

# The Focus 3 Story

Responding to Crisis through Engagement of Head, Heart, Feet and Spirit  
in Parma Court, Kainai Blood Reserve, and Kugluktuk



Written by members of the Focus 3 communities in  
Kugluktuk (NWT), Kainai Blood Reserve (AB), Parma Court (ON)  
and The Students Commission  
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This toolkit was created by the Focus Three team: youth of Kugluktuk, Parma Court's Youth Vybes Crew, Kainai Youth Council and The Students Commission.



# Focus Three Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to provide an overview of the Focus Three project as it happened in three very different communities: Kugluktuk in the Far North, Kainai First Nation in Alberta, and Parma Court, a small urban community in Toronto.

Its primary purpose is to assist organizations external to a community with increased understanding, as well as specific tools and processes, on how to respond to a request from members of the community for assistance in responding to a crisis they identify in their community.

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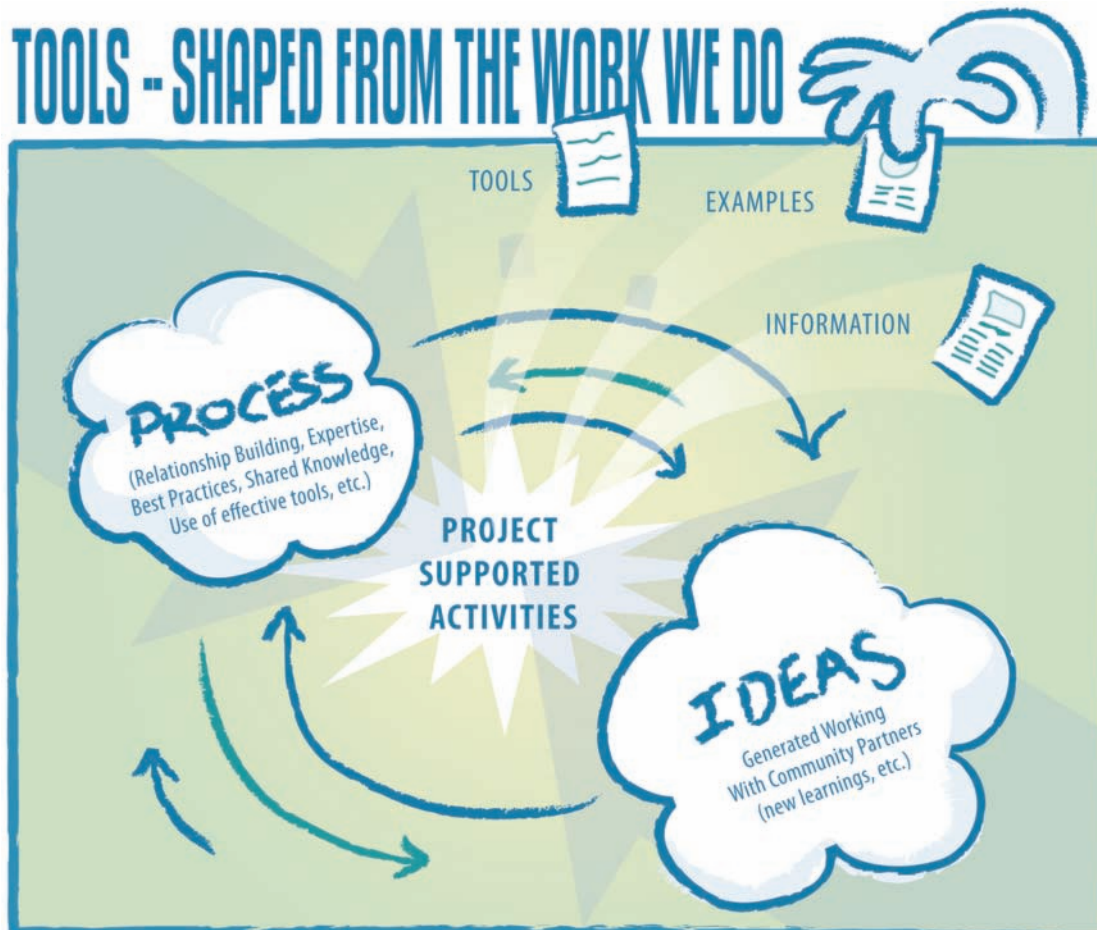
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# Focus Three Toolkit

**Welcome** to the Focus Three Story and Toolkit! What you are holding in your hands represents a summary of the Focus Three project, implemented by adults, youth and organizations from three communities, Kainai Blood Reserve, Kugluktuk, and Parma Court in partnership with The Students Commission from 2007 to 2009. This toolkit documents the work done in each community, summarizes overall approaches and processes that worked in each community, and provides examples of tools that can be adapted by others. It has grown out of the experiences, processes and learning of the members of Focus 3. The tools and activity guides that are presented here for you have been developed with, and by the young people of these communities, and have been created so as to help other communities and organizations take action on issues that they face every day.

We encourage you to take whatever pieces you wish and modify them to make them fit the community that you are living and working within. This toolkit is designed for young people and community members who wish to motivate and mobilize; adults and organizations that are supporting youth to tackle an issue in their community; and for those who want some outside organizational assistance. We hope that you make use of the materials that lie before you and we wish you all success in your endeavours!





## Introduction

The Focus Three project began with a mother asking for help after her son had been killed through gun violence. She wanted to do something in her community to protect her son's friends and the young boys and girls to follow from her community. She was knocking on the doors of police officers, government officials and community agencies looking for help. About 10 years ago, we had received a similar visit from a woman from a wealthier background wanting to start an organization after violence had interrupted her life. The similarity of the two requests in origin and generosity of spirit was remarkable; the differences in the likelihood of the two desires becoming successful heartbreaking and resolve-making. One woman already had a Board of Directors of well-placed individuals in place, with a marketing plan, and no youth yet to serve. She went on to establish an important organization doing excellent work. The other woman did not know what a Board of Directors was, needed to borrow computer access and an email address so agencies could potentially respond to her; yet local youth were regularly meeting in her apartment to have dinner.

We promised to help find the resources to bring her ideas and desire to life, but not do so until we were sure that we could be there for the journey it would take. We knew from our work that there were many such people, old and young, affected by a crisis wanting to do something, seeking support to do so, but without the experience of "systems" to make their ideas happen. We drafted a project idea that would explore the process of how an organization with the knowledge of "systems" and how they work could assist unattached individuals affected by a crisis to meet their need to do something about that crisis.

The federal government (Social Development Partnerships Program) gave the Students Commission of Canada a 1.5 year contribution grant to work with three communities in a focussed manner to respond as they wished to the crisis they faced: Focus 3.

The common element was that in each community there were community members emotionally moved by a crisis, who wanted to take action, and were looking for outside assistance to do so.

This was an engagement project, engagement of the community and its youth with their adult allies, in a sustained, not-always-perfect, but authentic, relationship with an outside organization, by request.

## Focus Three Overview

The criteria for selecting the communities included passionate individuals personally moved by a crisis, an invitation to us as an outside organization to partner, and an indication that there were others in the community who could be rallied to get involved. Our goal was to foster engagement at the individual, social and systemic level in each community.

One of the communities we selected was the Blood Reserve in Alberta where Kainai youth wanted to create Reclaiming Hope, a project to address youth suicide, in honour of their friend, Myron Wolfchild, who helped found the Kainai Youth Council, had been an inspiring youth leader, and had recently committed suicide, despite all of his successes.

A second community was Kugluktuk in Nunavut where we met a young man who wanted to address the rampant abuse of alcohol by adults in the community and its devastating impact on the young people of that community.

The third community was Parma Court in Toronto where the mother of “Blits” who had been killed by gun violence wanted to encourage the community to take action to prevent other young men in the community from being shot.

## Approach

Our approach was strength and values-based; our objective was to engage adults and youth together on the values and emotion that had been the initiators of their desire to act, working collaboratively to identify their individual strengths and the strengths of their communities. Our starting point as an organization is always our *Four Pillars: Respect, Listen, Understand and Communicate™*, which underlines the core processes and values of what we do.<sup>1</sup> Communication is the last of our Four Pillars, and the first act of our collaborations for positive change. This fundamental process ran through all aspects of Focus Three; in our experience ensuring that engagement activities have rapid, concrete, demonstrable achievements is an important sustainer of youth and community engagement. Communication products are effective first acts, so most of what we do begins and ends there.



Our role was to respond to the requests of the community with the knowledge and resources we had, drawn from our previous work and the work of the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, which the Students Commission leads. The Centre of Excellence is a national network of partners, which brings youth organizations, youth members and academics together to improve the lives of young people through better understanding and sharing of knowledge.

We recommend that at the beginning of every collaboration, each partner takes time to identify and share values, and define the values base of the collaboration.

## Tools and Frameworks

The Four Pillars are our foundation, and upon that foundation there are some core frameworks, definitions and adaptable tools that help guide the process work of youth and community engagement that we do. The Centre of Excellence’s Youth Engagement Framework and its definition of youth engagement were used throughout the project to work with community members to design, implement and evaluate the activities they undertook. Concepts and steps from the *Knowledge in Action*

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1 for full description of the Four Pillars.

Framework<sup>2</sup> and the Youth Decision Makers Framework<sup>3</sup> were used to guide knowledge exchange and involvement of young people in decision-making and decision-making opportunities throughout the project.

## Definition of Engagement: Head, heart, feet and spirit all present

The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement defines youth engagement as the meaningful participation and sustained involvement of a young person in an activity, which has a focus outside of him or herself. Full engagement consists of a behavioural component (e.g. spending time doing the activity), an affective component (e.g. deriving pleasure from participating in it) and a cognitive component (e.g. knowledge about the activity).

In our work with youth and youth organizations, we call this Head, Heart, Feet, and Spirit, which is understood as connectedness with something greater than oneself. We distinguish between participation, which is simply showing up for an activity and engagement, in which all elements of the definition are present. In terms of programs for young people, it means that they are learning something, are emotionally invested, are in action and are contributing to others, perhaps a group effort, a team, or the community.

