

HERE
AND
NOW

The Winnipeg Plan to
End Youth Homelessness
hereandnowwinnipeg.ca

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

WE
MATTER
WE
ARE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This toolkit would not be possible without the active participation of youth who shared their stories, hopes, and recommendations.

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HERE AND NOW: WINNIPEG PLAN TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

<http://www.hereandnowwinnipeg.ca/>

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Youth Research Team members PHOTO BY DENISA GAVAN-KOOP

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO TOOLKIT

1.1 Introduction and toolkit development

Youth are the here and now. They are the change makers, leaders, activists, and artists who continue to drive positive social change in our world. When young people experience homelessness, it shows us how we have failed as a society to protect and care for vulnerable people. We believe that we all have a role to play in ending and preventing youth homelessness in Canada. Every person in this country and around the world has the right to an adequate, affordable, and safe place to live.

Here and Now: The Winnipeg Plan to End Youth Homelessness is Winnipeg's first plan aimed specifically at ending and preventing youth homelessness. Numerous service providers, Indigenous leaders, government agencies, and youth with experience of homelessness in Winnipeg collaborated to develop an action plan titled: *Here and Now: Winnipeg's Plan to End Youth Homelessness*, which was launched in 2016. The plan reflects the collective knowledge and aspirations of over 100 youth with experiences of homelessness and 200 community and governmental stakeholders representing over 70 agencies and organizations. The Here and Now strategy responds to the over-representation of Indigenous youth experiencing homelessness by aligning with growing community mobilization efforts that seek to understand and address the enduring legacy of colonization and the meaning of reconciliation in Canada.

In Phase 2, implementation of the Here and Now plan, it was a priority that youth remain meaningfully engaged. An outcome of Phase 2 is therefore the creation of this toolkit which outlines practices, based on the literature and on primary participatory action research with youth in Winnipeg, on how to meaningfully engage youth with experiences of homelessness. We hope this will provide a roadmap, along with practical tips and suggestions, for other community agencies and initiatives that want to engage youth in planning, strategy, policy, and/or organizational development.

Youth with experience of homelessness are experts who can directly inform the actions we need to take to end and prevent youth homelessness in cities across Canada, and the world. The toolkit was created in collaboration with 15 youth who have lived experiences of homelessness who are part of the Here and Now Research Team. This project was funded in part by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnership Strategy's Innovative Solutions to Homelessness, and End Homelessness Winnipeg.

1.2 Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit was created to help guide organizations, communities, youth workers, and researchers through the process of youth engagement, particularly as it relates to engaging youth who have experiences of homelessness. Although this toolkit can be used by anyone in the world, given the research took place in Winnipeg, this toolkit will describe Canadian youth homelessness in greater detail within a specific community context.

1.3 How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is a guide that you can refer to before, during, or after your youth engagement project. In this toolkit we articulate unique barriers to youth engagement with young people who have experienced or are at-risk of homelessness, detail practical strategies to engage with homeless youth from diverse backgrounds and experiences, review key approaches to youth engagement, and evaluate homeless youth engagement plans. In the appendix of the toolkit, you will find checklists that can help you through your youth engagement process.

For the purposes of this toolkit we define youth as any young person who is in the age range of 15–29 years old. The Here and Now plan drew from the United Nations definition of youth which states, "*youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of our interdependence as members of a community. Youth is a more fluid category than a fixed aged group*" (United

Nations, 2016). Notably there are differences in how to engage youth who are 15 versus youth who are 28, and your youth engagement process should reflect the differing needs of youth in this broad age range.

1.4 Toolkit overview

This toolkit is broken down into five chapters plus an appendix with resources to help you through the youth engagement process:

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: What is youth engagement?

- Chapter 3: How to engage youth
- Chapter 4: Engaging youth in research, policy, community & arts-based methods
- Chapter 5: Evaluating youth engagement
- Appendices with resources including checklists, surveys and sample questions

You may want to use this whole toolkit or may only need to access certain sections. However, you choose to use it, we hope that it will inspire meaningful and enhanced youth engagement.



PHOTO BY MEGAN BRESCH

CHAPTER 2: WHAT IS YOUTH ENGAGEMENT?

2.1 What is youth engagement?

Youth engagement refers to youth and adults coming together in a meaningful way to solve problems, develop solutions, and take action. Youth engagement creates opportunities for youth to share their voices, ideas, and participate as active citizens in shaping their communities and the world. According to ACT, youth engagement is the result of the process where “youth are involved in responsible and challenging processes that lead to social change” (actforyouth.net, 2018). In *A Study of Best Practices in Youth Engagement and Leadership Development*, author Davis (2016) states that youth who are actively engaged bring three important skills to the process: Capacity (knowledge and skills), motivation (increased awareness), and opportunity (the chance to act on passions).

Youth engagement is one of the most rewarding processes we can take part in to facilitate youth development, empower youth to act on issues that matter to them, and add value to organizations and communities working on initiatives aimed at improving the lives of youth.

Youth engagement is centered on the relationship that youth create with adults and other youth who are involved in the process. The quality of engagement depends on the quality of these relationships and whether youth feel safe, empowered, and motivated. Youth engagement is growing as communities, governments, organizations recognize the value of including youth in the decision-making processes that impact individual youth, their communities, and our world. It is important to engage youth from a wide variety of backgrounds to offer equal opportunities to participate

and include voices that have been pushed to the margins (i.e. youth experiencing homelessness, youth with disabilities, youth with drug dependency issues, etc.).

Youth engagement differs from a youth program as engagement is focused on a long-term commitment to work with youth in a way that seeks their input and provides capacity to make decisions. Youth programs are often designed by adults for youth that are carried out to address prevention, intervention, provide direct services, recreation activities, social support, or training. Youth programs are often for a fixed amount of time and follow a rigid structure for age range and defined program activities. Youth engagement can be an important process for organizations to engage in who want youth to help design new programs or evaluate changes to existing programs.

The Guidelines for the Ethical Engagement of Young People (2006) developed by Alderman, Balla, Blackstock, and Khanna, is a valuable resource/tool for organizations who are currently engaging with youth or who are planning to engage with youth. It outlines key principles related to youth engagement. These principles guide how organizations should view youth engagement as a natural process that seeks to respectfully engage with young people and incorporate their ideas and voices into the organizational structure (Alderman et al., 2006). The seven principles that organizations must practice for respectful and meaningful youth engagement include:

1. Youth engagement is not a program
2. Contributions must match the organization
3. One youth cannot represent the many
4. Debate as a learning tool
5. Dignity and safety
6. Avoid false expectations
7. Balance and accessibility

These key principles can be found in the document here: <https://fncaringsociety.com/sites/default/files/Guidelines-Ethical-Youth-Engagement.pdf>.

One tool that has helped guide youth and child engagement practices over the last 25 years is from the work of geographer Roger Hart. Hart (1992) defined children's participation in youth engagement activities through a ladder of participation. Hart originally designed his ladder with the idea that the basis of a democratic society rests on the ability of citizens' participation to create that

democracy (Hart, 1992). Children's participation grows as they acquire the skills and confidence to move through and participate in society (Hart, 1992). Hart's ladder of participation defined 8 rungs of the ladder that reflect differing levels of youth participation and engagement. At the bottom of the ladder is tokenism, and in fact the last four rungs of the ladder are not considered true youth engagement (see diagram below) as youth are guided solely by adults and adults are primarily responsible for decision-making.

ROGER HART'S LADDER OF PARTICIPATION



RUNG 8 - Youth initiated shared decisions with adults: Youth-led activities, in which decision making is shared between youth and adults working as equal partners.

RUNG 7 - Youth initiated and directed: Youth-led activities with little input from adults.

RUNG 6 - Adult initiated shared decisions with youth: Adult-led activities, in which decision making is shared with youth.

RUNG 5 - Consulted and informed: Adult-led activities, in which youth are consulted and informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of adult decisions.

RUNG 4 - Assigned, but informed: Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, decision-making process, and have a role.

RUNG 3 - Tokenism: Adult-led activities, in which youth may be consulted with minimal opportunities for feedback.

RUNG 2 - Decoration: Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, but have no input in how they are planned.

RUNG 1 - Manipulation: Adult-led activities, in which youth do as directed without understanding of the purpose for the activities.

Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, as cited in www.freechild.org/ladder.htm

Please refer to the article, *Participation Models: A chase through the maze Citizens, Youth, Online* (nonformality.org, 2012), for a detailed list of methods that have been

developed over the years on how to engage with children and youth.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PROMISING PRACTICES SPOTLIGHT

🌟 Mockingbird Society

American based organization that specifically works with youth who have been in the foster care system and who experience homelessness. The Mockingbird Society is dedicated to *“meeting society’s obligations to children and youth who need out-of-home care. Our advocacy is rooted in the direct experience and voices of young people who have experienced foster care and youth homelessness”* (See mockingbirdsociety.org for more information).

🌟 Sacred 7 Youth Council

Hosted by the Indigenous Winnipeg-based community organization Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre. The Sacred 7 Youth Council is annual youth assembly where youth from community elect seven youth (ages 13–21) to be part of youth council, *“to represent the voice for youth in the community”* (mamawi.com, 2019). Youth who are part of the council attend a national youth conference with other youth from across Canada each year and one youth is invited to join Ma Mawi Board of Directors.

🌟 Sketch Art project

Based in Toronto, Ontario, Sketch Arts project is a community art social enterprise aimed at engaging and collaborating with young people aged 16–29 who are currently experiencing homelessness, poverty or other challenges, with the purpose of experiencing the transformative power of the arts and building leadership and self-sufficiency skills using art (See sketch.ca for more details).

2.2 Why engage youth?

There are a multitude of reasons why we engage youth in organizations, government, committees, in research, or on special projects. The saying, “nothing about us, without us”, is an important mantra for engaging in work that directly impacts young people’s lives. Youth engagement is evidence-informed practice that has been shown to benefit organizations, communities, and the youth and adults who collaborate through youth engagement. Like any new undertaking, if you have not engaged youth before, there is a period of growth as people adjust to new models of working and collaboration. For those committed to meaningful youth engagement, the benefits vastly outweigh the challenges.

In our project we asked the Here and Now Youth Research team what they thought were the most important reasons to engage youth. Here’s what they said:

- To understand what youth went through or are going through
- To get information from the direct source (if it’s about youth – ask youth!)
- To get youth perspective
- To recognize that youth are the future
- To recognize that youth opinions matter
- To get ideas on how to tackle issues
- To help youth feel important and valued
- For youth to feel heard and validated
- To develop long-term goals

One of the recurring themes in what the Here and Now youth research team said is that they want to feel heard. Youth want their voices, stories, and ideas to be heard. Often in society, youth are not able to exercise agency over decisions that impact their lives, and their concerns are not always taken seriously. This is particularly true for youth who have been impacted by involvement in government systems such as Child and Family Services, Criminal Justice, and Mental Health, whereby the agency of youth may be challenging to uphold with other complexities in organizing and operating such systems.

To me youth engagement is about learning skills or tactics to support youth in developing their voice so that they can be able to understand and take these things on themselves. Give them the skills to help them. You have to engage them and find a way to communicate with them and get these questions answered. It's going to take a little tactfulness because sometimes people are berated to the point where they don't want to talk about things because they don't feel like there is any hope left

– Youth, age 27, Here and Now Youth Research Team

MORE REASONS TO ENGAGE YOUTH:

- Youth engagement offers opportunities for youth to grow as individuals and develop important skills related to critical thinking, self-advocacy and leadership skills
- Youth engagement can offer youth mentorship opportunities and a chance to develop healthy relationships with adult mentors (youth-adult partnerships)
- Youth engagement is beneficial for organizations seeking funding for programs that support youth development (McCreary Centre Society, 2016). See [Rising Youth.ca](http://RisingYouth.ca) for an example of youth led project grant funding opportunities
- Youth engagement creates opportunities for youth to be involved in meaningful work that is important to them to gain a sense of agency and feel empowered to tackle problems, develop solutions, and take action
- Youth engagement can benefit the mental health of youth involved in the engagement process particularly as it relates to meditating suicide ideation (Armstrong, 2015) and depression (Mahony, Schweder, & Stattin, 2002)
- Direct experience with a program, service, policy, or system provides youth with insights into their impacts and challenges that simply cannot be understood without such experience (ohchr.org, 2019)

2.3 Best practices for youth engagement

The following five practices on how to engage populations that are hard to engage, such as youth experiencing homelessness, were constant themes in the literature. For more detailed practical strategies, see Section 2.4 (Barriers and how to break them down). The five approaches are identified are: Positive youth development (PYD), Trauma-informed/healing-centered approaches, Adaptive and flexible approaches, and arts-based engagement methods.

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT (PYD)

Positive youth development occurs when youth are engaged in positive ways that support the developmental and skill building processes of youth (Hamilton, 1999). Through PYD, youth are provided with opportunities for meaningful experiences, engagement, and skill building opportunities. Positive youth development is only realized when youth are given genuine opportunities to participate in positive change in their community in meaningful ways. Importantly, PYD supports and encourages opportunities for youth to gain a sense of belonging, power, self-advocacy, self-confidence, which in turn promotes hope and a positive outlook for youth's future. Some key ways we can encourage PYD during engagement processes is to foster healthy adult-youth relationships, always ensure youth's emotional and physical safety, and engage youth in meaningful opportunities to participate in the community. When youth feel empowered, they are more committed to working on projects and to the end goal. In a study of Canadian youth who produce activist vlogs on YouTube, the researchers noted that if you recognize youth's agency, they are more willing to participate and feel valued in speaking out and acting (Raby et al., 2017).

