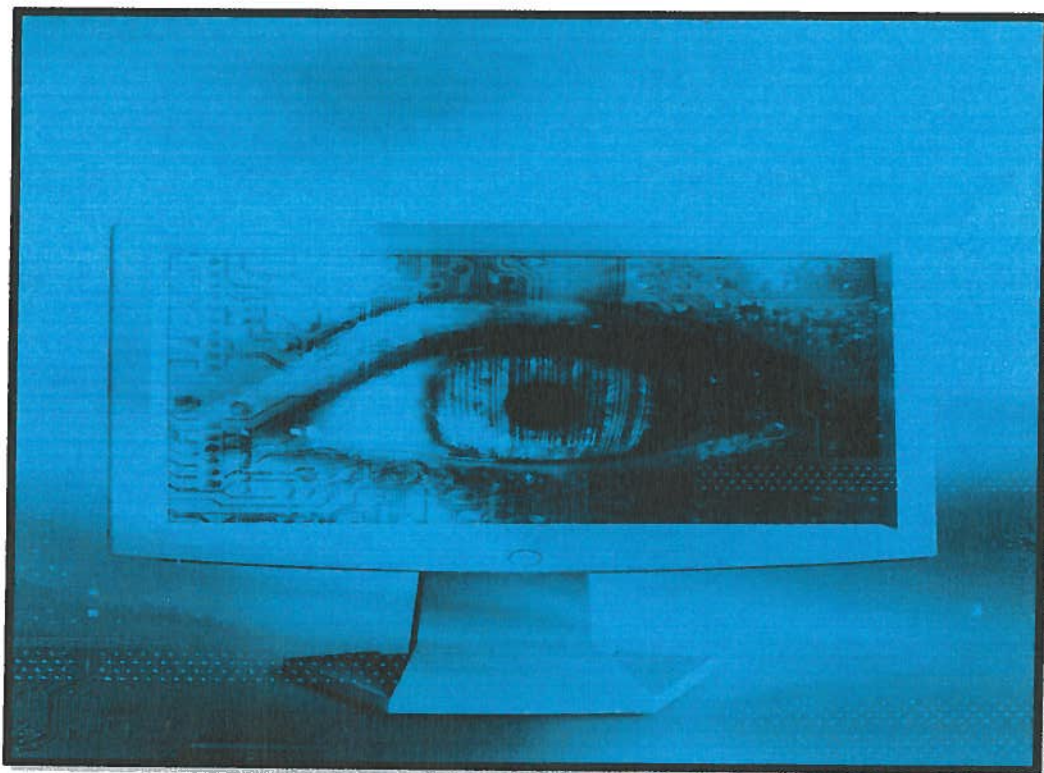


REPORT:  
***FUTURE VISIONS FOR YOUTH***

JAN. 31, 2014  
A CONSULTANT STUDY  
FOR DEVELOPING A  
YOUTH STRATEGY

TOWN OF AMHERST-JUNE, 2013-RFP-13-10



PARTNERS:

TOWN OF AMHERST, AMHERST YOUTH TOWN  
COUNCIL, COMMUNITY YOUTH  
STAKEHOLDERS, COMMUNITY YOUTH  
AND  
DR. LENA WALKER

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction and Details:

As a strategic priority of Amherst Town Council in 2009, *Youth Initiatives* was deemed to be a priority. The best way to address this issue was the development of a Youth Council. This group was originally called the *Youth Advisory Council* but was renamed in 2011 to *Amherst Youth Town Council* in a rebranding effort, to have a known, direct affiliation to the Town of Amherst. The inaugural council in 2009 had a membership of 7; currently in 2013 membership is at the capacity as per policy of 12 members; with 28 applications having been received this year.

The role of the Amherst Youth Town Council is to identify and bring forward issues to Town Council, to become more familiar with the workings of local government, to participate actively in community events and to make recommendations to Town Council (refer to Amherst Youth Town Council Policy #10350-21, [www.amherst.ca](http://www.amherst.ca) -Residents-Youth- See Appendix 1).

The Amherst Youth Council has become an established, respected youth organization that is raising the profile of youth in Amherst and is operating in accordance with policy; but gaps still persist. The Amherst Town Council posed a number of critical questions to explore these gaps and determine possible youth initiatives for the future. (See Appendix 2).

In an effort to answer some of these pressing questions and to better delineate the needs of all youth in the Town of Amherst, the Town Council put a call out to enlist a study, making youth one of its priorities for the upcoming years. To this end, the Town of Amherst commissioned a study into mapping assets and gaps in youth services in the Town of Amherst, exploring best practices for youth, and determining possible strategies for future youth initiatives across the 8 domains of: **Youth Volunteering, Youth Homelessness, School Readiness, Mental Health and Addiction Services, Youth Involved in Crime, Physical Activity, Low Income Families and Drop-out Rates**. This study is entitled *Future Visions for Youth*. The Amherst Town Council hopes that this study will enliven youth initiatives and practices that help develop the full potential of all Amherst youth and improve their chances of making a successful transition to adulthood.

