particular event or activity.

### *Build relationships first.*

- Plan informal events to build relationships, then start to work on projects together.

### *Appreciate all parents' involvement.*

- Parents sometimes feel that they receive the message "Why are you here? Your child is doing fine" when they initiate contact (such as attending a parent-teacher night) and their child is not in trouble.

### *Increase cultural awareness through professional development.*

- Increasing educators' awareness of and comfort with the culture and traditions of the Aboriginal families in their community will go a long way toward improving relationships between Aboriginal families and schools. Specific professional development opportunities offered with the support and input of community partners are critical in this regard.

## PRINCIPLES INTO ACTION CASE STUDY: VIOLENCE IS PREVENTABLE PROJECT AND ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

---

The Violence Is Preventable (VIP) project was initiated in 2004 in British Columbia by BCYSTH with the goal of establishing a province-wide system that would provide children and adolescents with school-based support and education related to issues of domestic violence. The objectives of the VIP project are as follows:

- ✓ To break the silence of domestic violence by making it safe for children and youth to speak up in schools about domestic violence and the issues that impact their lives
- ✓ To increase teacher, school staff, parent, and student awareness about violence in relationships and its effects on child witnesses
- ✓ To facilitate partnerships between schools and communities in order to respond to the emotional, social, academic, and psychological needs of children exposed to domestic violence

BCYSTH offers central coordination of the VIP initiative:

- ✓ Resource development
- ✓ Development and delivery of VIP training for Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) counsellors
- ✓ Ongoing support and guidance to CWWA counsellors and their member agencies
- ✓ Province-wide awareness raising, sustainability planning, and advocacy
- ✓ Support for Aboriginal, multicultural, and other identified communities
- ✓ Community development strategies and support
- ✓ Training of program facilitators

There are three key activity services to schools:

1. *Awareness Presentations:* To educate educators, parents, and other adults (e.g., foster parents, public health nurses, childcare providers, and others who have a stake in the healthy development of our children) about children and youths' exposure to domestic violence.
2. *Violence Prevention Presentations:* Classroom presentations (kindergarten to Grade 12) so that children and youth can learn about domestic violence. In addition to domestic violence, these presentations include topics such as unhealthy vs. healthy relationships, communication skills, and self-esteem.
3. *Group Interventions:* For children and youth who have been exposed to domestic violence, multi-week psychoeducational groups are held in the school so that they may have the support needed to cope with the impact of domestic violence on their lives.

Although the program was always intended to provide culturally relevant support for specific cultural groups, BCYSTH formally documented some of their strategies for increasing relevance to Aboriginal communities in the 2007 revision of their manual.

*The Violence is Preventable initiative demonstrates the four guiding principles in the following ways:*



### **Understanding and integrating cultural identity**

- ✓ Includes background information and history of domestic violence both common in families who are not Aboriginal and specific to Aboriginal histories and experiences
- ✓ Glossary of common Aboriginal terminology for CWWA counsellors
- ✓ Provides resources and handouts such as “Elements of Aboriginal Domestic Violence” that can be printed and distributed to Aboriginal students and partners

### **Increasing youth engagement**

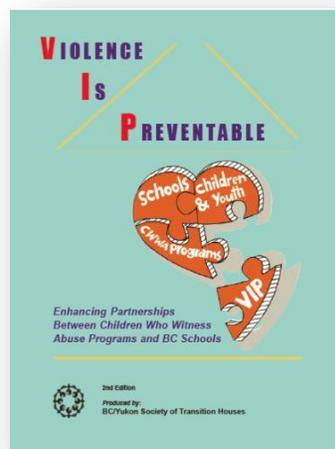
- ✓ Youth receive culturally relevant psychoeducational support from CWWA counsellors
- ✓ CWWA counsellors are guided on how to create safe spaces for Aboriginal children and youth that combat internalized oppression.

### **Fostering youth empowerment**

- ✓ Aboriginal children and youth feel at ease with a CWWA counsellor who is able to support the diversity of Aboriginal experiences
- ✓ Provides suggested activities for CWWA counsellors when working with Aboriginal students
- ✓ VIP Manual outlines how a CWWA counsellor can approach diversity among Aboriginal students in the BC school system

### **Developing and maintaining effective partnerships**

- ✓ VIP Manual identifies key organizations that support First Nations education
- ✓ VIP Manual outlines how CWWA programs can build partnerships with First Nations schools and their communities



## EXAMPLE OF INNOVATIVE STAFFING: THE GRAND ERIE DISTRICT BOARD ABORIGINAL EDUCATION TEACHER CONSULTANT

Innovative programming plays a major role in improving outcomes for Aboriginal youth in schools; however, innovations in developing new staff positions are just as important. For example, the Grand Erie District School Board has found significant student and community benefits from having an Aboriginal Education Teacher Consultant.

The Grand Erie District School Board is a public school board in southwestern Ontario, with schools in Brantford and surrounding communities. There are a large number of Aboriginal students, including more than 500 Six Nations of the Grand River resident students and about 40 Mississaugas of the New Credit resident students attending secondary schools. There is also a significant non-Reserve resident Aboriginal population. Statistics Canada Census data (2006) information suggests that 750-1500 school age urban Aboriginal students may be attending Grand Erie District School Board schools<sup>32</sup>.

Created in the fall of 2008, the Aboriginal Education Teacher Consultant is a system-wide, program position designed to support all students (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), teachers, and administrators in both the elementary and secondary panels. This position was filled by a registered teacher whose family is from the local community.

The consultant mainly works with students and educators in schools with high Aboriginal populations but also makes it a priority to meet regularly with students who attend schools with low Aboriginal populations. The consultant works with Aboriginal parents by liaising between parents and educators/administrators. In this capacity, he has been able to attend parent-teacher or parent-principal meetings and improve communication between the parties.

The impact of the Aboriginal Education Teacher Consultant includes the following:

- In the first year of the program, youth who worked with the consultant showed a 25% improvement in some learning skills (most notably conflict resolution), as measured on report cards.
- The consultant made efforts to give all Aboriginal students access to school board-employed Aboriginal role models (i.e., Elders, mentors, counsellors).

In addition to providing support for youth, the consultant has been able to mentor educators in a number of ways:



<sup>32</sup> Statistics Canada Census data (2006) available online at [www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-594/index.cfm?Lang=E](http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-594/index.cfm?Lang=E)

---

## SECTION 5: RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

## WHAT ARE INDIGENOUS METHODOLOGIES IN COMMUNITY RESEARCH?<sup>33</sup>

Indigenous methodologies approach research from an indigenous worldview that is holistic and includes the spirit, emotions, heart, and body. Cultural protocols, values, and behaviours are viewed as integral parts of methodology. They are seen as factors to be built into research and to be thought about and integrated openly as part of the design. Protocols, values, and behaviours are discussed as part of the final results of a study and disseminated in culturally appropriate ways and in a language that can be understood by the community. Reporting and sharing knowledge are two research components that are often not addressed in scientific research. In community-based research, the community orientation and identity tends to influence the research approach.

### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE POSSIBILITIES, CHALLENGES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES?

- Community participation and ownership at all levels of the research process must be evident. Community control of the research process is important (see page 119 for discussion of ownership principles).
- Researchers who are doing research in indigenous communities have a responsibility to know something about the history of indigenous peoples. This includes an awareness and understanding of the existence of indigenous cultures, traditions, worldviews, and philosophies.
- Indigenous and nonindigenous researchers who tackle research in indigenous contexts must have a knowledge base and understanding of Western research methods as a mechanism of colonization. With this knowledge comes the responsibility to engage in research projects that empower, liberate, and “indigenize” rather than colonize, control, and oppress. Research then becomes an instrument of healing, restoration, recovery, and power.

#### Suggested readings:

Absolon, K. & Willett, C. (2004). Aboriginal research: Berry picking and hunting in the 21st Century. *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 9(1), 5–17. Available online at [www.fncfcs.com](http://www.fncfcs.com)

Absolon, K., & Willett, C. (2005). Putting ourselves forward: Location in Aboriginal research methodology. In L. Brown & S. Strega (Eds.), *Research as resistance: Critical, Indigenous and anti-oppressive research approaches*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press.

Nabigon, H., Hagey, R., Webster, S., & MacKay, R. (1998). The learning circle as a research method: The trickster and windigo in research. *Native Social Work Journal*, 2, 113–137.

Gilchrist, L. (1997). Aboriginal communities and social science research: Voyeurism in transition. *Native Social Work Journal*, 1, 69–85.

St. Denis, V. (1992). Community-based participatory research: Aspects of the concept relevant for practice. *Native Studies Review*, 8, 51–74.

Wilson, S. (2001). What is an indigenous research methodology? *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 25, 175–179.

<sup>33</sup> The authors wish to acknowledge Dr. Kathy Absolon of Wilfrid Laurier University for her assistance with this section. Dr. Absolon wrote the sections on Indigenous Methodologies, Research and Evaluation Considerations, The Building Blocks of an Evaluation, and Considerations for Interviewers (starting on page 114).

## WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS OF RESEARCHERS?

Indigenous researchers are expected to have a knowledge set that is steeped in their cultural history. They are also expected, by their communities and by the institutions that employ them, to have some form of historical and critical analysis of the role of research in the indigenous world and to be able to advance indigenous knowledge, worldviews, and methodologies in their research agenda. Indigenous researchers, in a sense, have dual knowledge sets and are expected to be functional and masters at both our own worldview and Euro-Western worldviews.

Non-indigenous researchers are expected by the indigenous community to have an understanding of and appreciation for the impact of colonization and imperialism on the communities and their people. Non-indigenous researchers are expected to develop a knowledge set that, recognizing indigenous peoples' worldview, is critically conscious and can assist as an ally in advancing indigenous peoples'/communities' agendas.

***“Researchers have an obligation to demystify research for community partners and to help community partners understand how searching for knowledge and knowledge production is an everyday occurrence that we all do. Research is simply the act of acquiring information and knowledge. Too often in the past, research was something that was done to participants, with them receiving little or no benefit. Demystifying research means being clear about the how, what, and why of the search process. It also means including the community at every step in the research process.”***

