

**Minwaashin Lodge
Aboriginal Women's Support Centre
Ottawa, Ontario**



**Summary Report
Community Mobilization Project
Healthy Equal Relationships**

Report of a Community Consultation Process in
Support of an **Action Plan** for Aboriginal Youth and
Their Families in the City Of Ottawa

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*Minwaashin Lodge/Aboriginal Women's Support Centre
Community Mobilization: Healthy Equal Relationships Project*

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Executive Summary

"It has truly been an honor and privilege to be involved in this project. It not only has impacted on all the youth and partners who were directly involved but it will impact everyone who has a chance to view the video and discuss its purpose. I am also appreciative of all the new connections and friendships I have made through this endeavour."

Project Partner

The Healthy Equal Relationships project is a unique, culture-based violence prevention initiative of the Minwaashin Lodge/Aboriginal Women's Support Centre in Ottawa, Ontario.

Through this project, a highly successful hip hop/rap music video *Love You Give* and *Love, Doing it Right: A Manual* was produced by and for youth. The lyrics to the song were created by hip hop/rap artists, Lakota Jonez and Big Dro based on violence education workshops with 75 youth at Minwaashin Lodge and other area services. Youth with Culture Shock Canada designed and taught the choreography and Grade 12 students from Canterbury High School produced the 3.5 minute music video and graphics for the 25-page insert.

Ninety community leaders, parents, foster parents, service providers, educators and Elders also contributed ideas for steps that can be taken right now to better support Aboriginal youth and their families in Ottawa.

The project was initiated in response to the urgency of Aboriginal family violence. Disproportionately higher levels of violence challenge service providers, educators and policy makers alike to generate new prevention approaches aligned with the needs and realities of Aboriginal youth today.

Isolation, marginalization and prejudice contribute to and significantly worsen the impact of social problems underlying family violence. Higher rates of poverty and addictions are directly related to an intergenerational cycle of abuse rooted in the decimation of Aboriginal families through policies such as residential schooling. This project addressed the cycle of violence at its roots by empowering Aboriginal youth to creatively express the beauty and wisdom of their culture.

The *Love You Give* project aligns with themes identified at the Policy Forum on Aboriginal Women and Violence (Ottawa, 2006). They are as follows.

- √ The need for a program continuum that includes awareness and prevention initiatives.
- √ The need for a wholistic approach to ending violence that includes men as champions.
- √ The need for community ownership of the issue, with women playing a key role as leaders.
- √ The need to highlight role models and healthy relationships.
- √ The desire to move forward by finding and sharing the good news stories.

Report on the Results of a Community Consultation in Support of Aboriginal Youth

Overview

On Friday, June 9, 2006 over 350 community members came together at Confederation High School in Ottawa to celebrate the launch of an Aboriginal hip hop/rap music video, *Love You Give* created by and for youth to promote healthy, equal relationships¹.

The first phase of Minwaashin Lodge's *Healthy Equal Relationships* project empowered Aboriginal youth to create their own unique educational tool aimed at breaking the cycle of violence against women and girls. The music video they created, '*Love You Give*' draws from traditional teachings about equality and respect to deliver a message about contemporary relationships that is powerful, vibrant and relevant to today's youth.

Building on the energy and momentum of the highly successful morning launch, the focus of the community mobilization phase of the *Healthy Equal Relationships* project was to generate ideas from a broad range of community stakeholders on actions to better meet the needs of Aboriginal youth and their families in Ottawa.

Over 90 community members representing education, law enforcement and health and social services joined parents/foster parents, grandparents and Elders in an action planning exercise aimed at mobilizing support for Aboriginal youth.

Action Plan for Aboriginal Youth in the City of Ottawa

The recommendations for action identified through this community consultation process have been grouped into the following five key result areas. Whether taken together or as separate initiatives, actions in these areas will significantly enhance support for Aboriginal youth and their families in Ottawa.

