

Supporting youth in our communities

A manual for adult allies in Yukon



McCreary
Centre Society

YOUTH HEALTH • YOUTH RESEARCH • YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



This manual was created for use in Yukon by adults who want to become better allies to the youth in their community. It was funded by Yukon Government Health and Social Services, Health Promotion Department and was created as a result of two adult ally training workshops held in Whitehorse in March 2013.

It covers an introduction to adolescent development and information about risk and protective factors in the lives of Yukon youth, before discussing how adult allies can support meaningful youth engagement in communities across the Territory. A selection of tools for working with youth and for assessing your role as an adult ally is included.

Special thanks are due to the youth workers and community members from across Yukon whose knowledge and experiences shaped this manual. Their observations and perspectives on engaging young people are included throughout the manual.



This manual was produced by McCreary Centre Society, a non-government not-for-profit committed to improving the health of youth through research, education and community-based projects. Founded in 1977, the Society sponsors and promotes a wide range of activities and research to identify and address the health needs of young people.



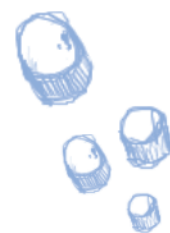
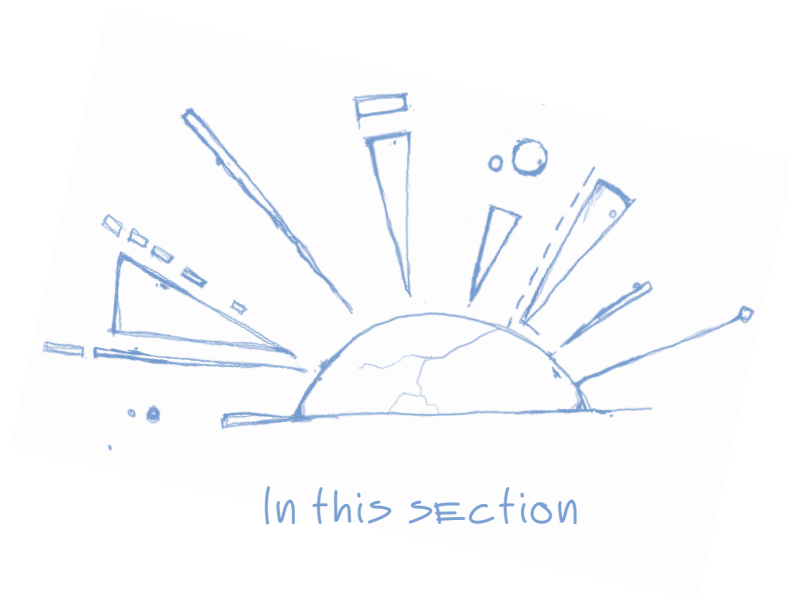


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In this section

Youth leaders today and tomorrow

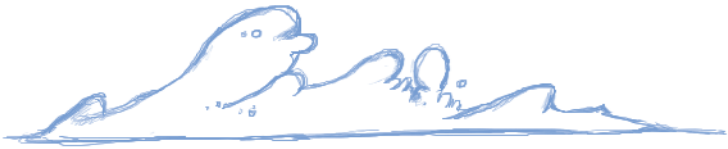
What adult allies need to know about youth development

Challenges to healthy youth development in Yukon

Building protective factors in youth's lives

First Nations, Inuit and Métis youth health





Like the Wizard of Oz, an adult ally brings out what young people already have inside.

Youth leaders today and tomorrow



As adult allies it is important to recognize and believe that teenagers can and do amazing things. Being an adult ally has been described as being like the Wizard of Oz—your role is to bring out what young people already have inside them, and to support them to shine.

We often think of youth as the next generation of leaders, yet throughout history youth have shown themselves to be incredible leaders during their teenage years.

Some notable adolescents include Joan of Arc, Alexander the Great, Mary Shelley (the author of *Frankenstein*), King Tutankhamen, Tennessee Williams, Oscar Wilde, and Louis Braille (who invented Braille at 15).



What adult allies need to know about youth development

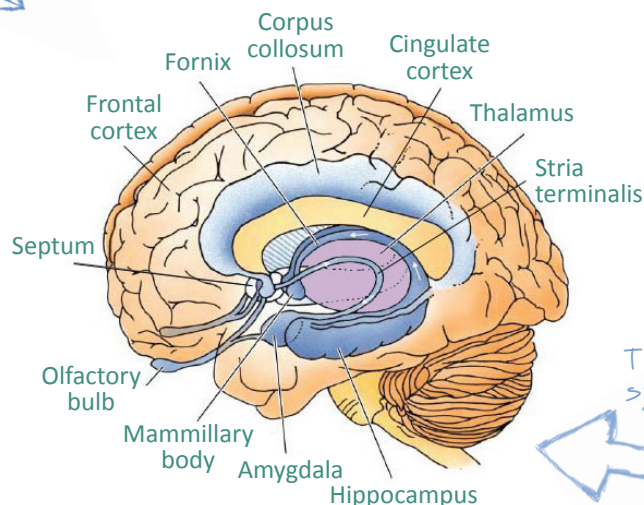
As adult allies, it is important to understand the biological development of young people as they move from being a child through adolescence and into adulthood. By understanding the developmental stage they are in, we are better equipped to support them.

Adolescence is the physically healthiest and strongest life stage, yet it can be a time of emotional turmoil. The two biggest killers of young people in Canada are accidents (often caused by risky behaviour such as driving too fast, driving under the influence, or not wearing a seat belt) and suicide.

The adolescent brain

The human brain continues to mature and develop throughout childhood and adolescence and well into early adulthood. The region of the brain called the **amygdala** develops early. It is responsible for instinctual reactions including fear and aggressive behavior. Yet, the **frontal cortex**, which is the area of the brain that controls reasoning and helps us think before we act, only develops later and is still changing and maturing well into adulthood.

Also during adolescence, nerve cells in the brain develop myelin, an insulating layer which helps cells communicate, and which are essential for the development of coordinated thought, action, and behavior.



The brain continues to develop throughout adolescence and early adulthood.

The limbic system



Youth's brains
function differently
from adults when
making decisions
and problem solving.

Youth think and act differently from adults

Adults sometimes wonder why young people do not see things the way they do. Pictures of the brain show that youth's brains function differently from adults when they are making decisions and problem solving. Their actions are guided more by the amygdala (the instinctive and impulsive part of the brain) and less by the frontal cortex (the problem solving and reasoning part of the brain).

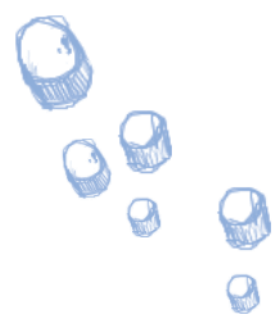
As a result, youth are more likely to act on impulse than adults, which can lead to getting involved in dangerous or risky behaviour. They are also less likely to think before they act or to think through the consequences of their actions.

Hormones

Humans start to produce reproductive hormones at around the age of 13. These hormones are responsible for young people's changing body shape and rapid growth (which can be as much as 4 inches in a year) as well as their increasing interest in sexual relationships.

It can be difficult for young people to manage the changes going on in their body brought about by these hormones. They are often worried and embarrassed by their changing body, feel tired or hungry, and want to experiment and take risks.

This doesn't mean that young people cannot be held responsible for their actions, and that there are not other factors, such as the group of friends they hang out with, which affect how young people behave. However, an awareness of these hormonal changes can help adult allies understand, anticipate, and support youth.




Early adolescence
is around ages 11-13


Stages of development

Early adolescence is usually around ages 11-13, but it comes earlier for some young people and later for others.

Youth at this stage experience a number of physical changes. These include physical growth, as well as starting to grow body hair, increased perspiration and oil production in hair and skin. Girls experience breast and hip development and the onset of menstruation. Boys experience growth in their testicles and penis, wet dreams, and a deepening of the voice.



Cognitively at this stage, young people have a growing capacity for abstract thought, and their intellectual and moral thinking begins to deepen, but they are still mainly interested in the present with limited thought to the future.





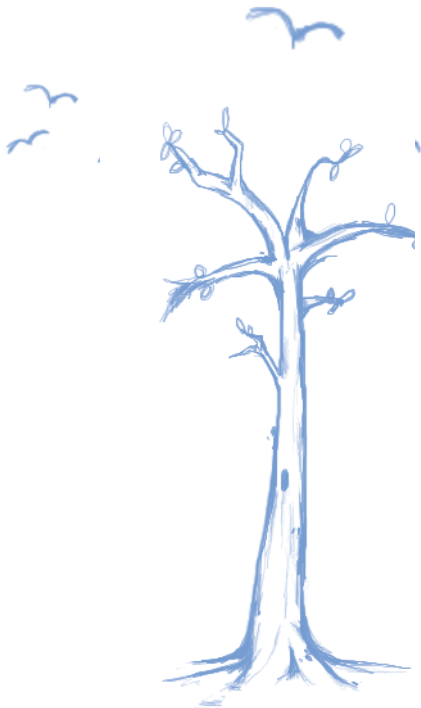
Socially and emotionally, this is the stage when youth realize their parents are not perfect, and there is a rise in conflict with their parents and a desire for more independence. Peers begin to have a greater influence; there is greater desire for independence, growing sexual interest and a desire for privacy. Youth at this stage are also struggling with their sense of identity, worry about being "normal" and feel awkward about themselves and their body. They often become moody, test limits and return to more childish behavior when stressed.




Supporting youth at this stage of development

As an adult ally working with youth in this age group, there are a number of things that you can do to be supportive. These include:

- 
- Hosting discussions on media images of beauty, body image and adulthood
 - Promoting healthy body image and self-esteem and supporting the youth's physical, emotional and cognitive changes
 - Listening and being responsive
 - Being flexible
 - Modeling respect
 - Recognizing that challenging authority offers an outlet for new cognitive skills
 - Offering opportunities for autonomy and independence within the limits of safety
- 
- Providing opportunities for questioning beliefs and culture, and for complex thinking and pondering big questions
 - Providing information, resources and space to talk about healthy sexuality (including a range of sexualities and gender identities)
 - Acting as a role model
 - Having a sense of humour and offering chances to have fun.





Middle Adolescence
is around ages 14-18

Middle adolescence usually occurs between the ages of 14 and 18.

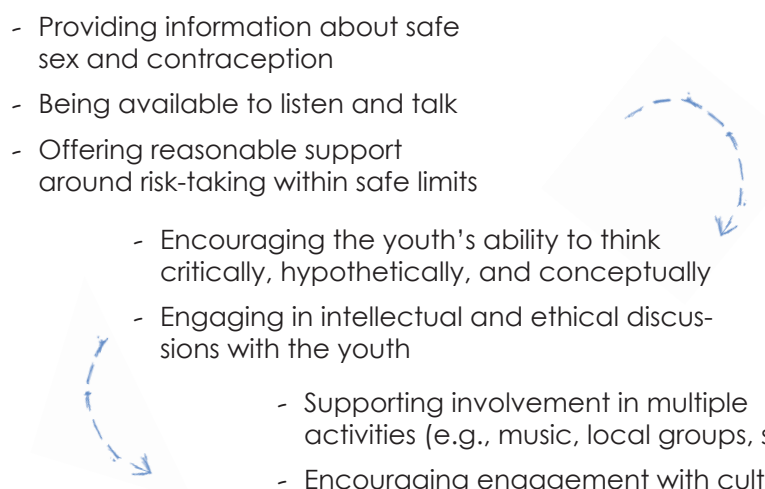
At this stage, puberty is completed and physical growth slows for girls, but continues for boys.

Youth continue to develop cognitively through this stage, including developing a greater capacity for setting goals and moral reasoning. They begin to think about the meaning of life.

Socially and emotionally, they become more self-involved with high expectations and poor self-concept. They are still adjusting to their changing body, worrying about being normal and continuing to become more independent. They develop a greater reliance on their friends and develop feelings of love and passion along with increased sexual interest.

Supporting youth at this stage of development

All of the skills you would use to support early adolescents can be useful with middle adolescents. Building on these skills, you can also support this age group by:

- 
- Providing information about safe sex and contraception
 - Being available to listen and talk
 - Offering reasonable support around risk-taking within safe limits
 - Encouraging the youth's ability to think critically, hypothetically, and conceptually
 - Engaging in intellectual and ethical discussions with the youth
 - Supporting involvement in multiple activities (e.g., music, local groups, sports)
 - Encouraging engagement with culturally diverse peers
 - Engaging openly with the youth about moral reasoning



LATE ADOLESCENCE is around ages 19-25

Late adolescence usually occurs between the ages of 19 and 25.

As youth move toward young adulthood, young men continue to gain height, weight, muscle mass, and body hair; whereas, young women tend to be physically fully developed.

Late adolescents have an ability to think ideas through from beginning to end, to delay gratification, and to reflect more deeply on their feelings. They typically worry about their future and have an increased concern for others.

They have a firmer sense of identity, including sexual identity. Peer relationships remain important but they are also developing more serious relationships. They also have greater emotional stability and increased independence and self-reliance.

For young people in this developmental stage, social and cultural traditions can regain some of their importance.



How to support youth at this stage of development

- Continue providing information about safe sex and contraception
- Provide for self-care, including stress management
- Respect the privacy and intellect of the young adult
- Respect the young adult's intimate relationships and identity development
- Support the young adult's moral idealism and social activism
- Celebrate the process of searching that is part of late adolescence

Across the stages of adolescent development, we see changes in sleep, arousal, appetite, and risk-taking as a result of the biological changes that young people are experiencing. We also see an increased interest in relationships and social causes.