The CEYE Framework for Youth Engagement provides a simple tool for youth and their adult allies in a community to look at four elements of designing and evaluating an activity: what starts or initiates an engaging activity, what keeps it going and sustains it, what are the qualities of a good activity, and what are the results. Each of the four elements has three levels of factors that are important to consider: what's happening for the individual youth, for friends and family, and for community/organizations and society. Congruency and connection between these levels is effective: for instance matching an individual's values, to the values of peers in the program, to the values and policies of the organization.

The Centre's Framework for Youth Engagement assists researchers, policy makers and project planners, to understand and measure the elements that initiate and sustain quality programs and their outcomes at three levels. It also provides a means of looking at barriers and negative outcomes.

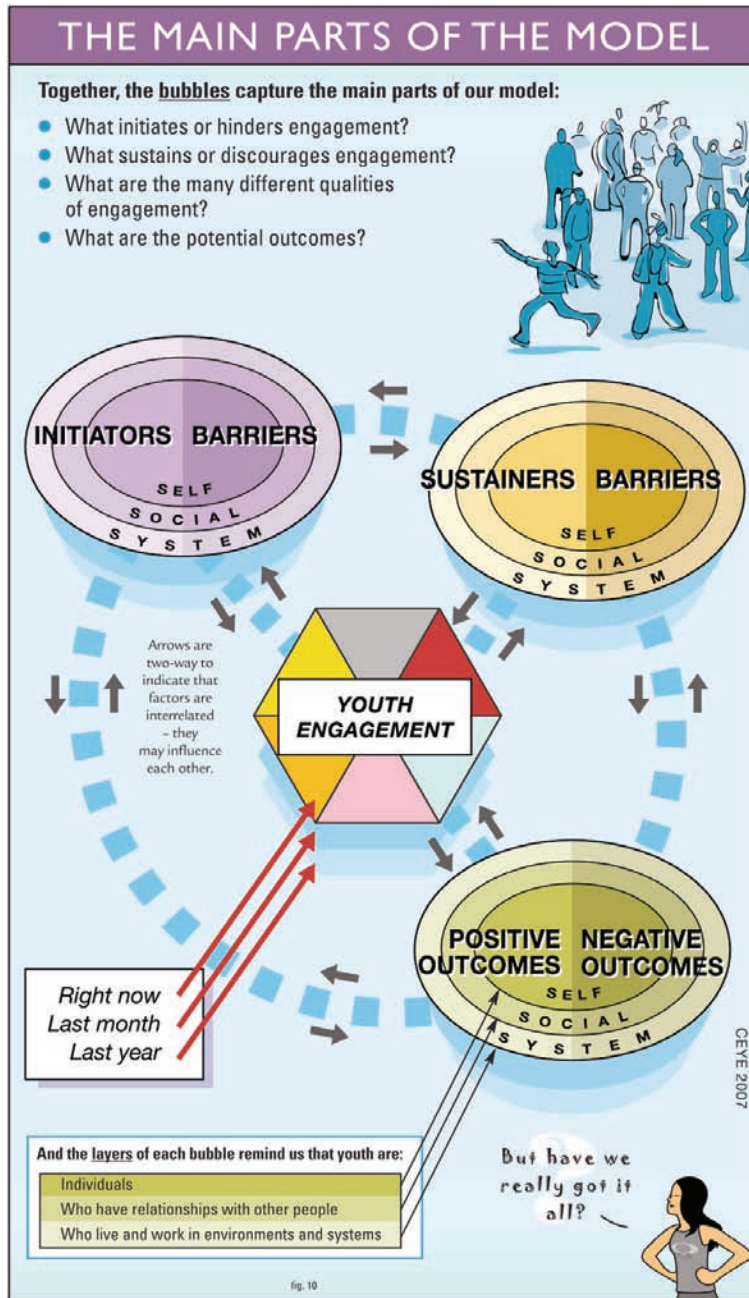


## COMMUNITY VOICES

*I believe that those who work on a project like this from outside the area of focus need to be very aware of the impact of the crisis on those from the community and support them emotionally as well.*

<sup>2</sup> Developed by The Centres of Excellence for Children's Well-Being. See *Knowledge In Action Framework*, Appendix 2.

<sup>3</sup> Young Decision Makers Model, Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement. See Appendix 4.



## Engagement Framework

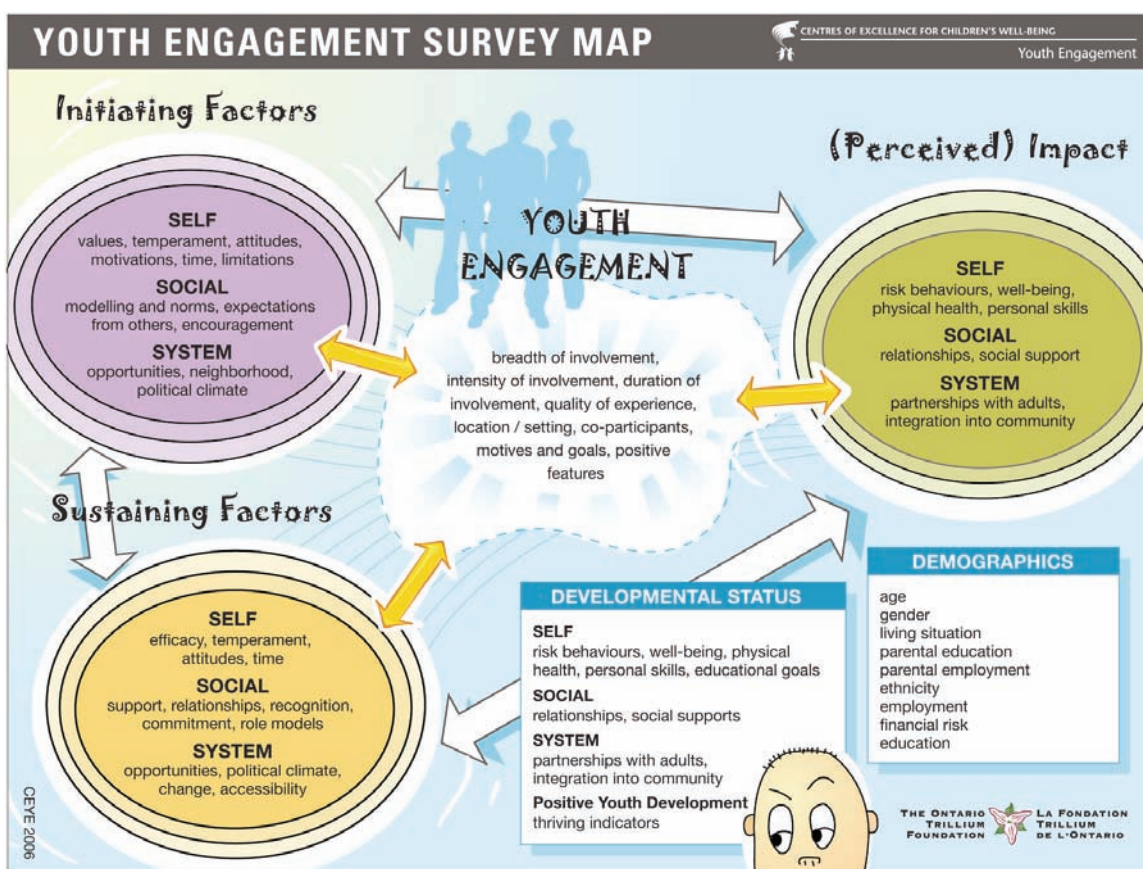
In Focus Three, the heart was a key initiator of the activities that community members wanted to engage in. Much of our work was to support the other aspects of the engagement in order to sustain the projects that they wanted to accomplish: developing knowledge and skills in order to sustain actions and behaviours that led to project success, and developing connections to resources and opportunities to contribute to the greater good, which in turn produced personal and community rewards.



## Survey Map of The Youth Engagement Framework

When we started working with a community, both youth and adults in it, we started with simple versions of the maps<sup>4</sup>, open circles, which asked: What do we need to get started? What would we need to keep going? What would be the qualities and characteristics of the activities we would like to do, and what would be the results we would like? We would repeat the exercise three times: one for individuals participating, one for families or groups of peers, and one for the community: three levels of operation. The centre of the map, Youth Engagement, describes the characteristics of the activity.

The factors in the map that have been identified through the Centre's research are extensive, but in our work with Focus 3 community members, particularly youth, we focussed on the factors they identified as elements that we would work putting into place and try to achieve through specific activities. Over time these added up to more complex approaches, for example a range of activities (breadth of involvement) for members of the Kainai Youth Council or Parma Court's Youth Vybes group.



The centre of the map, the engagement circle, is where the definition operates, where we were looking to ensure that activities were designed for head, heart, feet and spirit (cognitive, affective, behavioural, and connecting outside self).

<sup>4</sup> See *Youth Engagement Survey Map* above and Appendix 8, 9 for blank worksheet version

## The “Head, Heart, Feet, and Spirit” of Youth Engagement<sup>5</sup>



### Head!

Engaged youth ...

- spend time thinking about their activities
- are interested in learning about the activities they're involved in
- pay attention and concentrate when doing their activity



### Heart!

Engaged youth ...

- have positive feelings (its fun!) and sometimes negative feelings (its stressful!) about their activities
- feel that their activities are valuable and an important part of who they are
- are committed to their activities



### Feet!

Engaged youth ...

- are involved in a small or large number of activities
- may spend a lot or a little bit of time in each activity
- have been involved in their activities for a sustained period of time
- get results from their activities



### Spirit!

Engaged youth ...

- feel connected and committed to something greater than the self, which could include something sacred (God, nature, a higher power)
- seek meaning and purpose in life.
- have genuine concern for and contribute to the well-being others and society.
- may (or may not) identify with a religious tradition or community

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<sup>5</sup> Drafted by M. Busseri (Brock University) in April 2008 for CEYE. See Appendix 10 for worksheet.

## Focus 3 Project Elements in Each Community

We started the project with a set of proposed activity areas and objectives outlined in the funding proposal. Throughout the project, we were in conversation with community members, conducting informal process evaluations and reflections with community members and creating the activities as requested by members of the community. When reviewing the project process documentation, the following elements emerged as common to all communities.