1. **Aboriginal Youth Coalition:** participants strongly recommended empowering youth to create and oversee their own action plan to address the problems identified (notably drugs, violence, isolation and racism) through a youth coalition. The first step toward creating a coalition would be holding an Aboriginal Youth Forum for the City of Ottawa.
2. **Cultural Education:** a comprehensive plan is needed to increase knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal culture and history among all sectors (education, police, health and social service providers) in the City of Ottawa.
3. **Access to Services:** an inter-agency capacity-building plan is needed to promote information-sharing and continued partnerships.
4. **Role Models:** a program to recruit Aboriginal role models for healthy balanced living is needed to provide positive examples for youth at risk.

¹ For further information see www.loveyougive.org

5. **Funding:** a comprehensive review is needed to determine how funding is presently allocated in the City of Ottawa to ensure equity and fairness for programs and services specific to the needs of the urban Aboriginal community.

Context: Urgency of Problems Impacting Aboriginal Youth

The population of Aboriginal youth in Canada is growing rapidly. According to a report from the Canadian Council on Social Development²,

- “Among all Canadian children and youth, one in 20 reported Aboriginal identity in 2001 – 5.1%, up from 4.2% in 1996.”
- “About 65% of Aboriginal children and youth identify themselves as North American Indian, just under 30% as Métis, and about 5% as Inuit.”
- “In 2001, there were almost half a million Aboriginal children and youth in Canada. Between 1996 and 2001, their numbers increased by 16%, with the highest growth rate among youth aged 10 to 19, which rose by over 25%.”
- “Overall, Aboriginal people are a much younger group than non-Aboriginal people. Children and youth under age 25 comprise 51% of Canada's Aboriginal population, whereas they make up only 32% of the non-Aboriginal population.”
- Ontario has more Aboriginal children and youth (86,000) than any other province or territory.
- 48% of off-reserve Aboriginal youth ages 20-24 did not complete high school compared with 26% of non-Aboriginal youth in this age range.³
- 48% of Aboriginal children in census metropolitan areas live with a lone parent.⁴
- 58% of Aboriginal children live in poverty.

Study after study continues to show Aboriginal youth are disproportionately represented across all of the most urgent risk groups including conflict with the law, violence and addictions.

Cycle of Violence

² Portrait: Children and Youth in Canada, Canadian Council on Social Development (2006:6)

³ Aboriginal People's Survey 2001 – initial findings: Well-being of the non-reserve Aboriginal population

⁴ Aboriginal People's of Canada: A demographic profile, Statistics Canada 2003

Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile (2001):

- Aboriginal women stand out in this report as being at much higher risk of relationship violence. *Twenty-five percent of Aboriginal women were assaulted by a current or former spouse during a five-year period, twice the rate for Aboriginal men (13%) and three times the rate for non-Aboriginal women.*
- Almost one half of Aboriginal people assaulted by a spouse reported that a child had witnessed the violence, and the majority of these were female victims.
- Overall, rates of *spousal homicide among Aboriginal women are more than 8 times higher* than for non-Aboriginal women.
- Among *Aboriginal men, the rates of spousal homicide are 18 times greater* than for non-Aboriginal men (2001:28-31).

Inuit: According to a report by Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association⁵:

- Inuit say alcohol and drug abuse, family violence and abuse, and suicidal behaviour are their most common mental health problems.

Substance Abuse

- 1 in 5 Aboriginal youth report having used solvents; of these, 1 in 3 was under the age of 15; over half began using solvents before the age of 11.⁶
- Aboriginal youth are at two to six times greater risk for every alcohol-related problem than their non-Aboriginal counterparts.
- Aboriginal youth are more likely to use all types of illicit drugs than non-Aboriginal youth.
- Aboriginal youth begin using substances (tobacco, solvents, alcohol and cannabis) at a much younger age than non-Aboriginal youth⁷.
- Alcohol and drugs are a major factor in the early sexual practices of Aboriginal youth, and high rate of teen pregnancy.⁸

⁵ First Nations and Inuit Health System Renewal: Gender-Based Analysis. Ottawa, ON: Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association (2002:20)

⁶ Scott, 1997 quoted in A Statistical Profile on the Health of First Nations in Canada, 2004.