TRAUMA-INFORMED/HEALING CENTERED APPROACHES

An important part of any youth engagement project will be to ensure youth are engaged in healthy and positive ways that don't compromise their health, well-being or safety. Recently, trauma-informed care has been recognized as a critical component of how we interact with people in the human services field, including how we engage with youth. A definition of trauma used by Clinic Community Health in Winnipeg, Manitoba comes from wellness educator Tara Brach. Brach (2011) states that: *"Trauma is when we have encountered an out of control, frightening experience that has disconnected us from all sense of resourcefulness or safety or coping or love."*

Trauma-informed simply means that we understand that youth have experienced various (and often multiple) forms of trauma that could impact how they view the world and

react/act in situations. We know that all people in the world have experienced some form of trauma at some point in their lives. Because of this, each person in the world has unique circumstances that have shaped their view on reality. As youth engagement workers it is important to reflect on how your own trauma experiences can impact your work. Please refer to section 3.7, which further describes how to practice trauma-informed care in your youth engagement project.

"When I say trauma-informed, I mean when staff are knowledgeable about the things we were are talking about – like Indigenous issues, addiction, abuse, sexual abuse, CFS, so trauma informed means they know about these things and they are respectful of you and other clients"

– Youth Researcher, age 24, Here and Now Youth Research Team

When working with youth who have experienced significant trauma it is important to create trusting relationship where youth feel safe and supported when discussing trauma or challenging circumstances. Dr. Sandra Bloom's Sanctuary Model outlines seven commitments that organizations can commit to in order to engage in trauma informed practice which include:

- Emotional intelligence
- Social learning
- Open communication
- Social responsibility
- Democracy
- Growth and change (Bloom, 2017)

We must deliver these commitments to engage youth in the best way possible that ensures their safety and well-being.

ADAPTIVE & FLEXIBLE

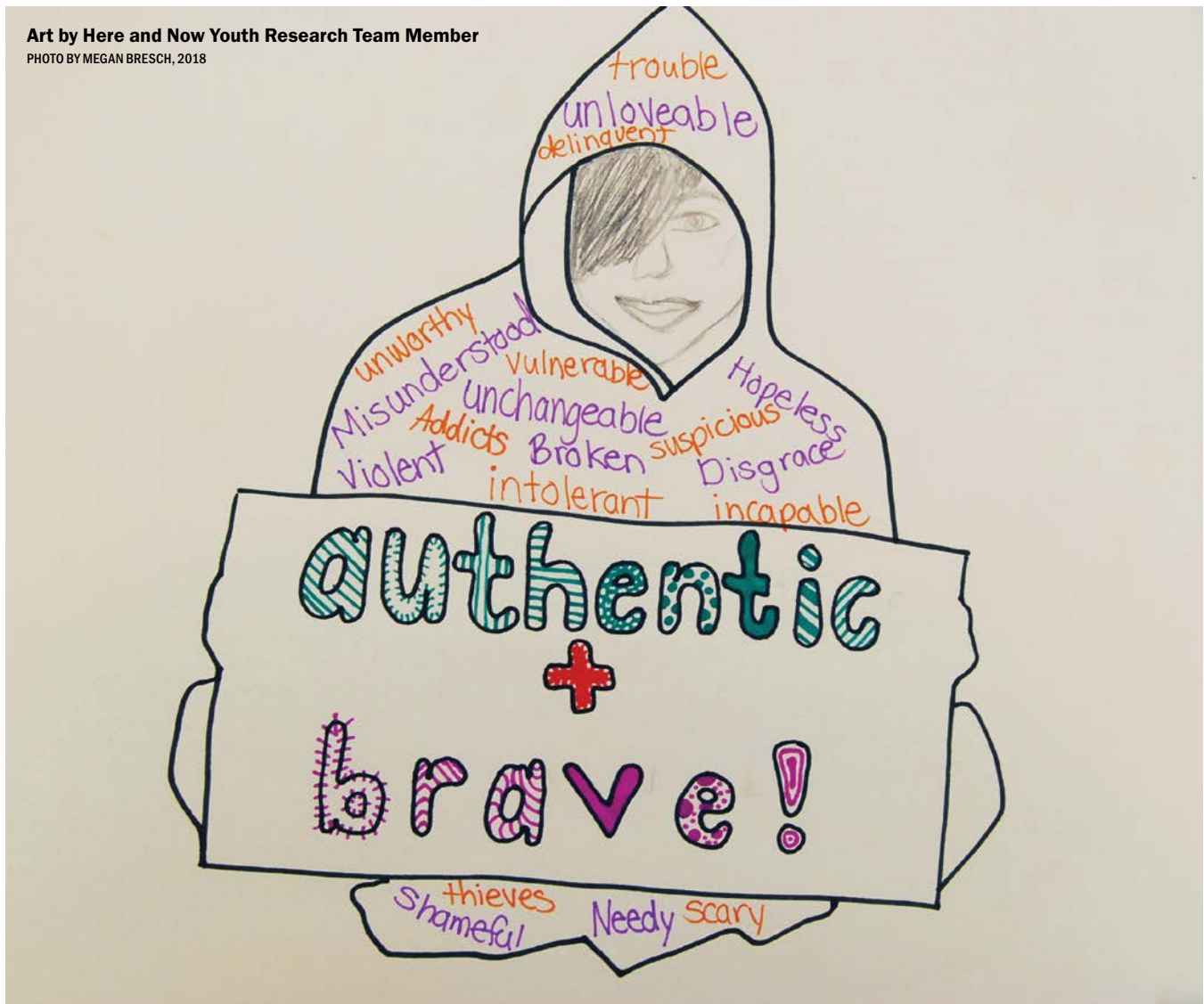
Youth engagement is a process that requires time and commitment. There will be challenges, so it is important to think about how you will overcome these challenges and adapt your youth engagement process as necessary. When working with youth it is important that you create a plan, but also have a contingency plan and be ready to adapt your project or plan as you move through the youth engagement process. Engagement is not a linear process. While regular engagement should be scheduled to keep youth involved and build group cohesion, rigid participation requirements create barriers for those who are struggling with other things in their lives. Some days, participation and making it to a project meeting may just not be possible. It is important to ask youth what they need and how you can support them with their participation. In our project we asked youth at the very first meeting some basic questions (**See Appendix A for Youth Needs Survey**) and some needs they might have related to participation (accessibility, child care, transportation, other challenges). Practicing harm-reduction, supporting youth through mental health challenges, and meeting youth where they are at, are some key ways we can practice adaptive and flexible approaches to youth engagement.

ARTS-BASED METHODS

Arts-based methods have proven particularly useful when engaging populations such as youth with experiences of homelessness or people experiencing mental illness (see Kidd, 2014; Liebenberg, 2017; 2018). Arts-based methods can either be used within research, or as a component to enhance engagement with youth. There are five main types of arts-based research, including visual art, sound art, media, literary art, and performing art (Wang et al., 2017). Art can be a very powerful tool for sharing stories, especially stories that are laden with trauma, in a visual and expressive way. Art that youth create can be a window into their journeys, experiences, and desire for change.

Arts-based engagement can be incorporated into social science research or can be an engagement tool on its own. Either doing an arts-based project with youth, such as creating a mural (see Paint it Up! Youth Engagement Program, 2011) or incorporating some creative elements into your project can have a positive impact. An example of arts-based engagement with youth experiencing homelessness comes from Edmonton researcher Cynthia Puddu who completed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) photovoice project with youth. Youth who took part in this project were offered the opportunity to document their lives and experiences of homelessness to share in a photo essay publication (See Voices from The Street, 2018).

The image on the following page is a photo of the artwork of one of Youth Research Team participants. A guest community artist and facilitator, Luna Galdames, attended our youth research team meetings in the early stages of our project. For this exercise, she asked youth to write in the inside box how they saw themselves, and outside of the image, how they feel society thinks of them. It was a very powerful exercise that speaks to how art can help paint a picture that is much harder to describe in words.



2.4 Barriers to youth engagement

There are several barriers that can prevent youth from being able to engage with organizations or on long-term projects. Therefore, before you begin youth engagement with a specific population, such as youth with experiences of homelessness, it's important to identify some potential barriers and plan to break them down. Without doing so, youth engagement cannot be successful. One of the most basic things we can do to facilitate youth engagement is to offer safe and accessible spaces for youth and adults to come together.

So, what does a safe space look like for youth? It starts with the feeling of belonging and creating a space that is free from discrimination. To really understand what youth,

require to feel safe, we must ask them what they need and work together to create a safe and accessible space. One way you can do this is to develop Community Standards as a group. Community Standards are a common practice used in group facilitation, where the group engages in an exercise to discuss some basic guidelines on how the group will interact together. Some examples of guidelines would include what is acceptable behaviour, what makes a space safe, how to resolve conflict, and how we can treat everyone with respect and dignity. This can also be a good opportunity to discuss triggers, how to cope if youth feel overwhelmed, and what does harm reduction look like if you are engaging with drug dependent youth. At the first

gathering with youth, you can develop guidelines you and the group would like to follow during the youth engagement process. Write down the community standards on a large piece of paper and remember to bring and post up at each meeting. You can adapt community standards and add to the list as needed or as issues arise. Please see below for example of Community Standards created by the Here and Now Youth Research Team:

HERE AND NOW YOUTH RESEARCH TEAM COMMUNITY STANDARDS

- Respect each other*
- Be on time*
- Let other people share*
- Listen while other people are talking*
- Stay on task*
- Be mindful of your headspace*
- Care for each other*
- Get things done!*
- Minimize frustration*

IDENTIFYING COMMON BARRIERS TO YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

There are challenges that have been noted in literature on youth engagement, particularly related to the competing demands of youth participants, community organizations, and project budgets and timelines. Youth need to feel safe and their basic needs met for successful engagement. If we are working with youth who are experiencing homelessness or other challenges, they may not be getting their basic needs met (food, shelter, water, proper clothing, medical care, etc.). While it is not our job to provide these things directly, there are some ways that we can assist youth to help meet their needs.

BARRIERS TO YOUTH ENGAGEMENT THAT THE HERE AND NOW YOUTH RESEARCH TEAM IDENTIFIED:

- Lack of food
- Lack of medication
- Nowhere to keep belongings
- Language barriers
- Lack of confidence
- Denial
- Lack of trust
- Feelings of unworthiness
- Shame
- Lack of awareness
- Shyness
- Lack of supports
- Apathy
- Addictions
- Relationship/family problems
- Connection to crime/gangs/
law difficulties
- Bigger issues to deal with –
i.e. having children, being incarcerated,
health issues

As we can see from the above list, there are multiple barriers that are reflective of personal, structural and systematic issues that can impact youth participation. However, it must be noted that youth are also incredibly resilient and have the capacity to participate, despite encountering one or more of the above noted barriers. Our research showed that despite encountering many of these barriers, the youth we engaged with still made it to our project meetings and participated at a high level. As adult facilitators, it is our role to figure out ways to break down as many barriers to participation as possible. The next section offers tips and recommendations on how to do this.

2.5 Breaking down barriers to youth engagement

HERE ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:

- Support youth in finding ways to ensure their basic needs are met. Do they have reliable, safe housing? Are they getting enough to eat each day? Are they experiencing severe mental health challenges? Refer youth to community partners to get the supports and resources they need. When youth are worried about meeting their basic needs, it can be difficult, or impossible, to participate
- A good budget that ensures youth needs can be met is an important component of successful youth engagement. For example, the budget should allow for helping youth attend project meetings and events through transportation cost support, providing food, and honorarium (if possible), to compensate youth for their time and efforts
- Organizations must adequately understand and be ready for youth engagement (see checklist in Chapter 3) and foster a culture of participation that seeks to include youth in decision making processes, and that provides a safe space for youth participation
- Create a safe, and judgement-free zone for participation. Ask youth what you can do to ensure that youth engagement is accessible for them. As an adult facilitator you must be kind, have fun, and encourage youth
- Adult facilitators must be trained on how to properly engage with youth. Ensure staff have training that covers: harm reduction, trauma informed care, Applied Suicide Intervention Training Skills (ASIST), Mental Health First Aid for youth, etc.
- Avoid tokenism. It is important to fully engage youth, not just invite one or two youth to “join” adult meetings. Youth engagement must be a full process that integrates youth participation into your organization or process that recognizes youth agency
- Make decisions with youth about the project, goals, direction, and anticipated outcomes as much as possible
- Remember that youth engagement is not a linear process! Be adaptable and flexible to ensure the best outcomes
- Expect that there will be challenges. Address conflict as soon as possible and in a direct and supportive manner. Open communication is critical to building a cohesive and positive group

SPOTLIGHT BOX: CHALLENGES RELATED TO HONORARIUM

We wanted to highlight some potential benefits and some common challenges related to honorariums and youth engagement:

- ◆ It is important to provide honorarium people with lived experience who share their time and insight. If you wouldn't work for free, we cannot expect the same of youth. Their time is valuable, and we can show respect for that by offering compensation for their time
- ◆ It is important to have clear expectations on how much honorarium is offered, for what purpose, and what is expected of youth to accomplish before they receive honorarium
- ◆ There are debates on whether gift cards or cash is more appropriate to offer. The article, *Compensating Research Participants: A Survey of Current Practices in Toronto*, discusses how it is good practice to offer cash so people can choose how to spend their income, and how gift cards may not be appropriate compensation (See: <https://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Fair-compensation-Report-.pdf> for more information)
- ◆ A major challenge related to honorarium is that for folks who are struggling it can become a life line and expected income, even though it is not consistent or paid as a job. For example, in our project, the youth received fair compensation for their participation in all project activities. A couple of times project meetings were cancelled due to extreme weather and illness of facilitators and several youth were very upset over not receiving their honorarium that week as they were “counting” on receiving honorarium that week
- ◆ We advise discussing honourariums and the potential for cancelled meetings in advance, as well as support for facilitators if they do have to miss a meeting. This could include a back-up facilitator, or could involve support such as referrals to basic-needs services for youth if meetings must be cancelled

THE HERE AND NOW YOUTH RESEARCH TEAM IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING WAYS TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:

- Offer support
- Encouragement
- Transportation
- Group activities, team engagement activities
- Engaging youth on the street – having conversations with them
- Help youth to understand reality
- Provide a comfortable environment – no judgement, safe space
- Provide incentives – bus tokens, honorarium
- Make it on their time
- Walk around in groups and initiate conversations
- Going to them
- Accommodate pets
- Cool facilitators

The quality of youth engagement depends on the relationships that are created with adult mentors, how well we can provide a safe space for participation, and whether youth feel meaningfully engaged. We asked the youth from the Here and Now Research Team about what qualities make up a good facilitator. Here's what they said:

- Listen
- Demonstrate the seven sacred teachings
- Patience
- Letting everyone speak
- To involve us in all projects
- Be easy to approach
- Be involved out of the class and maybe when it's done
- To be confident mentors
- Tolerance

- Understanding
- Constructive criticism
- Positive advice/support in our ideas
- Leadership
- Do not be boring!