- Element 1: Invitation: Initiating
- Element 2: Relationship Building
- Element 3: Clarifying Objectives and Purposes
- Element 4: Building Capacity by Working Together
- Element 5: Designing Positive Activities
- Element 6: Executing Positive Activities
- Element 7: Celebrating Results
- Element 8: Connecting with Resources
- Element 9: Ongoing “You can’t pay people to care.”
- Element 10: Evaluating Results

Element 8, Connecting with Resources, occurred through out all stages of the project and was important for connecting individuals in the project to ongoing resources in the community in order to sustain their efforts. Elements 9 and 10 were also continuous throughout the process of each of the other elements. The sustaining of the groups, the activities and the relationships formed resides in the notion of caring; the purpose of the project was to assist with skill building to help shape caring into action. The detailed stories of Focus 3 in each community that follow in the next sections of this tool kit are organized using these elements.

### Common Community Needs

The process of identifying of community needs was not confined to an initial “needs” assessment. In fact, our journey would indicate that such an approach would not have been as effective and helpful, as the continuous process that we used. Members of the community we were working with started with initial ideas of what they wanted to accomplish and do, but these ideas changed and evolved as we worked together, becoming more practical and achievable in a series of repeated steps: identify a wish/need, move forward on a concrete action, evaluate and celebrate it, and identify a next wish / need. Priorities emerged throughout the project. At the end of the project, across the three communities,



### COMMUNITY VOICES

*The child grows up to be old enough to go to school. Snacks and lunch are hard to buy.... The realization of not having these things increases daily. Life circumstances that the child faces fuels the lack of ambition to engage themselves in school. The long-term reward seems almost unreal.*



## COMMUNITY VOICES

*As the child reaches the teenage years, the signs of a cycle are clear.... From mother to son, opportunities are limited....*

these four needs and wishes were common in each community, expressed by adult workers, parents and youth.

- Opportunities for youth to get outside the community and experience difference, learn new things, explore new ideas, places, and horizons
- Support for positive activities to occur and for youth getting involved in positive activities (positive peer pressure)
- Skill and knowledge development for youth and adults to design and implement programs
- Support and skill development for navigating community politics and bridge building to existing resources.

Meeting these needs provided projects that met head, heart, feet and spirit requirements for engagement of adult and youth participants in the project.

It became clear that adult and youth members of the community wanted to see positive youth development opportunities both inside and outside the community. A definition of positive youth development that we have adapted from the National Youth Development Centre is useful for understanding the work of Focus 3.

### **Positive Youth Development**

Positive Youth Development is “the process of preparing young people to participate in the opportunities of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated and progressive series of activities and experiences that help them become more socially, morally, emotionally, physically and cognitively competent.”<sup>6</sup>

In each community we worked with community members to think about and strive for programs of quality, introducing them to simple checklists of content elements and features, and supporting them to begin to design for and reflect upon afterwards in terms of whether the event or program met the checklists. We used the following checklist as our standard.

### **Features of Positive Development Settings<sup>7</sup>**

- Physical and psychological safety
- Appropriate structure
- Supportive, caring relationships
- Opportunities to belong
- Positive social norms
- Support for efficacy and mattering
- Opportunities for skill building
- Integration of efforts, community synergy

<sup>6</sup> This adapted definition comes from the National Youth Development Centre (1998). The adaptation is to replace the words “challenges of adolescence” to “opportunities of adolescence,” which illustrates our alignment with an asset-based view of youth and adolescence.

<sup>7</sup> National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2002). Community Programs to Promote Youth Development. Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth. Jacquelynne Eccles and Jennifer A. Gootman, eds. Board on Children, Youth and Families, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

## Support From Adult Allies

Community members also said that they wanted training for both adults in the community and youth leaders. We introduced each community to our Adult Allies Training Manual<sup>8</sup> and ran workshops using materials from the Manual.

An adult ally helps youth have their voice heard through meaningful youth engagement. With support of an adult ally, young people can be meaningfully involved in every stage of an initiative. Being an ally to young people involves a combination of positive attitude, skill and awareness to help in advocating for a youth leadership and empowerment agenda.

Adult Allies:

- Acknowledge and push aside any biases that they may have so that they enter into a partnership with an open mind;
- Move from the traditional “adult-as-mentor” role to an “adult-as-partner” role;
- Support youth to have ownership of a project and to take the project to new levels;
- Do not impose their judgments or ideas;
- Are willing to take risks; and
- Share power and accountability for success and failure.

In each community at the initiation stage, we talked with community members about how to start what they wanted to do and explored with them and from our observations what the barriers were. Initiation included building relationships that helped identify the values of the individuals wanting to take action, and embed those values in the project and its execution.

Adult Allies from the community and from The Students

Commission helped support youth with their ideas, and we trained and supported adult allies as the various project ideas took shape, using the framework of Head, Heart, Feet, and Spirit for exploring what needed to be in a project event or activity, and the checklist of features of positive youth development settings to aim for success and safety.

The following table is a summary of the various activities that occurred in each community which Focus 3 helped support. Details of the activities are outlined in the separate community stories.



## COMMUNITY VOICES

*A young woman is 19 and finds out that she is pregnant. The father of the baby is out of the picture due to ...circumstances. She has no support systems to turn to. Her father left her mother before she was born and her mother is struggling herself. Her mother works two job to pay bills and take care of her younger brother and sister....*

<sup>8</sup> See *Adult Allies in Action Manual*, available at [www.engagementcentre.ca](http://www.engagementcentre.ca).

## Highlights of Project Activities in each Community

Time Frame	Parma	Kugluktuk	Kainai
November - December 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christmas Event with mothers and families whose children have been killed by violence (UMove)</li> <li>• Toy Drive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecting young person who wanted to work with us, with Principal of School and adults to support him in community,</li> <li>• Kitikmeot Board of Education</li> <li>• Grizzlies Sports Organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly conversations with Kainai Youth Council</li> <li>• Partnership Agreement, Work plan</li> </ul>
January - April 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UMove Meetings, Monday nights</li> <li>• Informal outreach to youth (corners, coffee shops)</li> <li>• Flyers to community re project, events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two youth leaders come to Toronto for Training.</li> <li>• Training at TYPS conference.</li> <li>• Adult Ally Training concurrently with ally from Kitikmeot Board of Education</li> <li>• Exchanges outside community identified as important.</li> <li>• Flyers produced to recruit for trainings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning a Youth Leadership retreat</li> <li>• Training in Toronto: 4 youth, 2 community co-ordinators</li> <li>• Training at TYPS Youth Conference (4 youth leaders)</li> <li>• Regular staff liaison through phone, email</li> <li>• Support in developing materials</li> </ul>
April-June 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal outreach continues,</li> <li>• Training in workshops, programs Brainstorm “Super Program”</li> <li>• Connect with YouthVybes</li> <li>• UMove meetings</li> <li>• Development of community map</li> <li>• Host barbeque</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 youth, one adult ally attend YouthQuake training in Ottawa in May, with SC staff, on conflict resolution</li> <li>• Ongoing email and telephone communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting contact with other organizations in community</li> <li>• 3 Visits to community to attend connection meetings with other organizations, leaders</li> <li>• Training 60 Kainai Youth Council Members re Reclaiming Hope and workshops</li> <li>• Adult Ally Training</li> <li>• Reclaiming Hope Forum in May (140 youth in attendance)</li> <li>• Collaborative work on Reclaiming Hope curriculum</li> </ul>
July – September 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using evaluation tools with UMove, Youth Vybes for events</li> <li>• Assisting YouthVybes to find new space</li> <li>• Planning for Youth Symposium event UMove</li> <li>• Video Clips</li> <li>• Youth Vybes events, weekly meetings</li> <li>• Community Meeting on the Mural</li> <li>• Youth Vybes participation at summit</li> <li>• Bigga Blitz Block Inferno (evaluation)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 youth participate in Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse strategy conference in Toronto</li> <li>• 2 days in Toronto designing survey for their school (PAR project)</li> <li>• Documentation of projects in Kugluktuk with Grizzlies sports program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth develop community survey</li> <li>• Participation in feasts, barbecues, community celebrations, talent showcases, municipal meetings, memorials</li> <li>• 32 Km Memorial Walk</li> <li>• Youth Week: 4 community fairs with health messages</li> <li>• Documentation on website etc.</li> </ul>
October - December 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Symposium event UMove</li> <li>• Youth Vybes Youth updating webstie</li> <li>• Youth Vybes supported to write proposal: Youth In Power (YIP) for Hood Show</li> <li>• Developing branding and image for Youth Vybes: letterhead, business cards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Followup re application of training in community</li> <li>• Survey carried out. Worked on project development ideas arising from survey with youth.</li> <li>• Documentation on website.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restructuring, rebuilding of Youth Council</li> <li>• Ongoing telephone support and social networking</li> </ul>

January - March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holiday Dinner</li> <li>• Weekly Meetings</li> <li>• Youth Vybes Training: Ottawa</li> <li>• Work plan development</li> <li>• Resource Development begins</li> <li>• TYPs conference: Youth Centre</li> <li>• Woodgreen: Rites of Passage Group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SC staff visit Kugluktuk.</li> <li>• Interviews and focus groups, drafting resources and framework drawing on strengths of the community.</li> <li>• Identifying resources that could be better connected.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finishing Reclaiming Hope Workshop Curriculum</li> </ul>
April - June 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Vybes</li> <li>• Fundraising activities</li> <li>• Work with Action for Neighbourhood Change</li> <li>• Youth Vybes opens bank account</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing communication.</li> <li>• Participation in Evaluation and Creating Final Toolkit Products.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in Evaluation and Creating Final Toolkit products</li> </ul>
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invitations to youth and adult to participate in events outside the community</li> <li>• Ongoing phone and internet support, sending of resources</li> <li>• Face-to-face support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invitations to youth and adult to participate in events outside the community</li> <li>• Ongoing phone and internet support, sending of resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invitations to youth and adult to participate in events outside the community</li> <li>• Ongoing phone and internet support, sending of resources</li> </ul>

## Youth as Leaders and Decision Makers – Knowledge Exchange In Action

Research in the field of youth engagement, positive youth development, and knowledge exchange shows that when youth and knowledge consumers are involved in planning and decision making both around the generation of knowledge and project planning they experience more positive results. This includes greater sense of personal efficacy, control and confidence, as well as reporting more positive perceptions of the experience. Behind the scenes in our work with these communities, there were two process frameworks, one adult-created, one youth created, that informed our work in terms of collectively looking at issues and developing communication tools. More details about these frameworks are in the Appendix 2, 3 and 4.