⁷ Janet Currie (2001). Best Practices: Treatment and Rehabilitation for Youth with Substance Abuse Problems. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.

⁸ Anderson, Kim (2002). Tenuous Connections: Urban Aboriginal Youth Sexual Health and Pregnancy. Toronto, ON: Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres (OFIFC).

Conflict with the Law

The rate of incarceration for Aboriginal youth in 2000 was 64.5 per 10,000 population compared to 8.2 per 10,000 population for non-Aboriginal youth. Of these:

- 1 in 6 were suspected or confirmed with FASD; and
- 8 in 10 had a substance abuse problem.

Cause of Death

- Injury and poisoning is the leading cause of death for Aboriginal children through adulthood (accounting for 40 per cent of deaths among males).
- Suicide and self-injury accounted for 38 per cent of deaths in youth and 23 per cent of deaths among young adults (Health Canada 2003:27-29).

As the population of Aboriginal children and youth continues to grow, the cost of doing nothing or of only a minimal, fragmented response to these tragic statistics will be very high.

Community Engagement Process

Out of a total audience of over 350 people who attended the launch of *Love You Give*, 90 participants stayed for the afternoon community planning session. They included community leaders and representatives from education, law enforcement and health and social services as well as parents/foster parents, grandparents and Elders⁹. (Children's Aid Society of Ottawa staff was not able to attend the session, however they provided written responses which are included in the summary.)

The community consultation process began with frontline youth workers from Minwaashin Lodge, Odawa Friendship Centre and Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health sharing their best practices in working with Aboriginal youth in the City of Ottawa.

Participants were then divided into seven small working groups. Each group included one Elder and at least one Minwaashin Lodge Board or staff member to facilitate the discussion. Responses were recorded on flip charts.

The following two questions guided the community dialogue.

1. In your experience what are the most urgent barriers to healthy equal relationships facing Aboriginal youth in our city today?
2. What are one or two key steps we could take right now to address those barriers and strengthen supports to Aboriginal youth and their families?

⁹ Information from registrant sign-up sheets; a list of service providers and organizations represented is appended.

The purpose of the working groups was to generate ideas for practical, immediate steps to better respond to the needs of Aboriginal youth in Ottawa. The results shown below represent the information as it was recorded on flip charts. The categories assigned by one of the working groups to record their responses proved a good fit for those of all working groups; therefore they have been used to report the results below.

Summary of Community Responses

Although the respondents represent diverse sectors of the Ottawa community, including educators, service providers, police, policy makers, parents/foster parents and Elders there was wide agreement among all working groups about both barriers and steps that can be taken right now to better support Aboriginal youth.

Barriers cited most often concerned lack of knowledge and understanding about Aboriginal history and cultures and the ongoing problems of stereotyping, racism, discrimination and isolation that are the outcomes of marginalization and misinformation.

Framework for an Action Plan

The recommendations for action put forward through the community consultation process fall into the following five key result areas. Whether taken together or as separate initiatives, progress in these areas will significantly enhance support for Aboriginal youth and their families in Ottawa.

1. **Aboriginal Youth Coalition:** formation of a youth coalition to *empower youth* to take leadership on some of the problems described in this report, beginning with an Aboriginal Youth Forum for the City of Ottawa.
2. **Cultural Education:** strategies to increase knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal culture and history at all levels and among all sectors in the City of Ottawa.
3. **Access to Services:** development of an inter-agency capacity building plan to promote information-sharing and partnerships at all levels of service planning and provision.
4. **Role Models:** developing a program to recruit Aboriginal role models for healthy balanced living as a prevention resource for youth at risk.
5. **Funding:** a review of funding allocations in Ottawa to ensure equity and fairness for the Aboriginal population.

Next Steps

This report will be distributed among the Board and staff of Minwaashin Lodge/Aboriginal Women's Support Centre and the *Love You Give* project partners. Further discussion regarding how best to move forward on the recommendations contained in this report is the responsibility of the Board of Directors.

Action Plan Framework to Implement Community Recommendations

The following chart shows short-term actions that will be undertaken in support of recommendations put forward at the community consultation.