We must listen to youth and ask them what they need to participate. There are of course limits to our capacities, however it is important that every effort is made to ensure that youth participation is accessible, safe, and empowering. Youth feel most engaged when they can participate in decision-making processes and when they feel the work they are doing is important and making a difference. Chapter 3 goes into further detail about how to begin the process of youth engagement. specific way to undertake youth engagement.



PHOTO BY MEGAN BRESCH

CHAPTER 3: HOW TO ENGAGE YOUTH

In this chapter we will further explore how to engage youth and what are some of the requirements and considerations when planning for and initiating youth engagement. Agencies, organizations, and projects that are aiming to support youth engagement must first ask themselves, why do you want to engage youth?

3.1 What does meaningful engagement with youth look like?

This section will explore how we can engage with youth in a meaningful way. First, what does meaningful youth engagement look like? We describe meaningful engagement as a youth engagement process that results in youth who feel supported, empowered, and committed to the process.

We asked the Here and Now Research Team to give us insight into successful engagement. We asked them, “How do you know youth engagement has been meaningful and successful?” Here’s what the Here and Now Youth Research Team said:

- **Everyone shows up on time and keeps coming back**
- **More educated people**
- **More funding and programming**
- **Media coverage**
- **Youth are willing to give back and help the cause**
- **Maintaining structure and balance in their own lives**
- **Mental health is taken care of and have access to needed resources**
- **Positive feedback from youth**

This is an exercise that you can adapt to your youth engagement project. By asking youth what meaningful youth engagement looks like to them, you can then together design your project to accommodate their ideas. We recommend doing this as soon as you begin your engagement process. By doing so, you will have a set of desired outcomes to work on together that set the stage for your engagement process.

3.2 Ethics and youth engagement

Before beginning any youth engagement project, take the time to think through the ethical considerations related to your project. When working with youth, especially youth who have experienced a great deal of trauma and marginalization in their lives, we must think about what we can ask of youth in terms of their participation. Because youth range in age from 12–30, you can adapt your project and ethical requirements as needed. The type of project you are asking 12–14-year-old youth to participate in might look different than the type of project you ask 25–29-year-old youth to participate in.

Here are some approaches you can take to practice ethical youth engagement which include:

- **Avoid tokenism.** Do not engage youth simply for the sake of following the trend of youth engagement. As noted by Alderman et al. (2006), youth engagement is not a program, it is a process whereby organizations should make permanent changes that meaningfully include youth in the fabric of their organization structure
- **If you are engaging youth in a research project,** you may need to access support or partner with a researcher at a university or college and go through a formal ethics process overseen by a Research Ethics Board (REB). It should be noted that there are debates on whether institutional research ethics and REB’s truly can provide appropriate guidance on what constitutes ethical youth research. See Bray, Liebenberg, & Zink, 2014.
- **If you are a researcher,** you can complete the TCPS 2 Tutorial
- **Course on Research Ethics (CORE)** (<http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/education/tutorial-didacticiel/>)

- Have clear expectations and enforce healthy boundaries. Clear expectations can prevent conflict, disappointment or misunderstandings. Continually reinforcing healthy boundaries with youth can help them to learn about how to engage in healthy relationships and how to set healthy boundaries in other areas of their lives

BELOW WE HAVE PREPARED A LIST OF QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF IN REGARD TO ETHICS AS YOU PREPARE FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:

- If you are engaging with youth who are under 18, if so, what type of permission from a parent or guardian is required?**
- Are there risks to youth's safety?**
- How will youth be compensated for their time? Are you asking them to volunteer or will you provide payment or honorarium for their time?**
- Is your youth engagement project dealing with complex issues such as violence, homelessness, addiction, etc.? If so, what considerations do you need to ensure that youth you are engaging with can do so in a safe way?**
- What type of commitment are you asking for youth to contribute to the youth engagement project? Is it reasonable?**
- Are you engaging youth in a research project? If so, what type of formal ethical process will you need to go through to achieve? What are the benefits and limitations of institutional research ethics?**

Here are some tips on how to respond to the ethical challenges as outlined in the checklist above:

- Common safety risks include potentially triggering discussion topics, influencing or being influenced by other youth in relation to risky behaviours such as gangs or drug-use, etc. It's important to remember that youth's lives may be particularly unsafe due to their marginalized circumstances. While engagement should not be a replacement for programs that offer direct services to youth, there is an ethical responsibility to support youth in accessing resources to the greatest extent possible. It is important to think about how you will mitigate these risks to ensure safety while

participating. For example, it is good practice to have at least two facilitators when working with youth who engage in risky behaviours and set expectations for youth on what is acceptable when they are participating (see Community Standards)

- In the Here and Now ethics application we were required to state that if youth disclosed any involvement with activity that would cause serious harm to themselves or others, or abuse of a minor, we would be required to report this to the proper authorities. You can create a similar expectation in your youth engagement process by setting out these expectations at the beginning, so youth are aware of your responsibilities
- If you plan to engage youth who are under 18 and in the care of CFS, it is important to have discussions with their social worker, foster parents, and or group home to ensure that all parties are able to offer the support and understand the risks and benefits of youth participation

3.3 What level of youth engagement are you aiming for?

In Chapter 2 we discussed Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation and levels of decision-making capacity of youth. As noted in Hart's ladder of participation, moving up the rungs of the ladder signifies increasing shared decision-making power between adults and youth. Many projects that engage youth often do not reach rung 8 (complete shared decision-making capacity and youth-initiated decisions). If your organization is seeking to reach the higher levels of the ladder of participation, consider in advance what this will look like, and plan on how to get there. In some cases, you may move between different levels on the ladder depending on the project, initiative and/or outcome of your youth engagement process. What level of youth engagement can your organizations, group, or project support realistically, and in a way that does the least harm to youth, and hopefully provides ample benefits? If certain requirements are met, then it may be possible to engage youth in a way that enables them as much choice as adults in the organization. However, this takes time, and a willingness for organizations to invest heavily in youth engagement. This is possible if

there are strong advocates for youth who understand the importance of engaging youth, and advocate for youth engagement at the organizational level.

3.4 Different approaches to youth engagement

As discussed briefly above, there are different methods and ways of approaching youth engagement. There may also be multiple approaches you use, or start with one, and decide to move to a different model. Flexibility is critical to ensuring that the process of youth engagement can be adapted to meet youth's needs. We have put together a list of some of the possible ways that you can engage youth in your organization or project.

HERE'S A LIST OF WAYS THAT YOU CAN CARRY OUT YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:

- Youth-led Participatory Action Research
- Youth-led projects
- Youth advisory council
- Participation on Board of Directors
- Peer-to-peer support programming (Davis, 2016)
- Youth governance committee
- Youth leadership development

Youth-Led Participatory Action Research (PAR) – PAR is an approach that seeks to expose injustice, develop solutions, and take action. According to the Youth Led Participatory Action Research Hub, “*Youth-led Participatory Action Research is an innovative approach to positive youth and community development based in social justice principles in which young people are trained to conduct systematic research to improve their lives, their communities, and the institutions intended to serve them.*” (YPAR, 2015). Check out the YPAR Hub and their exciting work at <http://yparhub.berkeley.edu/>. Please refer to Section 4.1–4.3 for more information and Spotlight box in Chapter 4 for more examples of youth-driven PAR projects.

Youth-led projects – Are projects where youth lead the planning, decision-making, and carrying-out of project activities in consultation with supportive adult allies. The decisions in this type of project are led solely by youth (Fletcher, 2012). An example of a youth-led project is Citizen, which is a youth led initiative that develops projects to combat racism, discrimination, and bullying in Vancouver, B.C. (See <http://www.vancouveryouth.ca/> for more information).

Youth advisory council – A youth advisory council consists of youth who come together to provide input on decisions often as a resource to a, group, or agency, and advocate on a particular issue or issues (<http://www.youthpowerny.org/>, 2019). See for examples: Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre Sacred 7 Council (<http://www.mamawi.com/annual-youth-assembly/>), Youth Advisory Council Manitobans for Human Rights (<http://www.mhri.ca/youth-council/>), and CHAMACOS Youth Council (<http://yparhub.berkeley.edu/in-action/salinas-chamacos-youth-council/>).

Participation on Boards – Youth can participate as a member of a Board of Directors to provide critical input on issues being discussed, vote on key issues, and provide direction from a youth perspective to the organization (Fletcher, 2018). If youth are asked to join a Board of Directors, they should be treated as a full member with the same rights and capacities, not as a “token” youth (Fletcher, 2018). They should also be provided the training, mentorship, and support necessary for their participation. There are several examples of organizations who have youth members on their Board of Directors such as Environmental Youth Alliance (<https://eya.ca/>), Youth Project NS (<https://youthproject.ns.ca/>). Please also refer to Community Tool Box Section 8. Including Youth on Your Board, Commission, or Committee for more information (<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/organizational-structure/include-youth/main>).

Peer-to-Peer support programming – Youth who have lived experience act as peer supports and mentors to other youth who may be experiencing behavioural or mental health challenges (Davis, 2016). One of the most prolific examples is Youth Move Oregon (YMO) where youth with lived experience of mental health challenges, addiction recovery, foster care system, juvenile justice,

and use their experiences to offer support to other youth (Davis, 2016). See <https://www.youthera.org/> for more information.

Youth leadership development – Youth are offered opportunities to engage in leadership development training that build skills focused on empowerment, self-esteem, positive social change, and how to be a role model (National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition, 2010). See for examples: Powerful Youth International, Empowering Indigenous Youth in Governance and Leadership (EIYGL) (<http://www.ildii.ca/eiygl/>).

3.5 Planning for youth engagement

The next few sections will describe and offer guidance for organizations who are considering youth engagement to better understand what levels of engagement your organization or agency can support in a way that best supports youth in a meaningful way. Are you looking for long-term engagement? What do we need to consider when engaging with youth with experiences of homelessness? How do we provide cultural safety when engaging youth who identify as Indigenous?

LONG-TERM YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

If you are aiming for long-term youth engagement, consider what this will look like before you begin. Successful youth engagement often takes a considerable amount of time. The benefits of long-term engagement can vary depending on what type of projects the youth engagement will centre around. Will you be creating a long running youth advisory council? If possible, it is best to have youth help to create long-term youth engagement strategies, as they can advise on how they want to participate and in what types of initiatives/projects.

A youth engagement strategy is one way in which your organization can plan for ongoing, and long-term youth engagement. A youth engagement strategy is a plan that outlines how to engage youth and often involves youth participation in the planning process. Other times, youth engagement strategies are developed by organizations to help guide them through the duration of the youth engagement process (planning, action, and evaluation).

ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS TO ENGAGE HOMELESS YOUTH

Youth who have experienced/are experiencing homelessness have unique needs that must be met for engagement to be successful. By needs we mean things that are critical to participation such as transportation, creating a safe space, an accessible location, accommodations for youth with disabilities, practicing harm-reduction and trauma-informed care. Accessibility also includes using appropriate language (including special considerations for language use if the youth's first language is not English), meeting youth where they are at, having realistic expectations for outcomes, and creating an open environment that welcomes discussion, disagreement, and collaboration.

There are other simple ways to make people feel welcome such as posting a rainbow flag on the door of your meeting space and ask youth what pronouns they would like to be called (both are symbols of accessible spaces that must be supported by action such as LGBTQ2S* staff training).

CULTURALLY SAFE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

When developing a youth engagement strategy, it is imperative that you operate from an anti-oppressive, non-violent framework that seeks to understand how critical social issues impact the population you are working with. Further, adult facilitators must have a good understanding of how to offer culturally safe spaces and appropriate activities and that diverse world views and ways of understanding are interwoven into your project design.

Consider the different cultures of the youth you will be engaging. What types of supports or engagement do youth from different cultural backgrounds require? It is best to ask youth and do not assume anything. For example, Indigenous people in Canada come from many different First Nations with differing cultural practices so it is important not to assume that “one size fits all”. We must ask the youth we are working with in what ways do they feel comfortable participating and how can we incorporate cultural healing and ceremonies into our work if that is what the youth desire? If we are working with newcomer

youth, then what considerations do we need to consider ensuring we provide a safe and culturally appropriate space that meets their needs?