### COMMUNITY VOICES

*I think it is important that the community has ownership of everything that they do.*

Knowledge in Action <sup>9</sup> : Adult Model	Young Decision Makers <sup>10</sup> : Youth Model
Identify the need or purpose requiring evidence-informed decisions	Initiate action
Knowledge generation: inquire, appraise, synthesize knowledge	Study issues: How do we know what we know? Our own knowledge, knowledge from our peers, knowledge from research.
What is the message to be transferred?	Discuss the issues with peers
To whom to transfer the message?	Decide on recommendations with peers
How to transfer the message?	Inform others
Select, tailor, implement interventions and products	Take Action to sustain the idea and consult with others on how well it is going ( interact with your youth constituency)
Monitor knowledge use	
Evaluate knowledge use impact	
Next Steps	

See Appendix for details on how these applied to Focus 3.



## COMMUNITY VOICES

*Everyday going through school, work, etc. there are different frustrations one might pick up. If frustrations are not handled properly they will accumulate. The more frustration accumulates, the*

*harder it will become to handle other frustrations one may encounter later on in the day. This is why when conflicts between two people occurs, it is sometimes hard for one or both people to take steps to resolve it without escalating the situation further. Understanding the possible accumulation of other's frustration help make it easier to resolve conflicts/misunderstandings/arguments as they occur.*

<sup>9</sup> The *Knowledge in Action Model* was developed by the Centres of Excellence for Children's Well-Being.

<sup>10</sup> The *Young Decision Makers Model* was developed by The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement.



## How To: Focus Three Tools

### TOOLS DEVELOPED BY FOCUS 3 COMMUNITY MEMBERS

The following tools were developed by Focus 3 community members.

- Tool Development Template — Based on the Knowledge in Action Model, it assists in developing tools for effective communication and knowledge exchange. See Appendix 3 for a more detailed application of the model to the Focus Three process.
- Partnership Agreement — guidelines and blank agreement form.
- Tips on Creating Successful Youth Programs — written by youth leaders for other youth leaders.
- Celebrate the Good Things — a filled-in example of a questionnaire worksheet to help celebrate a community success story.
- Celebrate the Good Things — a blank worksheet for photocopying.
- Celebrate and Take Action — a description of how to use the Taking Action worksheet.
- See, Think, Do — youth tips on how to take action on an issue.
- Tips on Being Safe — for youth by youth.
- Keeping Us Safe — a letter to elders from youth.
- Suicide Awareness — for youth by youth.
- Bringing Back Positivity to My Community — a youth pamphlet.
- Connecting Young Dads with Their Children — a youth pamphlet.



Tool Development Template:

Tool Name:

Fill out the following questions in as much detail as possible. Writing down your thoughts not only helps you make your ideas more concrete, it can help you share them with others.

What is the purpose of the tool?

.....  
.....  
.....

Where does the information come from? (Sources)

.....  
.....

What is the key message of the tool?

.....  
.....

Who would use this tool? Youth  Organizations  Policy Makers  Other:

.....  
.....

Where would they use it?

.....  
.....

What might prevent them from using it?

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.....

This tool was created by the Focus Three team: youth of Kugluktuk, Parma Court's Youth Vybes Crew, Kainai Youth Council and The Students Commission.



What is it? (Describe in detail the format / style: eg. pamphlet, poster, video etc.)

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What is it? (Key content)

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Will we train people how to use tool? Yes  No  If yes, how?

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.....  
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**OBJECTIVES CHECKLIST (Use for evaluation)**

Do we hope it...

- Yes  No  Educates, shares information?
- Yes  No  Changes attitudes.  
What attitudes? .....
- Yes  No  Changes behaviours.  
What behaviour? .....
- Yes  No  Reinforces existing knowledge?  
What knowledge? .....
- Yes  No  Reinforces existing behaviours?  
What behaviour? .....

# Partnership Agreement

Building a Community-Organization Relationship

## Commitment to Partnership Agreement

This Commitment to Partnership Agreement was developed through honest discussions between The Students Commission and community groups, such as Youth VYBES in Toronto, Ontario and the youth of Kugluktuk, Nunavut. Following the completion of Focus 3 (a project that supports three communities where passionate individuals have been moved by a crisis in their communities and have started to try to do something about it) the partnering groups came together to discuss the successes and difficulties that they had experienced when working with outside organizations and developed this document to share their learnings as a tool to other groups. We hope that this document will help you to create a successful, sustainable, and reciprocal partnership between your organization and communities in need. They felt quite often organizations are well intentioned, but can find working in challenging communities overwhelming sometimes. They can come and connect but cannot complete their commitments.



Respect is the foundation for any relationship, and it can easily make or break a partnership. It is also a value that is not often perceived the same way; what respect means to me may not be what respect means to you.

## We feel respected when...



- You show genuine interest in our community
- You understand who we are
- We are seen as an equal
- You make time for us
- You have faith in us
- We feel accepted
- Organizations value our opinions
- You say meaningful things to us
- You communicate with us and do it clearly
- People care about us
- We feel like we are being heard
- You encourage us to continue

These guidelines are useful to help outside organizations build strong connections to community groups. There are many benefits for community groups who are working with outside organizations. From our experiences, these are the things that worked for us.

## What outside organizations can do for our community:

- Help us create change, don't try and change us
- Be open and honest to the group, with what you will get out of this commitment
- Don't think you can do it on your own
- Don't assume you know it all
- Get to know the community and how it operates
- Organizations need to be able to include youth and other groups in the community outreach
- Find out what's going to be useful to the community then do it and support it
- Ask us what we need
- Ask permission before you do stuff
- Only commit to what you can do
- Follow through on what you are saying
- Don't just work with us when we're in crisis, work with us when we're not
- Do something that's going to be useful to the community
- Get permission from the person you are filming or taking photos of before hand
- Share new skills so we can sustain the work after you leave
- Promote the project that your group is doing
- Provide new experiences
- Connect us to resources outside of our community
- Dedicate time to actually be in our community



True partnerships are reciprocal, they go both ways and it is important to acknowledge what both sides are able to put on the table. Often with larger, more connected outside organizations that are supporting community groups the focus is on what resources and supports they can provide communities and not what a community can offer in return. Here are some examples of what community groups are able to offer.

## What can community groups offer outside organizations and businesses?

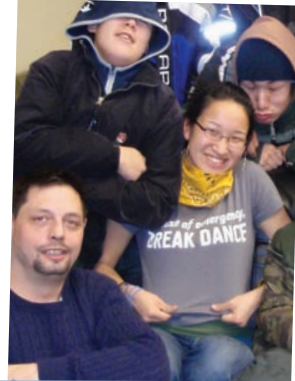


- Knowledge of the community
- History of the community
- A connection to the neighborhood
- Experience and expertise
- Offer guidance and help drive the project
- Provide access to youth
- New relationships and friendships
- Network with the community
- New opportunities and experiences
- Opportunities for volunteers
- Possible employees
- Tax receipt for charitable donations (sometimes)

Clear expectations are important for success, they act as a foundation and allow all parties to know what they're responsible for. We as community groups need to be accountable for our contributions and commitments to organizations. Here are a few ways we can ensure a successful partnership.

### We commit to the partnership

- Keep all project documents in order to send to organizations (i.e. financial)
- If we say we are going to do something, then we do it
- Come to the table with open ears
- Be clear about what we need
- Be reasonable about our expectations
- Carry our own weight
- Ask for help when we need it
- Be willing to try something different
- Respect the expertise of the organization



We hope that you find these guidelines helpful in creating a meaningful partnership. Following these recommendations alone is not enough, you have to come together and have honest discussions to find what will work best for you both. Commitment is crucial; being truly committed to the partnership will help ensure trust and honesty, which will lead to open communication. These are the ingredients to breaking barriers and will allow all parties to benefit fully, from any relationship, while building capacity and meaningful experiences for both parties.



# Commitment to Partnership Agreement

## The Agreement

I, ..... , on behalf of .....  
(Name of supporting organization representative) (Name of organization)

commit to ..... in ..... ,  
(Name of community group representative) (Location of community group)

to work as according to the Commitment to Partnership Agreement.

.....  
(Signature of supporting organization representative) (Date of Agreement)

\*

I, ..... , on behalf of .....  
(Name of community group representative) (Name of community group)

commit to ..... in ..... ,  
(Name of supporting organization representative) (Location of community group)

to work as according to the Commitment to Partnership Agreement.

.....  
(Signature of supporting organization representative) (Date of Agreement)





# What We've Learned

(For program leaders by program leaders)



## Tips On Creating Successful Youth Programs

So you want to run a program for young people in your community, but you're not sure where to start? We've been supporting young people in the Youth Clubs on the Kainai Blood Reserve for more than 10 years collectively, and have learned from some really amazing youth programmers. We don't always get to share our thoughts about how to put a program together, and how to be a good youth leader, so we thought we'd do that here.

### Step One:

#### Keep it simple:

Programs often fail when they are too complicated, or there are too many hoops for participants, parents and/or guardians of the participants and even the program leaders to jump through. The simpler you can make the program, the better, especially if the program is something that is run by volunteers or isn't super formal. (An example of a formal program would be something they run at school, but the youth clubs that meet once a week on Kainai are less structured and would be simpler. The clubs don't grade your participation, you don't have to try-out to get into the program and you don't need to fill out a checklist to see whether or not you qualify for the program.)

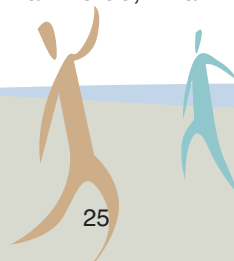
Keeping it simple might also mean keeping the activities you do appropriate to the space. The more equipment you have to rent or buy or bring in, or have the youth bring in, the more difficult it will be. It's much easier to run a basketball game if you've got a ball and a basketball court or it's easier to run a video club if you've got an editing suite - if you don't have a ball and net, or editing equipment and have to organize to get it in, it makes it much harder.