Recommendations	Actions to Implement Recommendations
<p>1. Aboriginal Youth Coalition: formation of a youth coalition to <i>empower youth</i> to take leadership on some of the problems described in this report, beginning with an Aboriginal Youth Forum for the City of Ottawa.</p>	<p>√ A copy of the summary report highlighting this recommendation will be brought forward to the Urban Aboriginal Task Force.</p> <p>√ A Youth Leadership project that empowers Inuit, Métis and First Nation youth to take action toward ending the intergenerational cycle of violence will be developed by Minwaashin Lodge in partnership with the OWD.</p>
<p>2. Cultural Education: strategies to increase knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal culture and history at all levels and among all sectors in the City of Ottawa.</p>	<p>√ As above: Urban Aboriginal Task Force</p> <p>√ Minwaashin Lodge will continue to provide quality cultural education opportunities for in the education and social service sectors.</p>
<p>3. Access to Services: development of an inter-agency capacity building plan to promote information-sharing and partnerships at all levels of service planning and provision.</p>	<p>√ As above: Urban Aboriginal Task Force</p>
<p>4. Role Models: developing a program to recruit Aboriginal role models for healthy balanced living as a prevention resource for youth at risk.</p>	<p>√ As above: Urban Aboriginal Task Force</p> <p>√ Minwaashin Lodge will continue to identify and recruit Aboriginal role models as an integral component of all core and special project youth programs.</p>
<p>5. Funding: a review of funding allocations in Ottawa to ensure equity and fairness for the Aboriginal population.</p>	<p>√ A copy of the summary report highlighting this recommendation will be brought forward to the Ottawa Social Planning Council. The Minwaashin Lodge Board of Directors will strongly recommend the Council conduct a review to assess current practices in funding allocation.</p>

Special Appreciation: Our Partners

The *Love You Give* launch and community consultation were planned and organized in collaboration with seven partners committed to empowering Aboriginal youth and their families in Ottawa. They are:

1. Frank Wiley, Steve Willcock and Rob Perry, Canterbury High School
2. Michel Clairmont, Children's Aid Society of Ottawa
3. Louise Logue, Ottawa Police Service
4. Christine Colbert, Ottawa Family Service Centre/Parent Resource Centre
5. Pat Poitevin, Royal Canadian Mounted Police
6. Lisa Stephens, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board
7. Marc-André Clement, Culture Shock Canada.

Special Appreciation: Our Champions

Appreciation also to our Project Champions, Police Chief Vince Bevan, Member of Parliament, Tina Keeper, and GGs Quarterback, Josh Sacobie.

“The linkages developed through this project with partners such as Robert E. Wilson School, Canterbury School, Children's Aid and Culture Shock Canada were precedent setting and have had spin-off effects. Also with the Ottawa Police Service and other partners as well as students and their parents there is an increased awareness of both the richness of Aboriginal culture and of agency roles.”

Project Partner

Appendix A

Community Member, Service Providers and Organizations Represented at Community Consultation

- √ Elders
- √ Minwaashin Lodge Board and staff members
- √ Parents and grandparents of Aboriginal youth
- √ Criminal justice system representatives: police, probation and parole, RCMP
- √ Child protection system: CAS staff and managers, foster parents
- √ Education system: Director, Ottawa-Carleton Board of Education, principals, teachers, guidance counsellors
- √ Aboriginal service system: front line workers from Odawa Friendship Centre, Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, Mamisarvik Addiction Centre,
- √ City of Ottawa: public health nurse, homelessness workers,
- √ Non-Aboriginal service system: Youth Services Bureau, Interval House of Ottawa, Eastern Ontario Resource Centre, John Howard Society, Ottawa Community Immigrant Services,
- √ Policy makers: Ontario Aboriginal HIV Strategy, Métis Nation of Ontario, Native Women's Association of Canada

Appendix B Transcription of Flip Charts

Note: Asterisks indicate this issue was identified by a number of the working groups.