During the development of the Here and Now Strategy, Indigenous youth provided guidance on creating/operating culturally appropriate services. Their guidance fit into four categories: education, specific cultural practices, good service delivery, personal connection and trust.

**Acknowledgement of the culture is the most important thing
– Youth participant**

- **Education:** Youth shared that education is important so Indigenous people can know their culture, decide whether to engage with it or not, and build pride and self-esteem. As a basic start, every person involved in youth engagement should be trained in cultural awareness.
- **Specific cultural practices:** Youth identified specific cultural practices that they wanted integrated in their lives, services and programs. Regular access to cultural activities that involve Elders, include smudging, drum circles, ceremonies, or retreats. Youth on the Here and Now youth research team expressed that engaging with their culture can lead to a better understanding of themselves and offer the support they need to address challenges in their lives. Indigenous-led organizations that integrate cultural programming are the best places to connect Indigenous youth to specific cultural practices because they interweave traditional practices and culture into their philosophy and operation (i.e. policies, staff, layout, approach to work, practicing healing and ceremony as part of workplace and programming). Wherever youth show up and ask for support, it is our responsibility to work with the community to support them, even if we cannot directly provide the support they are asking for. According to Tammy Christensen, the Executive Director of Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad Inc., it is important to refer youth to organizations that can best help them meet their needs. For example, if youth want access to cultural programs, look to the

community and to the people who are already providing these services, and connect youth to them. When developing an engagement initiative that will include Indigenous youth, prepare in advance so you can offer opportunities for engagement with culture and traditional healing practices and ceremony with these community partners.

- **Good Service Delivery:** youth identified 'good service delivery' as low-barrier and accessible. This includes a convenient location, not having intimidating front entrance security, and offering food or a beverage. It also requires a reciprocal relationship of learning where facilitators also share who they are and are open and honest about setting expectations for how youth feedback/participation will be used
- **Personal Connection and Trust:** youth identified specific qualities in facilitators or youth support workers that could build personal connection and trust. These were people/support workers who are: respectful; polite; genuine, honest; empathetic; supportive; welcoming, makes people feel at home; creates a sense of belonging; relaxed; non-judgemental; loyal; has a sense of humour; and is persistent.

3.6 Organizational and project considerations

Before you first begin your youth engagement process it is important to define what is required to carry out this process in an organized, supported, and well-planned manner. The next section will review organizational and project considerations before beginning your youth engagement process. This section will also offer tips on a recruitment strategy for engaging youth, as well as offer checklists (which are also included in the Appendices) for your organization to review.

For many youth-serving organizations, youth engagement seems like a logical process. In most cases it can be a very natural fit and flow, given there are the right people in place at organizations who advocate for youth engagement. For some folks, youth engagement requires a big change in the way we do our work and the way we think about the youth we serve. In recognizing youth's agency to work alongside organizations to create change, there

is an acknowledgement of youth's capacity to create that change. This can be difficult in situations where organizations have limited capacity whether it is because of staffing concerns, budgetary limitations, or time commitments. Those circumstances can often cause conflict in how much time, energy and money, can be devoted to youth engagement.

Organizations who seek to engage youth must work to build and foster a culture of participation. According to Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin & Sinclair (2003), building a culture of participation includes understanding that youth engagement is a process that requires organizations to undergo changes. Some key components of this include listening to youth, adapting the organization to support new ways of working at multiple levels, and ensuring that youth's ideas are implemented (Kirby, Lanyon, Cronin, & Sinclair, 2003). Therefore, before you begin youth engagement, please refer to the checklist ***Is Your Organization Ready for Youth Engagement*** below. If you answer no to any of the questions, the next section describes ways you can address these issues and prepare for youth engagement. It's important to consider three major important factors: Budget, timeline, and expectations.

An adequate budget is necessary for successful youth engagement. When planning, think about all the costs that are necessary to engage youth and break down barriers. This is especially critical if you are seeking to engage youth in traditionally hard to reach populations such as youth experiencing homelessness. Some important budget considerations include: Food, transportation costs, honorarium, project supplies, workshop facilitators, cultural activities, child minding, and an amount set aside for contingency. The biggest cost will be time for a skilled staff person who can commit the time necessary for engagement.

Decide on the timeline of your youth engagement project before beginning. Once you decide on the timeline, communicate that with youth so they are aware of the time commitment that is expected of them if they choose to take part. Make sure that your timeline lines up with your organizational and project priorities. It's important that timelines for your youth engagement process are not too rigid and can allow for some flexibility and adaptability. Youth engagement is not a linear process, and often

relationship building takes a considerable amount of time to gain trust and move towards high level youth engagement.

Finally, manage expectations about youth engagement within your organization as well as the youth you are working with. As mentioned above, communicating with youth honestly about the engagement process is key, particularly around the time they are expected to give, skills required, timelines of the project, participation in decision-making and expected outcomes. Organizations who want to participate in quality youth engagement must think about how much they can reasonably ask of youth, and how will they continuously support youth throughout this process.

CHECKLIST: IS YOUR ORGANIZATION READY FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT?

- Have you defined a clear purpose and scope for engaging youth in your project or organization?
- Does your organization have a clear strategy on how to engage youth?
- Are adults in your organization adequately trained for youth engagement? (i.e. trauma informed care, youth care training, youth support work, leadership training, cultural awareness, knowledge of resources and referrals, etc.) See Appendix E for a further list of training resources
- Are decision-makers in your organization willing to transfer decision-making authority to youth? Are they clear on what decisions these are?
- Can your organization adequately handle the costs (including staff time) associated with breaking down barriers to youth engagement?
- Does your project/organization/institution, etc. have an adequate timeline and budget to support youth engagement?
- Is your organization and staff flexible in responding to challenges related to youth engagement?
- Does your organization operate from a harm reduction, trauma informed approach to youth engagement?

After reviewing this checklist please refer to the next section for support on what needs to happen to check YES for any of the above considerations.

WAYS YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN PREPARE FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:

1. Determine the purpose and scope of your engagement. Ask yourself: why is it necessary for us to engage with youth? How will our organization benefit from youth engagement? What are some challenges/barriers for our organization to overcome before you can begin the youth engagement process?
2. Host an information/strategic planning session to discuss the benefits and risks of youth engagement, and how to adequately plan for this process. You may also want to create a youth engagement strategy before you begin to engage with youth to determine all the necessary steps, how the process will flow, and what your expected/desired outcomes are.
3. Complete training for adults in your organization or agency on what is youth engagement and why it is important. Make sure the folks who will be engaging with youth have experience and are trained to respond to the unique needs of youth. There are institutes and organizations that can facilitate this – see Youth Advocacy Training Institute; Free Child Institute, Heartwood, etc. Please refer to Appendix E for a list of Training Resources for Youth Engagement.
4. First, your organization needs to determine which decisions they are willing to share power with youth on. Ensure that everyone in the organization who will be supporting the youth engagement process is willing to acknowledge the capacity and skills of youth. Youth already have power, it is up to the adults in the organization to recognize this and help them use this power to create change in the world.
5. Put proper supports in place to remove barriers and increase ease of access for youth participation (i.e. youth friendly space, proper budget, accessibility, anti-oppression policies & practice). Consider which neighbourhood, bus routes, and even the design of the location. For youth with experience of homelessness, consider whether youth may be “banned/barred” from particular locations, restrictions related to intoxication, gang territories, etc.
6. For successful youth engagement, one of the most important considerations is to look at the capacity of your organization in terms of the time required to achieve the desired engagement levels, and whether or not you have an appropriate budget and capacity that will help break down barriers for youth engagement (i.e. are you offering honorarium, food, transportation support, money to hire necessary staff, etc.).
7. To ensure that projects that involve youth are adaptive to the changing needs of youth, make sure that your project is flexible enough (with budget, timeline, outcomes, etc.) that it can be adapted, changed, extended as needed. We must be responsive to the needs of youth and changes that happen in the community that impact our work.
8. Provide training for staff on how to support youth with trauma, and youth in crisis (i.e. Mental Health First Aid for youth, Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, Non-Violent Crisis Intervention, Trauma-informed approaches to care, etc.). Determine how you will integrate trauma-informed care into your work for youth and staff through policies and/or trauma informed care trained professionals. Do not forget to provide support for all staff who are engaging with youth with lived experiences of trauma. Please refer to the Trauma-informed toolkit at trauma-informed.ca for more information.

3.7 Recruitment strategy for youth engagement

An adaptive and far reaching recruitment strategy is needed for successfully finding youth to participate in youth engagement. Set criteria for participation: are you defining participation by age? By experience (i.e. experience of homelessness,)? or is it open to all youth in the community? Once you establish criteria for participation, determine how flexible you will be on the criteria once participants begin to express interest.

If you plan to bring together a diverse group of youth with different experiences and backgrounds, it is necessary to reach out to multiple organizations (as many as you can) that serve youth and reach out to them. Often community organizations can recommend or help you meet youth that may be interested in your youth engagement project. For example, in the Here and Now case study, we recruited participants at safe spaces and drop-in spaces that serve homeless youth. This involved meeting with the staff that run youth programs or directly interact with youth, as well as spending time with youth at organizations that serve youth experiencing homelessness. You will need to meet youth where they are at, spend some time at the locations, talk to youth about the project, and share information one-on-one.

A key part of the recruitment process is engaging with and developing relationships with direct service staff. Staff at youth serving organizations who have established relationships with youth in their community may act in ways that are protective of youth if they don't trust your process is going to be positive, properly resourced, and has things in place to prevent risk. In the Here and Now youth engagement process, the youth engagement coordinator spent two months meeting with contacts in the community that support youth. These meetings involved offering a participation information letter outlining the purpose, expectations, and time commitment, as well as a recruitment poster. The youth engagement coordinator also spent time describing the process with the staff, as well as our plans to mitigate conflict and ensure youth's needs are being met if they participate (i.e. safety needs, food, honorarium,

time commitment/expectations, etc.). The staff were then able to recommend youth who they felt would be a good fit for the project.

Social media also plays a key role in recruitment strategies. Recent studies have shown that youth experiencing homelessness have access to social media at a fairly high level (See Barman-Adhikari et al., 2016). Social media sites offer user-friendly platforms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) that youth can access from any public computers (such as at libraries, organizations, or on free Wi-Fi on cell phones, etc.). Traditional methods such as boots on the ground outreach and posting flyers at community organizations can work well too. It's important to try to reach as many youth as possible in as many ways as your recruitment strategy (and time) allows for.

Consider if ongoing recruitment is a requirement for your project. How will you recruit new youth if some youth leave the project? What happens if you have too many youth interested that is beyond the capacity your organization or project can handle? Have contingency plans in place and be adaptive as your project moves along. Please see Appendix C for a Recruitment Strategy Checklist and Appendix D for a Sample Recruitment Poster for additional resources to aid you in recruitment.

3.8 Starting your youth engagement project

When starting an advisory council or youth group, create a space that is fun, welcoming, respectful, and honours youth's agency and dignity. The Here and Now Youth Research Team identified what is needed to create a safe space for youth engagement:

- **Have a signal if an issue needs to be talked through**
- **Talk about being mindful of people's triggers**
- **Make it an inclusive environment (i.e. everyone is welcome and encouraged to participate, space is accessible, open dialogue is encouraged)**
- **Talk about and practice confidentiality**
- **Be kind**
- **Follow Community Standards**



Youth research team meeting, July 4, 2018 PHOTO BY MEGAN BRESCH

Establishing a fun environment can be accomplished by activities such as icebreaker exercises, games, art, music, etc. Some simple icebreaker exercises are games include asking a question at the beginning of each meeting (i.e. if

you could go anywhere in the world where would you go?) or getting up and moving around to play a simple game. See spotlight box below for list of icebreaker exercises and links to find more.

SAMPLE ICEBREAKER EXERCISES:

- Questions like what is your favourite (Fill in blank)? You can go around the room and ask each person to answer the question. For example, what is your favourite summer activity?
- Find 10 things in common with other participants (Balance Careers, 2018)
- What do you prefer? Ask participants to move to one side of the room or the other while you ask them questions such as (do you prefer coffee or tea? Movies or TV? East coast vs. West coast, etc.)
- Line up. Ask youth to line up in order of height, birthday, alphabetically by first name, etc. (Fun-Attic, 2018)
- Sit down if... (ask the youth questions like, sit down if you have ever ridden a motorcycle, sit down if you have broken more than two bones, sit down if you have ever been stung by a bee, etc.)

To create a safe and welcoming environment that encourages participation you can post signs (location directions on the door, rainbow flag, etc.), provide a clean and nice-looking space, and ensure facilitators are friendly and present. It is also critically important to provide learning opportunities that are reflective in personal growth and skill development and finding a platform to use your voice to benefit youth. (McCreary Centre Society YAC, Powell River YAC, and Tatami YAC, 2012). Youth will want to take part if you create a fun, meaningful, and welcoming environment.

3.9 Sustaining youth engagement

As noted in section 2.3 on best practices and youth engagement, being adaptive and flexible are two key tenants to sustaining youth engagement. It is normal to expect challenges, conflicts, wavering participation, changing goals, and of course, growth, fun, successes, and positive change. Below we've listed some key practices that include trauma-informed care, self-care for facilitators, conflict resolution, and harm reduction, which are necessary to ensure sustainable and meaningful youth engagement.