*Dr. Kathy Absolon  
Wilfrid Laurier University*

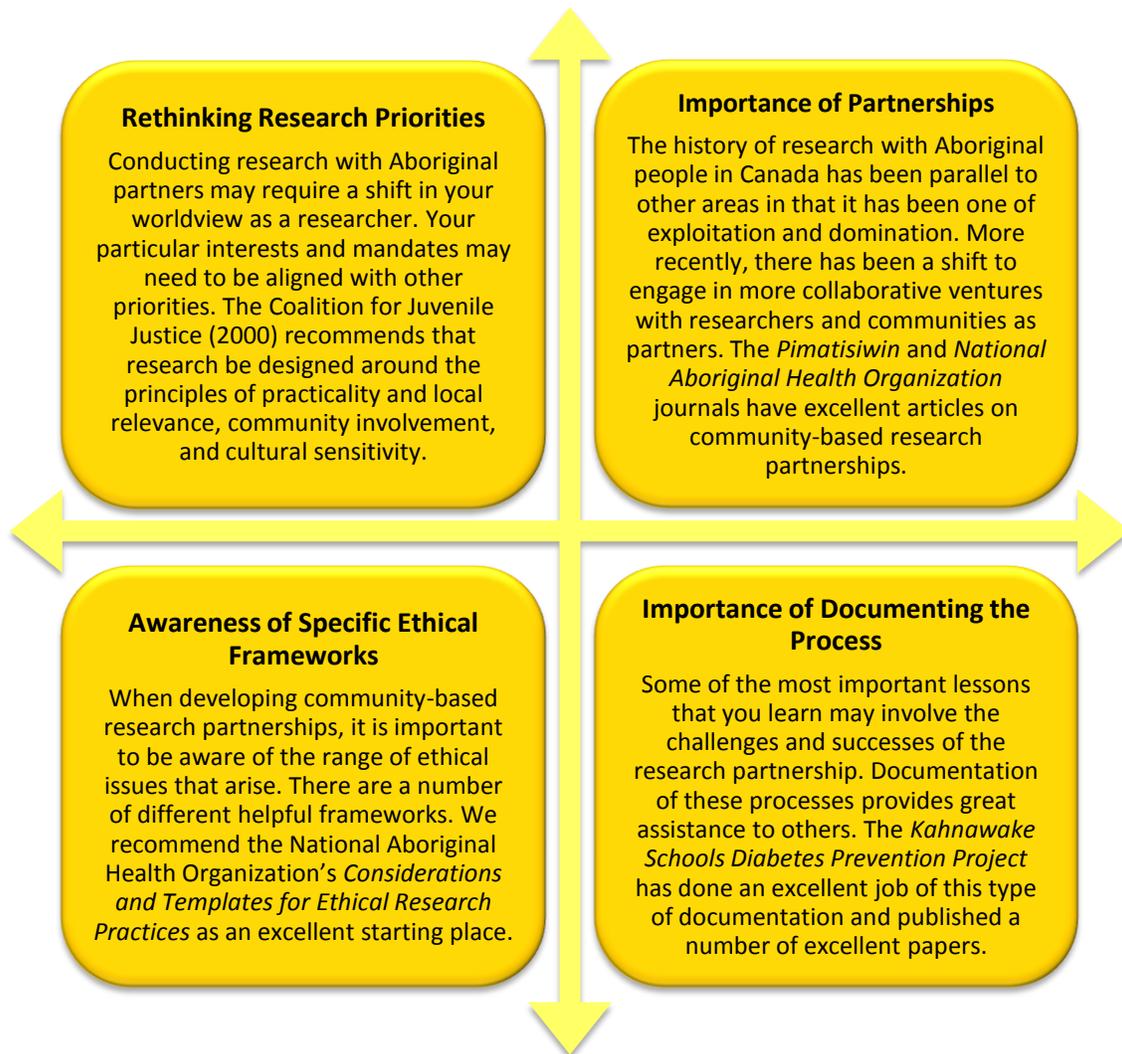
Different approaches and methodologies are being developed to ensure that research with indigenous peoples can be more respectful, ethical, sympathetic, and useful. Aboriginal research methodologies require Aboriginal paradigms, so the community would expect the researcher to have some knowledge of them or be prepared to work with them to ensure Aboriginal paradigms guide the methodologies.

Researchers also need to be aware that some communities have developed their own ethics committees to deal with appropriation issues in research. These groups may be contacted as an additional source of support.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS: THE BIG PICTURE

---

For non-Aboriginal researchers venturing into the area of research with Aboriginal partners and youth, there will be many opportunities to apply research skills you have developed in your other work, but there will also be new challenges and opportunities.<sup>34</sup>



---

<sup>34</sup> Information under “Rethinking Research Priorities” was taken from Coalition for Juvenile Justice. (2000). *Enlarging the healing circle: Ensuring justice for American Indian children*. Washington, DC: Author.

Information under “Awareness of Specific Ethical Frameworks” was taken from NAHO’s *Considerations and Templates for Ethical Research Practices* is available online at

[www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/toolkits/FNC\\_ConsiderationsandTemplatesInformationResource.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/toolkits/FNC_ConsiderationsandTemplatesInformationResource.pdf)

For more information about “Importance of Partnership” section, see, for example, Salsberg et al., (2007). *Knowledge, capacity, and readiness: translating successful experience in community-based participatory research for health promotion*. Available at [www.pimatisiwin.com/Articles/5.2F\\_Knowledge\\_Capacity\\_and\\_Readiness.pdf](http://www.pimatisiwin.com/Articles/5.2F_Knowledge_Capacity_and_Readiness.pdf)

## EIGHT PRINCIPLES OF ABORIGINAL RESEARCH

As awareness of historic inequalities in research-community relationships has grown, people have begun identifying tenets of ethical research. Brant Castellano (2004) identifies 8 such principles:

### Principle 1:

- Aboriginal peoples have an inherent right to participate as principals or partners in research that generates knowledge affecting their culture, identity, and well-being. This right is protected by the Canadian Constitution and extends beyond the interests that other groups affected by research might have.

### Principle 2:

- The Government of Canada has a fiduciary obligation to guard against infringement of Aboriginal rights in research activities, particularly in institutions and activities for which it is responsible. The appropriateness of particular safeguards must be endorsed by Aboriginal peoples through their representative organizations.

### Principle 3:

- Action by the Government of Canada to establish ethical standards of research should strike a balance between regulations that restrict infringement of Aboriginal rights and those that respect the primacy of ethical codes originating in affected communities, including Métis communities.

### Principle 4:

- Ethical regulation of research affecting Aboriginal peoples should include protection for “all knowledge, languages, territories, material objects, literary or artistic creations pertaining to a particular Aboriginal people, including objects and forms of expression which may be created or rediscovered in the future based upon their traditions,” as cited in emerging international norms.

### Principle 5:

- “The federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, [should] review its legislation on the protection of intellectual property to ensure that Aboriginal interests and perspectives, in particular collective interests, are adequately protected.”

### Principle 6:

- Development and implementation of ethical standards for Aboriginal research should be in the hands of Aboriginal peoples, as experts in devising minimum standards for general application and as majority members on Aboriginal-specific research ethics boards serving local, regional, and national communities.

### Principle 7:

- The costs of community consultation, development of research plans, negotiation and implementation of ethical protocols, and skills transfer should be recognized in budget formulas for research grants and project planning, whether conducted by researchers internal or external to Aboriginal communities.

### Principle 8:

- Responsibility for education of communities and researchers in the ethics of Aboriginal research rests with Aboriginal communities and organizations, government funders, granting agencies, professional associations, research institutions, and individual researchers working collaboratively.

Brant Castellano, M. (2004). Ethics of Aboriginal Research. *Journal of Aboriginal Health*, 1(1). 98-114.

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

---

**Research must benefit Aboriginal people as well as the researcher.**

- Research conducted with Aboriginal people should make a positive difference in their communities. Researchers must ensure that the design; research questions; and the way the data are collected, interpreted, and communicated benefit Aboriginal people and do not harm them in any way. Research should be built upon the strengths of Aboriginal people and their communities.

**Research must be culturally appropriate and relevant to the community.**

- A researcher should understand and respect Aboriginal worldviews, and these should be incorporated into research questions and design, to the extent possible. Researchers should learn about indigenous methodologies (see page 114 for an overview).

**The researcher has an obligation to learn about and apply Aboriginal cultural protocols that are relevant to the community involved in the research.**

- Aboriginal communities are diverse in their languages, backgrounds, and traditions. Protocols can vary from group to group and from one community to the next. The research team needs to learn from the communities they are working with and honour the differences among them in their research. Issues that might arise include gift giving and signed consent.

**Researchers should support the training and education of Aboriginal people to build community research capacity.**

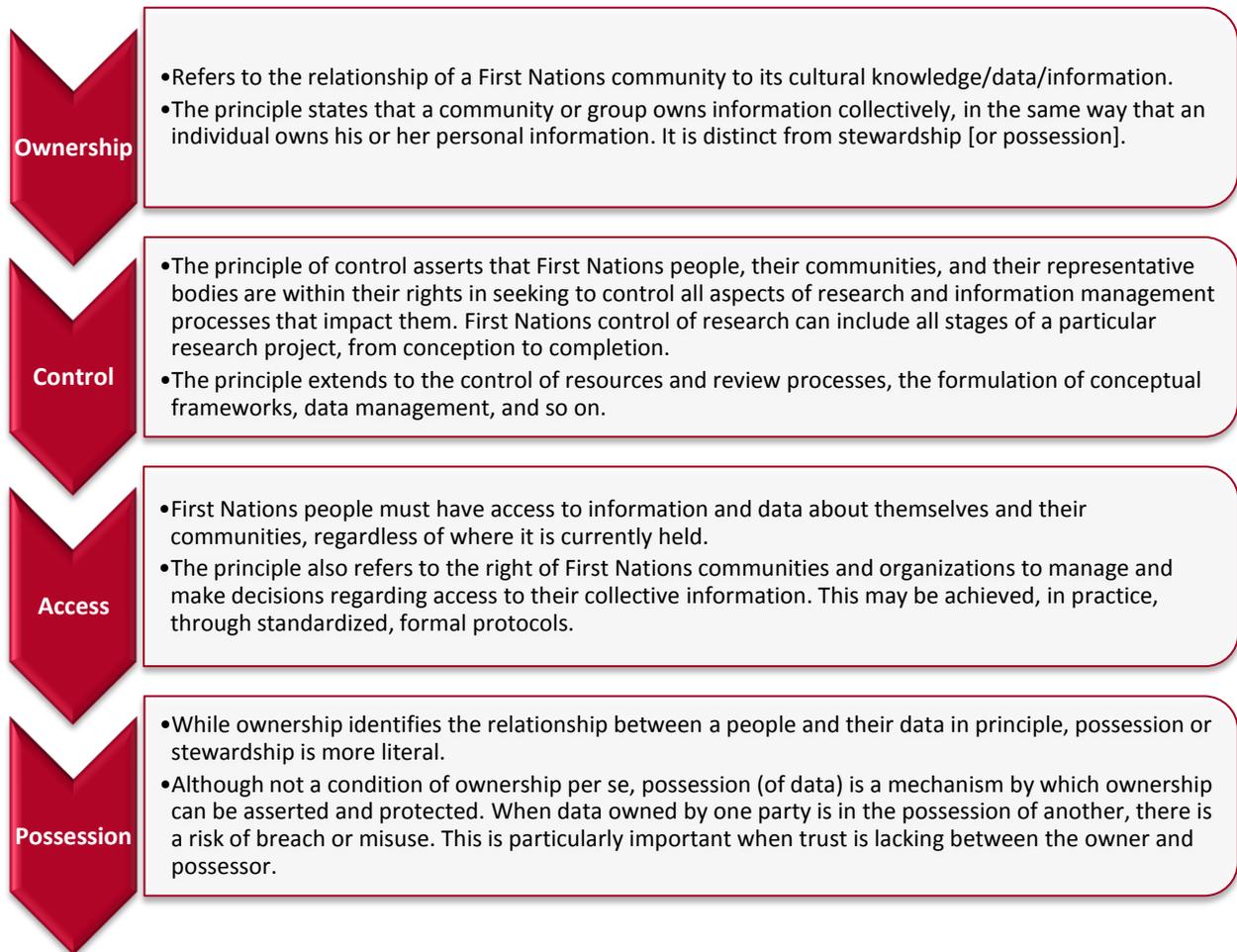
- Aboriginal people must be given the opportunity to learn about the role of research and the research process and be taught the skills to conduct research. Ideally, well-trained Aboriginal researchers should conduct Aboriginal research in their communities.

**Research projects should be designed to allow continuous opportunities for consideration by the Aboriginal community.**

- Research with Aboriginal communities should be flexible so that Aboriginal people or the wider community has the time to consider the proposed project and its components and to discuss its implication before the project begins and also at various stages throughout the project.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS: OCAP PRINCIPLES

Although there are numerous frameworks and ethical standards with which researchers should be familiar, the OCAP principles are central to designing mutually beneficial research projects in conjunction with Aboriginal communities. The following description of the OCAP principles is taken from the document *OCAP: Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession*.<sup>35</sup> This document refers specifically to First Nations communities, but the principles are applicable to all Aboriginal community-based research. The OCAP principles are defined as follows:



OCAP principles need to be considered and integrated into every step of the research process. The National Aboriginal Health Organization document cited here provides specific and concrete strategies and examples of how to apply these principles and practices.