What the Community Said About Barriers to Healthy Equal Relationships

*Education***

- √ Appropriate education (i.e. mainstream creates criteria/inflexibility).
- √ Not integrating different learning styles; understanding and teaching sensitivity.
- √ *Not valuing diversity through communications; not holistic.
- √ A continuum on how we approach education; more open response to their needs, listening.
- √ Dispelling the myths.
- √ *Struggle/peer pressure; bullying.
- √ Lack of support in the education system.
- √ No follow-up on school drop-outs.
- √ Lack of culturally sensitive programs in learning centres.
- √ Curriculum in education system; educational reform.

Access to Resources and Services

- √ *Isolation (custody and visitation).
- √ Lack of culturally specific treatment centre.
- √ **Loss of language.
- √ *Lack of training in culture-specific services.
- √ Lack of traditional healing practices.
- √ Lack of recognition of experience, lessons learned, traditional teachings.
- √ Lack of opportunities for cultural experiences.
- √ Lack of understanding about Aboriginal spirituality.
- √ Lack of Aboriginal foster homes.
- √ Lack of youth group homes; not permitted to speak their language.
- √ Lack of prevention versus reactive.

Funding Related Barriers

- √ Lack of culture-specific program funding to address the needs.
- √ Lack of cooperation between agencies due to competition for funding.
- √ *Lack or limited financial and human resources; therefore lack of outreach to youth (who don't have the resources to come to services).
- √ Lack of funding to assess learning disability (FASD).

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*Poverty*****

- √ Makes it difficult to participate.
- √ Lack of housing causes homelessness.
- √ Lack of education causes low life and social skills.
- √ Trying to fit into the city life.
- √ Lack of free recreation.
- √ Lack of transportation.
- √ Not enough community drop-in centres.

Family Life

- √ Having both parents that are alcoholics; therefore older siblings parenting the younger ones.
- √ Not knowing family, culture or language.
- √ Unequal parental relationships; lack of respect.
- √ Lack of family outreach.
- √ Parents don't connect with their culture due to internalized racism/identity issues.
- √ Late identification of problems with youth.
- √ Violence against women.
- √ Intergenerational trauma.
- √ Loss and abandonment.

Community/Social Life

- √ *Young people not having a voice; where do they go; how do they express themselves?
- √ Invisibility.
- √ ***Lack of understanding and dialogue between everybody; lack of awareness; lack of validation of Native culture – it's not profiled and acknowledged, no valuing culture; therefore problems with cultural pride.
- √ *****Stereotypes/isolation; stigma; still 'forgotten' people; historical stigma of CAS, police and the criminal justice system (both ways).
- √ *****Racism/discrimination; is a silent barrier and families/kids experience the serious impacts (kids are often silent about their Aboriginal identity); multiple layers of oppression; labeled as 'visible minority'.
- √ Negative influence of the media; type of coverage (crime, missing Aboriginal women).
- √ *****Lack of stimulating/positive role models/champions.
- √ *Exclusiveness; feel they don't fit in; lack of community involvement.
- √ No connections to community when they come to the city.
- √ Mainstream community values versus traditional values.
- √ Lack of cultural activities that are connected to trends (i.e. hip hop) that kids are exposed to.

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- √ *Certain areas of the city further marginalize Aboriginal youth; geographic/area barriers/ghettoized.
- √ Lack of feeling valued by the community.
- √ Need for recognition of struggles in urban centres.

Youth Social Development

- √ *Lack of self-esteem; not knowing yourself or having a good relationship with yourself.
- √ Drugs/substance abuse/solvent abuse.
- √ Lack of communication.
- √ Lack of conflict resolution skills.
- √ Disillusionment.
- √ Lack of recognition of talents.

Inuit-Specific

- √ Shyness; feeling different from others; therefore hurtful
- √ Unhappy due to no activities.

What the Community Said About Key Steps We Can Take Right Now

Enhance Funding

- √ More funding for Aboriginal youth programs.
- √ Urban funding falls outside the jurisdiction of Indian Affairs; there is no City of Ottawa plan to address the unique needs of Aboriginal citizens.