Adolescence is a period when young people really care about social issues, and when they think change is possible, so it is a great time to get them actively involved in their community.

Challenges to healthy youth development in Yukon

Adolescence can be a time when young people engage in health risk behaviours, and often lack the skills to protect themselves and the awareness to fully understand the risks they are taking. As adult allies, it is important to understand risk factors among young people in Yukon.

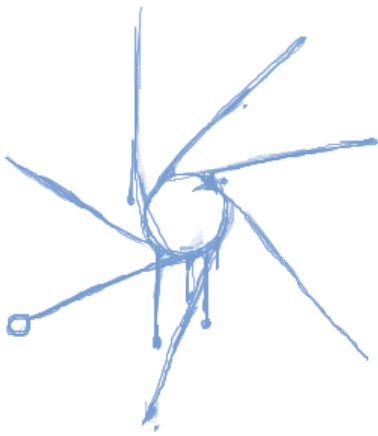
Youth workers and community members generated a list of the biggest risks they see to youth growing up healthy in Yukon.



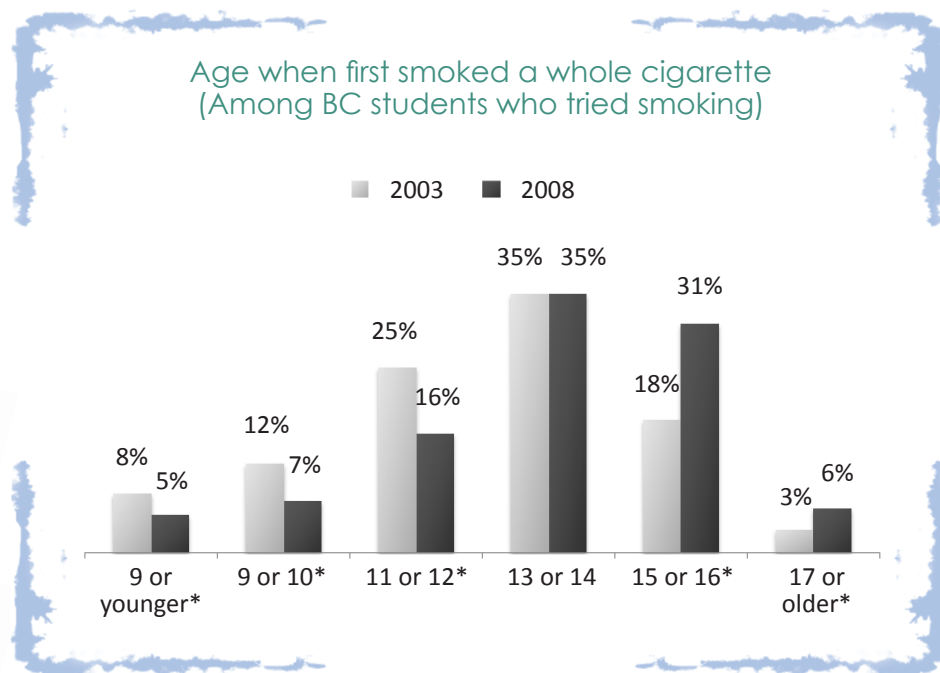
- Drug & alcohol use, including family misuse & early use & lack of access to harm reduction resources
- Peer pressure
- Lack of adult connection/ support in community; schools
- Bullying & violence
- Isolation
- Lack of opportunities
- Apathy & boredom
- Food insecurity & nutritionally poor diet

- Stress
- The legacy of residential schools
- The gulf between well-resourced youth & those living in poverty
- Homelessness
- Lack of access to mental health facilities; services & diagnoses
- No rites of passage ceremonies
- Tokenism
- Lack of access to employment
- Extreme weather
- Dangerous highways





Risky behaviours tend to start around ages 13-15. For example, this is the age when most youth who are going to try substances do so. Data from the BC Adolescent Health Survey (2008) shows that although the percentages of youth who are trying tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs have generally decreased over the years, those who are trying these are first doing so between Grade 8 and 10. (See example for smoking below.)





Protective factors ARE...

Anything that PREVENTS or REDUCES vulnerability AND INCREASES health AND WELL-BEING.

Building protective factors in youth's lives

The Health Behaviours of School Age Children survey carried out in Yukon in 2009 identified a number of protective factors such as neighbourhood connectedness, family connectedness, supportive adults, positive peer relationships, pro-social friends, school connectedness and physical activity.

Yukon youth workers and community members added the list:




- Active lifestyle
- Settled land claims
- Honouring First Nations/other cultural practices
- Fresh air; natural environment
- Strong cultural heritage
- Not being treated as different
- Social emotional learning approach
- Anti-bullying
- Blood ties
- Physical activities
- Non-violent communication
- Meaningful participation in arts activities & hobbies
- Family Support workers
- Youth & recreation centres


Youth workers in Whitehorse identified these organizations and programs as promoting protective factors in local youth:



- Canada Games Centre
- Wood Street School
- Friendship Centre (Skookum Jim)
- BYTE
- Individual Learning Centre
- Kwanlin Dün
- Home School Network
- Girls Club (VFWC)

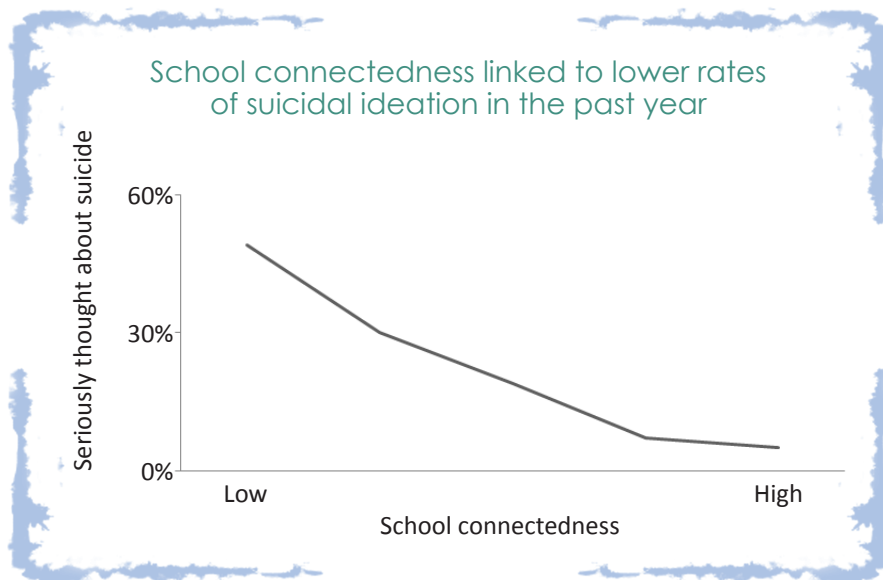


Family connectedness is...
How close youth feel to their family and how much they feel understood by them.

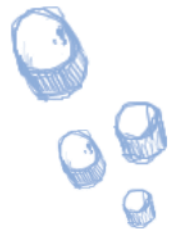


By looking at results from the BC Adolescent Health Survey (2008) it is possible to see the effects of the various protective factors that have been identified as available to young people in Yukon.

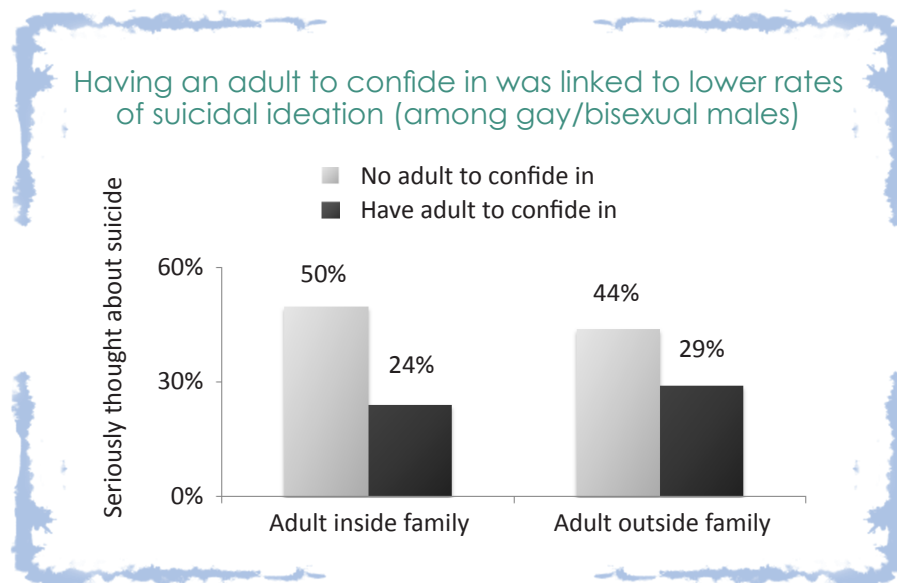
Family and school connectedness are two of the strongest protective factors for youth and are consistently linked to positive health outcomes, such as positive mental health and reduced risky behaviours.



School connectedness is...
How much youth feel their teachers care about them, how well they get along with their teachers, and how much they feel they are a part of their school.



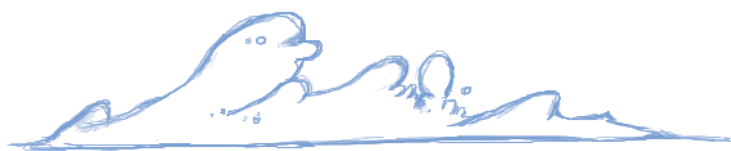
When youth approach professionals for help (such as youth workers, social workers or school counselors), they report better outcomes if that adult is helpful as opposed to not helpful. For example, youth who reported that they had been sexually abused and who found a professional adult in their lives helpful were more likely to report feeling good about themselves, good or excellent health, post-secondary aspirations and never having self-harmed, compared to abused youth who had asked for help but not found it helpful.



Positive peer relationships - Adolescence is often a time when young people start to develop relationships beyond their immediate family, and peers take on a bigger role in their lives.

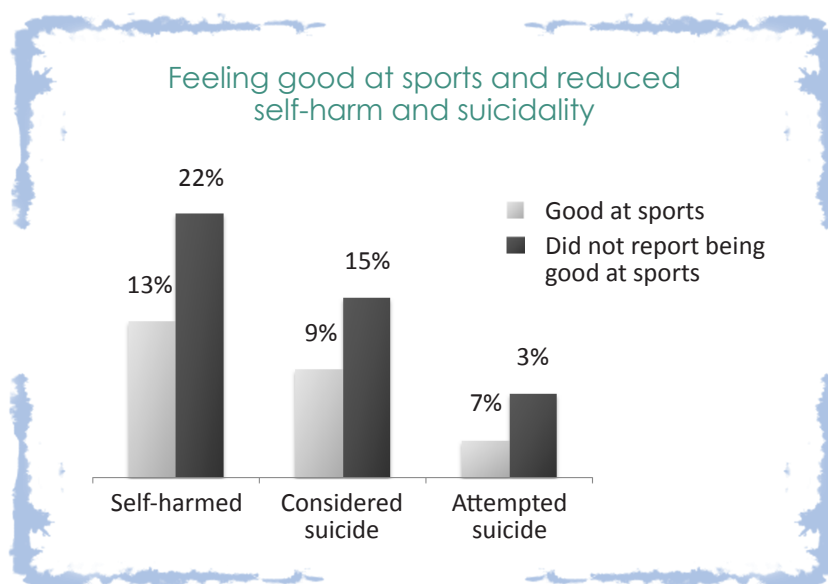
Having friends who disapprove of potentially risky behaviours (like binge drinking and fighting) is an important protective factor for reducing the chances young people feel suicidal, and increasing the chances they plan to continue their education beyond high school.





Sports programs like the basketball in Faro, or the LEADERS in Training program facilitated by BYTE ARE great local EXAMPLES of projects which build skills in young PEOPLE.

Building skills and competencies are also important protective factors. Youth engagement is another protective factor which is discussed in more detail on page 22.



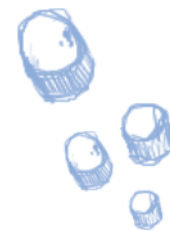
You can learn more about protective factors and their importance in youth's lives at www.mcs.bc.ca.

Visit McCreary on the web for copies of these and other reports—all free for download:

A picture of health (2009)

Making the right connections: Promoting positive mental health among BC youth (2011)

Fostering Potential: The lives of BC youth in government care (2012)



First Nations, Inuit and Métis youth health

As a result of the legacy of colonization and the ongoing impact of the residential school system, First Nations, Inuit and Métis youth face additional barriers to their health growing up.

In BC, for example, Aboriginal youth are at greater risk of attempting suicide than their non-Aboriginal peers. However, when risk and protective factors in their lives are taken into account, some factors are more prominent than others.

For males, the biggest risk factors associated with a suicide attempt in the past year were experiencing extreme despair to the point where they felt they could not function properly and having experienced a friend commit suicide or a family member commit suicide. For females, their chances of attempting suicide were highest if they were feeling extreme despair and had a history of physical and sexual abuse.

However, the chances of Aboriginal males attempting suicide were reduced by nearly two-thirds if they had strong family connectedness and felt safe at school, even if all three risk factors were present. For females, their chances of attempting suicide even if they were in despair and had been abused were greatly reduced if they felt connected to family and school, and felt safe at school.