PRACTICING TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

As noted in Chapter 2, trauma-informed care practice is critical to engaging with youth, particularly youth who have experienced homelessness. Putting this into practice means being aware of how you respond to youth, understanding that we have all experienced some form of trauma in our lives, and shifting the question from 'why are you acting this way?' to what 'has happened to you?' (Klinic, 2013). One way to practice this is checking in with youth on a regular basis, and openly discussing how to respond if people are triggered, or if an activity is too difficult for them to engage in. If youth feel triggered or are struggling, refer them immediately to get the support. This support is required whether it is urgent crisis support or longer-term trauma counselling. Another trauma-informed

practice is simple mindfulness exercises, practicing letting go of some of the energy or negative emotions that may surface from discussing challenging issues. Think about what types of supports that you have in place for youth if you are doing work that deals with trauma, as well as for the staff that is engaging with youth.

SIGNS A YOUTH MAY BE TRIGGERED:

- Youth may leave the room suddenly
- You may present a change in demeanor and body language
- Youth may act out with inappropriate behaviour
- Youth may tune out and get silent
- Youth may stop coming to meetings
- Youth may engage in conflict with other youth

Unless you are a qualified counsellor or mental health professional, it is important to encourage youth to seek out professional support for past trauma and mental health challenges. As youth engagement professionals, we can support youth and help them obtain the support and resources they need. We also understand that youth may not have access to the types of professional support for healing such as psychiatrists, addiction treatment, counsellors, Elders, etc. or they may not be ready to reach out for support. However, there may be breathing exercises, grounding exercises, or a simple meditation that might support your youth engagement process. By practicing trauma-informed care, we are making a conscious decision to put youth's lives and needs over and above the goals of the project. Appendix E lists several resources related to trauma informed care that will be useful for organizations to incorporate into their youth engagement process.

SPOTLIGHT: MEDITATION EXERCISES

Here are some examples of meditative techniques that are suitable for beginners:

1. Visualize Safe Place Meditation

An example of this kind of practice can be accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPBxNLpOLNU>

2. Gratitude Practice

More information on gratitude practice can be accessed here:

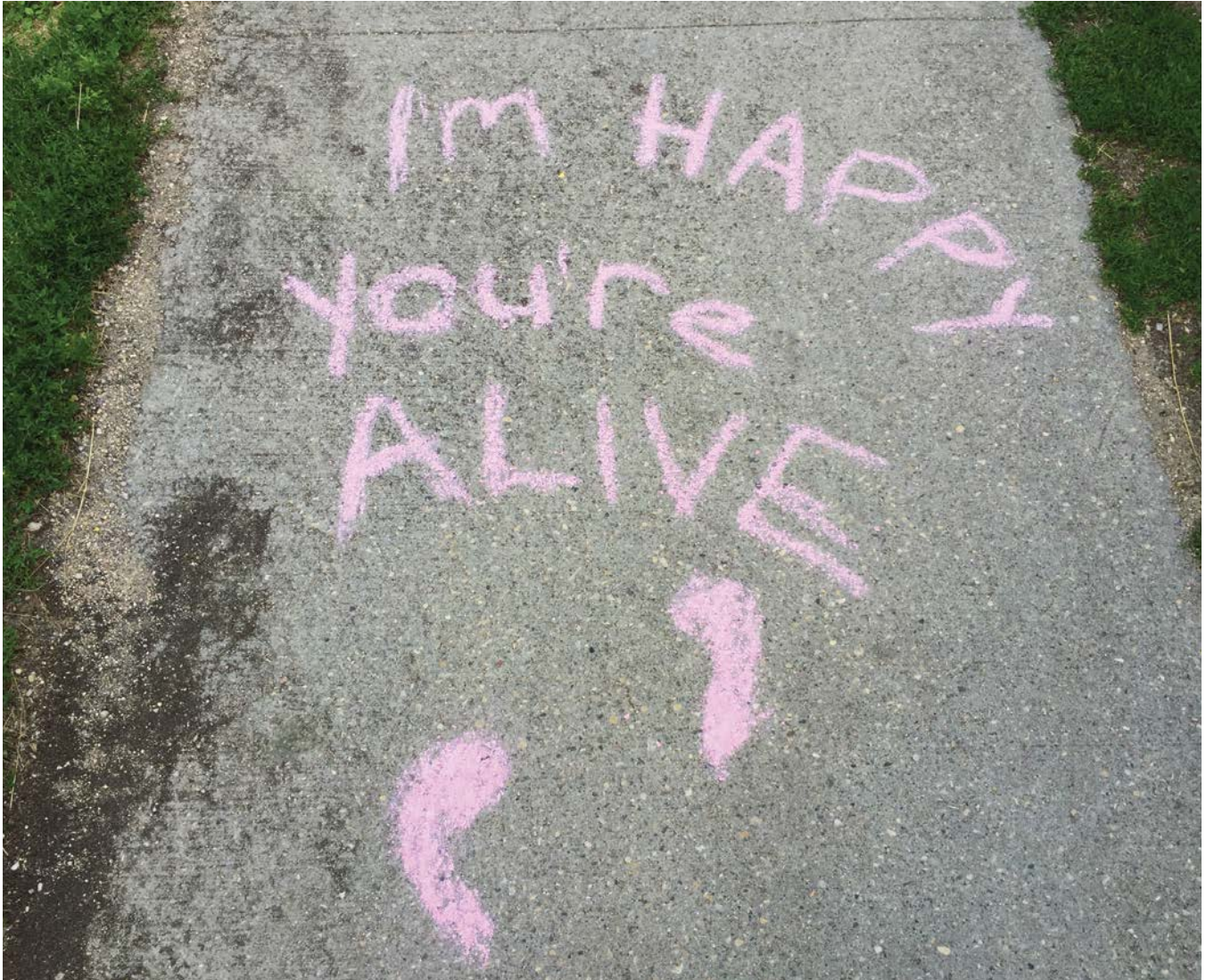
<https://gratefulness.org/practice/practice-space/>

3. Lovingkindness (Metta) Practice

An example of this kind of practice can be accessed here:

Metta (Loving Kindness): The Practice of Universal Love (Enthusiastic Buddhist)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWowi-fAGGY>



Chalk art by youth research team member from July 4, 2018 PHOTO BY MEGAN BRESCH

SELF-CARE AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

The previous section detailed how to apply trauma-informed care in our youth engagement work, but it is just as important to care for ourselves as professionals with engage with people with trauma. This is especially true if you are working with populations of youth that have experienced the trauma of homelessness, poverty, addictions, or violence. Caregivers and youth support workers are at risk of vicarious trauma exposure response or secondary traumatic stress, which means that people may be impacted by indirect trauma due to hearing stories of people who have experienced severe trauma (Tend, 2019). People may experience symptoms like those of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) without experiencing the trauma directly themselves (Tend, 2019). More commonly, this secondary trauma develops into burnout. Burnout can be defined as, “a psychological syndrome emerging as a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job” (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). According to Bourg Carter (2013), “burnout is a state of chronic stress” have negative personal, professional, and psychological impacts that can make it hard to function effectively (Bourg Carter, 2013). Some of the major tell-tale signs of burnout include: physical and emotional exhaustion, cynicism and detachment, and feelings of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment (Bourg Carter, 2013).

Organizations that practice trauma-informed care will best be able to support staff who engage with youth with trauma. Organizations should provide opportunities for staff who engage with youth to be allocated the necessary time to participate in self-care and wellness. This could include: Mental health days, adequate vacation time, appropriate workload, appropriate workspace and resources to complete tasks, debriefing procedures, team building exercises, reasonable expectations, and opportunities for staff to engage in healing and self-care in their working environment. It is the responsibility of the youth engagement staff as well as leaders in the organization to ensure that proper care is put into place for all parties. We’ve put together a checklist of ways to ensure that trauma-informed care is incorporated into your youth engagement process for adult facilitators and youth.

CHECKLIST: TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE READINESS AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

- Does your youth engagement process/project involve a complex issue such as homelessness, drug dependency, poverty, violence, etc.?
- Does the organization have a policy on and practice trauma-informed care?
- Are staff who engage with youth trained in trauma-informed care?
- Are staff who engage with you able to access training and resources on trauma-informed care before beginning the youth engagement process?
- Are supports put in place for youth who may be triggered by taking part in your project?
- Are supports put in place for staff who will be engaging with youth?
- Have you developed a self-care strategy for youth and adults who will be participating in the project?

HARM REDUCTION AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

The Manitoba Harm Reduction Network (MHRN) defines harm reduction as, “Harm reduction is a practical set of strategies and tools to help people stay safer when engaging in activities that could have risk, like sex and drug use.” The MHRN state that a harm reduction approach is one that, “calls for non-judgmental, non-coercive services and resources to support people who use drugs and their communities in reducing harm” (MHRN, 2019). For more information please see the Manitoba Harm Reduction website: www.mhrn.ca/harm-reduction.

We must acknowledge the multiplicity of challenges youth might be going through on any given day. Many youth do not discuss all the activities they are involved in, particularly if they include gangs, abusive relationships, sex work, etc. There are many ways youth may be trying to survive day to day that we must be aware of, but not pass judgment on. Our role is to meet youth wherever they are at, accept them and welcome them.

Youth’s level of participation may fluctuate due to substance use, and that is okay. Harm reduction does not mean there are not consequence for inappropriate or abusive behaviour, however it does mean we deal with

these conflicts with compassion and understanding. Before beginning youth engagement, learn about harm reduction and actively make a plan that is consistent with your organization's policies and procedures. Ensure you communicate the harm reduction policies to the youth, ask

them what they need, and try to work within your capabilities to make that happen. Further, if you are working with youth who may be at risk of opiate overdose, ensure there is a Naloxone Kit on site.

FOR SOME GREAT RESOURCES ON HARM REDUCTION PLEASE CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING LINKS:

- Harm Reduction: <https://ontario.cmha.ca/harm-reduction/>
- Harm Reduction Training Manual: <http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Educational%20Materials/Epid/Other/CompleteHRTRAININGMANUALJanuary282011.pdf>
- Understanding Harm Reduction: Substance Use: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/substance-use-harm-reduction>
- How to Administer Naloxone (Video): https://video.vice.com/en_us/video/how-to-administer-naloxone/581a1bbfabcb66366a55bd82

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Whenever you are working with a group of people, some form of conflict is inevitable. Conflict may arise due to power imbalances, personality differences, and differing opinions. When we are working with youth, some are still developing their conflict resolution skills. Particularly for those who have experienced trauma or who have mental health challenges, tread carefully when attempting to resolve conflict.

It is important to handle and resolve any conflict as soon as possible and to ensure this is done in a kind, compassionate and supportive way. Safety is our number one priority so if youth need support to feel safe participating or alternatively are acting in ways that are unsafe, we must urgently address these issues. You can let youth know that

you care about them and that you are there to support them, while addressing behaviour that may be harmful.

The initial creation of community standards together can help to remind folks of approaches to resolve conflict. Open and honest communication is important, as are respecting boundaries, and managing individual and group expectations. You can have one-on-one conversations with individual youth if you notice their behavior or engagement level has changed. Make sure that you are doing group audits (see chapter 5 for more information) to check the pulse of the group every so often. Reach out for support from a trained professional or your organization if you need additional help managing conflict within your group.

HERE ARE SOME BASIC TIPS YOU CAN FOLLOW TO RESOLVE CONFLICT:

- Be positive and supportive
- Try to avoid judgement and using “shaming” type language
- Address the conflict as soon as possible, do not let issues fester
- Listen to each party objectively
- Show compassion
- Work together to develop a favorable outcome
- Access more support if it is a major conflict (i.e. organizational support, HR, outside mediator)

*Tips adapted from YWCA Halifax Girl Space Conflict Resolution

3.10 Concluding youth engagement

Unfortunately, given the unpredictable world of non-profit funding and changing organizational goals may mean that youth engagement will not be an ongoing practice carried out by your organization or community group. We cannot stress enough that youth engagement should be thought of as an ongoing process to integrate as a permanent part of your organizational structure, however we also understand that this may not be the reality for all organizations.

Having an appropriate exit strategy in place can help to mitigate some of the conflict that could arise due to the project ending. It is natural that youth may be disappointed if the project ends, rather than them choosing to move on after lengthy participation. Ensure you celebrate successes in a major way if this is the case, and assist youth with finding other opportunities to get involved.

The next chapter will describe in greater details how we can engage youth in research, policy and community initiatives.

CHAPTER 4: ENGAGING YOUTH IN RESEARCH, POLICY, AND COMMUNITY ACTION

4.1 Multiple approaches to youth engagement

There are many ways we can engage youth in organizations, agencies, projects and/or research. Multiple approaches are often needed to ensure that youth's voices are heard, and they can participate and express themselves in ways that are meaningful. Youth's voices not only need to reach those in the community, but also to reach people at policy decision-making levels to create long-term and impactful change. While you want youth to guide the engagement and process, as a facilitator you will also need to propose options and a structure to the engagement. This can be a fine balance, however youth engagement does not simply mean asking youth what they want to do, then doing it. Indeed, most humans would have a hard time answering what they want to do

as a group, particularly at the beginning, without some structure or proposals. In this chapter we will explore a few of those ways in greater detail due to the potential for engaging youth in creative, focused, and change-focused methods. Namely, we will focus on how participatory action research, policy advocacy, community engagement, and knowledge mobilization efforts seek to engage youth in transformative ways.

4.2 Why engage youth in research?

Carrying out research with youth is another effective way that we can engage youth in projects that aim to expose injustice and advocate for social change about issues that directly impact their lives. There are many different research methodologies that can be applied, however, there are some that are more suited to working with youth.