Enhance Access to Resources and Services

- √ A 'Guide' to the Ottawa Community for Aboriginal residents.
- √ More in-home supports; more mobile crisis services.
- √ Real public education versus showcase, i.e. by youth for youth; for adults by youth.
- √ *Have programs available in other settings, i.e. Boys and Girls Club with culturally specific activities; make linkages to current youth groups, i.e. Boy Scouts; mentorship: work with Big Brothers/Sisters.
- √ **Partner with existing programs that have a similar focus, i.e. In Love and In Danger (high school initiative) for outreach/student conferences; community partnership projects with Aboriginal guidance; collaboration between agencies (lateral).
- √ Create community program opportunities i.e. 3 hours of gym time at a school on week-ends.

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- √ **Capacity building – problem-solving approach; empowerment; consulting Aboriginal authorities/organizations; Aboriginal voice in CAS, police, and mainstream agencies.
- √ Work with families through Friendship Centres (i.e. Art Therapy program at Wabano; mother/daughter Regalia-Making workshops with Elders).
- √ Use a multi-cultural approach to reduce the negative impact and work with Social service agencies, educators, police and policy to educate about the spectrum of cultural awareness/sensitivity leading to increased cultural competency resulting in culturally safe services.
- √ Provide opportunities for kids to go to the bush to experience the culture (Native Outdoor Camps, assist other organizations to provide camps, work with urban Aboriginal centres and Elders).
- √ Increased access to Aboriginal Elders and traditional healers.
- √ Specific youth counseling programs (i.e. for youth in care) that is culturally appropriate.
- √ *Make referrals to Aboriginal agencies; make linkages with role models to influence them to go to these agencies; build stronger relationships with Aboriginal agencies – build on protocols.
- √ Identify early intervention techniques.
- √ Provide accurate cultural information for agencies to utilize with parents and youth.
- √ Structural changes within agencies.
- √ **Frameworks to incorporate culturally appropriate information and programs for youth; build framework within communities; best practices for culture, cultural competence from a holistic approach.
- √ Aboriginal community-run Children's Aid.
- √ Wrap-around services from within Aboriginal communities.
- √ Training goes both ways.

Education

- √ **More awareness in the schools; have the history and needs of Aboriginal people embedded within the school curriculum; demand a review and inclusion of a more accurate 'Canadian' history; re-write the history books; lobby government for curriculum input.
- √ Encourage cultural individuality starting very young in the schools.
- √ More training for youth outside of school.
- √ Work with school boards and schools to raise awareness and find champions to promote awareness and youth programs.
- √ Address negative peer pressure through role models; anti-bullying workshops in partnership with police, anti-oppression workshops; more projects such as this one.
- √ Aboriginal schools.
- √ Have agencies go to the schools with outreach programs to give cultural information that is Aboriginal specific.
- √ Promote healthy relationships by taking this video to the schools.

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- √ Invite Elders to the schools as part of early intervention.

Support

- √ Show pride in Inuit youth to prevent shyness.
- √ Address self-esteem through community and support activities.
- √ Help by providing positive experiences
- √ Give guidance to Inuit youth.
- √ Help Inuit youth become more self-sufficient.
- √ Provide supports to help with reconnection with family and identity.
- √ Provide programs for the process of learning a new way of life in the city.
- √ Support for the positive aspects of finding your family and for the negative if rejected.
- √ Ask those who are affected by issues to help bridge others to services and advise what needs are out there.
- √ *Provide positive role models; use billboards/posters.
- √ More communications with youth on reserve about the reality of life in Ottawa.
- √ Peer support.
- √ Mentors.
- √ Value experience and cultural understanding vs. education.
- √ Help families and women find voice.

Community/Social Life

- √ *****Celebrate/respect differences: breakdown stereotypes/isolation; address racism/stigma; increase awareness of differences i.e. Two-Spirit; partner with youth who will express their own specific and diverse needs; make ourselves visible/celebrate; more Aboriginal visibility; recognizing Aboriginal communities as distinct; not just an Aboriginal issue but a city-side effect.
- √ *More open dialogue; different cultural dialogues with all youth so they can learn from each other; information sharing.
- √ Teach tradition versus residential school legacy.
- √ More resource centres.
- √ Treat addictions.
- √ *****Aboriginal Community Youth Forum; an Aboriginal Youth Coalition supported by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal agencies with a shared responsibility to ensure Aboriginal youth issues are voiced by bringing youth to the table; Youth Networks (i.e. National Association of Friendship Centres); build dialogue and relationships to have open communications – ask youth ‘What do you want/need?’

