Understanding Contexts of Youth-Adult Partnerships: Call notes (March 7, 2012)

Items for next call:
-Sharing research tools: snapshot survey
-other suggestions?

1) Intros:
Isabelle (Heartwood, CYD, St. Mary's, Halifax), Susan (St. Thomas U, Fredericton), Jan (BGCCAN, Markham), Serena (BGC Central Region, Markham), Kim (YMCA, GTA), Stoney (SC, Toronto), Sharif (SC, Toronto), Zhen (YMCA, Toronto, YAC), Maureen (Frontier College, Toronto), Moffat (RMYC, Thunder Bay), Marina (Saskatoon, Youth Launch), Tania (Saskatoon, Youth Launch), Bonnie (Saskatoon, Youth Launch), Robin (Victoria, Ministry of Children and Family Development)
Regrets: Linda, Mark, Marla, Sandra, Gord, Patti

2) Team updates and making connections across projects:
YMCA (Kim):
-youth involved in the research project have been involved for a year in a youth advisory committee that reports to and advises the Board of YMCA Toronto, first time we have begun youth involvement in governance
-currently getting into developing the research questions together
-we're documenting and have a lot of notes already, but what are we going to analyze in the notes?
-Setting a meeting in April to only talk about the research project with the full youth group
-which youth-adult partnerships are we looking at: youth and adults in the committee, youth and Board members, etc.
-group has prioritized bringing in younger youth, so we may be looking at relationships between older youth/young adults and younger youth
-under increased pressure to access youth in this group - using the term "gatekeeper" as one of Kim's roles as the closest adult ally to the group
-Youth engagement framework - looking at the relationship of youth with the organization (System layer), relationship between youth and between youth and adults and relationships that adults bring into the project (social layer)
- e.g. interested in interacting with a Board member (system and social layer), starts as an organizational relationship and then becomes a social relationship

Frontier College is a national literacy organization (Maureen)
-looking at impacts of our programs on at-risk youth
-we've been doing research related to this in the past, focused a lot on the relationship aspects
-currently across the organization, we're looking at impacts
-this project will build on that existing research, look at long term impacts
-key aspect that came out: relationships between youth and tutor/instructor is important for their outcomes and engagement in the program

Quantum (Susan)
-overlap with other contexts re: learning (e.g. Frontier College, Nutana, Quantum in NB)
-interest in developing mentors - is a different relationship than full-time paid staff

Youth Launch/Nutana
-balance between open questions to ask youth and adults about Youth-Adult partnerships and bringing in definitions that exist already so that we can add to what we already have without reinventing
-doing our best to look at 3 layers of questions (1) relationships within our context, 2) within our research team, 3) across other teams)
(www.studentscommission.ca/yap/resources/QuestionMatrix_e.pdf)
-Tania: getting to the point of the ethics proposal - Tania and Patti are working together to take the lead on the ethics proposal - they're both at every meeting with the rest of the team (Marina and two students at Nutana)

Dept of Community Services (Isabelle)
-Youth-adult partnerships within Dept of Community Services (child welfare, income assistance, shelter, etc.)
-engaged youth re: how can youth be best served? Need positive relationships with staff
-youth will be creating a video re: adult-youth partnerships and implementing a survey
-staff want to build better relationships with youth, but there are institutional barriers (e.g. large case-load)

Robin (MCFD, Victoria)
-how to sustain engagement in system like these where there are a lot of other constraints
-heterogeneous group here, mentorship between youth and between youth-adult
-evaluation of front-line service level team - co-researcher team of youth and adults
-there are a number of major initiative changes but the teams don't feel like they have the capacity to do this

3) Common themes:
Layers of relationships: looking at multiple relationships within each project
-the Centre's Youth Engagement Framework
(http://www.studentscommission.ca/yap/proj_01_e.php) is helpful to think about the social layer (i.e. relationships between youth, between youth and adults, youth and young adults, etc.) and the system layer (e.g. relationships between youth and the organizations)
-some relationships begin at the system layer and then evolve into a social relationship (For example: youth initially interested in interacting with Board members due to their organizational position and then a personal relationship between youth and Board members grows)
-include relationships between youth co-researchers and other youth

Overlaps and connections of contexts across teams:
-Government systems and institutional barriers: e.g. Dept of Community Services, NS (Isabelle); MCFD, BC (Robin); City of Kitchener (Marla)
-Learning contexts: e.g. Nutana (Bonnie, Tania and Marina), Frontier College (Maureen)

and Quantum (John Howard NB, Susan)
Action: Connecting teams with overlapping contexts

Identifying different roles of adults and youth in these partnerships:
-Adult 'gate-keeping' role

Describing the context/setting re: who is targeted for programs, what is the mix
-Susan: not about taking something that works for mainstream youth and assuming it works for at-risk youth and vice versa – look at similarities across these different relationships
-Stoney: from the YMCA research we did, importance of diversity of experience - the more different the place they went to and the more different the people they met, the more positive outcomes they reported
-what does it look like when the group becomes more diverse? Settings with a mix of youth that are perceived as successful with youth that are perceived as at-risk vs. settings that are more homogeneous (e.g. where there are programs that are targeted for 'at-risk' youth)

4) Strategies for keeping momentum:
-Debrief questions - How are you feeling about: 1) The project? 2) The process? 3) Your roles? and 4) How we are working as a team?
-got a better understanding of what we were wanting to do and get from it
-momentum goes up and down due to school schedules, work towards the point to be grounded enough so that we can work outside of our meeting times and can work individually or in pairs to move things forward
-each taking our own responsibility to do tasks and then coming back to the group
-our academic partner meets with us every week
-it helps to be in the context/environment that we're studying

-Potentially more regular national calls (once every two weeks) at a regular time: Tuesdays 1:00 EST, Wednesdays 2:00 EST, Wednesdays at 3:00 EST?
Action: Nish will send out to confirm

5) Timeline
-check out the updated general timeline to help plan with your team
http://www.studentscommission.ca/yap/workplan_01_e.php