For more information about protective factors and their importance in the lives of Aboriginal youth:

Raven's Children III: Aboriginal youth health in BC (2012)

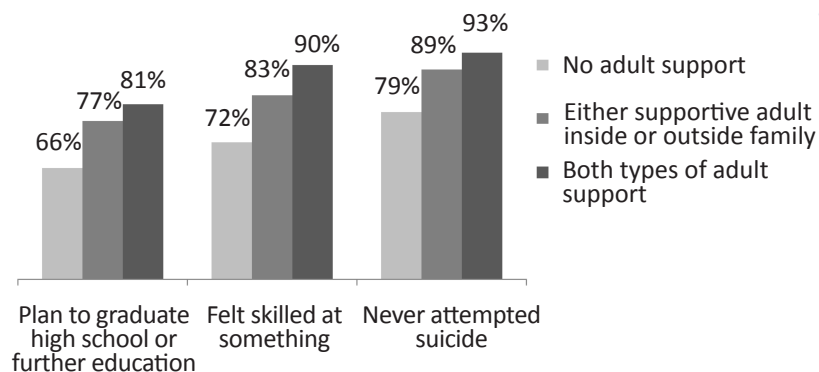
Métis youth health in BC (2012)

These reports are available to download at www.mcs-bc.ca.

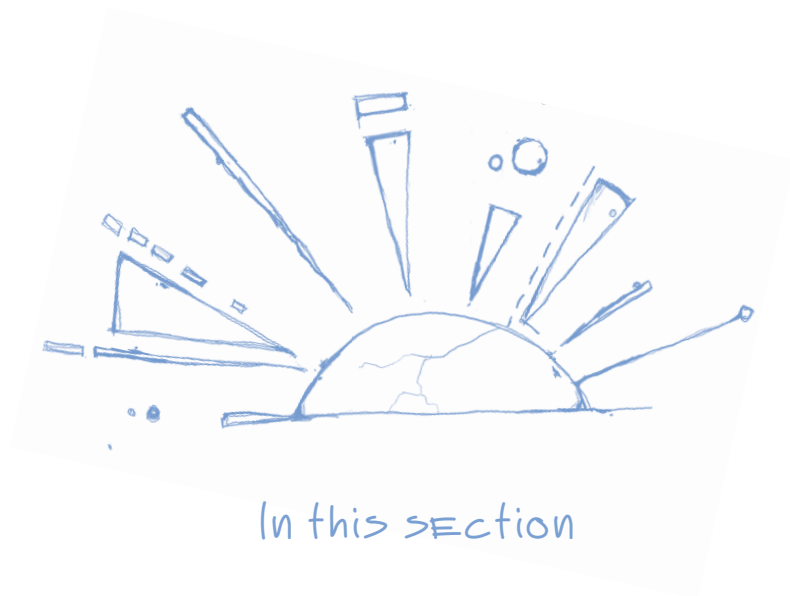
Having supportive relationships with adults was linked to higher rates of positive behaviours, such as feeling skilled and planning to graduate high school or a post-secondary institution. Supportive adults were also linked to lower rates of potentially risky behaviours, such as attempting suicide or gambling.

For example, youth were less likely to have gambled in the past year if they felt their teachers cared about them quite a bit or very much (40% vs. 50% who felt teachers cared to a lesser degree).

Role of adult support for Aboriginal youth



Note: For "Plan to graduate high school or further education," there was no significant difference between having either and both types of adult support.



In this section

What is youth engagement?

Models of youth engagement

Youth engagement as a protective factor

Overcoming challenges of youth engagement in Yukon





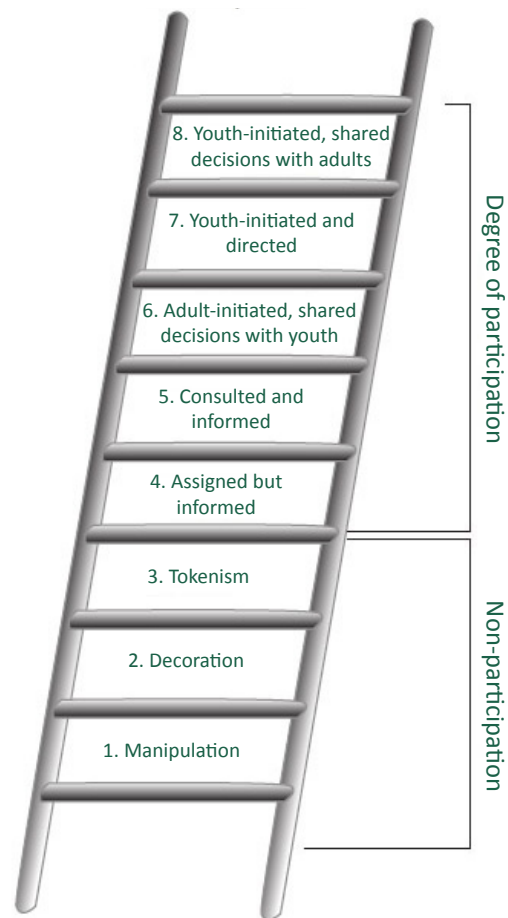
What is youth engagement?

Youth Engagement is...
The meaningful participation and sustainable involvement of young people in shared decisions in matters which affect their lives and those of their community, including planning, decision-making and program delivery.


Models of youth engagement

Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation can be a useful way to think about the level of youth engagement which is present in your project or organization. The ladder builds from projects which do not meaningfully engage young people through to genuine partnerships with adults and shared decision-making. The first three rungs of the ladder are completely controlled by adults and the top four have varying degrees of participation.

The Ladder of Participation



Adapted from: Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation, Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship, UNICEF



Tokenism is when
young people appear
to be given a voice,
but actually have little
choice about how
they participate.

The rungs of the ladder

- 1) **Manipulation.** This is the first rung and happens when adults use young people to support causes and pretend that the causes are inspired by young people.
- 2) **Decoration.** This occurs when young people are used to help or support a cause in an indirect way, although adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by young people.
- 3) **Tokenism.** This is when young people appear to be given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.
- 4) **Assigned but informed.** This occurs when young people are given a specific role and informed about how and why they are being involved. An example would be including youth on a local community board.
- 5) **Consulted and informed.** This happens when young people give advice on projects or programs designed and run by adults. The young people are informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of the decisions made by adults. An example of this would be a recreation centre's Youth Advisory Council.
- 6) **Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people.** This happens when projects or programs are initiated by adults but the decision-making is shared with the young people. An example might be a local research project where youth ask their peers questions designed by adults.

Turn the page to read about
the top rungs of the ladder...



Adult allies and youth can decide together what types of decision-making best fit the needs of the group.

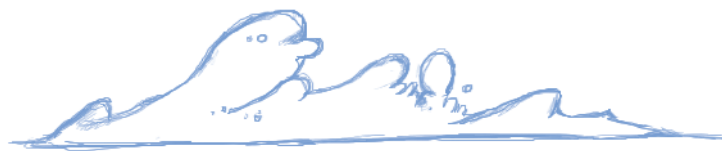
7) **Young people-initiated and directed.** This step is when young people initiate and direct a project or program. Adults are involved only in a supportive role. An example would be a group of Grade 9 students who protest to their local school board about changes in the curriculum.

8) **Young people-initiated, shared decisions with adults.** This happens when projects or programs are initiated by young people and decision-making is shared between young people and adults. These projects empower young people while at the same time enabling them to access and learn from the life experience and expertise of adults. This rung of the ladder can be embodied by youth/adult partnerships. See the Aboriginal Next Steps II example on page 31.



Is rung 7 or 8 better?

Hart's Ladder of Participation shows youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults as the top rung of young people's participation, followed immediately by youth-initiated and directed. However, some people believe that youth-initiated and directed projects should be the top rung. Both have merit, and as adult allies we can work with young people to determine what our role is and which form of decision-making best fits with the group's needs.



Matrix of Participation

Tim Davis developed the Matrix of Participation to support the Ladder of Participation. Ideally, you would like to see your organization offering a spread of opportunities across the matrix to ensure sustainable and effective youth engagement.

Without opportunities to gain experience, information and to develop networks, many young people may never join committees or forums or take up leadership opportunities where they could have power to make change in their community. By getting involved in one-off events and short-term activities, young people can develop their self-confidence and build the networks with other young people and with adult allies that enable and encourage them to get involved in other perhaps more long-term projects.

The Matrix of participation worksheet is available on page 84.

This is a handy tool to see how many of your local projects are engaging youth in a meaningful way.

Having a spread of projects across the top rungs of Hart's ladder will be the most successful, as this means young people have a chance to be involved as much or as little as they wish.

Matrix of participation

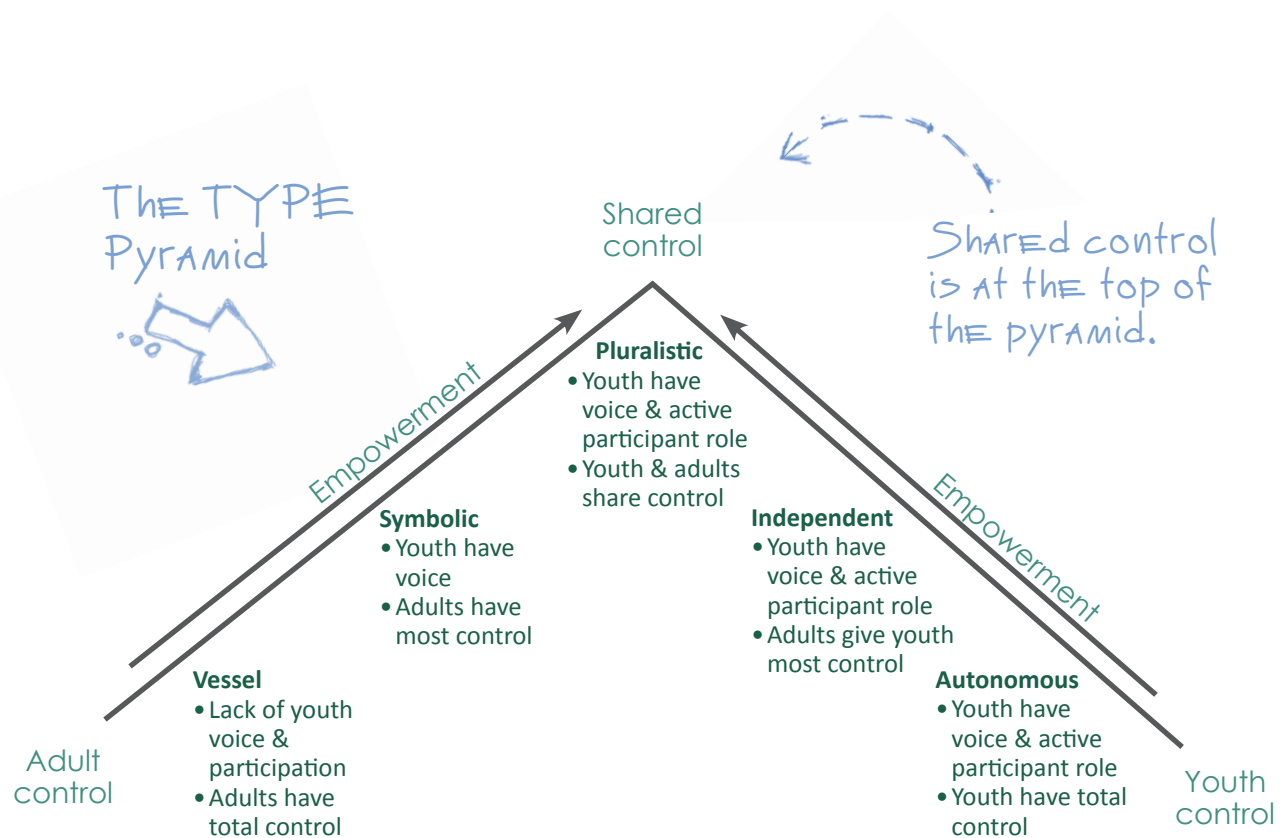
	Individual feedback	Consultation	One-off event	Participation projects	Peer-led activities	Youth forums	Youth in Governance
Youth initiated-shared decisions with adults			✓		✓		
Youth initiated and directed			✓				
Adult initiated-shared decisions with youth	✓	✓					✓
Youth are consulted and kept informed							
Young people are assigned tasks							
Tokenism							
Decoration							
Manipulation							



Other models of youth engagement

Although Hart's Ladder is still widely used to measure participation, two other models worth checking out are Wong's Typology of Youth and Empowerment (TYPE) which is a way of thinking that sees shared control as the top of a pyramid.

The TYPE Pyramid encourages adults to share responsibility with youth, co-learn together and to serve as a resource and collaborator rather than as an expert.