<sup>35</sup> First Nations Centre. (2007). *OCAP: Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession*. Available at [www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/FNC-OCAP\\_001.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/FNC-OCAP_001.pdf)

## RESEARCH AND EVALUATION CONSIDERATIONS

---

Research and evaluation are important components in the provision of services. First and foremost, we want to know that the programs we are offering meet the needs of the youth and are not resulting in unintended negative consequences.

Regardless of your interest in research and evaluation, the current funding climate requires the collection and interpretation of data that support the effectiveness of the programs you are offering. Furthermore, most organizations now need to supplement any sources of core funding with community-based or corporate grants, and successfully obtaining these grants typically requires the inclusion of an evaluation plan. For community organizations, large-scale, well-designed program evaluation studies with control groups are nearly impossible, given their mandates and resources. Satisfaction surveys, exit surveys, and other participant feedback mechanisms serve as useful alternatives.

There are many different types of research. Research is generally qualitative and/or quantitative. Most qualitative research attempts to capture the experiences of subjects, whereas quantitative research is more concerned with measurement. Determining the effectiveness or value of a program is called *program evaluation*, and this type of research can be either quantitative or qualitative or a mixture of both. Program evaluation research requires an identified outcome, a means of collecting the requisite information, and a method of interpreting the information.

### PROGRAM EVALUATION: MAKING YOUR EVALUATION A GOOD ONE!

An evaluation should be useful to the people who request the information, practical to implement, conducted in an ethical manner, and accurate. There are three basic stages in the process:

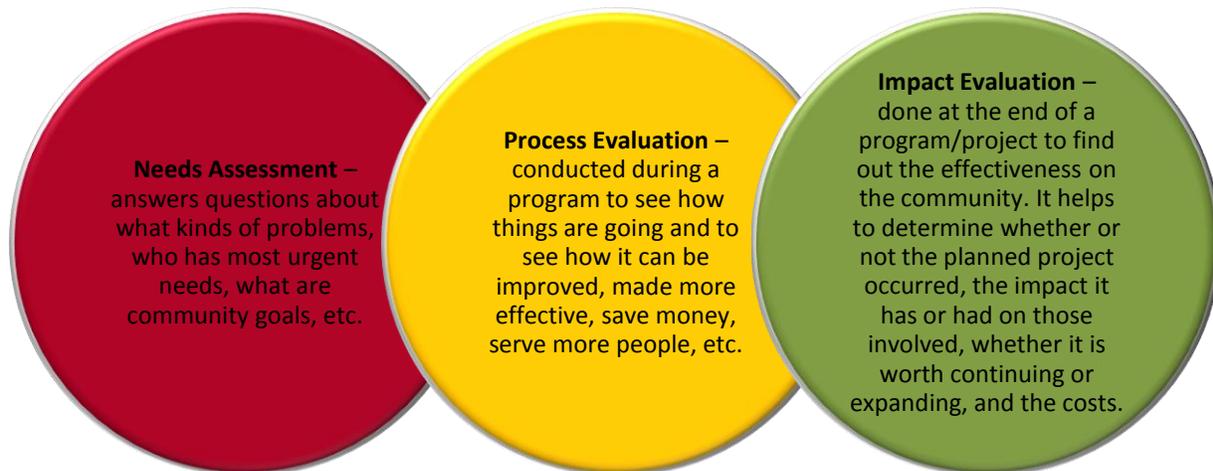


## THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF AN EVALUATION

It is important to define your objectives and the results you expect. An objective is an identifiable action or activity that is to be completed in a specific time period. When a program has stated its objectives, an evaluator has something to work with as the design begins.

### TYPES OF EVALUATION STUDIES

There are three types of evaluation studies. These types differ in terms of the stage of a project at which they occur and the questions that they address.



### EVALUATION STRATEGIES

The types of questions to ask depends on the expectations of the program and its objectives and goals. It is important to prioritize the evaluation needs. Strategies for data collection can involve a number of interview and circle processes, as outlined below:



## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERVIEWERS

---

There are a number of strategies for conducting effective interviews:

- Interviewers should refrain from giving their opinions.
- If using written questions, “pilot test” the questions first to ensure they are clear.
- Check your language to see whether the interviewee is comfortable.
- Keep the questions simple and clear.
- Interview one person at a time.
- Don’t start questions with “why”; this is not always useful.
- Make sure to get the interviewee’s consent.

### TYPES OF QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

The diagram consists of two rounded rectangular boxes. The left box is titled 'Closed Questions result in yes or no answers' and contains four red buttons with white text: 'Did you find the program useful?', 'Has the program had an influence on your life?', 'Was the influence good?', and 'Was the influence bad?'. The right box is titled 'Open Questions result in more substantive answers' and contains three red buttons with white text: 'In what ways has the program helped you?', 'What was the best part of the program?', and 'What has changed in your life because of the program?'.

### ATTENDING TO PROCESS

Researchers can ask themselves process questions such as those listed below, and make notes on their thoughts during the evaluation.

- Do the documents and files match what people are saying?
- Is there a positive feeling about the program?
- Can you describe the benefits that participants get from the program?
- Are those benefits written elsewhere (e.g., from interview, in existing files)?
- What are the major strengths of the program?
- What are the major weaknesses of the program?

It is important to write these notes immediately while the “feel” is fresh in your mind.

## ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH RESEARCH

Throughout this toolkit, we have emphasized the importance of engaging and empowering youth and have provided specific strategies to increase these outcomes. Engagement and empowerment of youth is also an important consideration in research and evaluation. By involving youth in research, you are maintaining high ethical standards in terms of ownership of data, you increase the validity and relevance of the research, and you are supporting the development of interest and skills in tomorrow's researchers.

*"Not only do youth 'find their voice' through participation in programs, but they also need to 'find their voice' in the research and design and delivery of evaluation mechanisms and in the dissemination of the results of evaluations."*

*Dr. Marie Battiste  
Academic Director, Aboriginal Education Research Centre*

### CONSIDERATIONS FOR INVOLVING YOUTH IN RESEARCH<sup>36</sup>

#### Research Activities

- Youth can be involved in developing research priorities and questions
- Youth can help carry out research activities, with proper preparation
- Youth can contribute to analysis of data, identifying conclusions and making recommendations with researchers.

#### Dissemination

- Youth can assist with reporting and disseminating results
- It is important to think about how to return data to youth: provision of raw data, magazine articles, fact sheets, etc.
- Data need to be available to youth in a manner that they can access to inform their work (e.g., with youth councils, as social activists)
- Youth can be an effective voice for bringing forward recommendations to policy action groups.

<sup>36</sup> The authors acknowledge Dr. Marie Battiste's contribution to this section.

## CHALLENGES IN IDENTIFYING THE IMPACT OF PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Another type of research is prevention research. This research is a form of evaluation research that focuses on establishing the *absence* of a negative outcome rather than the *presence* of a positive outcome. In reality, much prevention research does both. For example, a program evaluation might explore whether youth are more likely to use condoms during sexual intercourse (i.e., presence of a behaviour) in addition to whether they are more likely to delay onset of sexual intercourse (i.e., absence of a behaviour).

There are a number of challenges when evaluating prevention programs:

### Establishing Reasonable Outcomes

- Are we trying to prevent alcohol use or are we focusing more on other drugs? Are we trying to prevent binge drinking but acknowledging that some experimentation with alcohol may be normative? Are we trying to prevent unsafe decisions made while under the influence?
- Appropriate outcomes will differ depending on the age of the youth, the challenges facing them, and the intensity of the intervention. Philosophical and political factors may also influence these decisions (e.g., whether or not a harm reduction approach is considered acceptable or whether the desired outcome is an all-or-nothing proposition).

### Selecting a Timeframe

- What is the timeframe for the anticipated changes? Do we expect to see them immediately following the intervention or program? Do we expect them to show up later in development?
- There are many documented research examples of both immediate effects and “sleeper effects” (i.e., impacts that only emerged in the context of longitudinal follow-up).

### Measuring Problems versus Strengths

- If we are simultaneously trying to build youth assets and prevent harm, is one of those things more important to demonstrate?
- How do you interpret findings that show the youth have better coping skills but are still engaging in bullying?

## CHALLENGES OF CONDUCTING PREVENTION RESEARCH WITH ABORIGINAL YOUTH

Beyond the typical challenges of prevention research, there are other challenges that arise uniquely when working with Aboriginal youth, families, and communities:

### **Difficulty determining appropriate outcomes:**

The first challenge is to determine appropriate outcomes and whether they are culturally appropriate. For example, a program designed to increase coping skills may conceptualize coping from a Western European view focused on the development of action-oriented coping skills, which may or may not be appropriate for a particular group of Aboriginal youth. Similarly, a program teaching communication skills may emphasize the role of eye contact in assertive communication, but in many First Nations cultures, eye contact is a more nuanced dynamic that may be appropriate in some situations but not in others. Without an appreciation of these differences, rating youth on particular outcomes might be misleading.

### **Inadequate culturally appropriate measures:**

The use of standardized measures generally aids in the interpretation and comparison of data; however, most measures have been designed for and normed with non-Aboriginal populations. In many cases, they have been developed for a group with a particular education level and SES, such as measures developed with and normed on university students. These measures may not be culturally sensitive in their format or questions. Interpretation of the data is difficult due to lack of comparable norms.

### **Challenges of Prevention Research with Aboriginal Youth**

**Infeasibility of the control group design:** Control groups play an important role in research with youth because of the developmental changes taking place.

For example, school connectedness typically decreases over the course of Grade 9. Thus, an evaluation that compares students' scores pre- and post-involvement with a school-based initiative to improve students' connection to school might find that the program was ineffective (because scores either stayed the same or dropped slightly). However, if school connectedness dropped *less* for students in the program than it would have otherwise, the program had a positive impact. With programming that is embedded in the school and community, it is very challenging to determine an appropriate control group. It is also ethically questionable to withhold programming that youth report to be helpful in order to establish an appropriate control group.

**Difficulty capturing systemic changes:** The most straightforward evaluation focuses solely on the youth involved with the services. However, according to our guiding principles, these efforts need to be embedded in partnerships with families and communities. As a result, it is likely that there will be changes at the family and community levels that also need to be captured. Other systems involved with the programming, such as the educational system, may also experience changes that should be captured in the evaluation. In the best-case scenario, documentation of positive changes in other systems will strengthen the sustainability and funding prospects for your initiatives. In other cases, assessing the larger system will alert you to unforeseen negative impacts.