HERE'S A SIMPLE CHECKLIST TO DETERMINE IF USING RESEARCH MIGHT BE AN APPROPRIATE ENGAGEMENT METHOD FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION:

- Do you want to find out more about a specific problem and how to solve it?
- Do you want to collect data that will enhance understanding of an issue?
- Do you want to create results that can be useful to other communities to help understand/solve a problem?
- Do you believe in rigor of scientific method to investigate a problem?
- Do you want to challenge power dynamics between youth and adults?
- Do you want to create opportunities for youth to be empowered as researchers and agents of change?
- Do you want to create tangible change/take action on a given problem?
- Do the youth you are working with want to challenge oppression and inequality?

4.3 How to engage youth using participatory action research

One research method that works well with youth engagement is participatory action research (PAR). At its most basic, PAR seeks to dig deep down to the root cause of problems, expose these problems, and collect data based on specific questions or aims for change. Often, it can be hard to reach youth with experience of homelessness due to multiple factors such as a lack of trust, they are an over-researched population, or they simply need to focus on daily survival. PAR is a flexible process that seeks to meet people where they are at. The quality of relationships is really what sets the stage for PAR to be successful as most of the time spent with PAR is around developing relationships that determine how the process will unfold.

Let’s break down what we mean by participatory action research (PAR) and some key terms that are used to describe the components of PAR. The participatory component refers to a process that seeks collaboration and participation from multiple parties. It challenges the notion of researcher vs. participant, and rather seeks for researchers and participants to come together as co-researchers. The action component of PAR seeks to challenge inequity and develop tangible outcomes in the community that results in a change to the status quo. Through PAR we can move beyond just doing research to unearth inequality or collect data, but rather use these findings to prove the need and create momentum to take action in one or more ways.

PAR can be used for specific purposes, and although the aim to be transformative and moving beyond “traditional” types of positivist research, there are always benefits and challenges to consider for any youth engagement method. We must ask ourselves if the challenges and potential “harm” to youth outweighs the benefits of a given project. This is especially important to consider when working with vulnerable populations of youth, and youth who have experienced intergenerational trauma (Liebenberg, 2017). According to Cahill (2007) we must ask ourselves the purpose of engaging in participatory methods and whether we are committed to true youth engagement. If we are simply using participatory methods and not centered on youth agency, we run the risk of tokenism (Cahill, 2007).

For many years, research with Indigenous people has been extremely exploitative (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Bennett, 2004). For those considering a research partnership with Indigenous communities and Indigenous youth, we must ask ourselves how this can be done in a way that seeks reconciliation as opposed to further exploitation and the reinforcement of “colonial” research. PAR offers an approach that seeks to challenge the exploitative nature of research, to one that creates opportunities for participation, and benefits that go to the community as opposed to strictly the researcher (Bennett, 2004; Bird-Naytowhow, Hatala, Pearl, Judge, Sjoblom, 2017). Please refer to the chart below for some possible benefits and challenges to consider before engaging in participatory action research.

Benefits of PAR	Challenges of PAR
Collaborative	Conflict among stakeholders
Cooperative	Not always able to do “true” PAR
Action-oriented	Requires long term engagement
Process-focused	Still inherent power imbalance between researcher and participants
Expose injustice and inequality	Risk of exploitation of vulnerable populations
Disrupt power imbalance	Requires skill building for researchers
Benefits to community not only researcher (Bennett, 2004)	Project based funding models rarely provide flexibility necessary to engage in PAR

To engage youth using PAR, the facilitator of the project should be trained as a researcher in this method. It is crucial that all project partners understand and agree on the necessity to undertake PAR for a given project, as well as have the capacity to support PAR as it is an intensive process. For more information on how to use PAR as part

of your youth engagement process, we have put together a couple of resources. Please refer to Appendix F for Participatory Action Research (PAR) readiness checklist, and Appendix G for a Participatory Action Research Process Guideline.

SPOTLIGHT: PROJECTS THAT ENGAGE YOUTH IN PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR)

- ◆ Canadian researcher and Associate Professor at Grant MacEwan and Ph.D. Candidate at the Alberta School of Health, Cynthia Puddu, completed a PAR project with homeless youth in Edmonton using photovoice as a data collection method, and to help youth share their stories. Youth experiencing homelessness were given cameras for a month and a half period in 2016 and had asked them to document their lives and experiences on the street. Their work resulted in *Voices of The Streets*, a photo essay collection based upon this work that has been shared Canada wide (Puddu, 2018).
- ◆ Linda Liebenberg is a South African researcher, now based in Halifax, Nova Scotia, who specializes in research with youth and on youth resilience and engagement. Her work has been extremely insightful into how we can work with youth across cultural contexts and using arts-based methods.
- ◆ Emily Skinner completed her Master of Arts thesis at the University of Winnipeg and completed a PAR project with youth who were part of Graffiti Art Programming. Together they looked at health inequality and belonging as a youth in Winnipeg. They shared their stories and experiences through critical hip hop pedagogy, where youth were matched with art mentors. Some youth completed art pieces, where others did performances such as hip-hop dances, and photography (Skinner, 2012).

4.4 Engaging youth in policy

Engaging youth in policy and governance is another way that we can support youth to participate and influence organizations and/or policies at the governmental level. So how do we go about the process of engaging youth in policy and governance at youth-serving organizations? We can do this by creating working groups made up of adults and youth that sit on advisory boards or councils, and together they can collaborate on informing the direction of the organization and give input on policy initiatives. Higher-level youth engagement would see youth sitting at

the table with government officials such as in the example of the work being done at the Mockingbird Society in Washington, USA (see below). An example of a youth advisory council engaging in policy work in Winnipeg is the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth Advisory Committee that have provided input on critical reports related to child welfare, mental health, youth justice, addiction and education and put forth recommendations for change.

SPOTLIGHT BOX: MOCKINGBIRD SOCIETY AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

The most notable example of policy work being done in collaboration with youth comes from the Mockingbird Society, based in Washington state. Founded in 2001, The Mockingbird Society is an advocacy organization that exists to serve youth and children who have been in the foster care system or who have experienced homelessness. The Mockingbird Society Public Policy and Advocacy team works with youth and their families to advocate for system reforms by setting an annual policy agenda. Through this agenda, The Mockingbird Society, youth and their families, and other collaborative partners work to reform and push for changes related to policy, practice and budgets – focused on youth in foster care, and youth homelessness (Mockingbird Society, 2018).

Coalition building is important to their work, whereby youth and representatives sit on committees and advisory boards that directly inform government and push for policy reform. These committees include the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs Advisory Committee, and the Washington State Supreme Court Commission on Children in Foster Care (Mockingbird Society, 2018). A major success achieved in 2018 saw a bill passed that enables youth to enroll in the Extended Foster Care (EFC) program until they turn 21 and re-enroll as many times as needed until they gain independence and stability (Mockingbird Society, 2018).

See: <https://mockingbirdsociety.org/advocacy-achievements> for more information on their amazing achievements in 2018.

4.5 Youth and community engagement

One of the main reasons we engage youth is to provide opportunities for them to have a say and take action about issues in their own communities. Community engagement simply means that folks in a community come together as a group around a shared set of values or goals to initiate change (Gottlieb, 2011). This engagement can be centered around addressing serious issues within the community, or around building a stronger community with more opportunities for people to participate. Community-based engagement is another way we can engage with youth to help them gain skills to understand real world processes as well as feel a sense of belonging and social inclusion in the communities they live or spend time in (UNESCO Jakarta Office, 2013). Building a sense of belonging was critical for many youth as identified in the Here and Now research project.

When designing a youth engagement project, take some time to think about the community you are working in and what are the most pressing issues. Often the work you are doing with youth will directly be influenced by the current situation facing residents in a community and the desire

by the community to make change. To determine how you can engage youth in the community, take some time to reflect on how your project can help meet some of the most pressing needs of community and give back through the work you are doing.

In Winnipeg, Indigenous-led initiatives such as The Bear Clan Patrol, Aboriginal Youth Opportunities/Meet me at Bell Tower, and Got Bannock, are only a few of the grassroots community initiatives that are providing opportunities for community members and non-community members to come together to tackle tough issues as a community, and to provide healing opportunities. The Here and Now youth research team participated in a Bear Clan Walk and other community initiatives such as community picnic in the North End of Winnipeg. We offered recreation opportunities by hosting occasional team building nights at the Big Brothers, Big Sisters community space located in the West End of Winnipeg. Youth were able to relax, get to know one another, eat food, create art or play games for a couple hours.

4.6 Engaging youth in advocacy, activism and knowledge mobilization

Related to community engagement, we can engage youth in various forms of advocacy and activism that push forward social and political change. Activism is grounded in action that seeks political or social change. To be an activist, all one must do is be willing to speak out against problems or situations that need to be made better. Self-advocacy can be a very useful skill that can come from youth engagement processes. Once youth feel empowered to speak out about their own stories, lives, circumstances, etc., they are motivated to speak out on behalf of others in their community.

Youth are engaging in activism if they participate in any type of project or community initiative that seeks to challenge the status quo or fight for things to be made better. Activism is a huge part of youth engagement, yet it is not often called activism. The youth that were part of the Here and Now Research Team stated this was an important part of the work we were doing. They wanted to advocate for themselves and for other youth and take action in their communities to prevent and end youth homelessness in Winnipeg.



The Here and Now Research Team planned a protest against youth homelessness

An important question to ask when beginning your youth engagement project is: “in what ways can your youth engagement project result in real world change?” This may influence some of the actions and steps that you take in your youth engagement process. Adam Fletcher from The Freechild Institute (2012) states that youth-led engagement through activism needs critical tools to be effective which include education about an issue, training to engage in different forms of activism, and inspiration gained from youth activism taking place across the world (Fletcher, 2012).

Knowledge mobilization refers to ways to share evidence and knowledge about an issue in a way that is easy to understand and use (Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health, 2014). Knowledge mobilization is critical to sharing the message about your youth engagement project, whatever type of project you decide to undertake. Finding ways to communicate about your project is something that can be decided on as a group. A simple way to do this is asking youth questions that include: 1) How can we take action; 2) In what ways can we share our message?; and 3) Who do we want to reach? It is important to select either one project or several smaller projects, which will depend on the time, budget, and resources your group is able to access.

CHECKLIST TO PREPARE FOR KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION STRATEGY

- In what ways do you want to communicate the information about your youth engagement project? Brainstorm a big list of all possible ways and then vote to decide on how you will do this.
- Who is the target audience you want to reach? Do you want to reach general public? Specific groups? The government? You can decide on your target audience and tailor your knowledge mobilization strategy accordingly.
- Decide on the format or formats you will share information through your knowledge mobilization strategy (i.e. do you want to make a zine, website, video, podcast, report, etc.)
- Are there time limitations that will impact your knowledge mobilization strategy? Budget limitations? Plan reasonable activities that fits within your capacity.

CHAPTER 5: EVALUATION

5.1 Evaluation and youth engagement

This chapter will review some of the key ways that you can evaluate the success of your youth engagement initiative. Evaluation is a reflection of the work that has been done to determine if it has been done effectively, and to examine if you have met the goals of your youth engagement project. It is important to examine your youth engagement practices in ongoing ways to ensure that youth's needs are being met and that they are still benefiting from participation in the engagement process. There are always opportunities to improve our connections, relationships, and ways of

understanding and working together. Sometimes youths' level of engagement is due to the reality that other needs take precedent and daily struggles of survival.

Work with youth to design and carry out your evaluation strategy. You can engage youth in evaluation through Youth Participatory Evaluation, which means involving youth in evaluation processes (Flores, 2007). Discuss the possible methods of evaluation with youth and together determine which methods are best to meet the needs of your evaluation process.

REASONS TO CONDUCT EVALUATION ON YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:

- To determine what has worked well
- To determine what didn't work well (i.e. challenges, barriers, conflict, etc.)
- The results can help improve existing programs and service or create new ones (For Youth Initiative.ca, 2018)
- To provide information to your funders on the effectiveness of youth engagement
- To help your organization/project secure more funding (McCreary Centre Society, 2012)
- To provide opportunities for individual and group reflection to identify opportunities for growth

5.2 Designing your evaluation strategy

You may want to use a variety of strategies to evaluate your progress. Ongoing evaluation can be a critical part of youth engagement to ensure that you are checking in with youth throughout the process to adapt as needed. We have adapted an evaluation process model based on one developed by Bohdana Kinsevyeh (2018) from Health in Common to form a simple five-step evaluation model for youth engagement. The five steps are:

1. Complete program or project inventory
2. Determine what it is you want to evaluate and how
3. Data collection
4. Data Analysis
5. Share and use results

Step 1: Complete program or project inventory. You can do this by describing the program or project framework or logic model. Be sure to include the following components:

- Define the purpose and mission of your project (i.e. what is your goal? What problem are you trying to solve or address?)
- Use a logic model (Inputs, Activities, Outputs, Outcomes and Impacts) to complete your project or program inventory (Kinsevyeh, 2018)
- Identify all the inputs that went into your program which includes the resources such as costs, time, staff, as well as the barriers to putting these inputs in place (i.e. too tight of a budget, not enough staff, etc.)
- Identify the activities you completed within the project
- List the outputs (i.e. what is the direct impact (if any) of your project?)
- Describe the outcomes or intended effects

*List adapted from The Community Toolbox Evaluating the Initiative Toolkit, 2018

Step 2: Select which categories that you want to evaluate and what questions you want to ask. First determine what specifically are you looking to evaluate. Is it the success of your program? If so, how will you measure success? Once you have determined what you are looking to evaluate you can choose from several methods and tools to help you

(see step 3). Next, develop a set of evaluation questions. Think about all the stakeholders and what types of information they would like to see from the evaluation. In the sample checklist evaluation tool below, we have included five categories and sample questions within each category to assist you. The questions are related to two specific measures which include process measures (i.e. planning and implementation), and outcome measures (i.e. Did you meet goals, what was the impacts on participants, what was the impact on the community?) (The Community Tool Box, 2018).