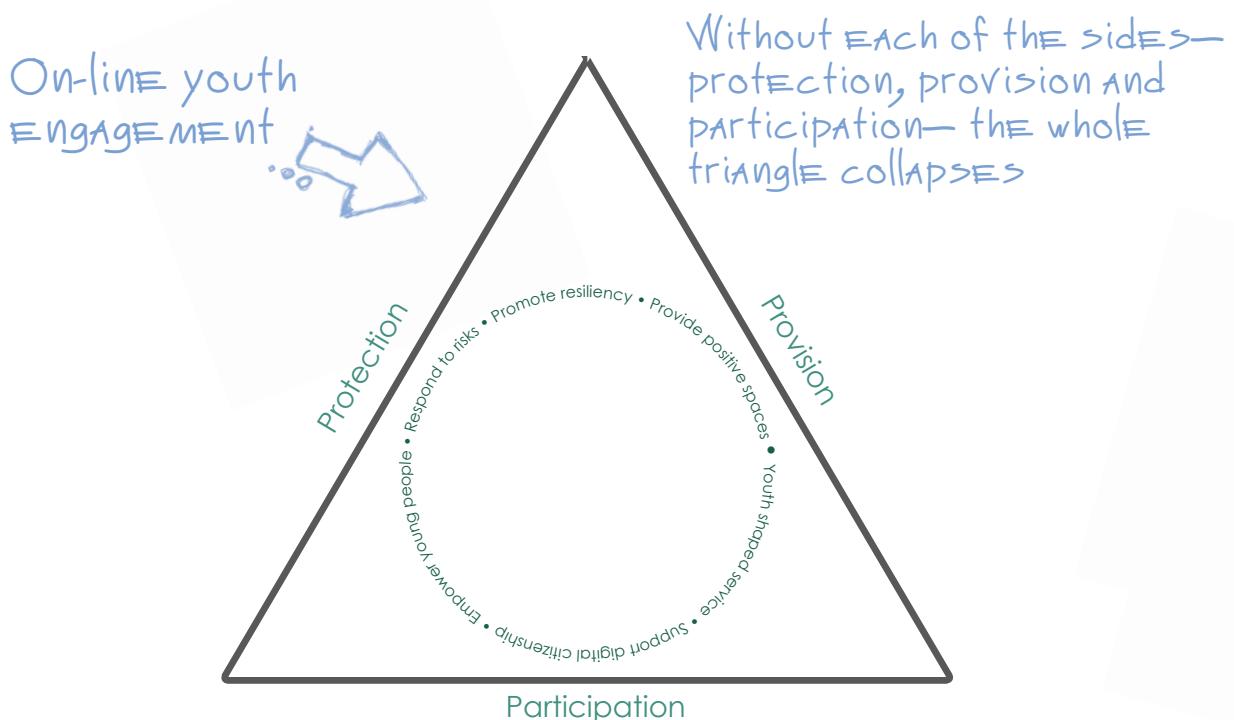
Wong et al. (2011)

On-line projects

Due to the geographical barriers present in Yukon, it may also be worth thinking about Tim Davis' model of on-line youth engagement. His model was created to ensure young people can learn to use the Internet safely. The model does this by encouraging youth's on-line participation in projects where they help to ensure the site is safe and youth are protected when on-line.

The three sides of the triangle of positive engagement—protection, provision and participation – cannot exist in isolation. Without one of the three sides, the whole triangle collapses.

For example, if you are thinking of providing a Facebook page where young people can interact and discuss Yukon issues, the best way to protect the young people who will use the site and post information about themselves may be to ensure they participate in setting up the ground rules for the site, have them help to moderate the content that people post, and empower them to feel that they can report and discuss any safety concerns that they have.





Youth engagement as a protective factor

Benefits of youth engagement in Yukon

By engaging young people we impact the community, make changes in the ways adults and organizations think and act, and directly benefit the young people themselves.

The community benefits in the long term because the earlier young people get involved in their community, the more likely they are to become adult leaders in that community, and the more likely they are to return to their community if they leave for school.

The community also benefits immediately because the projects and programs that youth help to create often provide important services and address key community concerns in innovative and cost-effective ways.

When local adults and community organizations include young people in their decision-making processes, they become more flexible and learn new ways of working, which in turn encourages more participation from others in the community.

Benefits of Engaging youth in Yukon communities:



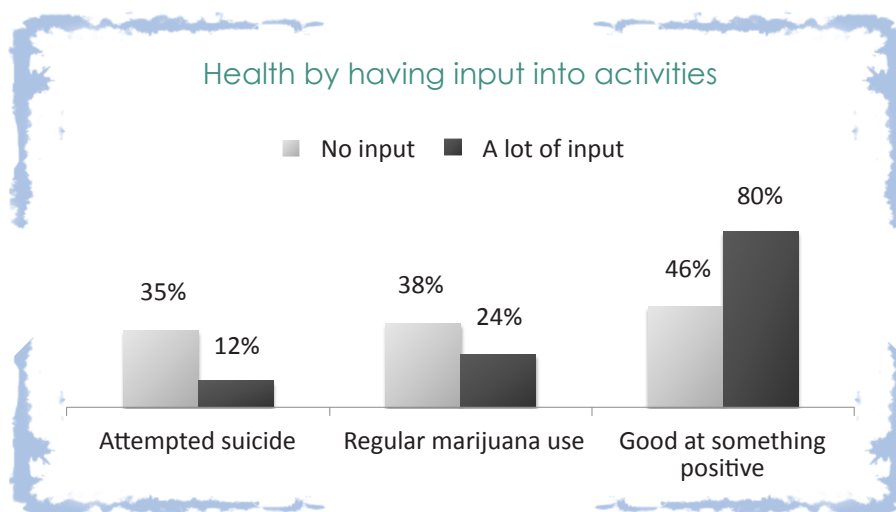
- Young people can serve as role models to their peers & younger youth
- Young people know firsthand what is needed at their school & in their community
- Young people think differently to adults & have great ideas
- Engaging young people means they will recruit other young people
- Young people have energy & can have an impact on the adults around them

- It bolsters youth's self-esteem & supports them to develop tangible skills
- It provides an alternative to engaging in risky activities
- It can offer access to positive peers
- It can connect youth with supportive youth workers & service providers
- Youth who are invested in the programs or services offered are more likely to take part

Youth Engagement
MEANS including young
PEOPLE in all ASPECTS
of the DECISIONS which
AFFECT them.

Youth engagement also has a lot of direct benefits for young people's development and is a significant protective factor. For example, BC youth who reported higher levels of engagement (where they felt listened to and valued in their activities) were more likely to report good or excellent general health, and were less likely to report extreme stress, despair and suicidal thoughts than their peers who were not meaningfully engaged in activities. The higher the level of youth engagement, the less likely young people were to engage in health risk behaviours such as smoking and substance use, and the more likely they were to have educational plans for the future.

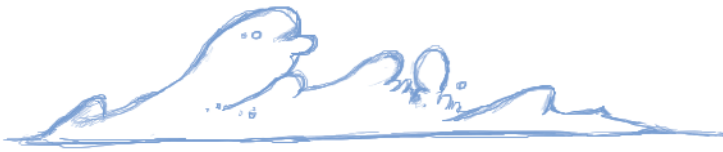
Youth engagement is particularly important for vulnerable young people such as those who had been physically and sexually abused, those growing up in poverty and those with a chronic illness or disability. For example, youth with experience living in government care were less likely to use marijuana or to attempt suicide and were more likely to feel they were good at something if they had input into their activities.



^Among youth with experience of government care.

For more on the
BENEFITS of youth
ENGAGEMENT and
strategies to
ENGAGE youth:

*A seat at the Table:
A review of youth
engagement in Vancouver*
For a copy of the report,
visit www.mcs-bc.ca



Overcoming challenges of youth engagement in Yukon



It can be difficult to truly engage young people in community or organizational decision making.

Community members and service providers in Yukon generated the following list of barriers to youth engagement in rural and urban parts of the Territory:



- Apathy & a sense of powerlessness to make changes in the world
- Low self-confidence
- Mental health & substance use challenges (for youth and/or their families)
- Lack of family support
- Intergenerational effects of residential schools
- Lack of appropriate & safe youth spaces
- Literacy skills
- Lack of opportunities which interest young people

- Lack of accessible transportation
- Vacant positions & a lack of continuity of adults working with youth
- Raised expectations around incentives for participation
- Gaps in socio-economic status among community members
- Health issues, including obesity, learning disabilities & FASD
- Ageism
- Bullying, peer pressure & a desire to 'fit in'

Projects that have overcome challenges

Below are examples of one rural and one urban youth engagement project facilitated by McCreary Centre Society which overcame some of the challenges that youth engagement projects typically encounter.

Project description

In a small BC community (population, 1,400), youth wanted to provide young people with alternatives to substance use, so they organized multimedia workshops to demonstrate that youth can have fun and learn skills without using alcohol and drugs. Other goals included strengthening the connection between youth, adults, school, and the community, as well as bridging the generation gap and intertwining traditional and urban culture.

A hip-hop artist was flown in from Vancouver to teach the youth techniques which they used when they partnered with Elders to create music that blended traditional songs with modern beats. To support the sustainability of the project, youth used some of their budget to buy equipment for the community schools so they could continue making their own media.

Aboriginal Next Steps II

Roles of youth and adults in the project

One local adult and one McCreary facilitator worked together to support the youth. The McCreary facilitator visited the community twice during the planning stages and checked in with a youth representative and their adult ally by phone at least every 2 weeks during the planning stages.

The local adult ally met with the youth weekly while they were planning the events, and spoke with local Elders to get them on board with the project.

Benefits

- Youth organizers gained skills through project planning and development.
- Youth and Elders came together and discussed solutions to substance use problems in their community.
- Mentorship and training provided to the local adult ally increased community capacity to support youth projects.

Successful strategies

- A community event was held where youth talked about their project idea and their budget short fall. As a result, a local caterer provided food, and the RCMP covered the flight costs to bring in the hip hop artist.
- The local principal was approached and met with the youth and adult supports. The principal agreed that hours spent on the project could be documented as credits towards graduation, and that the school could be used as the site of the workshops.

Challenges

- Elders were skeptical that youth could deliver the project.
- The budget for the project was less than was actually required to deliver the project.
- Getting the school to allocate time in the curriculum to the workshops and recognize the youth's work on the project as volunteer credit time towards their graduation requirements.



Positive Mental Health Next Steps

Project description

In September 2012, a senior high school Psychology class wanted to develop a series of peer mentorship workshops to talk about mental health with Grade 8 students. The senior students discussed the results of a McCreary report on positive mental health, and used it as a spring board to identify key issues and messages to share with the Grade 8's at their school.

Over the course of a semester, the psychology students developed unique workshops that highlighted protective factors in their community. They were trained as facilitators and learned about what it means to be a peer-leader.

The workshops were part of a conference day for Grade 8 students, and got rave reviews from workshop participants. The project was so successful that the teacher is planning to include this peer-to-peer education model in her class again next year, and is anticipating higher enrolment in Psychology because of it.

Roles of youth and adults in the project

This project was initiated by adults and involved shared decisions with youth. Students chose the topics within the umbrella of mental health, and created the activities for their workshop.

Adults engaged the students in a dialogue that included factual information on mental health and protective factors. They also shared best practices for creating successful and engaging workshops, and taught students the skills they would need to be great facilitators.

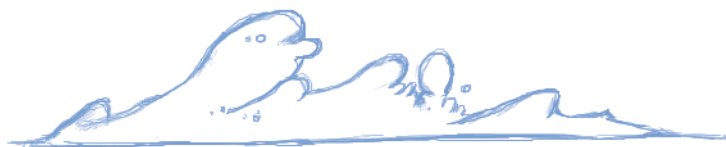
Some elements of the project, such as defining learning outcomes were not open to shared decision-making. In these cases, youth were informed of the requirements of the learning outcomes, and were able to make decisions within these boundaries.

Benefits

- Accurate health information dispels common myths about the health and behaviours of youth.
- Peer education model engages both mentor and mentee.
- Working within the school allows for use of class time.

Challenges

- Youth facilitators were not trained to deal with serious mental health concerns.
- Training the students as peer-facilitators required more support than initially planned.
- Due to the class schedule, planning meetings were held early in the morning, when youth were still tired.



Successful strategies

- The workshop plan was reviewed before each class to prepare for any issues that might arise, including recent events in the community (e.g. a youth suicide).
- A community agreement was generated by the Grade 12's at the start of the semester. Youth and adults could refer back to it throughout the semester to ensure all participants remained engaged and worked together respectfully.
- Each morning started with a group of students facilitating an icebreaker or energizer with the class. This got students actively engaged in the training, and provided an opportunity for them to practice their facilitation skills. It was also a great way to shift the power from the adult facilitators to the students.
- Extra class time was scheduled to allow the peer-facilitators to fully prepare for their workshops.

This proverb was displayed in the hallway to inspire students and staff and to encourage youth engagement in the school.



"TELL
ME AND I WILL
FORGET;
SHOW ME
AND I MAY
REMEMBER;
INVOLVE ME
AND I WILL
UNDERSTAND"

CHINESE PROVERB

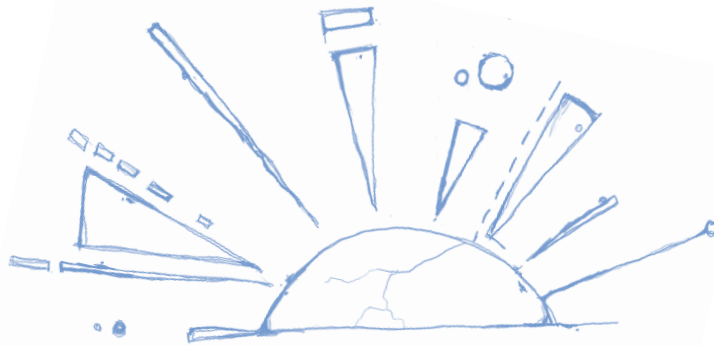


Youth-friendly practices

An organization that is committed to youth engagement will have practices that ensure:

- Youth are given the opportunity to speak
- Youth are given the information they need to develop informed opinions on issues beyond their current experience
- There are opportunities for informal networking between youth
- A support system is in place to facilitate the development of successful adult-youth partnerships
- An orientation system is in place for new youth participants
- Youth voice is considered equally as important as adults' in decision making
- The organization seeks feedback from youth on how it could better serve their needs
- Youth are given the opportunity and support to develop employment and other skills and experiences
- Adults are trained in positive youth development approaches



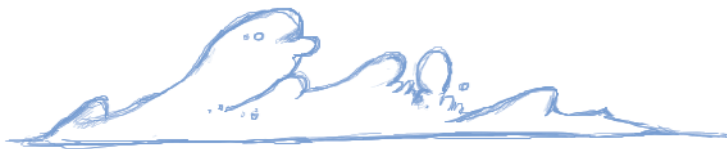


In this SECTION

Role of adult allies

Creating a youth-friendly space





Adult allies step outside of the 'adult-as-mentor' role and into an 'adult-as-partner' role.