### Step Two:

#### Keep it interesting:

Watch your audience. If you pay attention, you'll notice soon enough when they're not interested in what you're doing. Sometimes people just have to suck it up and do things that they don't like, but if you want to keep people coming back, you've got to start making it interesting. If people are restless and talking to one another and not paying attention to what they're supposed to be doing, don't be afraid to switch it up. To do this successfully, you always have to have a back-up plan. Make sure there's an activity that you can do, whether it's an ice breaker or an improv game or whatever that you've got up your sleeve. They're more likely to stay tuned to what they're doing if you mix it up a bit. But be warned, it can be tricky to balance too much chaos with too much dullness. Each group will have their own balance, so you'll have to find it on your own.

One way to make sure that it's interesting, is to make sure their input is both asked for and taken into consideration. They will know better what they want to do, what they want to talk about and what they need.



So let them tell you! Eventually, you'll get pretty good at guessing, but even then, make sure they take a lead role in determining what's going to happen.

### Step Three:

#### Keep it meaningful:

Part of keeping it meaningful is to make sure that it's interesting to them, but it's also about making sure that you're offering programming that is somehow meaningful to them in their minds and in their hearts. If the people in your program aren't invested with their minds, and their emotions, they're not going to stick around very long. People find meaning in different things, so it will be important to check in with your participants to see what they are finding valuable about the program. You might not want to ask them "what do you find meaningful about this program?" but you might ask something like "what do you like most? Why?", and explore more about the things they identify as giving them the most enjoyment, and the most opportunities to learn.



### Step Four:

#### Keep it challenging:

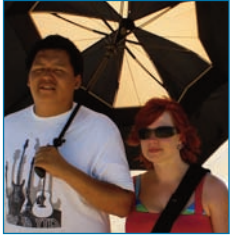
Running programs for youth can be super fun, but a lot of people think it's just about letting kids run around while you watch them. Though that might be a part of what you end up doing, that's not all of it. Working with young people is actually very difficult, and it takes a highly skilled person to do it well. One aspect that is particularly hard to balance is how challenging to make it. If you're running a community program that is open to everyone, chances are you will get a lot of people with varied skill sets. That right there can be a challenge for you! Challenge doesn't mean the same thing to everyone. We don't mean challenge like, for example, negotiate world peace, or invent a car that runs entirely on air. No, when we say challenge we mean things like learn how to public speak, or raise some money to attend a conference or event or something like that.



Because everyone is different, it will be hard to keep things challenging enough that young people will learn something, but not so challenging so that that the youth are overwhelmed and have no feeling of success at the end of the activity. There is a fine balance between the right amount of challenge and too much of it. What you don't want to do is create so many impossible barriers that you end up with a group of youth that feel defeated, but almost as bad is when something is so easy, youth lose interest quickly. Continue to ask your group questions, they'll be able to tell you in words and actions how they are doing.



## Step Five:



### Keep it fun

This one is simple. If youth aren't having fun, for whatever reason, they're not going to come. If you're having trouble keeping it fun, check in with them, see what they want to do and support them to pull it off. Just make sure that the fun they're having doesn't interfere with what you're trying to do with the program. What we mean is, make sure it's something positive, and nobody gets hurt at the expense of having fun.

## Step Six:

### Keep asking them:

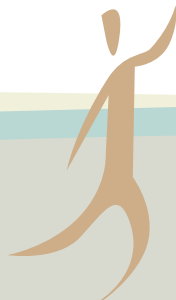
This program is for them, and they will be its biggest fans, or its biggest critics. Or maybe, sometimes both. Your role is to provide structure and support to the program and the participants, and to make sure that everyone is safe. It's also to make sure that the voices of the participants are included when you make decisions about the program. This is, after all, about them, for them, and they are going to have to be the ones to live through it, so it just makes sense to involve them in the decision-making aspect of the program too. Plus, as we all learned, it makes our jobs easier, because they are way more creative than we could ever be, so they pitch us an idea, and we make it work as part of the program, as often as we can. It saves us some time and sometimes saves them from suffering through some terrible activities!

We also need to make sure that we're asking them not only for ideas about the program, but also for feedback on the program, on yourself, on their day. Constantly ask questions. It's the only way you're ever going to learn from them.

## Step Seven:

### Keep it flexible (but have a plan).

When we tell people that we work with teens, we seem to get a lot of "wow, that's a sweet job. Must be easy, doesn't take much work, does it?" We just laugh now, and shake our heads. The truth is actually just the opposite. Yeah, it does take a lot of work. There's a lot of planning involved, and it can be stressful. But nothing is more stressful than showing up for your hour or two with these kids, and having no idea of what you're going to do. It shows when you have a plan, and it shows when you don't, and nothing says you don't value the time that these youth are giving out of their weeks to spend with you than showing up unprepared. One really important thing to remember though is that, though you have a plan, be prepared to abandon it at any moment. Sometimes a better idea hits, or someone suggests something that might be more interesting than what you've got planned, or maybe someone just really needs to get something off their chest. Whatever the reason, on occasion, you're going to have to let go of your plan, and go with it, whatever "it" is. Don't freak out, it's okay, and perfectly natural. Sometimes the best times you have with your program will be those that are unexpected and unplanned.



# Things that you can do to be a better youth leader:



- Be positive! You can have a bad day, but never take it out on them.
- Remember that it's not about you. It doesn't matter if you hate icebreakers, or whatever activity they're doing, if they love it, you need to suck it up and pretend you love it too. Or at very least, pretend to like it.
- Help eliminate the barriers to their participation. If you need to help get them to the program, help get them there. If you need to meet with their parents in order for them to get permission to come to program, meet with their parents. Whatever you can do to help get them there, do it.
- Role Model positive behaviours all the time, not just during program. Remember that they're always watching you and will be looking up to you whether you're "on" or not.
- Lean on them when you need to, don't be afraid to include them in programming opportunities and development. This will help you out, while helping them to build their own capacity and skills.
- Be consistent. With your meeting times, with what you say, with what you do, with how you hold people accountable, and with how you treat everyone. No one likes to figure out that they're not the favourite.
- Know your boundaries, and make sure you don't step over them. It can be tough, especially if you're not that much older than the youth in your program, but your role means that you have to be held to a higher standard. Things like drinking and partying with or dating participants are generally considered to be crossing the line, even if they are of legal age.
- Remember that you're not their friend, you're their leader, role model and support. It can be tough to see the difference because you should be friendly with them, but to treat them the same way as your friends, telling the same things, hanging out and doing the same things, that sort of thing isn't always useful or productive for them.
- Involve others with more experience when you need to. Look up to your elders and use the skills and knowledge of your mentors when you need to. Not everything has to be decided or handled by you, and it helps to lean on people with more experience than you sometimes.
- Hold them accountable. If they said they were going to do something, make sure they do it. Hold yourself accountable too. If you said you were going to do something, make sure you do it.
- Never ask them to do something that you wouldn't do yourself.
- Be honest with them. Always.

# Celebrate The Good Things

(Example worksheet filled out after Kugluktuk's group discussion.)



The idea behind this questionnaire is to get you discussing the positive things that have happened and that are happening in your community. This will help you to identify the steps that you took in order to deal with those issues, and hopefully will get you talking about other things that you can do for your community.

By celebrating the actions we take to affect our community in positive ways we show others what we value as individuals and as a community. From your experiences write down five good things that youth have done or are doing in your community:

1. *Lead a community march*
2. *Grizzlies (Kugluktuk High School Athletics Association)*
3. *We lobbied for a Kugluktuk Alcohol Education Committee*
4. *Worked at Computer Access Program Site*
5. *We are involved with the FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) group*

Think about all the good that came from the things you have done. Pick one of the five and answer the following questions about it.

a) What issue made you take action?

*We needed people to stop abusing alcohol and we needed to take away suicide which had become a real option for the youth.*

b) How did you do it? (the steps you took to get it done or make it happen)

*We got the students together, helped them find creative ways (like creating posters) to express their feelings, and we took them around the town to make others hear what we had to say!*

c) What support did you need? (people, things and resources)

*We needed the support of our leaders, to hear the messages we were sending. We needed the support of our friends to find strength and courage to share our feelings and we needed the support of our parents to love us and support our decisions.*

d) How did you feel about doing this? What was the best thing about it? What were the greatest challenges?

*It felt empowering, like we were accomplishing something, having our community hear about our issues and having them work with us to address our needs. It felt like we were gaining control over what happened in our lives and in our community, which in turn helped us to feel a sense of pride and ownership in Kugluktuk.*

e) Where are you now? What other things would you like to see happening in your community?

*We now have the Kugluktuk Alcohol Education Committee who has set the limits for how much alcohol comes into the community and educates the residents on safe drinking practices (knowing your limits, how to hold a party, etc.). With voting day coming up in 2010, we would like to see the continuation of the Alcohol Education Committee and hope to see more people looking for healthier alternatives to drinking. We would also like to see a youth representative on the Committee.*

# Celebrate The Good Things

(Discussion questionnaire)



The idea behind this questionnaire is to get you discussing the positive things that have happened and that are happening in your community. This will help you to identify the steps that you took in order to deal with those issues, and hopefully, will get you talking about other things that you can do for your community.

By celebrating the actions we take to affect our community in positive ways we show others what we value as individuals and as a community. From your experiences, write down five good things that youth have done or are doing in your community:

- 1. ....
- 2. ....
- 3. ....
- 4. ....
- 5. ....

Think about all the good that came from the things you have done. Pick one of the five good things you listed above and answer the following questions about the one you pick.

a) What issue made you take action and decide to do this activity?

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b) How did you do it? (the steps you took to get it done or make it happen)

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c) What support did you need? (people, things and resources)

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d) How did you feel about doing this? What was the best thing about it? What were the greatest challenges?

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e) Where are you now? What other things would you like to see happening in your community?