You can adapt these categories and questions to fit within the method you choose to collect your evaluation data (such as a focus group, survey, group audit, etc.). These questions can either be answered individually by the adults, individually by the youth, or collectively. In most cases a combination will be needed as it is important for everyone involved in the process to reflect.

We have put together a youth engagement checklist tool, which can help you in evaluating your youth engagement process by looking at five different categories related to youth engagement. **Please refer to Appendix H for Youth Engagement Checklist Tool.**

Step 3: Choose methods for evaluation and collect data. Collaborate with youth on selecting methods by explaining all the possible methods of data collection with youth, the challenges and benefits of each one, and then choosing a method/methods depending on your project capacity and timeline.

You can collect data using qualitative or quantitative methods, or a combination of both. Qualitative data collection methods focus on collecting experiential data, and value is placed on hearing people's perspectives and gaining insights (Schutt, 2011). The four main methods to collect qualitative data include: Participation, observation, interviewing, and analyzing documents/background context (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Quantitative data collection focuses on data that is measurable such as numerical quantities and values (Cleverism, 2019). It is quantifiable phenomena that focuses on measuring specific variables, and is often seen as more reliable, rigid, and fixed (Schutt, 2011). Quantitative data collection methods include surveys, counting, or interviews.

Evaluation is most effective when it is seen as an ongoing process that can help guide the progress of your youth engagement project. Try one method and see if it works, if not, try another one. You may also want to try a combination of methods to obtain meaningful feedback. Whichever method you choose will provide feedback to the coordinators or researchers on where they are “hitting the mark”. Please see below for a description of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods that you can choose from to use in your evaluation.

QUALITATIVE METHODS:

Focus groups – Focus groups can be defined as a gathering of a small group of people who are led in a discussion by a facilitator, with the purpose of gaining insight into a social issue (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, and Mukherjee, 2018). Focus groups are a good way to generate group discussion in an informal setting. Youth can share their thoughts about the engagement process and build upon each other’s responses. The ideal number of participants for a focus group is no more than 10–12 people. It is easier to manage a discussion with 10–12 people, and this also allows an opportunity for each person’s ideas to be shared. An evaluation focus group or focus groups can be a great way to gather feedback on a youth engagement process. It is important to record the responses so that they can be transcribed and analyzed later. Be sure to let the youth know that they will be recorded and input will be kept confidential. Further, an evaluation survey can be completed after the focus group to obtain additional information that can be transcribed later.

Group Audit – A group audit is a useful way to check in with the entire group on a one time or regular basis to see how members feel about their participation. A group audit should be conducted when the entire group is together which provides an opportunity for youth to take turns sharing how they feel the engagement process is going. This builds cohesion and positive continued engagement. A group audit also provides an opportunity to improve upon things before small issues grow larger. For example, during the Here and Now research project meetings we asked the youth two questions at the end of each meeting: 1) What did you like about tonight’s meeting? and 2) What could we do better for next time? By doing this, we were

consistently able to evaluate the overall progress of our youth engagement process and ensure that youth felt they were being heard. We followed up on the items that youth let us know needed improvement or discussed as a group how to address concerns.

Interviews – One method of gaining in-depth insight into your youth engagement process is to conduct individual interviews with each of the participants. You may only want to do this if you are engaging with a smaller group, if there are dynamics in the group that you cannot understand from a group discussion, or you are seeking very detailed evaluation information. A focus group is simply an interview that is conducted with multiple people at once.

Observation – Refers to the systematic observing, noticing, and recording of events that take place in the social setting of the project (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The adult facilitator can keep notes or a research journal to document the youth engagement process. The facilitator can record information related to evaluation and the notes can be used to reflect on progress and outcomes. The notes collected can be transcribed and then coded which can aid in the data analysis phase.

Reflection – Reflection is a process of looking back over time to reflect on experiences, thoughts and emotions. Reflection can help youth to build self-awareness and strengthens personal and group growth (Freechild Institute, 2018). A way to practice reflection through youth engagement is to engage youth in journaling throughout the project, or periodically setting aside time for reflection and writing. Authors Desjarlais & Smith (2011) note that reflection through journaling can be an important way to work through dilemmas, struggles, and provide learning opportunities that can lead to new insights or different ways of thinking about or approaching a situation.

Self-Assessment – Self-assessment is a useful process which allows people to examine their own role and performance in a project, to reflect on the work they have done, and sometimes with the goal to improve or change behaviour. It is recommended that criteria for assessment should be set before the project/work occurs so that there is a measure of where you started and what you are working towards (Desjarlais & Smith, 2011).

Self-assessment for youth engagement can be undertaken in the form of journaling, personal reflection through writing or art, goal setting, and discussion.

QUANTITATIVE METHODS:

Surveys – Surveys can measure quantitative or qualitative responses from youth. You can design a survey that elicits written answers, or a simple survey that asks people to fill in quantitative data. One way to use surveys is to gather information that people rate on a sliding scale. For example, if you ask the question, did you enjoy participating in this youth engagement process? Participants would be asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 their level of enjoyment, 1 being they enjoyed it a lot, and 10 being they did not enjoy it at all. These can be a good way to open discussion on how to improve your process.

Counting/Tracking – Another way you can evaluate progress is through counting quantitative variables. For example, if you are looking to measure youth attendance, track which youth participate in certain activities or data collection methods. In our youth engagement project, we passed around an attendance sheet to measure and monitor which youth were coming to meetings, and how often youth were missing meetings.

Once you have chosen the data collection methods you will use to conduct your evaluation, you need to continue planning for data collection. Here are a couple of important points to consider:

- **What is the quantity of data required to satisfy your evaluation requirements?**
- **Logistics – When will data collection take place? Who will collect the data? How much time is needed for data collection?**
- **Storage – Where will the evaluation data be stored? Who will have access to this data?**

Step 4: The next step in evaluation is to analyze the data you have gathered and synthesize it into measurable and usable formats (i.e. report, chart, paper, etc.). Data analysis refers to the process of reviewing, analyzing, synthesizing, and transforming data with the purpose of making connections and drawing conclusions to support decision-making. Your analysis process will depend on whether you have collected qualitative or quantitative

data. Once you have completed the data analysis, you will then synthesize the data to come up themes, findings, and recommendations. Please see below for a short description of Qualitative Data Analysis vs. Quantitative Data Analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) refers to processes or procedures that are used to analyze data, interpret data, and make sense of phenomena (Centre for Innovation in Research and Training, 2019). The most common types of approaches to qualitative data analysis and interpretation include: Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), Content Analysis, Narrative Analysis, and Discourse Analysis. Please see: https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/43454_10.pdf for more information on conducting qualitative data analysis.

Quantitative data analysis will involve the counting of numerical data collected, often entered into a spreadsheet format and then synthesizing the data into a useable format. You can decide how you want to present this information- whether you choose to use graphs, charts, or other methods of presentation.

Please see **Appendix E Resources for Youth Engagement** for links to data analysis resources.

Step 5: Decide how you want the evaluation findings to be shared and with whom. The information that you collected can be formatted to be presented in several ways depending on how you want to share the findings. This information can be adapted to be presented in written formats such as reports, blogs, or papers, charts, photographs, art, etc. It is up to you how you want to present the results of your evaluation. Get creative!

It is important that you share the evaluation findings with as many people as necessary including all possible stakeholders. In section 4.6 we described knowledge mobilization and included a checklist to get you started on developing one. Dissemination of your evaluation findings

can be a part of your knowledge mobilization strategy. Below we have listed some possible ways that you can use to share the results of your evaluation.

WAYS TO SHARE RESULTS OF EVALUATION:

- **Blog post**
- **Social media**
- **Evaluation report**
- **Website**
- **Radio interview or podcast**
- **Video**
- **Art project**
- **Charts**

Another component of this step is to gather feedback once you release the results of your evaluation. Are there recommendations that you can adapt now? Finally, once your evaluation is complete, ensure that you make time

to celebrate successes and accomplishments! Evaluation should highlight strengths and capacity that was built, not just things that need improvement.

6.0 Conclusion

We hope that this toolkit has been helpful for you as you begin and move through your youth engagement process. Youth engagement is a fulfilling and enriching way to create tangible change in organizations and empower youth in our communities. If possible, every effort should be taken to incorporate youth engagement as a permanent part of your organization. Youth engagement shows us the richness of working with people who experience and understand the world in a different way than adults. Through the process of youth engagement, youth and adults will grow in their capacities through developing relationships, sharing ideas, and co-creating knowledge. Youth engagement is not without its challenges or hard work, but it is always worth it. So, what are you waiting for?!

It was a really positive experience. Not often we get to do something that people actually listen to us and care about what we have to say. It makes a big difference.

– **Youth Researcher, age 29, Here and Now Youth Research Team**

It has given me opportunities to better myself. I've grown strong from it and I continue to keep growing. I'm not looking back this at this point.

– Youth Researcher, age 24, Here and Now Youth Research Team



Here and Now Youth Research Team PHOTO BY DENISA GAVAN-KOOP

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Youth needs survey

PLEASE FILL OUT THIS QUICK SURVEY TO LET US KNOW HOW WE CAN BEST SUPPORT YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROJECT.

1. Are you able to take the bus to attend meetings?

If no, would a ride be preferable? If so, please let us know which neighbourhood (if possible) you would need a ride from.

2. Do you require childcare to attend meetings?

3. Do you have any food allergies or scent allergies?

4. Do you need any accessibility and equity accommodations (i.e. are stairs difficult? Access to gender neutral bathroom?)

5. Are there any other challenges that may prevent you from attending meetings that we can support you with?

6. Is there anything else we should know about how to best support you?

Appendix B: Organizational readiness for youth engagement checklist

IS YOUR ORGANIZATION READY FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT?

- Have you defined a clear purpose and scope for engaging youth in your project or organization?
- Does your organization have a clear strategy on how to engage youth?
- Are adults in your organization adequately trained for youth engagement?
- Are adults in your organization willing to transfer decision making authority to youth?
- Can your organization adequately handle the costs associated with breaking down barriers to youth engagement?
- Does your project/organization/institution, etc. have an adequate timeline and budget to support youth engagement?
- Is your organization and staff flexible in responding to challenges related to youth engagement?
- Does your organization operate from a harm reduction, trauma-informed approach to youth engagement?
- Is the Board of Directors and/or Governance Committee interested in pursuing youth engagement?
- Is the Board of Directors well informed of the project, timelines, expectations, and outcomes?
- What is the method for seeking feedback and input on youth engagement from the Board of Directors?
- What information related to youth engagement would your board or advisory committee expect before, during, and after your youth engagement project takes place?

Appendix C: Recruitment strategy checklist

- Have you determined your target population? (i.e. age restriction, certain socioeconomic characteristics, neighbourhood of residence, etc.)
- Are criteria for participation strict or flexible?
- How many youth do you want to recruit?
- Where will you focus your recruitment efforts (i.e. will you target specific organizations that serve youth, youth programs, schools, public places, etc.?)
- Is recruitment closed after you reach a certain number of participants or will it be ongoing?
- Will there be an application process for youth who are interested in participating with your organization or project?
- How will you recruit new youth if some leave the project?
- What happens if the interest that beyond the capacity your organization or project can handle?
- Will you use social media and visual aids as a part of your recruitment process?

Appendix D: Sample recruitment poster

Your Voice Matters!

**Are you between the ages of 15-29?
Have you ever experienced homelessness?
Do you spend time couch surfing?**

Why take part in this project?

- **Skill building opportunities**
- **Get involved in advocacy and activism**
- **Workshops and training**
- **Explore creative arts and media**
- **Honorarium**
- **Food**
- **Fun activities!**

Please get in touch with us to learn more about how you can get involved. Join us at the first meeting!