Role of adult allies

Adult allies have an important role to play in providing guidance and in helping to create opportunities for success for young people. Their role is to support and encourage youth as they build their decision-making skills.

Being an adult ally involves a combination of attitude, skills and awareness to help shape an environment that supports and nurtures youth engagement. Being an ally means stepping outside of the traditional 'adult-as-mentor' role and into an 'adult-as-partner' role.

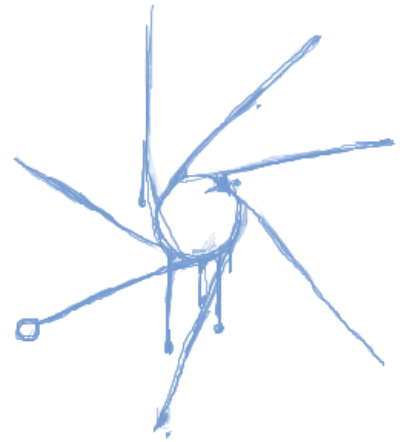
There are many talented adult allies in Yukon. Here is the list of skills and attributes they identified that they bring to their role:



- Approachable
- Trustworthy
- Fun
- Athletic
- Open
- Non-judgmental support
- Empathetic
- Understanding
- Experienced

- Infectious enthusiasm
- Accepting
- Good listener
- Validating
- Energetic
- Creative
- Theatre & arts-based skills
- Smart

- Acts fast
- Outdoor recreation skills
- Teacher
- Friendly
- Encouraging
- Patient
- Share power
- High stress threshold



The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement describes being an adult ally as creating a partnership in which young people and adults share learning and leadership, allowing them to become co-creators of community. The Centre notes that adults who become allies must be willing to take risks and learn to share power and accountability for success and failure.

This is not to say that an ally needs to surrender all power and responsibility to young people, but rather that both adults and youth have a role to play to balance these together.

- Mentorship
- Mutual trust
- Honesty
- Treat young people as equal
- Logistical support
- Role model

"Staff are there to help if you want it, but they'll leave you alone if you ask them to."

The following is a list of adult ally roles that young people generated:



We asked youth workers and youth service providers in Yukon to define what an adult ally is. Here is what they came up with...



An adult ally is approachable, supportive and advocates for youth. Their role is to act as a connector, and to mirror the strengths of young people. An adult ally is not prescriptive, manipulative or judgmental, and they are inclusive of all youth.



When young people were asked what got them engaged in their community organizations or local projects, they reported that they:



When young people were asked what kept them engaged in their community organizations or local projects, they reported:

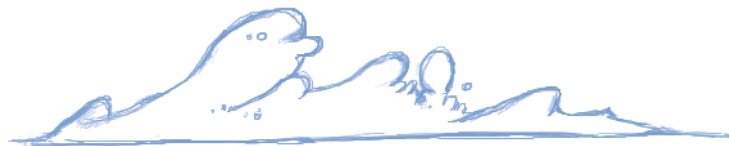


- Wanted to have their voice heard & to make a difference
- Appreciated that guidelines & contracts were in place
- Liked that there was an induction & on-going training
- Felt valued & had their contribution recognized
- Were involved in decision making

"If you're here for the money you won't get as much out of it. You should do it for the community. It's not about the money."

- The project had clear goals
- Youth had a clearly defined role
- Their opinions were respected
- They were learning new skills
- They were feeling empowered
- They felt like they were part of creating change
- It was a fun environment





Creating a youth-friendly space

Physical space

When youth and adults work together, it is important to create a youth-friendly space. The physical space should reflect the intent of the session to get the best participation and engagement.

If it is a working meeting which requires note taking and the use of tables and chairs, the room should be set up in a circle where everyone is equal. Adults should sit with youth, rather than at the front of the room or alone behind a different desk.

If the session does not require such a formal set-up, the space should allow youth to feel comfortable, safe and relaxed, yet ready to participate. For example, a space with couches, chairs and coffee tables in a semicircle works well if youth need to see a presentation or film clip.



To avoid distractions, choose spaces that are free of interruptions, such as people walking through.

The space should be the right size for the group. Do not host a group of 8 in a space made for 50 people, as this can be intimidating and unwelcoming. Equally, do not try to fit 20 people into a small space,

as it can be difficult to focus and maintain attention when conditions are cramped.

Ensure that everyone knows where the washrooms, exits and other important areas are.

Have refreshments readily available. This helps to create a welcoming environment, addresses basic needs, and provides a focal point for socializing at breaks.

Be aware of places that youth will and will not hang out. For example, if the setting does not reflect youth's culture and feel welcoming, they may not attend even the most exciting workshop.

Whenever possible, use soft or natural lighting to create a warm and relaxed environment.



Checklist for a youth-friendly physical environment

Accessible location

- Is the space easy to find? Accessible by transit? Clearly sign posted from the entrance? Could youth with disabilities access the location easily? Is it in a youth-friendly location?

Meeting space

- Is it the right size? Free from interruptions?
- Is the seating comfortable? Is it set up to support an equal sharing of power?

Washrooms

- Are they accessible? Are gender neutral washrooms available?

Guidelines

- Are they reasonable? Did youth have input in creating them? Are they clearly posted and explained?

Lighting and décor

- Is it too bright? Can the lighting be softened, if appropriate?
- Does the space reflect youth culture and interests? Do they reflect diversity? Have youth had input into the space?

Aspects of a youth-friendly physical environment suggested by adult allies from across Yukon include the following:



Provide space for youth to have fun & just 'hang out'

Provide indoor spaces for recreation

Incorporate technology such as computers, cameras or video games

Include nature & greenery in décor

Play music if it is suited to the intent of the session

Hours of operation should meet youth's needs & consider potential conflicts

Meeting times should take into account access to transportation

Events should be free (no-cost) for youth to attend



Emotional space

In addition to having a physically inviting and safe space, adult allies play an important role in creating a safe emotional space.

A safe space is free of discrimination, honours diversity and welcomes and supports young people.

Adults show youth they are valued, and act as mentors and role models. Adults should also have the skills and attitudes needed to be true partners with youth.

Checklist for a safe emotional space

- Is the space welcoming? Is someone there to connect with youth when they arrive?
- Is diversity represented in staff/volunteers? Peer-mentors?
- Are instances of discrimination addressed?
- Do adults have the skills and training to support youth's ideas and initiatives?
- Do adults model safe and respectful behaviours?
- Are vulnerable youth included?
- Are youth included in creating rules and programming?
- Are power imbalances regularly reviewed and examined?

- *Be respectful of youth's space*
- *Depending on the type of service you are providing, you might want to use a sign-in sheet or other way to ensure youth are safe and accounted for.*
- *Demonstrate trust & validate youth's emotions & experiences*
- *Have fun*
- *Be consistent*
- *Involve youth in displaying inviting, youth-centred decoration*
- *Attentive & engaged youth workers*

The following are aspects of safe emotional spaces suggested by adult allies from across Yukon:



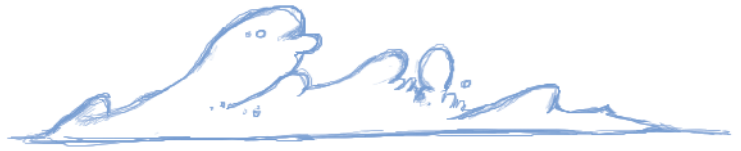


Youth-friendly meetings and projects

Checklist for youth-friendly meetings

- Be flexible about setting meeting times (most youth are at school during the day)
- Provide orientation materials about the organization, project, meeting procedures and timelines
- Avoid using jargon and acronyms
- Provide short breaks during longer meetings
- Create a supportive environment and always invite more than one youth
- Don't be too formal
- Consider providing food and transportation support (e.g., bus tickets)
- Include youth in the decision-making process
- Provide opportunities for relationship development
- Have a community agreement
- Provide skilled facilitators
- Hold the meeting in a youth-friendly space
- Have an evaluation in place
- Have clear objectives and achievable goals
- Have fun!

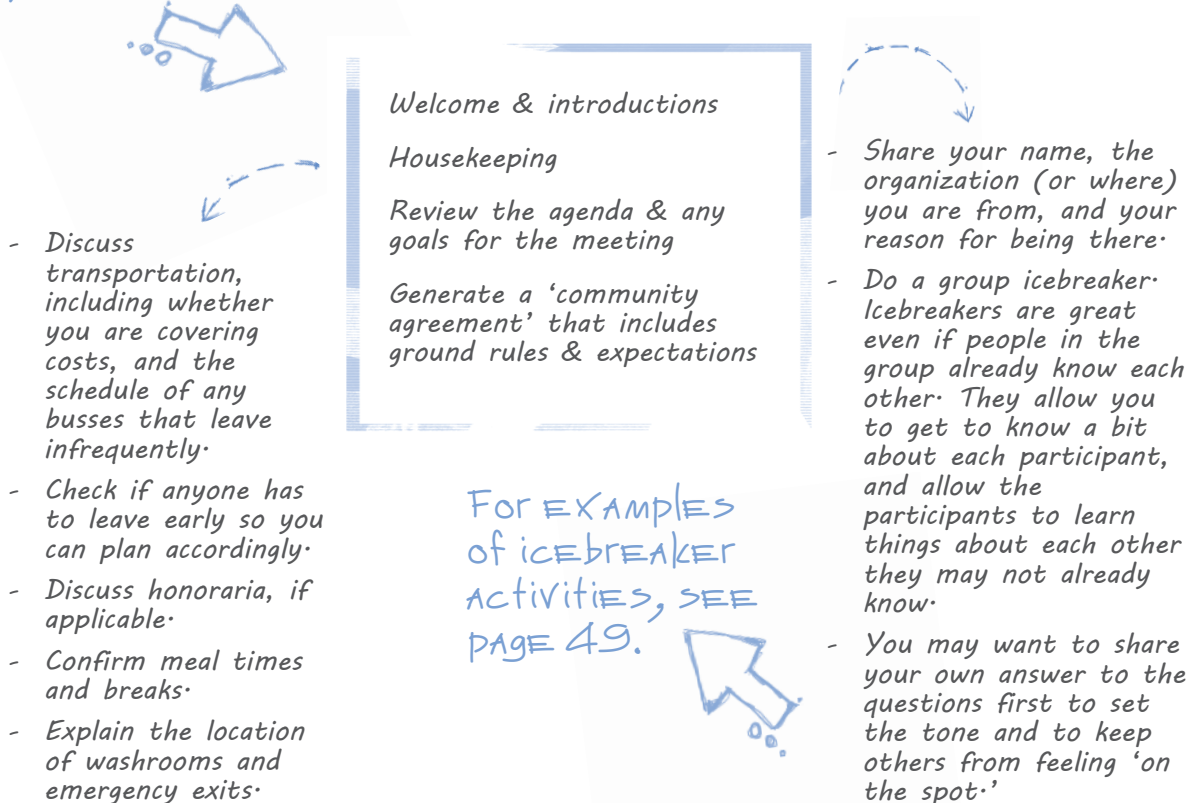




Opening a meeting

At the beginning of any event, workshop or project, it is helpful to do an introduction to provide any necessary information to participants. Keep the introduction as brief as possible so that you can get participants involved from the start.

HERE is a suggestion of how you might OPEN a MEETING:





The community agreement

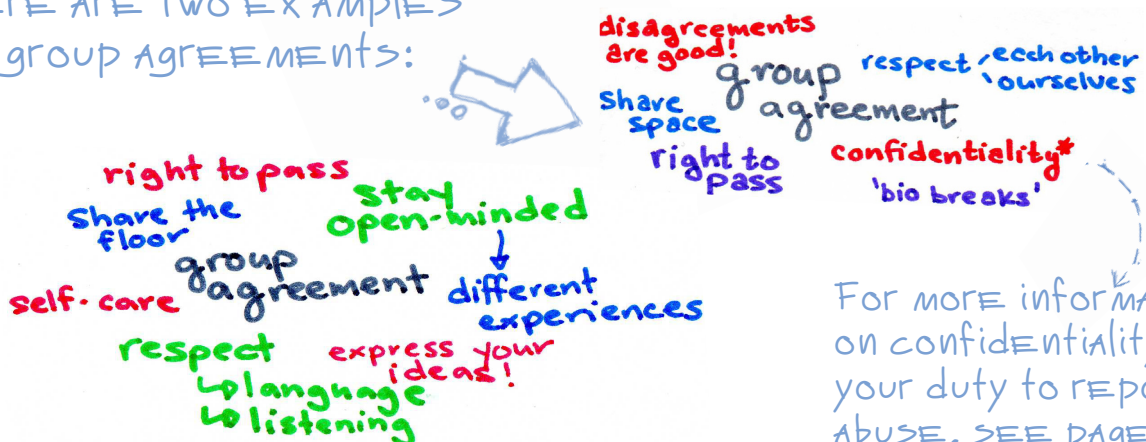
Community agreements create an atmosphere that encourages open discussion and supports learning. As an adult ally, you can support the youth you are working with to come up with their own guidelines.