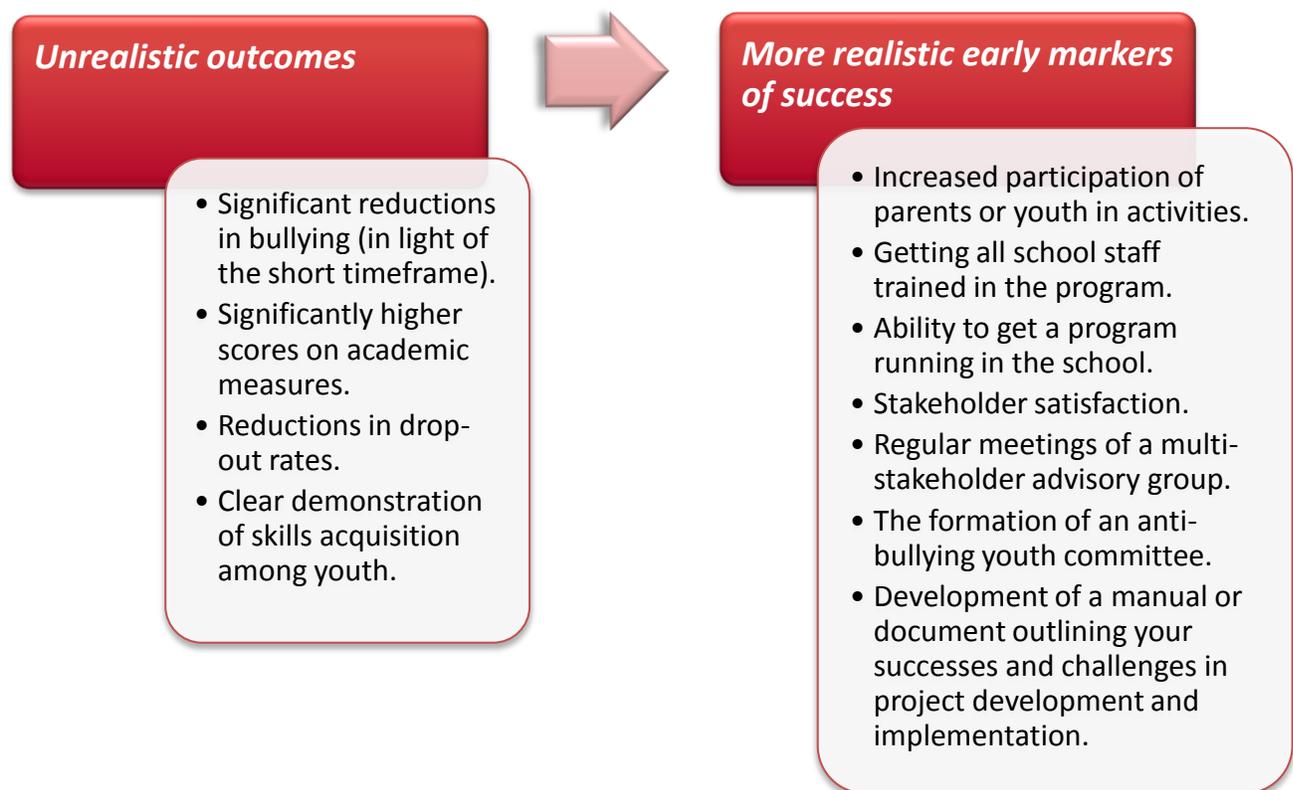
On the following pages, a number of practical and specific strategies are offered for program evaluation and prevention research.

## EVALUATION STRATEGY #1: BE REALISTIC ABOUT THE CHANGES YOU EXPECT TO SEE AND THE TIMEFRAMES IN WHICH YOU EXPECT TO SEE THEM.

One of the significant requirements facing organizations that receive external funding for doing community-based research is the need to demonstrate that the program or service resulted in some positive change in participant knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours. Often grant applications or funders will suggest certain outcomes of interest and timeframes in which they would like to see change. Often the timeframes are not very feasible; long-lasting behavioural change and personal growth take time!

Organizations (and funders) need to be realistic about the changes they can expect to see within the timeframes they are given. It is important to resist identifying the changes you think your funders want to see, if the goals are unrealistic, as you are setting yourself up for failure.

***For example, a new anti-bullying program is being implemented in a school. The funding was announced in September, the program will be fully implemented by December, and the final report is due to the funder in July.***



## EVALUATION STRATEGY #2: IF YOU ARE WORKING FROM A STRENGTHS-BASED FRAMEWORK, MAKE SURE YOU ASSESS STRENGTHS IN YOUR EVALUATION.

The importance of a strengths-based approach to programming has been highlighted throughout this toolkit. Many organizations have made the shift from focusing on deficits and risk behaviours to emphasizing and building on strengths. Unfortunately, evaluations are still often limited to a focus on reducing negative outcomes. The result is that the programs are being evaluated against criteria that are not the best indicators of what the programs' true impact may be. For example, if a mentoring program was developed to increase healthy peer connections and access to positive role models, then it does not make sense to evaluate it in terms of whether or not it reduced peer violence.

The strengths you choose to measure as part of your evaluation will depend on the goals of your program and the existence of appropriate measures. Connectedness and enculturation are two possible constructs that could be included as part of an evaluation strategy.

### Connectedness

- Adolescent connectedness is conceptualized as the outward expression of positive feelings and the seeking of support from people and places.
- There are many different components of connectedness, including connectedness to peers, school, family, community, and future.
- Adolescent connectedness has been found to be a useful construct for capturing positive changes arising in mentoring programs (see the U.S. Mentoring Resource Center's fact sheet at [http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm\\_send/292](http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/292)).
- For further ideas about measuring connectedness, see Michael Karcher's research and his Hemingway Measure of Adolescent Connectedness at <http://adolescentconnectedness.com>.

### Enculturation

- The importance of enculturation as a protective factor against a range of stressors and negative outcomes has been well documented (see page 27).
- Increasing enculturation (or cultural connectedness) is a goal of many programs and initiatives.
- Enculturation can be measured in different ways, including by indicators such as language, cultural identity, and involvement in traditional activities.
- For further ideas about measuring enculturation, see Whitbeck, L., Chen, X., Hoyt, D., & Adams, G. (2004). Discrimination, historical loss, and enculturation: Culturally specific risk and resiliency factors for alcohol abuse among American Indians. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 65, 409-418.

## EVALUATION STRATEGY #3: READ CANADIAN ABORIGINAL SOCIAL SERVICE JOURNALS FOR IDEAS ABOUT MEASURES AND METHODOLOGY.

There are some excellent journals available online that focus on issues facing Aboriginal youth and communities in Canada. Articles in these journals provide good examples of appropriate measurement strategies, ethical considerations, and other related research topics. We recommend the following:

- \* **Journal of Aboriginal Health** (at [www.naho.ca/english/journal.php](http://www.naho.ca/english/journal.php))

This journal is published by the National Aboriginal Health Organization. In addition to the journal, they have excellent publications available on their website (e.g., *Understanding Health Indicators*). The Journal of Aboriginal Health is dedicated exclusively to Aboriginal health issues in Canada and was established with the intention of fostering a dynamic community of people concerned with issues of Aboriginal health.



- \* **The First Peoples Child & Family Review** (at [www.fncfcs.org/pubs/onlineJournal.html](http://www.fncfcs.org/pubs/onlineJournal.html))

Published by the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, this journal focuses on innovation and best practices in Aboriginal child welfare administration, research, policy, and practice. The purpose of the First Peoples Child & Family Review is to "reach beyond the walls of academia" to promote child welfare research, practice, policy, and education from a First Nations/Aboriginal perspective and to advance innovative approaches in the field of First Nations and Aboriginal child welfare.



- \* **Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Indigenous and Aboriginal Community Health** (at [www.pimatisiwin.com](http://www.pimatisiwin.com))

The goal of the Pimatisiwin Journal is to promote the sharing of knowledge and research experience between researchers, health professionals, and Aboriginal leaders and community members. The journal provides a forum for this diverse population to publish on research process and findings in a cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural setting. The primary focus is on health and health research in indigenous communities. Articles can be sociological, psychological, medical, anthropological, experiential, and methodological, and both qualitative and quantitative.



## EVALUATION STRATEGY #4: USE PUBLISHED SCALES AND MEASURES JUDICIOUSLY.

Existing measures do not need to be abandoned; rather, they need to be used judiciously. In some cases, modifications may be necessary, and in other cases, perhaps only parts of a measure are suitable. Furthermore, due to issues of assimilation and loss of culture, it is not appropriate to assume that a more culturally relevant measure will make sense to all Aboriginal youth, any more than it is appropriate to use a mainstream measure. Standardized measures do have the advantage of producing scores and numbers, which may be a useful adjunct to other types of information collected in an evaluation. Quantitative data can provide a compelling case to funders and policy makers who may be unconvinced by qualitative data alone. If you are undertaking scale development, it is important to undertake this process with direct input from youth and other community members. In selecting and using quantitative measures for evaluation, you may wish to consider the following:

### Are there measures that have been successfully used with this population?

- Look at the measures other evaluators and researchers have used to measure similar outcomes. For example, the Aboriginal Youth Resiliency Studies is an ongoing initiative to measure resilience among Aboriginal youth. For methodology and measures see Andersson, N., & Ledogar, R. J. (2008). The CIET Aboriginal Youth Resilience Studies: 14 years of capacity building and methods development in Canada. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health*, 6, 65-88.

### What measures have been adapted for use with this population?

- In some cases, widely used measures have been applied to a range of cultural groups and may have appropriate norms or modifications. For example, the widely used Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents has been adapted for use with Aboriginal youth by changing the comparative nature of the questionnaire (where youth are asked to say who of two hypothetical individuals they are more like) to a scale format because in some Aboriginal groups there is a lack of comfort with comparing oneself to others.

### Can you conduct focus groups to review your proposed data collection strategy?

- It is better to identify possible problems with your questionnaires before you have administered them widely, and having a few focus groups to review items and identify possible sources of misunderstanding can go a long way in this regard.

### Can you corroborate the quantitative data with qualitative data?

- In the end, you will feel most confident about using and interpreting quantitative data when they can be combined with qualitative data. Alternatively, you can hold more focus groups with stakeholders to help you interpret your quantitative data.

## EVALUATION STRATEGY #5: COLLECT DATA FROM PARTNERS IN A SYSTEMATIC MANNER.

Using multiple informants when collecting data can capture successes *and* challenges from a variety of perspectives. Parents, community partners, teachers, administrators, and program developers can complete surveys or participate in focus groups and feedback sessions to provide their input and perspectives. These stakeholders can be important sources of information about the program and the perceived benefits to youth.

### **Example 1: General Feedback about Program and Impact**

The following example is a questionnaire used with partner community organizations to evaluate the TERF program at New Directions:

1. Please indicate how much you agree with each of the statements below using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>

- There is a cooperative relationship between my agency and TERF.
- I get feedback about participants in a timely manner.
- TERF offers a wide range of services.
- TERF services are high quality.
- I will continue to work with TERF.

For the following 5 questions respondents answer yes/no/don't know and provide comments:

- Has the program improved the physical health of the participants?
- Has the program improved the emotional well-being of the participants?
- Has the program improved the spiritual well-being of the participants?
- Has the program changed the attitudes of the participants?
- Has the program changed the behaviour of the participants?

Open-ended questions:

- What is the overall value of the program to participants? The community?
- What are the TERF program's strengths?
- What are some of the problems with the program?
- How do you think services could be improved?

### **Example 2: Partner Input about a Specific Issue**

Data from partners can also be collected to examine a particular issue or to answer a specific research question. The following example was used by the Uniting Our Nations research team at the Fourth R to study youth engagement factors among participants. Youth were interviewed directly about their engagement process, but this questionnaire was used to assess adult perceptions.

#### **Instructions:**

The purpose of this research questionnaire is to identify youth engagement factors related to initiatives that adapt violence prevention programs for use with First Nations youth. Engagement refers to the meaningful participation and sustained involvement of individuals in activities (Centre for Excellence in Youth Engagement, 2003). The questions below ask for your opinion about factors that led First Nations youth to be engaged in the first Uniting our Nations video (April, 2005), the summer Curriculum project (July, 2006), and the second video project (October, 2005).

The process of youth engagement can be understood in terms of initiating and sustaining factors and challenges encountered.

- *Initiating factors* refers to how and why youth become involved in projects.
- *Sustaining factors* refers to factors that maintain youth involvement or commitment to a project.
- *Challenges or barriers* to participating in the project include factors that may prevent or inhibit youth from becoming involved or staying involved in the project.
- Initiating, sustaining, and challenging factors can be at the individual, organizational/social, and community levels.