Recommended 4-Step Process for Empowering Aboriginal Youth in Ottawa:

Step 1: Community Youth Forum

Step 2: Identify Needs/Partners/Goals

Step 3: Implement Ideas of Youth

Step 4: Evaluate and Share Information with Other Youth

- √ **Opportunities to experience Aboriginal cultures; Social Events (Pow wows, ceremonies).
- √ Give kids something to do on their own.
- √ Social events downtown and in malls and community centre.
- √ Develop healthy Aboriginal communities.
- √ Healing work.
- √ Family support that doesn't isolate children from the community.
- √ Create formal and informal bridges between communities (systemic).

Response from the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa

This community consultation represented a significant milestone in Ottawa's response to the needs of Aboriginal youth with over 45 representatives of the Children's Aid Society attending the morning launch. Although not all were able to stay for the afternoon action planning session, some staff members provided their written comments in response to the questions posed as follows.

Barriers:

- √ Dispelling some of the myths and stereotypes often associated with Aboriginal youth, visible Aboriginal leaders/heroes, more predominant in politics, sports, municipal government positions, etc.
- √ Stereotypes, isolation and lack of addiction treatment resources that are Aboriginal specific.
- √ Positive role modeling is limited; lack of residential addiction treatment that is Aboriginal specific (i.e. a non-medical model); lack of positive media attention; always hear of what is not working.
- √ The lack of understanding and dialogue that does not occur between groups/individuals etc.; one should begin to understand the roots/history of the Aboriginal people.
- √ From a societal perspective it appears that some of the barriers that Aboriginal youth face have to deal with racism; discrimination; stigma/stereotyping.
- √ From the personal perspective Aboriginal youth, like all youth struggle with identity formation i.e. Who am I? Where am I going? How will I get there?... The additional question for Aboriginal youth is Where do I fit in? Sometimes there is a struggle in dealing with the demands of the traditional values with those of the urban lifestyle.
- √ "Fitting in" is extremely hard without the stability and structure of a consistent and supportive nurturing family/parents. Like all youth, coping with dysfunctional parents/family (addictions, conflict, etc.) can be a primary barrier to feeling "equal" enough to fit in.
- √ Struggling with the "collective depression" that Elders and parents have been saddled with because of the residential school experience. The unfair and

sometimes brutal treatment of the Aboriginal culture during this period robbed many of their self-esteem and pride. This created a psychological barrier which many youth and adults must continue to deal with.

- √ Poverty – a psychological and social barrier for all who group up in need – especially for minority youth who are treated/may feel like 2nd class citizens.

Key Steps We Can Take Right Now

- √ More education, workshops, forums, open houses, etc.; stereotypes, biases needed to be replaced through awareness and education; increased federal funding subsidies for Aboriginal education, community development, etc.
- √ Positive role models who demonstrate healthy relationships with all members of society; programming for youth for addictions needs specifically for Aboriginal youth (residential treatment).
- √ Opportunities for positive role modeling of healthy relationships – make these examples public in media i.e. on TV; build in a component of residential addiction treatment into an existing resource centre i.e. Odawa/Wabano to treat youth who are addicted.
- √ The first step would begin with open and honest dialogue to gain a better understanding of the Aboriginal youth and their families; the second step would be to assess their needs with the input of the youth and their families and begin to provide the resources.
- √ Media campaigns to promote Aboriginal culture focusing on history and current strengths. Seems that far too much information re Aboriginal culture is reactive media reporting about conflict and social problems.
- √ Group counseling/group work to help identify and deal with the ramifications of the residential schools for 2nd and 3rd generation family members.
- √ Address the issue of poverty. If so much money is supposedly being spent on Aboriginal issues – why are there so many kids growing up poor?