HERE ARE SOME suggestions to help you facilitate the discussion:



- Ask open ended questions, such as "What do you think makes for positive group dynamics?", or "What do you want to get out of your participation in this group?"
- Flip a negative suggestion into a positive one (e.g., 'Don't come late' becomes 'arrive early/on time')
- Ensure items in the agreement are aligned with your organization's protocol
- Encourage the group to work through their definitions of commonly used terms (e.g., What does confidentiality mean? How do you show respect?)
- Ask the group if they are happy with the agreement and if they are willing to commit to it
- 'Seal the deal' by asking the group to put their right hand in the air, their left hand out in front of them, and clapping down together on the count of three!

HERE ARE TWO EXAMPLES of group AGREEMENTS:



For more information on confidentiality and your duty to report abuse, see page 72.

Closing a meeting

Having a closing round is an opportunity to highlight any take-away messages, to acknowledge the achievements of the group, and to make plans for the next meeting. It is also an opportunity for the facilitator to 'take the temperature' of the group and to address any issues that may have come up.

Here is a suggestion of how you might close a meeting:



Gather participants together in a comfortable space where everyone can see each other

Thank the group & acknowledge their participation

Restate take-away messages

Discuss plans for the next meeting or workshop, if necessary

Do a closing round

Hand out evaluation or feedback forms, if appropriate

- A closing round might include participants sharing their name, one thing they found interesting or surprising about the workshop, and one thing they will take away from it.
- Why not try a creative check-in— "If you were a colour/type of weather today, what would you be?".



You can make feedback forms short and sweet:

You can add an energizer to shift the mood of the group. Rain maker (page 52) is a great way to refocus energy before the closing round.



HEAD


What are you thinking?
What did you learn?

HEART

What are you feeling?


HANDS

What do you want to do next?




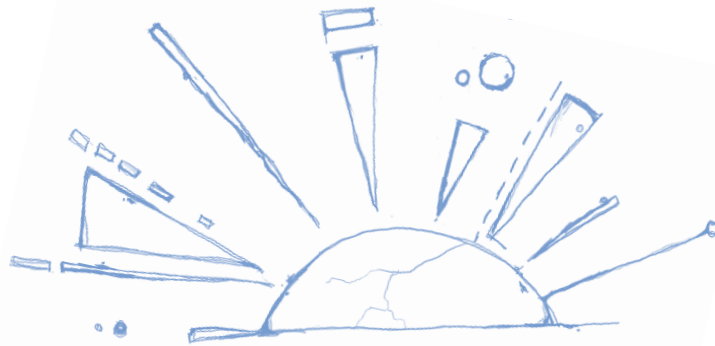
Consult with young people about the content, language and look of documents developed for them—or provide them with the tools to create it themselves!

Checklist for producing youth-friendly documents:

- 
- Consult with youth for their input in the development of the document
 - Keep the writing accessible, dynamic and straightforward

- Use examples and stories to help illustrate the important points
- Use tables and graphs to summarize main points
- Highlight major points and interesting quotes and consider pulling these points out of the document.

- 
- Use clear and descriptive titles and headings to help focus the document
 - Provide details of where to get further information
 - Make the documents available on-line



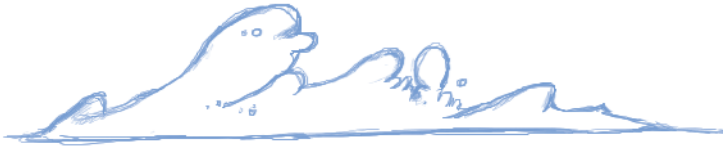
In this section

How to be a great facilitator

Facilitating engaged participation

Icebreakers, energizers and activities to spark dialogue





Facilitators guide participants through AN EXPERIENCE that fosters mutual learning.

How to be a great facilitator

Young people are often waiting to be invited to speak or to take part. The facilitator is there to encourage participants, and to be aware of who is not joining in, so they can be invited to participate.

As a facilitator, you are acting as a role model. It is important to model the behavior and participation that you want to see from the participants, and to follow through on any commitments you make.

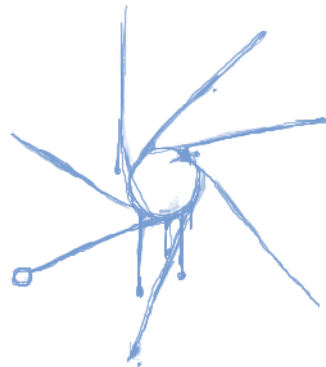
Facilitating groups can be challenging, and you will likely have hits and misses. Debriefing with co-facilitators and checking in with yourself can help you to learn from the challenges and to build on your successes. Check-ins are also an important element of self-care. It is important to take care of yourself, and to seek advice if you are not sure how you handled something.

A great facilitator...

- Encourages youth to participate
- Creates and maintains a safe space for all participants
- Keeps discussions on topic and projects on track, while still allowing time for fun
- Gets to know the group, and is mindful of barriers to participation (e.g., shares all instructions out loud, rather than in writing to assist youth with literacy challenges)
- Challenges ideas and encourages growth in participants
- Does regular check-in's and debriefs
- Follows through on commitments
- Is flexible and prepared to adapt plans to fit the needs of the group

LEARN PEOPLE'S NAMES AND USE THEM!





Facilitating engaged participation

Icebreakers and energizers help participants to get to know one another and encourage active participation. They set the tone of a gathering and can be used to raise or refocus the energy of a group.

These games are easy to play and allow groups to mix in a neutral, non-threatening way. Some of the games are silly, some are slightly embarrassing and some are informative in a lighthearted way.

To choose the icebreakers and energizers for your meeting or workshop, think about the personality of the group and the ultimate purpose of the activity. Facilitators are encouraged to take part to create equal conditions between the facilitator(s) and participants.

ICEBREAKERS AND
ENERGIZERS HAVE
MANY USES:



- Breaking the rigidity of the workshop
- Stimulating participant interest
- Introducing a topic of discussion
- Removing barriers between facilitator(s) and participants
- Allowing participants to interact and get to know one another





HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES
OF POPULAR ICEBREAKERS AND
ENERGIZERS, ALONG WITH SOME
TIPS TO HELP YOU FACILITATE:



Coming soon... films of
these activities in action
at www.mcs.bc.ca

Icebreakers

Three favourites

This activity involves pairing off one youth and one adult (preferably who they do not know well) and discovering three of their partner's favourite things. After a brief breakout session, the pairs return to the group and introduce one another to the group using this information.

Two truths and a lie

This activity allows participants to share interesting or unusual pieces of information with one another, by telling two 'truths' and one lie about themselves. The other participants then attempt to guess which statement is the lie. Adults can include at least one "When I was a youth I..." statement.

PROCESS:



- Give each participant two pieces of paper.
- Ask them to write their names along with two truths and one lie about themselves on one piece of paper and tape it to their body.
- Have participants walk around the room and meet everyone.
- Ask them to write the name of the people they just met on the other sheet of paper, along with the statement they think is the lie.
- Gather participants back to a large group after 5 to 10 minutes.
- Have each person introduce themselves and share the two truths, and one lie that is on their paper

Prepare:

- Several sheets of 8.5" x 11" paper cut in half.
- Scotch Tape.
- Pens for each participant.





The story of your NAME

Pair off one youth with one adult and have each share with the other the story of their names. Each person then introduces their partner to the group and explains the story of their name (This also helps the whole group to remember names more quickly by providing an interesting context to the introductions).

If participants are unwilling to share the story of their name or do not know it, they are welcome to make something up. You can also invite participants to share an anecdote of a way in which their name has affected their experience in life (for example, meeting a good friend because they share the same name).

The PAPER roll game

Place a roll of toilet paper in the middle of the group, and invite participants to take as many squares as they would need for an overnight camping trip. Once everyone has taken their squares, tell them that for each square, they have to share one thing they are proud of (suggestions might include achievements, skills or qualities).

To help the group get to know each other better, ask each participant to start with their name, and the community or organization they are from (if appropriate).

Prepare:

- One or two rolls of toilet paper

Energizers

The line-up game

This energizer requires participants to work as a team, and is a perfect segue for talking about the barriers to communication that occur between people.



PROCESS:

- Have everyone line up according to their ages, or their birth month.
- For an added challenge, or for smaller groups, instruct participants to do the activity silently.
- This may become frustrating for some, and it is a good idea to debrief with the group when finished the game.

Prepare:



- An open space for participants to move around.

Rain maker

This is a quick and easy energizer that is great for bringing meetings to a close, or gathering participants back together after a break.



PROCESS:

- The facilitator leads this exercise by rubbing their hands together and 'passing' the action to the participant on their left. The action continues around the circle, one participant at a time, until everyone is rubbing their hands together.
- The facilitator then starts snapping their fingers, and passes this action to the participant on their left.
- Instruct participants to continue with the first action until next action is reaches them.
- The next action is patting your palms on your thighs, and the final action is stomping your feet on the ground.
- As the actions pass around the circle, you will hear the 'rainstorm' picking up momentum.
- Once all four actions have passed around the circle, continue the actions in reverse order—stomping is followed by patting the palms of your hands on your thighs, followed by snapping your fingers, followed by rubbing your hands together.
- Finally the rainstorm will fade out as the last participant is stops rubbing their hands together.

Prepare:

- Chairs arranged in a circle

THE MORE
PARTICIPANTS,
THE BIGGER THE
STORM!



Elephant/Palm tree

This game is a lot of fun for any age group.

Process:



- Gather participants into a large circle, with one person who is it in the centre (the facilitator should either start in the middle, or select someone who has played before to demonstrate).
- The person in the middle of the circle points to a participant and calls out a figure—either 'elephant' or 'palm tree'.
- The participant who is selected has to form the trunk of an elephant or the trunk of a palm tree, while the participants to their left and right become the ears of the elephant or the leaves of the palm tree.
- If a participant makes the wrong gesture, they become 'it', and replace the person in the centre of the circle.
- The game becomes more difficult the faster the participant in the middle of the circle calls out the figures.

Prepare:

- An open space for participants to form a large circle.



Elephant

The participant who was selected becomes the trunk of the elephant by holding their arms out in front of their nose, hands together. The participants to the left and right of the elephant become the ears by forming their arms into a large 'C' shape, facing the middle participant.

Make up your own figures—the options are endless!



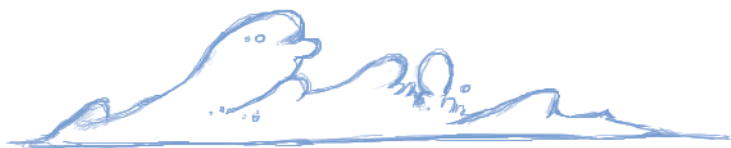
Palm tree

The participant who was selected becomes the trunk of the palm tree by standing up straight, feet together and hands at their sides. The participants to the left and right of the 'tree trunk' form the branches by stretching their arms out away from the tree trunk, and waving them like a palm tree in the breeze.

Toaster

The outer participants face each other, holding their arms out in a square to form the toaster. The participant who was selected jumps up like a piece of toast to 'pop' out of the toaster.





The big wind blows

This energizer allows participants to get to know each other by sharing things about themselves.



PROCESS:

- Have the group sit in a circle, with one person in the middle.
- The person in the middle will be the caller and will shout out the phrase 'The big wind blows on anyone who _____' (e.g., 'is a middle child', 'went hunting this year').
- It is important that participants only call out things that are true for them.
- Everyone who shares this in common with the person in the middle has to find an empty seat (you cannot sit in the adjacent seat).
- The last person remaining without a seat will be the next caller in the middle.



Prepare:

- Form chairs in a large circle, with one less chair than the number of participants.

Entourage

This energizer is a great way to build team spirit in a large group.



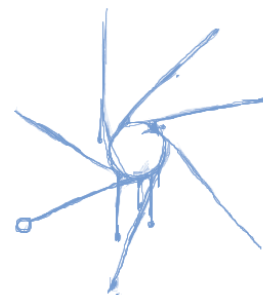
PROCESS

- Have everyone in the group stand up and ask them to find a partner.
- When the game begins, each pair will have a rock-paper-scissors battle. The person who wins this battle, will then challenge another person who won the first battle.
- The person who loses becomes a 'fan' of the winner and follows them to their next battle while chanting their name.
- The battles continue until there are only two people left with an entourage of people behind them chanting their name.
- The person who wins the last battle wins the game (and the entourage)!



Prepare:

- An open space for participants to move around.



Activities to spark dialogue

Thermometer game

The Thermometer game can be used to introduce a topic of discussion or to get youth thinking about the theme of a workshop.

Process:



- Have participants line up from one end of the room to the other (this doesn't need to be single file) and ask them to imagine they are standing inside a giant thermometer.
- The hot end of the thermometer represents 'agree' and the cold end represents 'disagree'.
- Read out a statement, and ask participants to choose where they stand, depending on the degree to which they agree or disagree with the statement.
- Facilitate a discussion with participants about why they chose to stand in a certain location.

Facilitation tips:

- Suggest that participants can think about how the statement relates to them personally, or to their peer group as a whole.
- Remind participants that everyone will interpret and think about these statements in different ways. This means that the person you are standing next to in the thermometer may not feel the same way as you about the statement, while you might actually have a lot in common with the person standing the farthest from you.



Prepare:

- A list of statements relevant to the workshop.
- Hot and cold signs to place on opposing walls.
- An open space for participants to move around.





Community mapping

This is a tool to engage youth in a discussion about the strengths of their community and the things they would like to see change. The activity allows young people to document their community from their own perspective, and to share what they see with others.