**Please note that all responses to this questionnaire will be kept confidential. You are not required to indicate your name, school, or organization when completing this questionnaire.**

#### **Please check one.**

- I am an Administrator
- I am a First Nations counsellor
- I am a Facilitator
- I am Research/Project staff

- 1. INITIATING FACTORS:** What were some individual (e.g., incentives), organizational/school (e.g., being approached by a counsellor they know), or community (e.g., project located at The University of Western Ontario) factors that led students to be initially involved in the project?
- 2. SUSTAINING FACTORS:** What were some individual, organizational/school, or community factors that maintained student commitment to these projects?
- 3. CHALLENGES OR BARRIERS:** If applicable, identify any individual, organizational/school, or community-level challenges that were encountered related to students becoming involved and or staying involved in the project. What are some solutions to these challenges?
- 4.** If applicable, please identify any other challenges encountered during the project.
- 5.** What recommendations do you have to engage youth in future projects?
- 6.** Please add any additional comments you have about the projects.

## EVALUATION STRATEGY #6: MEASURE PROCESS, NOT JUST OUTCOMES.

Often we design evaluations to measure longer-range outcomes such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and behaviour. Although these outcomes are important, it is equally important to measure the participants' perceptions of the program, particularly in respect to the guiding principles outlined in this toolkit. These data will provide important feedback about the successes and challenges of your program, as well as possible areas for improvement.

The following two surveys are used by the TERF program at New Directions. Together, they provide valuable feedback on cultural identity, youth engagement, and youth empowerment. The first addresses youths' comfort with the program staff (which is a critical issue for engaging high risk and alienated youth) and also the extent to which the program addresses cultural identity. It was adapted from one developed by the Child Welfare League of America.

### **Survey 1**

Please indicate whether you agree with the following statement or not, as indicated by the following scale:

- | <b>1</b>                 | <b>2</b>        | <b>3</b>                          | <b>4</b>     | <b>5</b>              |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Strongly disagree</i> | <i>Disagree</i> | <i>Neither agree nor disagree</i> | <i>Agree</i> | <i>Strongly agree</i> |
| a)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |
| b)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |
| c)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |
| d)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |
| e)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |
| f)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |
| g)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |
| h)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |
| i)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |
| j)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |
| k)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |
| l)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |
| m)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |
| n)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |
| o)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |
| p)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |
| q)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |
| r)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |
| s)                       |                 |                                   |              |                       |

The second survey addresses youth empowerment with respect to healthier relationships, lifestyle choices, goal setting, and academic performance. It was designed to evaluate a particular program. The use of rated items facilitates the pooling of data from a number of youth, while the open-ended questions provide an opportunity for more detailed individual input.

### **Survey 2**

Please indicate whether you agree with the following statement or not, as indicated by the following scale:

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>

- a) Since I started this program I am learning to think about goals for myself.
- b) I feel I am already starting to achieve some of my goals.
- c) I feel I have changed since I came here.
- d) The program has reduced my use of alcohol and/or marijuana.
- e) The program has reduced my use of hard drugs like cocaine and amphetamines.
- f) My school performance has improved since being in the program.
- g) I have a more positive attitude about being in school since being in the program.
- h) I have used things I learned in the program in my everyday life.
- i) I am more confident since being in the program.
- j) I am more hopeful and positive about my future since being in the program.
- k) I feel I have more control over my life since being in the program.
- l) I feel better about myself since being in the program.
- m) I feel more independent since being in the program.
- n) I feel less alone since being in the program.
- o) I am making healthier choices for myself since being in the program.
- p) I have healthier relationships with other since being in the program.
- q) I am more satisfied with my relationships with others since being in the program.
- r) My life is better now than before I came to the program.

In addition, there are several open-ended questions about changes in physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being, attitude, and perceptions of the program.

## EVALUATION STRATEGY #7: CONSIDER FOCUS GROUPS AS A SOURCE OF DATA.

Focus groups offer a number of advantages compared to surveys or individual interviews. They do not have the same reading comprehension demands as surveys. Similar to individual interviews, you are able to follow up on specific answers and get more detail, but the group format makes it a more efficient process. Youth may be more comfortable answering questions in a group than one-on-one.

**There are a number of considerations when planning focus groups to maximize effectiveness:**

A written plan is important. It can either include many specific questions or be more of a content guide from which questions are developed during the process (see next page).

It is important to emphasize that a focus group is not a consensus-driven process and that you are looking for areas where people have different perspectives.

Information needs to be recorded as closely as possible in the participants' own words. Facilitators may consider the use of a designated note taker or may record the session.

It is not advisable to use a pre-existing therapy group as a focus group because of the norms and dynamics that have developed during the therapeutic process.

Focus groups with Aboriginal youth can be adapted to a sharing circle format, as youth may be familiar and comfortable with the concept. Each youth is given a chance to comment on a particular question or issue in turn, while also knowing that they can pass.

**It is helpful to have written instructions to guide the facilitators. For example, it is important to explain confidentiality to participants. Here is a sample script used at New Directions:**

*The staff at TRY is dedicated to making your experience here as helpful as possible. We are from New Directions but not from this program, and we have come to ask for your input about TRY. New Directions has asked us, people from outside the program, in hopes that you will feel more comfortable telling us your honest opinion.*

*We are going to ask for your opinion on issues related to this program and we want you to know that although we will be letting the staff know all your overall opinions, we will not tell them who said what. That will be confidential. If, however, any of you disclose that you've been abused or harassed, or if any of you make threats to harm someone else, we will not keep that confidential and will need to tell this to a Senior Manager at New Directions.*

*We are not experts on this program, so if anything seems unclear we will be asking you to tell us more about your program as we go along.*

In addition to providing clear instructions prior to beginning the focus group, it is important to offer some sort of debriefing at the end. At the very least, participants need to know whom they could contact if they are uncomfortable or dissatisfied with the process. For example,

*Finish by thanking them and letting them know that if they have felt uncomfortable talking about their concerns in this focus group but have something they would like to discuss, they can use the suggestion box or call you [give extension]. You can also remind them that their Bill of Rights encourages them to call the Executive Director.*

### Sample Focus Group Template

Topic	Key Points	Sample Questions
<b>General</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Overall experience in program</li> <li>– Like</li> <li>– Helpful</li> <li>– Dislike</li> <li>– Obstacles</li> </ul>	<p>How do you feel, overall, about your experiences in [name of program]?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Liked and was helpful?</li> <li>2. More specifically, what did you like about the program?</li> <li>3. What was particularly helpful in the program?</li> <li>4. Disliked and made it hard?</li> <li>5. Were you dissatisfied or uncomfortable with anything that happened during your participation in the program?</li> <li>6. Did anything make it hard for you to engage or come to the program?</li> </ol>
<b>Benefits from the program</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Benefits from program</li> <li>– Changes in               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Knowledge</li> <li>✓ Skills</li> <li>✓ Behaviour</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What did you get out of coming to the program?</li> <li>2. How have you changed since you came to the program? OR What has changed in the things you know or you do since you came to the program?</li> </ol>
<b>Expectations about the program</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Initial expectations</li> <li>– Future expectations:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Keep the same</li> <li>✓ Change</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What did you hope to get out of the program when you first came?</li> <li>2. What did you think the program was about?</li> <li>3. What do you want to make certain remains the same?</li> <li>4. What do you think should change? OR What are you not getting out of the program that you think the program should be providing?</li> </ol>
<b>Culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Awareness of culture</li> <li>– Feelings about exposure to culture</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How has the program increased your awareness of your own culture or other cultures?</li> <li>2. Has this contact with culture been a good experience or a bad experience?</li> </ol>
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Additional comments</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you have any additional comments?</li> </ol>

## EVALUATION STRATEGY #8: USE EXISTING DATA TO DOCUMENT THE IMPACT OF YOUR PROGRAM.

For some programs, there may be existing data that can be accessed to document successes or to show impact. In some cases, these existing data can be used to estimate financial impact or impact on other systems (such as the justice system). These types of comparisons may be particularly influential with funders and policy makers.

### *Example 1*

- In an external evaluation conducted on the TERF program, the researchers from RESOLVE Manitoba (Research and Education for Solutions to Violence and Abuse) were able to use numerous existing estimates to document the impacts of the program. For example, by utilizing existing estimate of the cost to society per exploited individual, they were able to demonstrate that assisting 15 to 20 individuals to exit the sex trade every year translates to a savings of millions of dollars. Comparison of incarceration costs versus program costs were provided to show the cost efficiency of the program. They also provided rates of return to school and gainful employment, to help bolster the financial argument for providing services. These markers do not take the place of the other important outcomes such as personal satisfaction, safety, and growth, but they provide a more comprehensive picture.

### *Example 2*

- In looking at the impact of the pilot of the First Nations Cultural Leadership Course, program developers examined the students' grades and number of absences for each of their courses. This simple comparison demonstrated that students' marks in the course were much higher than in their other courses, and that on average, they had 25% fewer absences from the class. Such findings do not constitute an evaluation of the program, but they provided one more piece of data about the engagement strategies being used. This example also highlights the importance of partnerships, as it is through a partnership with the school board that these data were accessed.

One of the problems is that in many cases, there are no data specific to Aboriginal youth. In some cases, data tracking is improving in general. For example, many school boards are now implementing Aboriginal voluntary self-identification programs that will allow them to congregate data they are already collecting to look at these youth separately. This policy will mean that data for anything the school board collects (such as literacy scores, demographic information) can be extracted for Aboriginal youth. Better group data will provide useful benchmarks when looking at the impact of different initiatives both structurally (Does adding more First Nations counsellors increase graduation rates in a school?) and individually (Does involvement in a peer mentoring program increase graduation rates?).

## TOOLKIT SUMMARY

---

Much of what we have learned from others about working with Aboriginal youth and partners has been passed to us through conversations and relationships. This toolkit represents an attempt to document some of those lessons and provide a compendium of ideas, strategies, and resources for those undertaking similar work. We have tried to present a balance between organizing concepts and practical strategies because we think both are critical. Working with Aboriginal youth in a respectful and appropriate way requires a high degree of self-awareness regarding *why* you make the choices you do.

We believe the principles we have used to organize this toolkit—understanding and integrating cultural identity, increasing youth engagement, fostering youth empowerment, and developing and maintaining effective partnerships—are foundational in this work. Without attending to these basics, programs may continue to experience setbacks, not reach their potential, or even do more harm than good. We recognize that operationalizing these principles is easier said than done, but we believe that awareness of the importance of these principles is an important first step. If everyone in an organization is on the same page with respect to the importance of these principles, then progress will be made, a step at a time.

The information, strategies, and case studies presented in this toolkit grew out of input and guidance from a large number of individuals. Writing the toolkit has been a highly rewarding and educational process for the authors because of the generosity of the individuals who shared their knowledge. At the same time, we know that there are many, many others out there who are doing innovative work with Aboriginal youth and whose ideas are not represented in this document. It is our hope that people will contact us with their feedback and ideas and that we will be able to integrate those additional perspectives into a revised version of this resource in a few years. Anyone who wishes to contribute in this way can e-mail their ideas to Claire Crooks at [ccrooks@uwo.ca](mailto:ccrooks@uwo.ca).

Finally, writing this toolkit was an incredible process for the authors as we learned more about the amazing work being done around the country. Although some of the ideas presented here were accessed through print or web sources, most of them were gathered during conversations with contributors and reviewers. Throughout this process, we were moved by the commitment, creativity, and integrity of those who work with youth. We were also inspired by the feedback of our youth reviewers. Their ideas and energy indicate that the changes already taking place will accelerate in the coming years. In the end, we believe it is the empowerment of these youths' voices that will bring true and lasting change for Aboriginal youth, to the benefit of all Canadians.