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# Celebrate & Take Action



## Introduction

Though sometimes it's easy to buy into the hype and the stereotypes that they're not, young people actually ARE doing good things in their communities! Many youth are passionate, resourceful, energetic, and POSITIVE members of their communities, and we think it's time people start talking about all of the amazing things that they're part of. These "Celebrate and Take Action" worksheets can help you get the people in your community to see and celebrate all the good things that youth are doing AND help you plan the next big thing you want to do:

### **Celebrate the Good Things Worksheet:**

This worksheet will help you pull together ideas of the good things that youth are doing in your community. Get a group of young people together and get them to fill out these questions with you. Have a discussion, share experiences and talk about the things you're doing that are worth showing off!

### **Celebrate the Good Things...an example of good things from Kugluktuk:**

To give you an example, this worksheet was filled out by some of the young people from Kugluktuk, a community in Nunavut whose youth rallied together to create positive change and address some of the serious issues around alcohol and suicide in their community. After realizing how many good things they'd done, they made a poster to show people. The poster is included here for you to see too!

### **Taking Action Worksheet:**

This worksheet is a bit different than the first one. Celebrate the Good Things was about looking at the things you HAVE done. Taking Action is about what you can do next. Use this worksheet to help guide a discussion with your peers, so that you can map out what you want to do next in your community. We came up with a list to get you thinking.

- Create your own poster about all the good things you've done and plaster it around town!
- Have a Youth Appreciation Day with games and activities that showcase all the great things youth are doing in the community!
- Hold a BBQ for the community. Get community businesses to sponsor the event.
- Have a community awards ceremony to recognize the good stuff that young people are doing!
- Ask your town council to publicly recognize the work that youth are doing!
- Lead a community march!
- Host a dance, a movie night, a bake sale, or a car wash as a fundraiser to help young people get some money to do something positive or fun
- Plant and maintain a community garden.
- Host a community clean-up.
- Get on the radio and local television stations to talk about the work that youth are doing.
- Produce a play.





# Taking Action

(Build on what you have started.)

You know that you are capable of creating change. You can see this in the examples you provided on the “Celebrate the Good Things” questionnaire above. Are there other things you would like to do, or things you would like to see happen in your community? You can start right now.

What do we need? (Identify issue or need)

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What can people do? (Actions)

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What supports do we need? (People, things, resources)

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Continued on reverse.

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What are our next steps to make this happen?

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Other thoughts:

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This tool was created by the Focus Three team: youth of Kugluktuk, Parma Court's Youth Vybes, Kainai Youth Council and The Students Commission.





# How to Take Action on an Issue

This tool was created in partnership with the young people of the Kainai Youth Council (KYC). Working with these youth we were able to pull together a simple “how-to” that would encourage other young people in communities across the country to take action on the issues they see happening around them. It is based, in part on the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement’s Young Decision Makers (YDM) cycle. To find more information about the Centre or YDM, go to [www.engagementcentre.ca](http://www.engagementcentre.ca) or [www.tgmag.ca](http://www.tgmag.ca).

“When you think about the problem, the things that we have to deal with, it can suck because there’s so much, they’re so overwhelming. But I think we make things harder than they should be. See it, think it, do it. That’s it.”

## Three steps to action.



### See:

Step one is simple. Look around you. What’s happening in your school or your community? What is happening that is really amazing and positive in your community? What is happening that maybe isn’t so positive? This step is where you identify the issues. Try to figure out what you really want to change about your community or the behaviour of your friends and family. Sometimes it might sort of seem overwhelming, but think about those things that you can do. And remember, one small change can have a huge ripple effect on the entire community, so whatever you decide to do, no matter how small it might seem, is going to make a difference in someone’s life.

### Think:

Step two is a little more difficult than step one sometimes, because it means that you have to actually think about what you want to accomplish. Here is where you get to learn about the issue you are trying to tackle too. We think that the more you know about an issue or a problem, the better you’ll be able to address it. So in this step, think about what you know, and think about all the things you still need to learn. Think about who you could learn from, or who could help you, and then talk about what you want to do, and your ideas with other people. Chances are, you’re not the only one to feel the way you do, and there are other young



This tool was created by the Focus Three team: youth of Kugluktuk, Parma Court’s Youth Vybes, Kainai Youth Council and The Students Commission.





people that would jump at the chance to help make your community a better, safer place, and they might help you narrow down what sort of event or project you want to undertake. In one of the communities that we worked with through Focus 3, the youth organized an entire week's worth of positive games and activities, and held a walk between two towns (almost 34 km!) to help raise awareness about the issue of youth suicide in their community. In fact, they've been doing this for almost ten years running, and every year there are more and more youth and adults that are showing up and helping out.

Speaking of adults, it wouldn't hurt to see if you can't find some adults to come on board with your plans. Having an adult ally to a project or an event can go a long way to helping you overcome some of the barriers you might run into. They may have experience doing this sort of thing, or they might be able to help you get access to space or funding. They'll also bring a really different perspective on the issues, and can help you focus what you want to do. Listen and learn from them, but don't be afraid to teach them a thing or two, too!

### **Do:**

Sometimes the actual doing of an event or project isn't so easy, but if you've made it to this stage, congratulations! It can take a LONG time to get to this step, but sometimes the ride is worth it when you reach the destination. There are a number of important things when you get to this stage that you need to think about. You know what you're going to do, but when and where are you going to do it? Who is going to attend? How much is it going to cost? If it's free, right on, but if it's not, who's going to pay for it? Do you have volunteers to help you pull it off? Do people know about what you're planning on doing? What about after it's all over, do you have a plan to keep a program or something going? Or is this a one-time affair? These are all questions (and there are more that will arise as you move forward!) that you need to think about in order to execute an event successfully. To help you plan, we've together a worksheet to get you started. It's the same worksheet that has been used in the two communities of the Focus 3 project that have collaborated to write this document, and it works for us, so we wanted to share it with you.





# See Think Do

(For Youth by Youth)

## Activity Planning Tool Worksheet

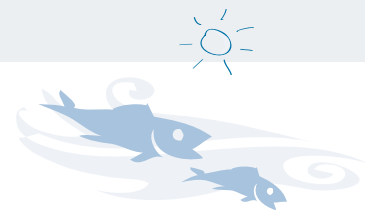
The idea of this tool is to help you pull your thoughts together about what issues you want to tackle, who you want to involve and what action you want to take. This tool is only a starting place! Answer the questions below and feel free to add your own. Take this tool and make it yours!

### SEE:

- 1) What is happening in your community that is really positive?
- 2) What are the top two issues that face young people today in your community?
- 3) What do other people your age see as being an issue in your community? Do they agree with what you think?
- 4) What have you or others like you already done to address these issues?
- 5) What is one thing that you can do to address one of these two issues? (For example: If homelessness was an issue for youth in your community, you might not be able to build a shelter, but you could host a fundraiser or a clothing drive with everything going to organizations or agencies that support the homeless.)

### THINK:

- 1) What do you know about the issue you want to address?
- 2) What else do you think you need / want to learn?
- 3) Where can you learn this from?
- 4) Who do you know that might want to help you, (youth, young adults and adult allies)? What ideas do they have to do something about this issue?
- 5) What do you think you need to talk to them about?
- 6) What organizations or agencies exist to help address this issue?
- 7) What do you want to do?
- 8) Why do you want to do this?
- 9) What do you hope will happen after you do this?



## DO:

- 1) When do you want to do this activity?
- 2) Where are you going to do this activity? Do you need permission from anyone to use this space (for example: city council, family members, permits etc?)
- 3) How much is it going to cost? Where are you going to get the money?
- 4) Who do you want to attend?
- 5) How are you going to get them there? (For example: if you want young people to attend, are you going to go to schools and community clubs to recruit them? What sort of promotion are you going to do?)
- 6) What do you want these people to get out of attending this event?
- 7) Is there anyone else that you should be inviting? What do your peers and your adult supports say?
- 8) How will you know this event has achieved its goals?
- 9) How are you going to evaluate the success of the event?
- 10) What are you going to do after the event is over? (What is the plan for follow-up or long-term action and who is going to lead that?)

Remember, these questions are just a place to start. The young people of the KYC have put them together to start you thinking about all of the things that you will need to do to help you pull together an event that will help your community move forward in a positive direction. Their advice to you is simple, just like this tool:



**“Ask questions, ask for help when you need it, and think big, even if you act small. Everything is connected, and the smallest action can have the biggest impact. Most of all though, don’t give up.”**





## Being Safe – Tips on Being Safe

We (members of the Kainai Youth Council) know that being safe is important to pretty much everyone but we also know that a lot of our friends don't always make the best decisions. When we thought about why this might be, we figured that sometimes it might just be that they didn't know what else to do. So, we've come up with a list of tips to help keep ourselves, as children and youth, safe. We've broken them up into four categories, using the four elements of the Medicine Wheel as a guide.

If you want to know more about the KYC, get in touch with us at the Youth Council office. We're in the Children's Services building, and you can call us at 737.2900 and ask for the Youth Office!

### How can you stay safe?

#### PHYSICAL:

- Party safely! A good time's a good time, but stay safe so this party isn't your last.
- Never take a drink from someone you don't trust.
- If someone's mixing you a drink, make sure you see them do it. If they get you a drink from a bottle or a can, make sure you see them open it in front of you.
- Always plan a safe ride home. Have a back-up plan just in case your first plan doesn't work out.
- Never get into a car with someone who's been drinking or using drugs, even if they say they're okay to drive.
- If you're going to get completely trashed, make sure you've got a buddy there to watch your back. A lot of bad things can happen when people get completely out of their mind on booze or drugs. Your inhibitions can disappear and the action or person that seemed like a terrible idea an hour ago might come across as really appealing, until you wake up with more than a hangover the next day.
- Drink in moderation. Binge drinking is dangerous, especially for teens and can totally mess up the way your brain develops. There's actual science to prove this too: it can be pretty scary.
- Remember: drunk sex is risky sex, because you're not always thinking straight.
- You might think that double-wrapping your condoms gives you twice the protection, you're wrong. Wrap it once, because twice can cause friction and breakage.
- If you don't have a condom, don't do it! Too many babies make babies, and too many other babies give other babies Chlamydia. No one wants to wake up with a venereal disease.
- Drink lots of water when you're drinking or using drugs. Make sure you eat something too.
- Remember that people can make stupid decisions when they're intoxicated. Lots of fights and negative things can occur. Before you start to kick or scream or do something stupid, think about how you're going to feel about it when it's over and you're sober. Booze and drugs aren't worth losing your friends, or your life.