PROCESS:

- Divide participants into groups of 3-6.
- Explain to the groups that they will be mapping out people, places and things in their community. The purpose of the map is to document strengths of the community, and to identify areas that participants would like to see change.
- Each group will choose symbols to represent different category of places, people or things they are mapping. For example safe places might be represented by a smiley face. The map should include a legend that lists what each symbol represents. Some places might be represented by more than one symbol.
- Allow 20-30 minutes to ensure the groups have plenty of time to include all the elements of the community that you want them to discuss.
- Have each group present their community map to the larger group and encourage questions from the audience.

Facilitation tips:

- Encourage participants to map based on their own personal experiences.
- You can adapt this activity to focus on particular elements of the community. For example, you may want to map the youth-friendliness of the resources that exist in the community.

HERE'S SOME
QUESTIONS TO HELP
GET YOU STARTED.



Where do I have fun in the community?

Where do I go to learn or gain new skills?

Where do I contribute by helping others or volunteering?

Where do I feel safe?

What places welcome youth and treat them with respect?

What is my favourite place in the community?

What people, places or things help or support me?

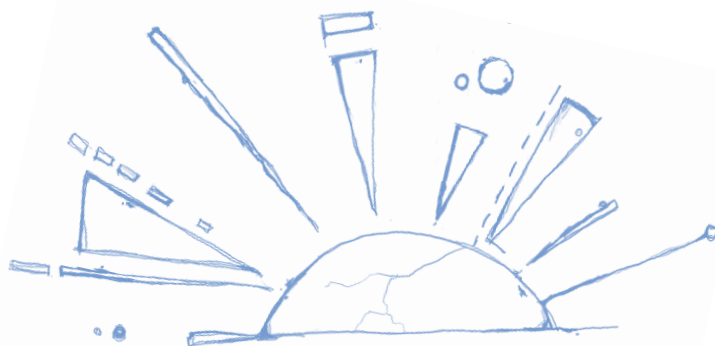
What makes my community a good place to grow up?

Prepare:

- A large, blank piece of paper
- Markers or pencil crayons
- Questions, or elements of the community for groups to discuss
- You may want to create symbols to give to each group that represent these elements

If I could add one thing to my community, what would it be?

If I could take away one thing, what would it be?



In this section

Preparing youth to take a leadership role

Youth-adult partnerships





Preparing youth to take a leadership role

Young people involved in community projects are sometimes so busy with the immediate tasks that they lose site of the broader vision that motivated them to get involved in the first place. As an adult ally it is important to help youth to clarify the decisions to be made and to remind them of the goals of the task to be accomplished.

Adults may support youth by facilitating a discussion around questions such as:



- What needs to be changed in the community?
- What would the ideal community look like?
- Why is there a gap between the real and ideal?
- What strategies can be developed to work toward solving the problem?
- This can be done verbally or by having youth draw their ideal community.



SEE Community mapping on page 56.



Youth Leadership programs should aim to:

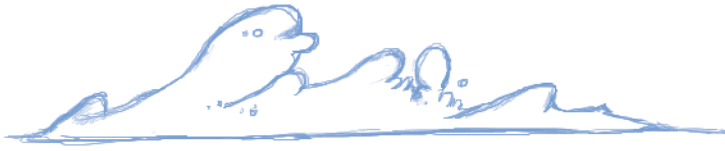


- Provide hands-on and experiential activities
- Provide opportunities for youth to observe, practice, and develop leadership skills



- Offer opportunities for youth to be successful
- Encourage youth involvement in developing and implementing program activities
- Establish expectations for youth, and allow them to experience the consequences of their choices and decisions
- Involve adult allies in a supportive role
- Provide the opportunity to interact with peer mentors
- Provide opportunities for youth to assess their own strengths and set goals for personal development





Providing healthy food
will help EVERYONE to
be at their best.

Youth-adult partnerships

A youth-adult partnership is different from a youth program because a youth program is delivered by adults to youth. A partnership means sharing power and only truly exists when both parties work together.

Hosting successful meetings

The tips for creating a youth-friendly meeting on page 42 are also helpful when thinking about a youth-adult meeting. For example, it is important to remember when scheduling meetings that youth are often in school, they have exams, and they don't tend to get up early.

It is also necessary to make sure the meeting is accessible by transit or that travel arrangements are in place. You might need to think about whether it is appropriate for the adults in the group to give the youth a ride home after the meeting or if other arrangements should be made.

Be clear to both youth and adults who will be attending what the meeting is about, how long it will last and what it is aiming to achieve.

Healthy food helps everyone focus, and having icebreakers and energizers can help to break down barriers.

A community agreement which is developed by youth and adults together can establish what is expected of everyone.



Before starting a youth-adult partnership, you might want to consider the following questions:

Are adults ready to share their power and responsibilities with youth?

Are youth ready to take on more responsibilities?

Do adults and youth have the skills to partner and work together successfully?

If the answers to these questions are yes, here are some additional questions to think about:

- *Is your organization ready? You might be the best ally in the world but if your organization is not youth friendly, youth will not feel welcome to enter the space (e.g., if the receptionist is going to be uninviting and rude to youth, or the caretaker stops them entering the building).*
- *Can the organizational structure support a partnership with youth?*
- *Do you have a framework for the project?*
 - *Does the organization know its role in terms of recruitment, membership, structure, funding, logistics?*
 - *Do you have enough resources? Is there enough of a budget if you need to provide food, travel, staff time? Do you have enough space for what you want to do? Are you providing honoraria?*
 - *Do you have clear roles and responsibilities? You should be really clear about youth and adult allies roles, and about the expectations of those roles. You can then recruit youth and adults who can fill those particular roles. It is important to be transparent if some people do not get chosen for specific roles that they volunteer to take on.*
- *Do you have an action plan? Before moving forward know who is getting together, when and what for. Know what you want to achieve and how long it will take you to achieve it. Be realistic. Build in opportunities to check in on progress, reflect on how things are going, and if the plan is being met.*
- *Do you have an evaluation plan? By recording what is working well and not so well, you can build on success and revisit what is not going so well. It is important to make sure youth are involved in designing the evaluation and are aware what the evaluation is measuring.*
- *Are you ready to have fun together? People will stay involved if they are having fun together.*

HERE ARE A
FEW THINGS TO
CONSIDER BEFORE
STARTING A YOUTH-
ADULT PARTNERSHIP:



Sustaining youth-adult partnerships

It is useful to learn from other projects that have not been successful in sustaining youth-adult partnerships, as well as from projects that have gone well. For example, when one youth-adult partnership failed, participants were asked “What went wrong?”

This example highlights the need to share power, work on stereotypes and for the adults to be really aware of the power they have to give up to make such a partnership work. The adults involved in the partnership have to believe that youth voice is critical to the project's success.

What adults said
about youth:

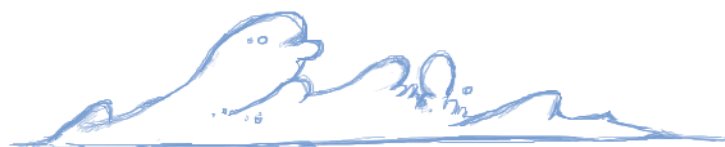


- They lack experience
- They lack patience for planning
- Youth don't hear adults
- Youth are overloaded
- Youth think in black & white
- They have peer pressure & competing priorities
- Youth want to be independent

What youth said
about adults:



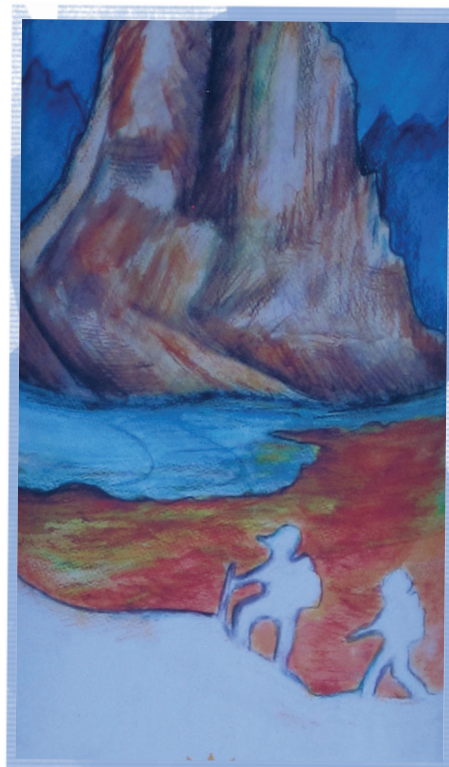
- They want to do it all themselves
- They won't admit when they are wrong
- They think that age gives them power
- They want our opinions but shun our ideas
- They are inflexible about rules
- They are too involved with the other adults, not the youth
- They can't handle youth growing up
- They want to win too much



BEFORE starting a youth-adult partnership, look into the policies of your organization so you can anticipate barriers and find solutions.

The chances of creating a successful youth adult partnership are increased if both youth and adults receive an orientation to the partnership before joining, and if all participants receive cultural competency training so that adults can learn about youth culture and youth can learn more about the adults as people, rather than just seeing them as authority figures.

Before starting any youth-adult partnership, check out your organization's policies and procedures. If there are barriers within these, try and work through solutions. Find out which practices can be changed to allow youth to fully participate and which policies are fixed. For example, if your organization's policy is that parental consent is required for youth to participate in the project, make sure you allow plenty of time for parents to give that consent and for you to answer any questions they may have.





Sustainable partnerships
NEED on-going commitment
from both youth and adults.

Prior to youth and adults coming together to work on a project, it can be helpful for the two groups to hold their own separate meetings at which they agree to a set of guidelines for how they will behave when working together.

In ONE EXAMPLE, this
is what adults CAME
up with:



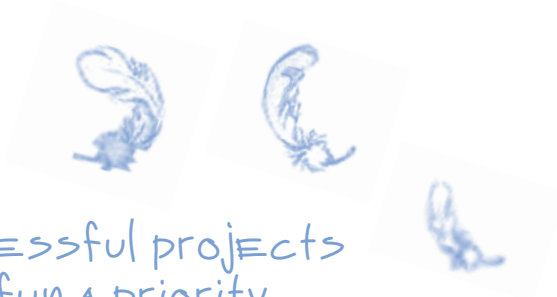
- Don't be condescending
- Be strengths-based
- Be ready to accept criticism
- Treat youth like experts in today's youth culture
- Don't lecture or dismiss feedback
- Be prepared to listen openly
- If you don't understand, ask

MEANwhile, here
is what youth
CAME up with:



- Invite adults to share their skills & experiences
- Speak up
- Don't stereotype adults
- Don't assume all adults will treat you like you are "just a kid"
- Take your responsibilities seriously
- Try to involve other youth

When the two groups met, they were prepared to work together and were able to create a community agreement which they all committed to. The agreement included commitments such as no side conversations, no interrupting, it's okay to disagree, be respectful, commit to attend meetings, and have fun!

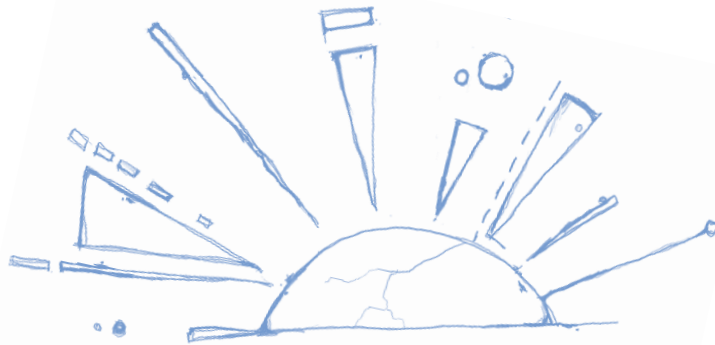


Successful projects
make fun a priority.

Signs of success:

- There is enthusiastic participation – both adults and youth are actively involved and are talking to each other (not just at meetings)
- There is dialogue and questions (youth are asking questions and engaging in conversations)
- There is clarity of roles (everyone is clear about why they are there and what their role is)
- Work gets done between meetings – people are following through on the commitments that they make
- Attendance is steady or growing—not dropping off
- People are having fun – there is laughter and fun in the partnership as well as serious discussions





In this section

Practicing your skills as an adult ally

Duty to report abuse

Scenarios for adult allies

Tools for adult allies

Adult Ally traffic lights

Adult Ally self-reflection

When I was 15

Matrix of Participation





Practicing your skills as an adult ally

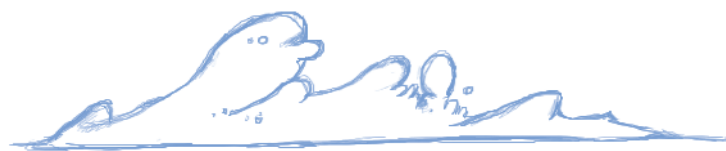
In this section, you might want to answer the three questions below before reading what youth workers and community members from across Yukon have done in these common situations encountered by adult allies.

1. *What would you do if a youth made a racist or discriminatory comment?*
2. *What would you do if a participant in a workshop you are hosting gets upset, angry or shares something really emotionally heavy?*
3. *What would you do if you are having a bad day and do not want to be there?*

Youth workers and community workers from across Yukon shared successful strategies they had used in these situations.



KEEP READING FOR MORE DETAILS...



A young person might make a discriminatory remark without realizing the power of what they are saying. This can be a teachable moment.

When a youth makes a racist or discriminatory comment

The chances of a youth making a racist or discriminatory remark can be reduced if you have done some preliminary work educating the young people about multiculturalism and celebrating diversity. For example, having a rainbow sticker in the room or pictures of culturally diverse youth around the room can help to create a welcoming space for everyone.

Developing a community agreement at the beginning of a session, which states that discrimination or racist language will not be tolerated, sets out clear expectations for youth and gives you something to refer to if you need to remind youth of the group's expectations.