---

## REFERENCES

- Aboriginal Healing Foundation. *Residential school resources*. Available online at: [www.ahf.ca/publications/residential-school-resources](http://www.ahf.ca/publications/residential-school-resources)
- Absolon, K. & Willett, C. (2004). *Aboriginal research: Berry picking and hunting in the 21st Century*. *First peoples Child & Family Review*. 9(1), 5-17. Available online at: [www.fncfcs.com](http://www.fncfcs.com).
- Absolon, K., & Willett, C. (2005). Putting ourselves forward: Location in Aboriginal research methodology. In L. Brown & S. Strega (Eds.), *Research as resistance: Critical, Indigenous and anti-oppressive research approaches*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press.
- Alderman, J., Balla, S., Blackstock, C., & Khanna, N. (2006). *The Declaration of Accountability On The Ethical Engagement of Young People and Adults in Canadian Organizations*. Ottawa, ON: First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada. Available online at: [www.fncfcs.org/docs/declaration\\_accountability.pdf](http://www.fncfcs.org/docs/declaration_accountability.pdf)
- Banks, James (2003). *Levels of Multicultural Content: A Brief Summary*. Available online at: <http://resources.css.edu/DiversityServices/docs/LevelsofIntegrationofMulticulturalContent.pdf>.
- Bates, S. C., Beauvais, F., & Trimble, J. E. (1997). American Indian adolescent alcohol involvement and ethnic identification. *Substance Use and Misuse*, 32(14), 2013-2031.
- Brant Castellano, M. (2004). Ethics of Aboriginal Research. *Journal of Aboriginal Health*, 1(1). 98-114.
- Brendtro, L., Brokenleg, M. & Van Bockern, S. (2001). *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future*. Bloomington, IN: National Education Service.
- Bryant-Davis, T. (2007) Healing requires recognition: The case for race-based traumatic stress. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 35(1), 135-143
- Canadian Council on Learning. *Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre Reports*. Available online at: [www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/AboutCCL/KnowledgeCentres/AboriginalLearning/?Language=EN](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/AboutCCL/KnowledgeCentres/AboriginalLearning/?Language=EN)
- Centre of Excellence on Youth Engagement, Adult Allies in Action. Available online at: [www.engagementcentre.ca/files/alliesFINAL\\_e\\_web.pdf](http://www.engagementcentre.ca/files/alliesFINAL_e_web.pdf).
- Coalition for Juvenile Justice. (2000). *Enlarging the healing circle: Ensuring justice for American Indian children*. Washington, DC.
- Community Education Unit, Children's Services and Programs Branch (2004). *Toward School plus Empowering High Schools as Communities of Learning and Support*. Available online at: [www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/pol\\_eval/community\\_ed/docs/hs2004splus.pdf](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/pol_eval/community_ed/docs/hs2004splus.pdf)

- Crooks, C.V., Camillo, C., & Hughes, R. (2010). *Increasing participation and engagement of Aboriginal parents and families in schools*. London, ON: CAMH Centre for Prevention Science.
- Duran, E., & Duran B. (1995). *Native American Postcolonial Psychology*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- First Nations Centre. (2007). OCAP: Ownership, Control, Access and Possession. Available online at: [www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/FNC-OCAP\\_001.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/FNC-OCAP_001.pdf).
- First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada (2003). *Caring Across Boundaries*. Available online at: [www.fncfcs.com/projects/docs/CABInformationSheet.pdf](http://www.fncfcs.com/projects/docs/CABInformationSheet.pdf).
- Fleming J, Ledogar RJ. Resilience, an Evolving Concept: A Review of Literature Relevant to Aboriginal Research. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Indigenous and Aboriginal Health*. 2008; 6(2). Available at [www.pimatisiwin.com/journals.php](http://www.pimatisiwin.com/journals.php).
- Fleming J. Ledogar R. Resilience and Indigenous Spirituality: A Literature Review. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Indigenous and Aboriginal Health*. 2008; 6(2). Available at [www.pimatisiwin.com/journals.php](http://www.pimatisiwin.com/journals.php).
- Formsma, J. (2002). *First Steps in Youth Engagement*. Unpublished document.
- Gilchrist, L. (1997). Aboriginal communities and social science research: Voyeurism in transition. *Native Social Work Journal*, 1, 69-85.
- Klinck, J., Cardinal, C., Edwards, K., Gibson, N., Bisanz, J., & da Costa, J. (2005). Mentoring programs for Aboriginal youth. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health*, 3, 109-130. Available online at [www.pimatisiwin.com](http://www.pimatisiwin.com).
- LaFromboise, T., Hoyt, D., Oliver, L., & Whitbeck, L. (2006). Family, Community, and School Influence in Resilience among American Indian Adolescents in the Upper Midwest. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 2006.
- Milloy, J. S. (1999). *A national crime: The Canadian government and the residential school system 1879 to 1976*. Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press.
- Nabigon, H., Hagey, R., Webster, S., & MacKay, R. (1998). *The learning circle as a research method: The trickster and windigo in research*. *Native Social Work Journal*, 2, 113-137.
- National Aboriginal Health Office. *Considerations and Templates for Ethical Research Practices*. Available online at: [www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/toolkits/FNC\\_ConsiderationsandTemplatesInformationResource.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/documents/toolkits/FNC_ConsiderationsandTemplatesInformationResource.pdf).
- National Aboriginal Health Office. *Guidelines from the National Aboriginal Health Organization*. Available online at: [www.naho.ca/english/documents/InterviewingElders--FINAL.pdf](http://www.naho.ca/english/documents/InterviewingElders--FINAL.pdf).

- Ontario Ministry of Education and Training. *Integrating Aboriginal Teaching and Values into the Classroom*. Available online at:  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/Toulouse.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/Toulouse.pdf).
- Phinney, J. S. & Rotheram, M. J. (Eds.). (1987). *Children's ethnic socialization: Pluralism and development*. Newberry Park, CA: Sage.
- Pridemore, W. A. (2004). Review of the Literature on Risk and Protective Factors of Offending Among Native Americans. *Journal of Ethnicity in Criminal Justice*, 2(4), 45-63.
- Pushor, D. 2007. *Parent engagement: Creating a shared world*. Invited research paper available at  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/research/pushor.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/research/pushor.pdf)
- R.A. Malatest and Associates, Ltd. Parent and Education Engagement Partnership Project: A discussion paper. July 30, 2002. Available at  
[www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/reports/parent\\_engage.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/abed/reports/parent_engage.pdf).
- Reynolds, W.R., Quevillon, R.P., Boyd, B., & Mackey, D. (2006). Initial Development of the Cultural Values and Beliefs Scale Among Dakota/Nakota/Lakota People. *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research*, 13 (3), 70-93.
- Saskatchewan Ministry of Education. *Empowering High Schools as Communities of Learning and Support*. Available online at:  
[www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/pol\\_eval/community\\_ed/docs/hs2004splus.pdf](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/branches/pol_eval/community_ed/docs/hs2004splus.pdf)
- Salsberg et al., (2007). Knowledge, capacity, and readiness: translating successful experience in community-based participatory research for health promotion. Available online at:  
[www.pimatisiwin.com/Articles/5.2F\\_Knowledge\\_Capacity\\_and\\_Readiness.pdf](http://www.pimatisiwin.com/Articles/5.2F_Knowledge_Capacity_and_Readiness.pdf).
- St. Denis, V. (1992). *Community-based participatory research: Aspects of the concept relevant for practice*. *Native Studies Review*, 8, 51-74.
- The Fourth R / Strategies for Healthy Youth Relationships. *Supporting Aboriginal Learning: Reflections from the Voices of Youth*. Available online at:  
[www.youthrelationships.org/curriculum\\_resources.html](http://www.youthrelationships.org/curriculum_resources.html)
- Tolman, A. & Reedy, R. (1998). Implementation of a Culture Specific Intervention for a Native American Community. *Journal of Clinical Psychology in Medical Settings*, 5 (3), pp. 381-392.
- UNICEF. *Leaving No Child Behind Report on Aboriginal Kids in Canada*. Available online at:  
[www.unicef.ca/portal/SmartDefault.aspx?at=2063](http://www.unicef.ca/portal/SmartDefault.aspx?at=2063)
- Ursel, E.J, Proulx, J., Dean, L., & S. Costello (2007). Evaluation of the TERF Youth and Adult Programs. Winnipeg, MB: RESOLVE. Available online at  
[www.umanitoba.ca/resolve/publications/FINAL%20Evaluation%20of%20TERF%20Youth%20&%20Adult%20Program%20Report%202007.pdf](http://www.umanitoba.ca/resolve/publications/FINAL%20Evaluation%20of%20TERF%20Youth%20&%20Adult%20Program%20Report%202007.pdf).

- Walters, K. L., & Simoni, J. M. (2002). Reconceptualizing Native women's health: An "indigenist" stress-coping model. *American Journal of Public Health, 92*(4), 520-524.
- What I learned In Class Today. *Aboriginal Issues In The Classroom*. Available online at: [www.whatilearnedinclasstoday.com](http://www.whatilearnedinclasstoday.com)
- Whitbeck, L., Adams, G., Hoyt, D., & Chen, X. (2004). Conceptualizing and measuring historical trauma among American Indian people. *American journal of community psychology, 33*(3-4):119-30.
- Whitbeck, L., Hoyt, D., Chen, X., & Stubben, J. (2002). Predictors of gang involvement among American Indian adolescents. *Journal of Gang Research, 10*, 11-26.
- Whitbeck, L., Hoyt, D., McMorris, B., Xiaojin, C., & Stubben, J. (2001). Perceived discrimination and early substance abuse among American Indian children. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 42*, 405-424.
- White, J. and Jodoin, N. (2007). *Aboriginal youth: A manual of promising suicide prevention strategies*. Calgary, AB: Centre for Suicide Prevention. Available online at [www.suicideinfo.ca/csp/assets/promstrat\\_manual.pdf](http://www.suicideinfo.ca/csp/assets/promstrat_manual.pdf).
- Wilson, S. (2001). *What is an Indigenous research methodology?* Canadian Journal of Native Education, 25, 175-179.
- Wolfe, D. A., Jaffe, P.G., & Crooks, C. V. (2006). *Adolescent risk behaviors: Why teens experiment and strategies to keep them safe*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.



---

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A. ABOUT THE AUTHORS

---

### CLAIRE CROOKS, PH.D., C.PSYCH.

Claire Crooks is a Registered Clinical Psychologist and the Associate Director of the CAMH Centre for Prevention Science. She is also an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education, and Adjunct Professor in Health Sciences and Psychology at the University of Western Ontario. Dr. Crooks is co-author of more than 40 articles, chapters and books on topics including children's exposure to domestic violence, programming with Aboriginal youth, child custody and access, child maltreatment, adolescent dating violence and risk behaviour, intervening with fathers who maltreat their children, and trauma. She is actively involved with training judges, lawyers, and other court personnel through her work as a faculty member for the U.S. National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and the American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence. She conducts training in a wide range of areas including strengths-based work with Aboriginal youth, custody and access evaluations, violence prevention, and bullying. She has testified before the Canadian Senate Committee on Human Rights about the intersection between domestic violence and child custody as a children's rights issue. She conducts program development and evaluation in the areas of violence prevention, and empowerment with Aboriginal youth. Dr. Crooks is a co-author of *Adolescent Risk Behaviors: Why teens experiment and strategies to keep them safe* (2006, Yale University Press). She received her B.A. from Princeton University and her graduate degrees from Queen's University.