It's not just when you're partying that we want you to be safe though. There are other things that we want you to do.

- If you're biking or walking on the road, remember that not all cars are going to care or even notice that you're there. Wear visible clothing, and make sure you've got reflectors and lights when traveling by night.
- Keep one ear open to the sounds of traffic when you're biking, walking or running with your MP3 player in.
- Wear the appropriate safety equipment! That stuff's made for a reason, and you only think you look like a dork.
- Wear your seat belt!
- Eat healthy foods. If you stuff yourself with junk, chances are you're going to feel and be pretty useless.
- PLAY, get up, get active, get outside and be enjoy exercise. Do it often.

## EMOTIONAL

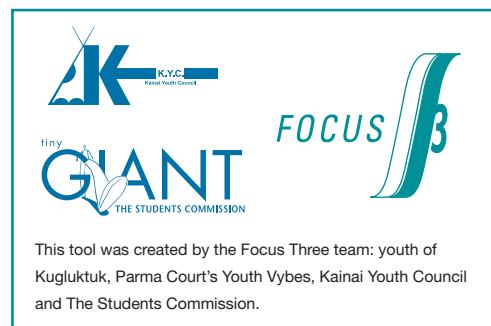
- Surround yourself with positive people.
- Show affection.
- Try to resolve conflict with something other than violence.
- Ask for help when you need it. You can get hurt if you let your pride get in the way.
- Apologize when you're wrong.
- Talk to someone when you're depressed, sad or just need a friend.
- Listen to music! It's powerful.
- Don't tell others things about you you're not comfortable telling. Some things can be kept to yourself.
- Tell someone if something is wrong, like you know about abuse, or you've been abused somehow. If you can't tell someone you know and trust, tell a stranger. Call Children's Services or the KYC (737.2900) or the Kid's Help Phone at 1.800.668.6868

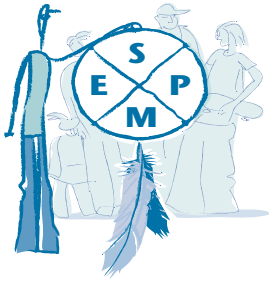
## MENTAL

- Go to school! In the bigger picture of your life, it's not that long. Stay in school and exercise your brain!
- Ask questions! Be curious! You'll never know what the answer is if you never ask the question.
- Learn from everyone that you can. Knowledge isn't just about what you learn in school.

## SPIRITUAL

- Take time to make peace with yourself and your spirit, whatever that looks like to you.
- Learn about your culture and your traditions.
- Be proud of your Blackfoot heritage. We are a proud people who cannot be beaten.





## How to Keep the Children of Your Community Safe

### Dear Adults and Elders in our community:

We (members of the Kainai Youth Council) sat down with a bunch of our friends and started talking about safety. Now you're probably thinking that safety isn't really something that a lot of people talk about, especially us being teens, but we can promise you that we think about it even if we don't say much about it. Sometimes it's hard to really understand what being safe means, and for us living on Kainai, being safe can take on a whole bunch of different meanings. This letter has been broken into the four points of the Medicine Wheel to help us better explain what we're talking about. Why are we writing this letter to you? Well, sometimes we don't make the best decisions, so we need your help to keep us safe. We hope you read on and put into action some of our suggestions.

If you want to know more about the KYC, get in touch with us at the Youth Council office. We're in the Children's Services building, and you can call us at 737.2900 and ask for the Youth Office!

### How can you help the kids in Kainai stay safe?

#### Physical

- Watch the road for bikes and people when you're driving! Give them room as you pass.
- Prepare meals for your children that are healthy. Canada's Food Guide is actually a great tool to help you make sure that we're getting all the nutrients that we need!
- Encourage your kids to get outside and PLAY. Recreation is the key to staying healthy, and being physically fit decreases the chance of injury because we get more used to being up and moving.
- Role-model good behaviour around drinking and safe partying. If your kid parties, make sure they know who to call for a safe ride home, and make sure they know their limits.
- Don't supply your kids with booze! Too many kids get sick and some have died when their parents give them alcohol to party with. That's not responsible parenting, and it hurts us.
- Don't smoke indoors or in cars, even if you're not with your children. The smoke lingers. Not only does second hand smoke make us sick, but watching you smoke encourages us to smoke, even if you tell us not to.
- Encourage your kid to wear their seatbelt and follow the rules of the road. Speeding can be fun, but it can be dangerous too, especially in the winter and on the gravel roads that crisscross all of Kainai.
- Make sure you know who to call if there's an emergency, and teach your kid who to call if there's an emergency. You never know when something might happen.
- Don't be afraid to talk to us about sex and sexuality. And if you can't do it, find someone who can. Nothing's worse than making us figure it out on our own. That's when things can get out of hand.
- Find ways to deal with conflict other than hitting us. There are so many options, find the strength to choose one.

## Emotional

- Tell someone you love, that you love them. Give them a hug and tell them they're beautiful. It just might make someone's day, or it just might make their life.
- You never know what kind of day your kid is having until you ask, so ask us!
- Remember to forgive us when we make mistakes. If we feel like a failure, we're not going to be anything more than that.
- Be strong for us. Your strength teaches us to be strong.
- Encourage us to be brave in the face of our mistakes. If we do something wrong, make us own up to it and take responsibility for it.
- Give us choices. Whether it's a choice about what time we want to go to bed, or the choice to go to a movie or a baseball game, practicing choices will help us out in the long run when it comes to really hard decisions like whether we want to smoke drugs or not, or get behind the wheel of a car when we're drunk. It might not seem like much, but it helps.
- Don't be afraid to admit when you're wrong.
- Don't punish us for things that are beyond our control. Depression isn't our fault, and it isn't your fault either. We need help, not to be told to "deal with it".



## Mental

- Encourage us to go to school and constantly learn. Even if you didn't finish school, learning is important.
- Talk to us about the things that are happening in your lives. We probably see what's going on anyway, and we'll thank you for including us in the discussion.
- Take an interest in what we're learning at school, at work, from our friends, from wherever. If you're interested in what we're doing, we're more likely to stick to it.
- Let us participate in making decisions about our future. At home, at school, at the Band level. You would be surprised by what we can come up with!
- Ask us what we think. About anything. Listen to us when we respond.
- Take action on our suggestions, even if it's just about what colour shirt you should wear to the Feast.
- Help us work with you through some of the issues we all face as a community.

## Spiritual

- Pray with us, pray for us, do something spiritual everyday. It doesn't matter if you pray to God, the Creator, or anyone else: just take time with us and for us everyday.
- Help us understand where we belong in this world.
- Teach us about who we are, and where we come from. We want to learn about our culture and our heritage. Get the Elders involved in teaching us things like our language and our traditions.
- Let us work with you to heal some of the hurts that affect us all. Let us share your burden, one day it will become ours and we need to deal with it now before it overwhelms us.

# Suicide Awareness

(A fact sheet for Youth by Youth)



## Suicide Awareness – What to do

Suicide is an issue that is out of control here in Kainai and in our First Nations communities across Canada. Aboriginal populations are three to four times more likely to suicide than any other population group in Canada, and as we have first hand experience in our communities, no one has been unaffected by the self-inflicted death of a loved one. Death surrounds us like an inescapable fog, and though no generation in our community is untouched by suicide, it is the youth we are most concerned about. Too many of our friends and sisters and brothers are dying. Too many of us are trying to take our own lives before we have truly lived. Too many of us feel that suicide is the only option available. Too many of us feel that there is nothing else, no one to turn to, no one to listen, no one to care.

We, as members of the Kainai Youth Council (KYC) want to stand up and declare to all the youth of our communities that we are listening. We care. We believe you are worth it. Because we live in a community where suicide has touched so many, we thought we would put together a pamphlet to answer some of the questions that we had as a group, and the answers that we came up with.



### How do you know someone might be thinking about suicide?

It can be hard to tell, and often, when someone dies, we think, oh god, there weren't any signs. But most people give some sort of signal, however subtle it might turn out to be. One of the biggest indicators that a person is thinking about suicide is if they have actually attempted it at least once before. Sometimes it takes people several attempts before they actually die, and if you're paying attention, these attempts won't go unnoticed.

Listen to what the people around you are saying. Statements like "I wish I was dead" or "no one would miss me if I wasn't alive" are often pretty good indicators that a person has been thinking about suicide.

Take cues from a person's behaviour. Have they been acting depressed or irritable lately? Have they been having trouble sleeping and eating lately? What about the way they socialize? Have they suddenly completely changed the way they dress, who they hang out with, where they go and what they do when they're out? These might all be signs that something is wrong.

### What do you do if you think someone you know might be thinking about suicide?

Be direct. Ask them up front if they are thinking about suicide, and if they've ever attempted it before. It might not be easy, but it's a good way to start talking to them about it. If they say yes, ask them if they have a plan. You're not going to plant suicidal thoughts in someone's head by asking them about this, so don't be shy. Someone's life could very well be on the line, so it's important to dive in. Listen to what they tell you about the plan, ask them if they thought about where they could get the materials (guns, knives, rope, drugs, etc). If they're pretty detailed, it's usually a signal that they're having serious thoughts about killing themselves, and they need to get some professional help right away. If their plan is sort of loose and not

quite thought all the way through, make sure you still get them help. Walk them to the councilor's office or to the phone where they can call a hotline. Stay with them until they've made the call if at all possible. Above all, stay calm. They don't need to see you freak right out.

Sometimes people make rash, stupid decisions when they are drunk or high, so if you're worried about a friend, and you're out at a party, keep an eye out for them. Be their buddy and watch their back.

## Who can I go to for help? Who can I refer my friend to?

There are a number of resources that you can call on that are available 24 hours a day. If you think that there is an immediate risk of suicide, call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest emergency room with your friend.