Date:

Time:

Location:

INSERT YOUR CONTACT INFO. HERE

Appendix E: Resources for youth engagement

DATA ANALYSIS

Analyzing Qualitative Data:

https://cirt.gcu.edu/research/developmentresources/research_ready/qualitative/analyzing_data

NVIVO Data Analysis Software: <https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/home>

Qualitative Data Analysis: https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/43454_10.pdf

Statistical Package for Social Sciences: <https://www.spss-tutorials.com/spss-what-is-it/>

ETHICS

Guidelines for the Ethical Engagement of Young People:

<https://fnrcaringociety.com/sites/default/files/Guidelines-Ethical-Youth-Engagement.pdf>

HARM REDUCTION

Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse: Harm reduction policies and programs for youth:

<http://www.ccsa.ca/Resource%20Library/ccsa-11340-2006.pdf>

Harm Reduction: <https://ontario.cmha.ca/harm-reduction/>

Harm Reduction Training Manual: <http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Educational%20Materials/Epid/Other/CompleteHRTRAININGMANUALJanuary282011.pdf>

How to Administer Naloxone (Video):

https://video.vice.com/en_us/video/how-to-administer-naloxone/581a1bbfabcb66366a55bd82

Understanding Harm Reduction: Substance Use

<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/substance-use-harm-reduction>

RESEARCH TRAINING

Heartwood Centre for Community Youth Development Participatory Action Research Manual:

<http://heartwood.ns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/ParticipatoryManual.pdf>

SAS2 Dialogue Ottawa Handbook for Participatory Action Research, Planning, and Evaluation:

https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/11f418_c56ab3b5fc5c455091178ac894ab359d.pdf

Community-Based Participatory Research A Training Manual for Community-Based Researchers:

https://www.livingknowledge.org/fileadmin/Dateien-Living-Knowledge/Dokumente_Dateien/Toolbox/LK_A_Training_manual.pdf

Qualitative Data Analysis: https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/43454_10.pdf

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

Crisis & Trauma Recovery Institute <https://ca.ctrinstitute.com/>

Self-Compassion: <https://self-compassion.org/>

Trauma-informed care training (Klinik Community Health in Winnipeg):

<http://klinik.mb.ca/education-training/training-opportunities/trauma-informed/>

Appendix E: Resources for youth engagement (continued)

Trauma-Informed Toolkit: http://trauma-informed.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Trauma-informed_Toolkit.pdf

Trauma Recovery resources: www.trauma-recovery.ca

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

A Way Home: National Youth Collaboration Toolkit:

<http://awayhome.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/National-Youth-Collaboration-Toolkit.pdf>

Community Action Tool: Creative Ideas for Youth:

<https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Creative-Ideas-for-Youth-Community-Action.pdf>

From Participation to Engagement: A Review of Conceptual Models for Developing Youth Engagement Strategies:

<http://www.jcsh-cces.ca/ye-book/html5/>

Heartwood Centre for Community Youth Development Youth Engagement Strategy:

<http://heartwood.ns.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/YouthStrategy.pdf>

McCreary Centre Society Youth Engagement Resources:

https://www.mcs.bc.ca/youth_engagement_resources

Participation Models A chase through the maze Citizens, Youth, Online:

https://www.nonformality.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Participation_Models_20121118.pdf

YAC Link: Tips and Tricks for Starting a Youth Advisory Council: <http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/YAC-Link-web.pdf>

Youth Consultation Toolkit:

http://www.officeforyouth.sa.gov.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0004/4990/youthconsultation-toolkit.pdf

Youth Engagement and Development: Principles in Action:

<http://www.algomapublichealth.com/media/1327/youth-engagement-strategies-and-toolscompressed.pdf>

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT TRAINING

Youth Advocacy Training Institute: <http://www.youthadvocacy.ca/>

Youth Engagement Matters: Training Course from University of Minnesota:

<https://extension.umn.edu/youth-work-courses/youth-engagement-matters-self-guided-online-course>

Youth Power: Youth Engagement Training, Module 1 - Facilitation Plan: Who Are young People

<https://www.youthpower.org/resources/youth-engagement-training-module-1-facilitation-plan-who-are-young-people>

Appendix F: Participatory action research organizational readiness checklist

IS PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH A GOOD FIT FOR YOUR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PROCESS?

- Do you want to find out more about a specific problem and how to solve it?
- Do you want to collect data that will enhance understanding of an issue?
- Do you want to create results that can be useful to other communities to help understand/solve a problem?
- Do you believe in rigor of scientific method to investigate a problem?
- Do you want to challenge power dynamics between youth and adults?
- Do you want to create opportunities for youth to be empowered as researchers and agents of change?
- Do you want to create tangible change/take action on a given problem?
- Do the youth you are working with want to challenge oppression and inequality?

Appendix G: PAR process guideline

Please see below for a step by step guide on how you can begin and move through the participatory action research process. Please note that engaging in PAR is not as linear as a process as this guideline suggests. We are merely offering a guideline that includes all the steps of PAR although you may jump between steps or not engage in various steps along the way.

Step 1. Determine the length of time for project and purpose of using PAR. Determine which age group/population/community you want to work with.

Step 2. Begin the relationship building process with the community or organization which can include creation of an advisory board, Indigenous leader circle, etc. to gain relevant feedback, approval and direction for your research project.

Step 3. Work with a local university to gain ethics approval on a research project. This is especially important when working with youth, and/or vulnerable populations. Complying with ethical standard ensures proper research methods and rigor in your process is followed.

Step 4. Plan your recruitment strategy and carry out multiple methods for recruitment of target youth population. Recruit youth once ethics approval is received.

Step 5. Undergo relationship building phase with youth that includes team building, appropriate skills training, workshops, etc. This is an ongoing and long-term organic process that often requires considerable time to build rapport and establish trusting relationships.

Step 6. Develop research questions and direction of project (i.e. what are you looking to investigate, what outcomes are you trying to achieve, and how will you get there?). Develop vision and mission of your project and what guiding principles will help you achieve your objectives.

Step 7. Determine data collection methods and timeframe for data collection

Step 8. Collect data and analyze data. This can vary on how this is done depending on the type of data you are collecting.

Step 9. Determine outcomes and how you can use the results to create/initiate action on the problem you are investigating

Step 10. Create knowledge translation/mobilization strategy to share outcomes of research

Step 11. Complete evaluation (although through the entire PAR process you should be practiced iterative cycles of reflection and action, and ongoing evaluation.

These steps have been listed and potential guideline only as there is no true way to “do” PAR. It is a process that develops based on the needs of the community or group of people, and together the process is shaped by all parties. The potential outcomes noted at the beginning of the project, and even the beginning research questions may change as you go through this process. We recognize that neither youth engagement nor research is a linear process. Some steps may take longer than others, may not be needed, or you may have to adapt different strategies as the project progresses. Being adaptive and flexible are critical components of any youth engagement initiative as we discussed in Chapter 2.

Appendix H: Youth evaluation checklist tool

The tool below can help you in evaluating your youth engagement process by looking at five different categories related to youth engagement. Please rate your answer from 1–10. 1 refers to a statement that is not very true or reflective of your experience, and 10 is very true and reflective of your experience.

	RATING	NOT APPLICABLE	NOTES
1) Planning/organization:			
Did your project have clear goals, expectations, and anticipate outcomes identified?			
Did you set realistic expectations for your project? Did you communicate these expectations clearly with youth?			
Did you ask for and listen to feedback from the youth and adapt your project as necessary?			
Were staff supported to learn more and develop their youth engagement skills and/or take part in training related to youth engagement?			
Were the proper organizational considerations for youth engagement applied to this project (i.e. adequate budget, accessible space, enough time to complete project, etc.)?			
Were adults involved with youth engagement respectful and knowledgeable of the cultures and sub-cultures of youth participants?			
2) Capacity:			
Did youth increase their capacity for participation in the community, organization or area identified in the youth engagement project?			
Did youth increase their capacity for participation in the community, organization or area identified in the youth engagement project?			
Did youth and adults both benefit from participation in this project?			
Did youth voice shape the direction and goals of the project or initiative?			

Appendix H: Youth evaluation checklist tool (continued)

	RATING	NOT APPLICABLE	NOTES
3) Level of Engagement:			
Did youth feel engaged throughout the project?			
Did youth regularly attend project meetings and activities?			
Did you adequately break down barriers for youth to attend engagement activities?			
What level of decision-making capacity did youth have? Were decisions shared equally with adults?			
4) Creativity			
Did your project incorporate arts-based methods to engage youth in creative ways?			
Did youth have an opportunity to express their ideas in creative ways (i.e. multiple methods of engagement - speaking, writing, art, music, etc.)?			
5) Outcomes			
Did you achieve the goal or goals of the project? If not, why not?			
How can the outcomes of this project be used to advance organizational goals? Youth's goals? Community needs/initiatives?			
Is there an opportunity to continue youth engagement in your organization or project? If so, what does this look like?			
How did you measure your success? What indicators did you use? Were they successful in helping you to determine successes and challenges?			

Appendix I: Sample evaluation focus group questions

1. What was the best part of your youth engagement experience in this project? Why?
2. What was the most challenging part of your youth engagement experience? Why?
3. How could we improve or make things better for next time?
4. How would you describe your overall experience with this youth engagement process/project?
5. In what ways did this project support your learning, development, or provide skill building opportunities?
6. Do you feel that your needs were being met throughout the youth engagement process?
7. Do you feel that facilitators utilized trauma informed care effectively in this project?
8. Do you have a greater understanding of what youth engagement is after taking part in this project?
9. Do you feel that this youth engagement process/project was successful? Why or why not?
10. What steps can organizations, communities, government, etc. take to make youth engagement opportunities more accessible?
11. What would you like to see happen with this project in terms of ongoing youth engagement?

Appendix J: Sample evaluation survey

1. On a scale of 1–10 (10 being the best, 1 being the worst), please rate your overall experience in with this youth engagement project?
2. Please rate how engaged you feel in this project (10 being very engaged, 1 being not engaged at all)
3. Please check all boxes that apply to your experience with this project:
 - I gained skills in more than one area
 - I had the opportunity to express myself creatively
 - I feel that my voice was heard throughout the project
 - I had the opportunity to try new things
 - I learned something new
4. Please rate how much decision-making capacity you feel you had throughout this project (10 being a lot of capacity, 1 being not very much)
5. Do you feel you have made an impact by participating in this project? (1 is not very much, 10 is a lot)
6. Has this been a rewarding experience for you? Please rate your experience (1 is not very rewarding, 10 is very rewarding)
7. Please rate your level of satisfaction with the facilitator/facilitators (10 is very satisfied, 1 is not satisfied at all)
8. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 is extremely accessible, 10 is not very accessible) please rate how accessible you feel it was to participate in this project? Please indicate what could be done differently to make this project more accessible for you or other participants.
9. Would you continue participating in this project? Why or Why not?

Appendix K: List of sample activities for Here and Now youth engagement process

- Youth needs survey (See Appendix A)
- Community standards exercise and posted it up each meeting and referred to this to resolve conflict, manage behaviour of group
- Passed around attendance sheet each meeting
- Application process for youth research team (asked three questions: What is your main reason for wanting to participate in this project?; Are you able to come to bi-weekly meetings and sometimes three meetings per month?; What part of this project are you most interested in? (i.e. research, group work, art, media, etc)
- Put up signs to meeting location at entrances to building and directions to room
- Put a rainbow flag on the door to our meeting space
- Icebreakers at each meeting (See Spotlight Box on Page 26 for links to sample icebreaker exercises)
- Smudge ceremony at the beginning of each meeting
- Shared a meal at the beginning of each meeting
- Closing reflection at the end of each meeting (What did you like about today's meeting? What could we do better for next time?)
- Youth engagement exercise (asked youth to identify barriers to youth engagement, ways to break them down, and how do we know if youth engagement has been successful?)
- Art activities (we did art exercises that included: challenging stereotypes about homeless youth (See image on Page 13), activist chalking (See image on Page 28), pan handling signs about youth homelessness. At each meeting we either put down large paper on the tables for the youth to draw or had colouring pages available)
- Bi-monthly team building nights at community recreation space
- Community outreach (walked with Bear Clan Patrol, participated in community gatherings)
- Youth designed t-shirts and youth led grant application from Rising Youth which enabled us to print t-shirts for the Here and Now Youth Research Team
- Trained youth on building leadership skills and completed exercise (what type of leader are you? (See: <https://www.we.org/ap/fourleaderstyles/>)
- Trained youth as researchers and how to do participatory action research
- Trained youth to facilitate focus groups and interviews
- Qualitative data analysis
- Evaluation survey
- Evaluation focus group
- Knowledge translation brainstorming session (How can we take action?; In what ways can we share our message?; Who do we want to reach?)
- Knowledge translation activities (Youth led social media accounts – Facebook, Instagram, two podcasts on community radio station, youth homelessness bus shelter advertising campaign, protest against youth homelessness, meeting with Manitoba Provincial Government Department of Families policy advisors)

Appendix L: Sample workplan/timeline for youth engagement

MONTH 1-2:

- Define why your organization wants to participate in youth engagement
- Identify champions within your organization who value youth engagement
- Work with staff at organization to ensure “buy in” from all key players. Youth engagement is only successful if everyone truly believes it in and recognizes it as valuable
- Identify how you will engage youth, define age range of youth, specific population of youth, etc. and reasons for this
- Identify practices that you want to use in your youth engagement process by conducting review of existing literature and youth engagement examples
- Ensure organizational and project supports are in place before you begin youth engagement (budget, space, time, etc.)
- Develop youth engagement recruitment strategy (define recruitment approaches, develop participant information letter, recruitment poster)

MONTH 2-3:

- Apply for ethics from University partner if engaging in a research process
- Troubleshoot potential problems, define safety risks and how to mitigate. Identify potential barriers for engagement and makes plans on how to break them down
- Decide on if you will have an application process for youth. If so, what will that look like? (please see Appendix K for examples on simple application questions to ask)
- Carry out recruitment strategy (put up posters, meet with staff at youth serving organizations, do outreach with youth in as many places as possible)
- Recruit youth and select participants based on application (if too many youth are interested beyond your capacity)
- Plan for logistics of first meeting for youth
 - *Note if working with Indigenous youth it is important to seek guidance from an Elder or Elders and plan for opening ceremony

MONTH 4- ONGOING:

- Develop facilitation guide, agenda, and select icebreaker activities for first meeting
- Complete community standards exercise and introductory activities at first meeting, ask youth to fill out Youth Needs Survey (see Appendix A)
- Hold session to discuss what is youth engagement, what are barriers to youth engagement, and how can we break those barriers down
- Determine with youth what your main focus, goals, purpose, vision, mission, and guiding principles are
- Carry out specific youth engagement activities (Note: Hopefully your youth engagement process will be a long-term integrated process that will carry on for a number of years or indefinitely. However, this may not always be possible, so if you have a defined end date – be up front about expectations and create realistic project timeline and goals with youth)