### DEBBIE CHIDO, M.A., M.ED. (COUNSELLING)

Debbie Chido has a B.Sc. from the University of Toronto and holds a Masters in Personality and Measurement Psychology and a Masters in Education in Counselling Psychology from The University of Western Ontario. She is pursuing her Ph.D. through the Faculty of Education at Western. As a part-time lecturer at Kings College, UWO, Debbie teaches undergraduate Research Methods and Statistics. She is also an Instructor in the Faculty of Health Sciences. Debbie is currently the Centre Manager and Researcher for the CAMH Centre for Prevention Science. She oversees numerous regional and provincial projects aimed at improving engagement and academic outcomes with Aboriginal youth. Debbie has extensive experience working on large scale projects and system-wide evaluations with several provincial and federal ministries. As a researcher, she has undertaken evaluations of the Unified Family Court System in Canada, the Office of the Child's Advocate in Ontario, Federal Correctional Services for Women Offenders in Canada, and province-wide foster care placements for children and youth in Ontario. She has co-authored numerous research papers examining the impact of child maltreatment and women abuse, women offenders, child welfare services, child protection legislation and services, issues related to maternal depression and poverty, violence prevention programming for youth, eating disorders and trauma and adolescents.

### DARREN THOMAS, B.SC.

Darren Thomas is a Community Educator and Motivational Consultant from Six Nations of the Grand River. Darren is a Seneca Bear clan from the Haudenauonee and is the Project Manager of the New Orators Youth Project. He specializes in working with First Nations people, inspiring them to be proud of their heritage. He is very passionate about the importance of youth connecting to a cultural identity that they feel empowered by and talks about helping them find their vision and their voice. Darren graduated from the Wilfrid Laurier University with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. He has worked as an Addictions Counsellor and was a Community Liaison for the Grand Erie School Board for 10 years. He consults to a wide variety of communities and organizations, including Wilfrid Laurier University. He has now returned to school on the path to completing a Masters in Community Psychology at Laurier.

## SHANNA BURNS, B.A., B.ED., M.ED.

Shanna Burns is an educator and researcher for the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Centre for Prevention Science in London, Ontario. She obtained her Bachelor of Education and Masters in Educational Psychology from the University of Western Ontario. Most of her work is in the area of Fourth R program development and implementation initiatives. Since she started at CAMH in 2004, Shanna has assisted with the Health, English, Aboriginal Perspectives, Alternative Education, and Media Literacy curricula. Shanna has consulted on and developed resources and presentations to address topics such as cyber bullying, school-based bullying, bullying in the workplace, media violence, and homophobia. Shanna has worked with many at-risk youth in mainstream and alternative education settings and with students in First Nations communities. During the 2009-2010 school year, she co-facilitated the After-School program with high-risk girls and Aboriginal students at H.B. Beal Secondary School in London. Shanna is a Fourth R Master Trainer, and is one of the Coordinating Editors for the International Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect.

## CHARLENE CAMILLO, B.A., B.ED.

Charlene Camillo grew up in Espanola, ON and is a member of the Moose Cree First Nation of Moose Factory, ON. She obtained her B.A. in Kinesiology and First Nations Studies and her B.Ed. from The University of Western Ontario. Charlene joined the CAMH Centre for Prevention Science in October 2007. As a research assistant for CAMH, Charlene is involved with various 4th R programs for Aboriginal youth. She has helped facilitate high school peer mentoring programs, assisted in a high school Aboriginal Cultural Leadership course and has been a mentor to Grade 8 Aboriginal students in the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB). She is also involved in the organization and implementation of two Aboriginal Grade 8 Transition Conferences each year, as well as many community outreach events. Most recently Charlene facilitated the After-School program with high-risk girls and Aboriginal students at H.B. Beal Secondary School in London, ON, and is continually involved with Initiatives in Southwestern Ontario to help improve the involvement and engagement of Aboriginal parents in schools. Charlene has represented Ontario in the sport of basketball at the North American Indigenous Games in 2002 and 2006. While at UWO, she was a member of the Women's Varsity Basketball team. Charlene has continued to contribute to the sports community by coaching basketball at schools in the TVDSB and at Fanshawe College in London, ON.

## APPENDIX B: PROJECT CONTRIBUTORS

---

A large number of individuals and organizations have contributed both to the three-year project that served as the foundation for this document, and through writing materials for the document itself. Contributors include:

Dr. Kathy Absolon, *Wilfrid Laurier University*  
James Antone, *Thames Valley District School Board*  
Janet Antone, *CAMH Centre for Prevention Science*  
Joe Antone, *Thames Valley District School Board*  
Dr. Marie Battiste, *Aboriginal Education Research Centre*  
Christy Bell, *New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults, and Families*  
Nora Bressett, *Nimkee NupiGawagan Healing Centre*  
Shanna Burns, *CAMH Centre for Prevention Science*  
Carey Calder, *Native Women's Association of Canada*  
Charlene Camillo, *CAMH Centre for Prevention Science*  
Hazel Cardinal, *Helping Spirit Lodge*  
Shelley Cardinal, *Canadian Red Cross*  
Debbie Chiodo, *CAMH Centre for Prevention Science*  
Mary Clifford, *BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses*  
Tim Cowl, *Thames Valley District School Board*  
Claire Crooks, *CAMH Centre for Prevention Science*  
Lindsay Doxtator, *CAMH Centre for Prevention Science*  
Major Serge Dubé and D Cds 3-3 JCR, *Junior Canadian Rangers Programme Coordinator, Department of National Defence*  
Jennifer Frain, *New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults, and Families*  
Joceyn Formsma, *Youth Consultant*  
Nicole Gall, *CAMH Centre for Prevention Science*  
Melissa Hallman, *Royal Canadian Mounted Police*  
Val Hopkins, *Thames Valley District School Board*  
Keely Howard, *BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses*  
Erin Howarth, *Thames Valley District School Board*  
Ray Hughes, *CAMH Centre for Prevention Science and Thames Valley District School Board*  
Pauline Huppie-Parsons, *Native Women's Association of Canada*  
Fiona Hurley, *CAMH Centre for Prevention Science*  
Helenka Jdrzejowski, *Youth A&D Prevention Services, Vancouver Coastal Health*  
Olivia Jim, *Helping Spirit Lodge*  
Edward Jobson, *Royal Canadian Mounted Police*

Andrew Judge, *CAMH Centre for Prevention Science*  
Kristen Hendricks, *Chippewas on the Thames*  
Joyce Hunter, *SEVEN Magazine*  
Jode Kehego, *Policy Analyst and Film Producer (Crossing Borders Productions)*  
Marsha Knight, *New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults, and Families*  
Chuck Lafferty, *Urban Native Youth Association*  
Kesha Larocque, *CRU Wellness Centre*  
Katie Lizmore, *CAMH Centre for Prevention Science*  
Sarah Longman, *Regina Public School Board*  
John R. MacDonald, *Grand Erie District School Board*  
Shelley Masson, *New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults, and Families*  
Christy McDonald, *New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults, and Families*  
Caroline McIsaac, *CAMH Centre for Prevention Science*  
Myron McShane, *CAMH Centre for Prevention Science*  
Jessica Pereira, *CAMH Centre for Prevention Science*  
Barry Prong, *Nuxalk Community School*  
Shahnaz Rahman, *BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses*  
Eleanor Robertson, *New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults, and Families*  
Laura Rudland, *Vancouver School Board*  
Jane Runner, *New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults, and Families*  
Stephanie Russell, *Thames Valley District School Board*  
Angela Shoemaker, *University of Western Ontario*  
Tracey Sillaby-Ramsey, *Thames Valley District School Board*  
Kelly Sowden, *University of Western Ontario*  
Art Steinmann, *School Aged Children and Youth Substance Use Prevention Project*  
Darren Thomas, *New Orators Youth Project*  
Robyn Turgeon, *Thames Valley District School Board*  
Rhiannon Wong, *BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses*  
Youth participants from all of the projects

## NATIONAL CONSULTANTS:

Cindy Blackstock, *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society*  
Shelley Cardinal, *Canadian Red Cross*  
Jocelyn Formsma, *Youth Consultant*  
Ginger Gosnell, *Youth Consultant*

**Affiliations are provided based on involvement with the project. The authors apologize to anyone who may have inadvertently been overlooked in this list.**

## APPENDIX C. TOOLKIT REVIEWERS

---

Dr. Kathy Absolon, *Aboriginal Coordinator and Assistant Professor, Faculty of Social Work, Wilfred Laurier University*

Dr. Marie Battiste, *Director, Aboriginal Education Research Centre*

Salena Brickey, *Policy Analyst, Public Health Agency of Canada*

Carey Calder, *Community Development Coordinator YOUTH, Native Women's Association of Canada*

Shelley Cardinal, *Aboriginal Consultant, Canadian Red Cross*

Jennifer Frain, *Executive Director, New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults and Families*

Ray Hughes, *National Education Coordinator, The Fourth R*

Dr. Peter Jaffe, *Academic Director, Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children*

Helenka Jdrzejowski, *Prevention Coordinator, Youth A&D Prevention Services, Vancouver Coastal Health*

Andrew Judge, *Youth Liaison Coordinator, CAMH Centre for Prevention Science*

Jocelyn Formsma, *Youth Consultant, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society*

Veronica Rene Keith, *Youth Launch / Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement*

Kesha Larocque, *Facilitator, CRU Wellness Centre*

Sarah Longman, *Equity Consultant, Regina Public School Board*

Stoney McCart, *Director, Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement*

Dr. Peter Menzies, *Clinical Head of Aboriginal Services, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)*

Thomas Puddicombe, *Aboriginal Integrated Crisis Counsellor, London Mental Health Crisis Service*

Laura Rudland, *Consultant, Aboriginal Education Learning Services, Vancouver School Board*

Rhiannon Wong, *Children's Services Coordinator, BC Yukon Society of Transition Houses*

Dr. David Wolfe, *Director, CAMH Centre for Prevention Science*

## APPENDIX D. PROGRAM CONTACT PAGE – CASE STUDIES

---

### **Canadian Red Cross**

National Office  
170 Metcalfe Street, Suite 300  
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 2P2  
Tel: (613) 740-1900  
Fax: (613) 740-1911  
Web: [www.redcross.ca](http://www.redcross.ca)

### **New Direction's TERF Program**

New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults and Families  
400 - 491 Portage Avenue  
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2E4  
Phone: (204) 786-7051  
Fax: (204) 774-6468  
Web: [www.newdirections.mb.ca](http://www.newdirections.mb.ca)

### **NWAC Violence Prevention Toolkit Project**

Six Nations of the Grand River  
1292 Wellington Street West  
Ottawa, ON K1Y 3A9  
Telephone: 613-722-3033 or 1-800-461-4043  
Fax: 613-722-7687  
Web: [www.nwac-hq.org/en/index.html](http://www.nwac-hq.org/en/index.html)

### **BCYSTH Aboriginal Capacity Café and VIP**

B.C./Yukon Society of Transition Houses  
Suite 325, 119 West Pender Street  
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1S5  
Phone: 604-669-6943 or 1800-661-1040  
Fax: 604-682-6962  
Web: [www.bcysth.ca](http://www.bcysth.ca)

### **The Fourth R: Uniting Our Nations**

CAMH Centre for Prevention Science  
100-100 Collip Circle  
London, ON N6G 4X8  
Phone: 519-858-5144  
Fax: 519-858-5149  
Web: [www.youthrelationships.org](http://www.youthrelationships.org)

### **Nimkee NupiGawagan Healing Center**

R.R. #1  
Muncey, Ontario N0L 1Y0  
Phone: 519-264-2277  
Toll-free: 1-888-685-9862  
Fax: 519-264-1552  
Web: [www.nimkee.ca/introduction.asp](http://www.nimkee.ca/introduction.asp)

### **Junior Canadian Rangers (DND)**

National Defence Headquarters  
Major-General George R. Pearkes Building  
101 Colonel By Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K2  
Phone: 613-995-6582  
Fax: 613-992-4739  
Web: [www.forces.gc.ca/site/home-accueil-eng.asp](http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/home-accueil-eng.asp)

### **Royal Canadian Mounted Police**

Public Affairs and Communications Services  
Headquarters Building  
1200 Vanier Parkway  
Ottawa ON K1A 0R2  
Phone: 613-993-7267  
Fax: 613-993-0260  
Web: [www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/)

### **CRU Youth Wellness Centre**

441 11<sup>th</sup> St. E.  
Saskatoon, SK  
Phone: 306-978-0391  
Fax: 306-657-3951  
Web: [www.cruwellness.com](http://www.cruwellness.com)

### **SEVEN Youth Media Network**

20 Victoria Ave. East, Suite 202  
Thunder Bay, ON P7C 1A9  
Toll free: 1-888-575-2349  
Fax: 1-807-344-3182  
Web: [www.sevenyouthmedia.com](http://www.sevenyouthmedia.com)

## APPENDIX E. GLOSSARY

---

This glossary is intended to assist with discussions about the past and present. Many terms have been ascribed to Indigenous peoples, cultures and society with little understanding. These terms may provide common understandings, but they cannot replace authentic dialogue about what is meaningful and representative of the many nations and communities that Indigenous peoples identify with.