It is important to address remarks made by youth and challenge discrimination when you see it. You are a role model and an ally for all the youth present. For example, speaking up when you hear "That's so gay," and explaining why that might be offensive (particularly if youth are unaware of the meaning), lets youth know why it is not OK to use such terms, and allows them to ask questions and work through this issue as appropriate.

If the youth is creating an unsafe space for others, offer clear consequences. If it is severe enough, you may have to ask the youth to leave because you want to create a safe space for all youth.

Whether you have to ask the youth to leave or not, you should always take the opportunity to discuss the incident with the individual later. Using "I" statements to explain that the remark was offensive and you did not find it OK can be a useful tool.


Often young people make discriminatory remarks without realizing what they are saying. You can use this as a teachable moment to discuss things like gender and racial stereotypes. This means you can address the remark without making the young person feel humiliated.



When a youth gets upset, angry or shares something emotionally heavy

Youth may sometimes become angry and frustrated because they do not have a feeling of control within the group, or have no input into the group. It therefore can be useful to give them responsibilities and opportunities within the activity or group.


Youth also sometimes become emotional when they are feeling like they are failing at an activity or within a setting. Give them opportunities to succeed and celebrate that success.



For some youth, the time they spend with other supportive youth and adult allies might be one of the only spaces where they feel safe. It is therefore important to let them know that it can be okay to get upset and/or to ask for help, and that there is no shame in this. Do not dismiss what they are sharing—acknowledge it. Thank them for having the courage to speak out.

It is important to maintain safety in the group at all times. Try to address any issues in a safe way for both the individual concerned and the group.

If you are comfortable and have the skills, you might want to problem solve together with the youth about the issue they are dealing with.



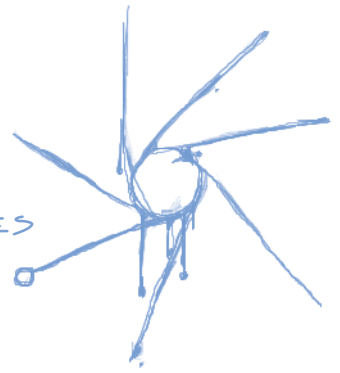
If a participant is going through something you cannot deal with in the group, do not try to solve the problem. It is important to know and remember your boundaries, but also to validate the youth's feelings and let them know what support you can and cannot offer. You might also want to tell them about other services and supports that they could access.



Ideally you will have a co-facilitator leave the group with them to debrief, listen and support them.

Be sure to do any necessary follow up, such as reporting abuse. Also check in with the youth later to see if they are okay.

Connections with youth workers in other communities who face similar challenges can be a positive support.



When you are having a bad day

Ideally you will have a co-worker who you can ask to help you out. Let them know you are having a bad day (so they don't personalize the situation).



Find someone appropriate to vent to about how you are feeling if you can. Many youth workers in Yukon work in isolation and may not have someone in their community that is a safe person to vent with. These workers might want to make connections with youth workers in other communities who may be facing similar challenges and can be a positive support.



Try not to take things personally but see things as opportunities to work through.

Accept that things don't always go the way you plan when working with youth (or anyone).

Remind yourself of why you want to be there.



Take a break and get yourself out of the situation (if it is safe to do so).

Be sure to eat and meet your basic needs.



Duty to report abuse

If a youth reports that they have been abused or are at risk of being abused, or that they are thinking of harming themselves or others, let them know that you have to report this in order to keep them safe. Explain to them what will happen and what supports will be available to them through the process.

All Yukoners are now required by law to report suspected child abuse. If you have concerns about the safety of a child or youth, please contact Family and Children's Services at 867-667-3002 (collect calls accepted), or toll-free at 1-800-661-0408 ext. 3002. You can also call your regional social worker or the RCMP to report your concerns if they affect a child or youth under the age of 19.

Yukon Regional Services Offices

Carcross
Box 174, Carcross Y0B 1B0
821-2920

Carmacks/Klondike Highway
Box 95, Carmacks Y0B 1C0
863-5800

Dawson City
Box 339, Dawson City Y0B 1G0
993-7890

Faro
Box 148, Faro Y0B 1K0
994-2749

Haines Junction
(including Destruction Bay,
Burwash Landing, Beaver Creek)
Box 5445, Haines Junction Y0B 1L0
634-2203

Mayo/Elsa
Box 9, Mayo Y0B 1M0
996-2283


Old Crow (sub-office of Dawson)
993-7890

Pelly Crossing
(sub-office of Carmacks)
863-5800

Ross River
Box 111, Ross River Y0B 1S0
969-3200

Teslin
Box 69, Teslin Y0A 1B0
390-2588

Watson Lake
Box 305, Watson Lake Y0A 1C0
536-2232



This is a good time to reflect on the content of this manual from the stages of adolescent development through to the examples of what has worked well and less well in youth engagement projects and youth-adult partnerships.

Scenarios for adult allies

Here are some scenarios which could occur in Yukon. You can think about or brainstorm with colleagues or other adult allies in your community how you would approach these situations.

Scenario 1

Your local community has been hit by an economic recession, changes in industry, and reductions in Federal and Territorial services. This has contributed to shops and services closing, and to a decline in the population.

Those who remain live in poverty and don't seem to want to get involved in community life or projects. However, some residents are trying to rebuild the area, and the local band council wants to improve the environment for young people in the area.

Council leaders have formed a committee to set priorities which they plan to move forward within the next year. Committee members include health workers, school officials, neighborhood leaders, and youth advocates. They want youth engagement on the committee and have invited a few student leaders to join committees and attend meetings, but these youth tend not to attend or say much.

Committee members want to increase involvement of young people in the planning process, but are unsure how to proceed and are asking for your assistance.

What should they do?



SCENARIO 2

EastSide is a low income area in the city. The area is made up of a mixture of long established Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families, migrant workers from across Canada, and an increasing number of Chinese immigrant families. Despite the area having a reputation for diversity, the different cultural groups tend not to mix.

EastSide Youth Center aims to strengthen social diversity and multicultural participation among teenagers in the overall area.

What should they do?

SCENARIO 3

A group of Grade 9 students have learned through their teacher that a waste site with thousands of barrels of hazardous chemicals is located a few blocks from their local youth center. They know that these wastes can contaminate the water supply, that there are large holes in the protective fences, and that young children play on the barrels.

The students want to take action. They visit the local health department and are told that nothing can be done. They want to mobilize groups of youth in the local area and across Yukon, but are unsure how to proceed and are asking for your assistance.

What should they do?

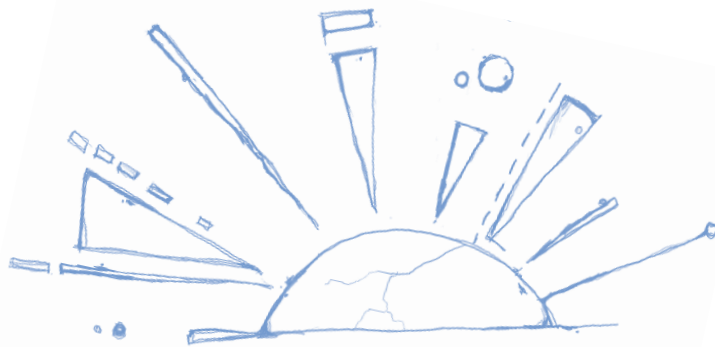
Scenario 4

A local adult-youth partnership was formed to create an advisory committee to oversee the development of a rec centre in the local community. Initially there was good attendance from both youth and adults, meetings seemed to go well and a vision for the leisure centre was created.

The building of the centre has been delayed, first by a funding delay and now by the winter weather. This means it will be at least another few months before building resumes. Attendance at meetings is dwindling and everyone is feeling frustrated and disillusioned. Adult allies involved in the project are worried that if the committee disbands, youth's wishes for the new centre will not be considered and the climbing wall and youth lounge they are advocating for will not get built.

What should they do?





In this SECTION

Tools for adult allies

Adult allies resources

Sources





Tools for adult allies

Adult ally traffic lights

Some people find the traffic light sheet useful as a tool to explore past, present and future ways of engaging young people.

The **red column** is where you record approaches or processes of engagement that have not succeeded and that you no longer wish to continue.

The **yellow column** is where you record ideas on engaging processes you would like to begin. A yellow light means proceed with caution, and you should ideally check in with young people before you implement your idea.

The **green column** is where you record ideas and approaches that are currently working and which you plan to continue with in the future.



Adult ally traffic lights

STOP	PROCEED WITH CAUTION	CONTINUE

ADAPTED FROM CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



Adult ally self-reflection

This sheet can be a useful way to check in on your own thoughts, feelings and biases. You can revisit it from time to time and see how your role as an adult ally is changing the way you think about young people.

Here is a tool for you to use to check in and think about how you are doing in your role as an adult ally. You can use it to see where you are doing well and where you think you could improve

Circle the appropriate number for each statement with 1 being *"I do not do this at all"* and 5 being *"I do this really well."*

You might want to highlight the items that you want to work on and fill the sheet out regularly to chart your progress.





Adult ally self-reflection

I truly respect young people's ideas.

1 2 3 4 5

COMMENT:

I continually give encouragement.

1 2 3 4 5

COMMENT:

I provide resources for their activities.

1 2 3 4 5

COMMENT:

I listen carefully to their ideas.

1 2 3 4 5

COMMENT:

I promote active participation.

1 2 3 4 5

COMMENT:

I model appropriate interactions.

1 2 3 4 5

COMMENT:

I am active in building support for youth in my community.

1 2 3 4 5

COMMENT:

I help youth get organized and empower them to get started.

1 2 3 4 5

COMMENT:

I encourage critical thinking in young people.

1 2 3 4 5

COMMENT:

I am open to alternative forms of communication and problem solving.

1 2 3 4 5

COMMENT:

I include young people in all aspects of the decision-making process.

1 2 3 4 5

COMMENT:

I share power with young people well.

1 2 3 4 5

COMMENT:

I share responsibility for successes as well as failures.

1 2 3 4 5

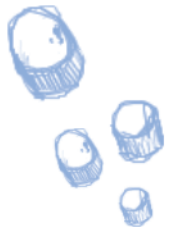
COMMENT:

My focus is on the process of engagement rather than the product.

1 2 3 4 5

COMMENT:

What was it like being 15 years old?



This can be a useful exercise to remember what you were like as a 15 year old, including thinking about which youth got involved in your community, who were the supportive adults, and what were the characteristics of those adults.

*Where did you live?
Who did you live with?
What school did you go to?
What did you look like?
Did you have a job?*

*What was on the walls of your bedroom?
What made you different from your peers?
What made you the same as your peers?
What did you think about?
What was your favourite song?
Who was your favourite band?*

*What kind of car did you want to drive?
Did you count the days until you could
get your license?
What did you do for fun?
Did you ever get in trouble while you
were 'just having fun?'
How did you feel?*

*Who were the young people who
participated actively in the community?
What were they like?
What did they do?
Were you involved in your community?
Were you involved in your school?*

*What kept you from participating more actively
in the community?
What could you have done to participate more actively?
Who were the adults who worked well with young people?
What were their qualities or characteristics?
What could adults have done to help you
to participate?*

Matrix of participation

	Individual feedback	Consultation	One-off event	Participation projects	Peer-led activities	Youth forums	Youth in governance
Youth initiated—shared decisions with adults							
Youth initiated and directed							
Adult initiated—shared decisions with youth							
Youth are consulted and kept informed							
Young people are assigned tasks							
Tokenism							
Decoration							
Manipulation							

Adult allies resources

Check out these resources for more information on supporting youth and being an adult ally



BYTE

www.yukonyouth.com

Programs and projects to engage youth in bringing about positive change in their communities.

BYTE works with youth to create and run events and programs, including interactive workshops and speaker series that can be hosted in communities across Yukon.

Yukon Youth Directorate

www.youth.gov.yk.ca

Resources for Yukon youth and youth service providers, including programs and services for youth, and funding sources for youth-focused initiatives.

Yukon Women's Directorate resource directory

www.womensdirectorate.gov.yk.ca/pdf/wd_yfrd.pdf

Information on a wide range of services and programs available to youth and families across Yukon, including a comprehensive list of resources available in the communities.

Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement

www.engagementcentre.ca

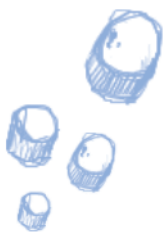
Run by the Student Commission in Toronto, the National Centre for Excellence has a range of resources for working with young people including handy fact sheets about being an adult ally.

McCreary Centre Society

www.mcs.bc.ca

Youth health research, engagement and evaluation reports free to download, as well as youth engagement curriculum and workshop ideas. On-line and in-person workshops and presentations are also available, call 604-291-1996.





Sources



We would like to acknowledge the following sources which are either directly quoted or whose work has formed the basis of some of the sections in this manual.

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry No. 95; December 2011 (Brain development).

American Academy of Child and Adolescent's Facts for Families <http://uulti.org/docs/AdolescentDevelopment.pdf>.

Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement.

Hart, R. (1992). Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Davies, T (2009): Can social networks bridge the participation gap? (Matrix of Participation).

Davies,T (2011): Rethinking Responses To Children And Young People's Online Lives http://www.nonformality.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Participation_Models_20121118.pdf (A model of on-line youth participation).

McCreary Centre Society, www.mcs.bc.ca.

Wong et al. (2011): A Typology of Youth Participation and Empowerment for Child and Adolescent Health Promotion http://www.nonformality.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Participation_Models_20121118.pdf (A model of youth engagement).

Youth Engagement in Decision Making: The Basics, produced by the Nova Scotia Youth Secretariat.