### You could also call:

**The Kid's Help Phone** at 1-800-668-6868 or visit their website at [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca)

**The Alberta Mental Health Board Help Line** at 1-877-303-2642

**Blood Reserve Crisis Response:** (403) 327-7905

**The Distress Centre/Drug Centre Crisis Line:** (403) 266-1605

**Teen Line:** (403) 264-8336

**Lethbridge Crisis Line:** (403) 327-7905

**Canadian Mental Health Association, Suicide Services Line:**  
(403) 297-1744

### Some places online have really great counseling and information.

- [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca)
- [www.befrienders.org/](http://www.befrienders.org/) (an anonymous email counseling service)
- [www.casp-acps.ca](http://www.casp-acps.ca) (Canadian Association for Suicide Prevention)
- [www.suicideinfo.ca/csp/go.aspx?tabid=40](http://www.suicideinfo.ca/csp/go.aspx?tabid=40) (Centre for Suicide Prevention has a lot of great information and links for those in crisis)

## What else can I do?

**Be calm.** The last thing they need to see you do is freak out.

**Ask them how they feel,** and whether or not there was an event or incident that triggered these thoughts and/or attempt(s).

**Try to get them to share** their feelings with you.

**Try not to say things like "well I wouldn't do that if I were you".** To tell them what you would or wouldn't do is passing judgment and that's not what they need to hear. Reassure them instead.

**Let them speak.** This isn't about you. Sometimes people just want someone to listen, and this is the only way they can get people to do that.

**Let them know that their life means something to you.** Tell them that you value who they are and what they bring to the world.

**Encourage them to get counseling** and seek support.

## What if it doesn't work?

Unfortunately, talking to someone about their suicidal thoughts doesn't always prevent them from actually going through with it. The most important thing to remember is that it's not your fault. If someone does end up taking their life after you've tried to intervene, do not blame yourself. You did the best you could with what you were given. Ultimately it is not your decision whether this person lives or dies, they made the choice, and it had nothing to do with you.

Seek some counseling for yourself. Call one of the numbers listed up above, or make an appointment to see a counselor. Allow yourself time to grieve. It can take a while to get over the death of someone you love, so remember the wonderful things they brought to your life and honour their memory by living each day as an active participant in life. Focus on the good things and remember that life will continue and it will get easier as time passes.



# Bringing Positivity Back To My Community

## People leave the community and feel guilty

*This is a way to get people back to our communities*

*Increasing the number of positive adults coming and going into the community will increase the number of positive youth, and positively impact the adults in the community*



### My community

I grew up in three different communities but for the reasons listed below I identified myself with one.

Of all the things I learned from my community growing up, the two that stand out the most are strong family values as well as the importance of the value of money.

I am extremely proud of my community because of the togetherness that we display at the times of crisis; for instance when my cousin died the whole community showed the utmost support by providing food and a shoulder to cry on. My family did not know how to bury my cousin due to him being the only Muslim in the family, but there was a mother in the community who knew how to get in contact with a Muslim mosque to make burial arrangements with the Imam.

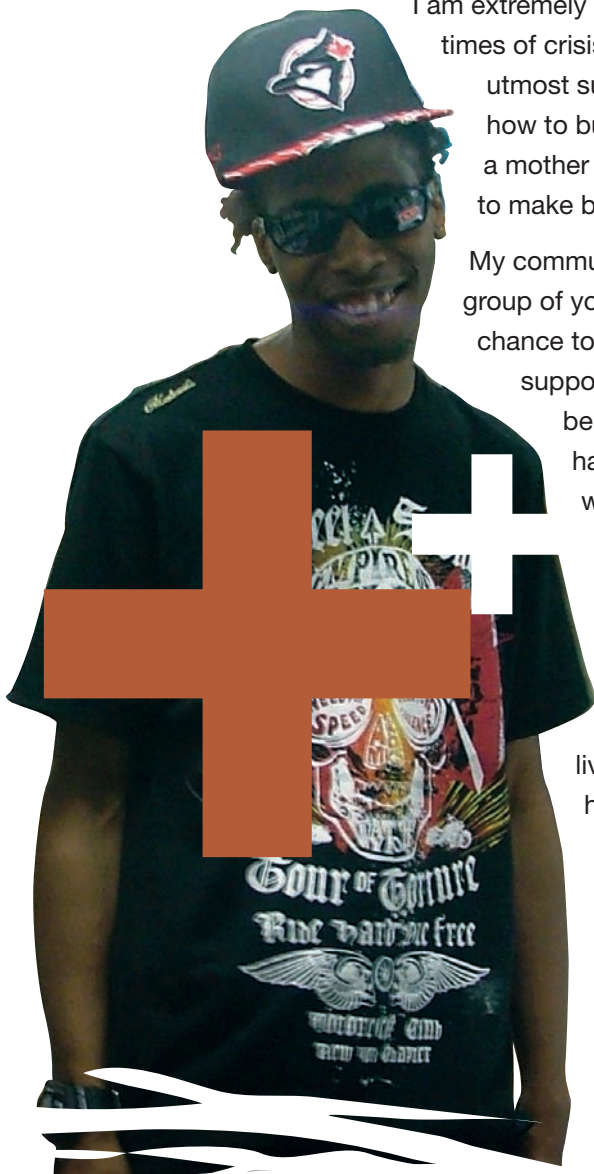
My community is very rich with talent and, when I used to dance hip-hop with a group of youth from the community, we won a lot of awards and a few of us got a chance to dance for videos and perform live at concerts. My community also supports anything that I have passion for. When I wanted to rap, everyone was behind me encouraging me. Now that I want to take on directing as a hobby, I have one of the older heads supporting me and actually taking me under his wing and teach me the profession.

### Why have I left?

Due to the fact that there were shady people that could not be trusted I decided to move to an area that I was not known in.

Another reason for leaving was that I knew that if I were to choose to live in my community, all of my "boys" (friends) would be in and out of my house constantly and there is the possibility that my things could get stolen. Also my friends might influence me to stay up late which can lead to trouble at work.

I also wanted to branch out and separate myself from my community to expand my horizon and learn new things.



VALUES  
SUPPORT

## How do I still stay connected / support my community?

Not only do I still work in my community, I volunteer every week as a part of my youth group, and hold various events throughout the year.

I also volunteer every weekend to teach the kids how to dance hip-hop.

Unknowingly I also provide my community with a positive role model for the young kids to look up to.

I try to provide direction for the youths to follow in order to become someone the community would be proud of.

## Contacting Former Community Members

Those that have left come around every once in a while to visit family members and when they do we can get in contact with that person.

OR

They often have friends from the community still and you can approach the friends for a way to get in contact with the person that left.

## What we would do when we find them?

Invite them out to a barbeque and show them the positive aspect of the “block” (community), but more importantly show them the young faces of the community and explain how desperately these kids are in need of a positive role model. They need people to model after and a guide to the “better side” of life.

## What they can do / offer?

Community members that have left often can provide other resources that some (or most) of us don't have access to.

The “successful” community members that have left often have “links” (networks) that are usually very useful.

They also provide the youth a direction in which they can take steer their life.



1. Get a group together in your community who will try to locate former community members who can be an asset to your community.
2. Locate the people who have left the community: connecting to family members and friends still in the community; use Facebook or other internet programs to start a social network group or advertise using radio, TV or newspapers.
3. Contact the people you have found using phone, internet or mail.
4. Invite them out to a volunteer and/or community meeting(s).
5. Have the mothers and the people affected by the negativity speak about how much a positive role model would do for the “block”.
6. Introduce them to youths of the area and show them how influential they can be to the youth. Invite them to tell their story to tell that just might change someone's outlook on life.
7. Show them a good time, and bring them to the barbeque in the community.
8. Let them get a glimpse of the negativity the “older heads” (older members of the community) provide.
9. Confirm that they are willing to help out.
10. Introduce them to the group that they will be helping out with. Introduce them to the youth.
11. Establish what kind of support they can or are interested in providing.
12. Continue to keep them informed of activities and positive outcomes.
13. Recognize their contributions to the community.
14. Continue to expand the network of role models and community supporters.





# Connecting Youth Dads With Their Children

Parma Ct

## Creating an action plan to have fathers in their children's lives – and building healthier communities

In many communities there are strong young leaders who are getting involved and helping make their communities healthier. There is no coincidence that for many of these young people, having a strong relationship with their fathers or father figures (uncles, stepfathers etc) helped them become the people who they are. It can better prepare them to resist negative temptations and to make safe and healthy choices.



*“If you look at me and my little brother you can tell. I was really connected to my dad’s family and supported by them. My brother who has a different father, he never had him or anyone from that family involved. He used to get into lots of trouble and made bad choices. If he had someone like I did, maybe it would be different.”*

– Focus 3 Youth Participant

## Here’s what you can do to help get fathers in their children’s lives...

1. Help the community recognize that this is an issue:
  - a. Recruit others in the community who want to help dads get connected : fathers, mothers, grandparents, community workers and other young people
  - b. Start talking about it in the community
  - c. Create a poster geared to fathers that advertises the idea of getting involved in their child’s life
  - d. Create material that is raw and honest: make it real to get people to understand how serious this issue is
  - e. Be assertive with fathers about what they need to do, but be open minded to their situations
  - f. Recruit family support of fathers, including their children’s mothers (having a process that allows the children to see their fathers)

2. Create a program for dads to get connected – to each other and their kids:
  - a. Create a work plan to use to guide the creation of a program
  - b. Consult with and talk to dads about what they are wanting
  - c. Find an agency or organization to support the program
  - d. Research grants that support this issue
  - e. Secure a space where fathers and their children can meet together
  - f. Identify a facilitator who actually knows how to connect with today's youth who are fathers
  - g. Create opportunities for recreation – getting dads and their kids together for recreation activities will help generate things to do
  - h. Create a support system for dads to connect with if your program / activities can't help them
  - i. Connect with existing parenting programs and see how their work can be delivered to fathers to help build skills (changing diapers, connecting with children, discipline etc)
3. Organize activities and events that celebrate and recognize fathers:
  - a. Host Fathers Day activities in your communities
  - b. Acknowledge the positive things being done by fathers in their children's lives
  - c. Have recognition dinners or similar things to show community support to young dads

If you can create a program for young dads you need to remember that many youth don't want to be a part of something like this because it's not cool and they don't think they have a problem. You will need to have a strategy that captivates the youth as well as helps them realize that they need this for their children's future. Don't let red tape and being afraid of offending people stop you from being honest – otherwise it might be a just another program that goes nowhere.