This glossary is not comprehensive and does not reflect the diversity of Indigenous communities around the world but it is intended as a place to begin.

**Aboriginal Nations** The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) used this term in its final report. RCAP defines Aboriginal nations as a "sizable body of Aboriginal people with a shared sense of national identity that constitutes the predominant population in a certain territory or collection of territories." The term has gained acceptance among some Aboriginal groups.

**Aboriginal peoples** This is a collective name for all of the original peoples of Canada and their descendants. The Constitution Act of 1982 specifies that the Aboriginal Peoples in Canada consist of three groups - Indians, Inuit and Métis. First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples have unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. The term Aboriginal peoples should not be used to describe only one or two of the groups.

**Aboriginal title** A legal term that recognizes Aboriginal interest in the land. It is based on Aboriginal peoples' longstanding use and occupancy of the land as descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada.

**American "Indian"** American "Indian" is a commonly-used term in the United States to describe the descendants of the original peoples of North America (see also Native Americans). Some people are dissatisfied with this term because it retains the misnomer "Indian" in its name and covers peoples who consider themselves distinct from "Indian" Peoples, namely the Inuit, Yupik and Aleut Peoples in Alaska. The term is not popular in Canada.

**Band** A band is an organizational structure defined in the Indian Act which represents a particular group of Indians as defined under the Indian Act.

**Band council** This is the governing body for a band. It usually consists of a chief and councillors who are elected (under the Indian Act or band custom) for two or three-year terms to carry out band business, which may include education, water and sewer, fire services, community buildings, schools, roads, and other community businesses and services.

<b>Comprehensive claim</b>	Comprehensive claims are based on unextinguished Aboriginal title. They arise where Aboriginal title has not been dealt with by treaty and other legal means. Comprehensive land claims negotiations address concerns raised by Aboriginal people, governments and third parties about who has the legal right to own or use the lands and resources in areas under claim. They include such things as land title, fishing and trapping rights and financial compensation.
<b>Eskimo</b>	Eskimo is the term once given to Inuit by European explorers and is now rarely used in Canada. It is derived from an Algonquin term meaning "raw meat eaters", and many people find the term offensive. The term is still frequently used in the United States in reference to Inuit in Alaska.
<b>Extinguishment</b>	A term used to describe the cessation or surrender of Aboriginal rights to lands and resources in exchange for rights granted in a treaty.
<b>Fiduciary duty</b>	The legal obligation of one party to act in the best interests of another. Canada has a fiduciary obligation with respect to Indians and lands reserved for Indians under Section 91(24) of the Constitution Act of 1867.
<b>First Nation(s)</b>	The term First Nations came into common use in the 1970s to replace Indian, which some people found offensive. Many communities have also replaced "band" with "First Nation" in their names. Despite its widespread use, there is no legal definition for this term in Canada.
<b>Indian</b>	The term Indian collectively describes all the Indigenous People in Canada who are not Inuit or Métis. Indian Peoples are one of three peoples recognized as Aboriginal in the Constitution Act, 1982 along with Inuit and Métis. Three categories apply to Indians in Canada: Status Indians, Non-Status Indians and Treaty Indians.
<b>Indian Act</b>	This is the Canadian federal legislation, first passed in 1876, which sets out certain federal government obligations, and regulates the management of Indian reserve lands. The act has been amended several times, most recently in 1985.
<b>Indian status</b>	An individual's legal status as an Indian, as defined by the Indian Act.
<b>Indigenous</b>	There is no official definition of Indigenous peoples. In part, the term "Indigenous" is described as follows: "Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them..." Its meaning is similar to Aboriginal Peoples, Native Peoples or First Peoples. It is often used to refer to Aboriginal people internationally.
<b>Inherent right</b>	The authority given to Aboriginal people by the Creator for self-determination, including the right to govern themselves.

<b>Innu</b>	Innu are the Naskapi and Montagnais First Nations Peoples who live in Quebec and Labrador. They are not to be confused with Inuit or Inuk.
<b>Inuit</b>	Inuit are the Aboriginal People of Arctic Canada. Inuit live primarily in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and northern parts of Quebec and throughout most of Labrador. They have traditionally lived north of the tree line in the areas bordered by the Mackenzie Delta in the west, the Labrador coast in the east, the southern point of Hudson Bay in the south, and the High Arctic islands in the north. The word Inuit means "the people" in Inuktitut and is the term by which Inuit refer to themselves. The Indian Act does not cover Inuit. However, in 1939, the Supreme Court of Canada interpreted the federal government's power to make laws affecting "Indians, and lands reserved for Indians" as extending to Inuit. Inuit live in communities and settlements. Inuit never lived on reserves, therefore the terms on-reserve or off-reserve do not apply to Inuit only to First Nations. There are four Inuit comprehensive land claims regions covering one-third of Canada: they are Unuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik and Labrador. Nunavut has three subregions-Kitikmeot, Kivalliq and Qikiqtaaluk.
<b>Inuk</b>	Inuk is the singular form of Inuit. Use Inuk when referring to one person. When referring to two people the correct term is Inuuk while three or more is Inuit.
<b>Inuktitut</b>	Inuktitut is the Inuit language and writing system. Inuinnaqtun and Inuvialuit are also languages and writing systems for Western Arctic and Kitikmeot Region; Qaniuyaapiat for syllabics and Qaliuyaapait for Roman orthography or Inuinnaqtun.
<b>Land claims</b>	In 1973, the federal government recognized two broad classes of claims - comprehensive and specific.
<b>Métis</b>	This is the French word for "mixed blood". The Constitution Act of 1982 recognizes Métis as one of the three Aboriginal Peoples. Historically, the term Métis applied to the children of French fur traders and Cree women in the Prairies, of English and Scottish traders, and Dene women in the north, and Inuit and British in Newfoundland and Labrador. Today, the term is used broadly to describe people with mixed First Nations and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis. Note that Métis organizations in Canada have differing criteria about who qualifies as a Métis person. Métis Settlements: in 1938, the Alberta government set aside 1.25 million acres of land for eight Métis settlements, however, Métis never lived on reserves and the terms on/off reserve do not apply to them.

<b>Native</b>	This commonly used term in the United States describes the descendants of the original peoples of North America. The term has not caught on in Canada because of the apparent reference to U.S. Citizenship. However, some Aboriginal Peoples in Canada have argued that because they are descendants of the original peoples of the Americas, the term Native American should apply to them regardless for their citizenship. Native North American has been used to identify the original peoples of Canada and the United States.
<b>Non-Status Indians</b>	Non-Status Indians are people who consider themselves Indians or members of a First Nation but are not entitled to be registered under the Indian Act. This may be because their ancestors were never registered or because they lost their status under former provisions of the Indian Act. Non-Status Indians are not entitled to the same rights and benefits available to Status Indians.
<b>Reservation</b>	A reservation is land set aside by the U.S. government for the use and occupation of a group of Native Americans. The term does not apply in Canada.
<b>Reserve</b>	The Indian Act describes a reserve as lands which have been set apart for the use and benefit of a Band, and for which the legal title rests with the Crown in right of Canada. The federal government has primary jurisdiction over these lands and the people living on them.
<b>Section 35</b>	Section of the Constitution Act, 1982 that states that Aboriginal rights and treaty rights are recognized and affirmed and makes it clear that treaty rights include rights that now exist by way of land claim agreements or that may be so acquired. As a result of this constitutional protection, government has an obligation not to infringe upon Aboriginal and treaty rights without justification.
<b>Section 91(24)</b>	Section 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1867, allocates jurisdiction to the Parliament of Canada to enact laws regarding "Indians and lands reserved for Indians."
<b>Self-government</b>	The internal regulation of a First Nation by its own people.
<b>Sovereignty</b>	Sovereignty is an internationally recognized concept. A basic tenet of sovereignty is the power of a people to govern themselves.
<b>Tribal Sovereignty</b>	American Indian tribal powers originate with the history of tribes managing their own affairs. Case law has established that tribes reserve the rights they had never given away.
<b>Specific claims</b>	Specific claims arise from the breach or non-fulfillment of government obligations found in treaties, agreements or statutes.

- Status Indians** Status Indians are people who are entitled to have their names included on the Indian Register, an official list maintained by the federal government. Certain criteria determine who can be registered as a Status Indian. Only Status Indians are recognized as Indians under the Indian Act, which defines an Indian as "a person who, pursuant to this Act, is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian." Status Indians are entitled to certain rights and benefits under the law.
- Treaty** A negotiated agreement between a First Nation and the federal and provincial governments that spells out the rights of the First Nation with respect to lands and resources over a specified area. It may also define the self-government authority of a First Nation. The Government of Canada and the courts understand treaties between the Crown and Aboriginal people to be solemn agreements that set out promises, obligations and benefits for both parties.
- Treaty Indian** Treaty Indians belong to a First Nation ancestors signed a treaty with the Crown and as a result are entitled to treaty benefits.
- Treaty right** Treaty Rights are special rights to lands and entitlements that Indian people legally have as a result of treaties. Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 recognizes and affirms, the "existing Aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal people of Canada."
- Tribal Council** A tribal council is a group made up of several bands and represents the interests of those bands. A tribal council may administer funds or deliver common services to those bands. Membership in a tribal council tends to be organized around geographic, political, treaty, cultural, and/or linguistic lines.
- Tribe** A tribe is a group of Native Americans sharing a common language and culture. The term is used frequently in the United States, but only in a few areas of Canada.

Adapted from: [www.reconciliationmovement.org/resources/glossary.html](http://www.reconciliationmovement.org/resources/glossary.html)

## APPENDIX F. ACRONYMS

---

This list of acronyms is provided for reference.

Acronym	Full Name
AFN	Assembly of First Nations
APTP	Aboriginal Pre-Cadet Training Program (of the RCMP)
BCYSTH	BC/Yukon Society of Transition
CAMH	Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
CAP	Congress of Aboriginal Peoples
CRU	Connections and Resources for U
CWWA	Children Who Witness Abuse
DND	Department of National Defense
FNCPA	First Nations Chiefs of Police Association
FNCFCS	First Nations Child and Family Caring Society
INAC	Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
ITK	Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
JCR	Junior Canadian Rangers
MNC	Métis National Council
NAFC	National Association of Friendship Centres
NAHO	National Aboriginal Health Organization
ND	New Directions for Children, Youth, Adults and Families
NWAC	Native Women's Association of Canada
OCAP	Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession
PHASE	Preventing Harassment and Abuse Through Successful Education
PREVNet	Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network
PTMO	Provincial/Territorial /Member Organizations
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
SACY	School Age Children and Youth, Substance Use Prevention Initiative
TERF	Transition and Education Resources for Females
TVDSB	Thames Valley District School Board
UMAYC	Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centre
UN	United Nations
UNYA	Urban Native Youth Association
VIP	Violence is Preventable
VSB	Vancouver School Board
WTPC	Walking the Prevention Circle