This report summarizes the findings from the *Future Visions for Youth* Study. The study consisted of a scan of the literature of over 10 academic and community sector studies and reports, interviews with over 10 key youth participants, two focus groups, (one with 22 youth, 2 adult facilitators, and 6 youth leaders, and a second with 6 key adult stakeholders), as well as 2 round

table discussions with 6 youth and 4 youth programmers. This study also involved the development of an asset map modeled after the Google maps concept, delineating the assets in Amherst across three broad categories: institutional, community and individual. Finally, the *Future Visions for Youth* study profiles 3 youth programs demonstrating best practices for youth; one local, one regional and one national. As a result of this research study a series of gaps were identified in youth services in the Town of Amherst and five key recommendations are outlined to address these gaps.

This study offers a definition of the term “youth” – encompassing the ages between 11 to the late teens, 18-19. The term reflects both a period (being a youth) and a process (making the transition to adulthood) – youth programs need to have regard for both of these elements.

From the literature scan emerged: (1) the need for an asset-based approach, promoting the strengths and skills of youth, where youth are viewed as resources to be developed, not problems to be solved; (2) the importance of a caring, supportive adult in making a difference in the life of a youth; (3) an emphasis on effective implementation, including a reliance on measurement for the sake of learning and improvement. (Neubauer, 2009)

#### **Identified Assets:**

The *Future Visions for Youth* Study findings spanned across the afore mentioned 8 domains and presented learnings connected to each. These learnings will be discussed in detail further along in the report. Three iterative rounds of research were conducted during the study and included engagement with a good cross section of Amherst youth and Youth Programs. Including institutions, community service clubs, local not for profits, youth driven clubs and organizations, arts and sports programs, community school and YMCA programs. These different programs fill different niches in the community. For example, Schools Plus runs programs targeting youth who are in need of connection and supports through school to enhance life skills and build personal capacity, while the YMCA programs focus on promoting neighbourhood engagement and enhancing quality of life for youth primarily through physical activity. (See Appendix 3- Link to Amherst Asset Map) The Amherst Asset Map is a dynamic interactive tool which may be used to develop future youth initiatives.

### **Best Practices:**

Most surveyed programmers define their organization as a competency-based program or service-based program, often possessing a holistic personal development perspective. Several of these programs tend to focus on developing competencies such as: Interpersonal skills, conflict resolution, critical thinking, civic responsibility, goal attainment, communication skills, self development, physically, mentally, socially and emotionally. Most programs pursue developing these competencies through experiential activities such as community service or project development, as well as formal and informal instruction. (Bonnell and Zizys, 2005)

Youth programming in Amherst was seen as most effective when it empowered youth towards action; as the Amherst Youth Town Council (AYTC) seeks to do, or when it involved youth meaningfully in program development and/or implementation; as with the peer to peer counselling program offered through Amherst High School, and programs were seen as most effective when they accounted for individual differences in terms of “age” and “stage” of youth development; as in the diverse and inclusive nature of programs such as Schools Plus, YMCA, Maggie’s Place, and Cops for Kids, all highly successful youth programs in the Town of Amherst.

### **Highlights of the Study Findings:**

The *Future Visions for Youth* study participants cited their top priorities as: **Mental Health and Addictions, Youth Involved with Crime, Low Income Families, Physical Activity and School Readiness**. Other important findings indicate the need for: **Expanded Community Awareness, a Dedicated Youth Space, Mental Health and Addictions Services, Collaboration across Community Organizations, Youth Led Programming, Inclusion, Giving Voice to Youth, Outreach, Youth Recognition** via days/festivals and forums and **Safe Free Programs** to address **Critical needs**. And finally, study participants emphasized the overarching theme of **Safety** across all domains as well as the need for further **Awareness, Access, Inclusion**, expanded opportunities for **Self Development** and additional **People, Places and Programs** to address the **Critical Needs of all Amherst Youth**.

There were also a number of **brilliant ideas** put forth by the study participants about how best their needs can be met. The highlights of these include:

There needs to be a more diverse membership on the Amherst Youth Town Council

We would like a youth centre, youth resource centre, and youth neighbourhood house or youth hub

There could be regular youth presentations, from ALL youth, to the Amherst Town Council

The ATC and the AYTC need to do regular outreach to the broader community  
There have to be more safe, accessible spaces for youth to learn and do free activities  
We need youth leadership training so youth can take the ball and run with it into the future  
We need a mentorship program for adults to mentor youth and youth to mentor youth  
There needs to be much better cross agency communication and collaboration  
There needs to be more awareness of the desires, strengths, issues and needs of ALL youth  
We need to fence in and staff the skate park  
The community could host an annual youth day, forum, or youth festival and have regular youth recognition days

**Further Learnings**  
The interviews with study subjects and the focus

**This report emphasizes the need to encourage an inter-generational learning culture across the entire community sector, including making it easier to access learnings and share best practices broadly, to enhance program design and effective implementation among more agencies. (Bonnell and Zizys, 2005)**

group with youth gave rise to further learnings, concerning the definitions of youth versus vulnerable youth, approaches to outreach to youth, youth-led initiatives, diversity of youth, program outcomes relevant to youth, involving parents in youth programs, addressing the challenges posed by a lack of awareness of the need and gaps experienced by youth, and the lack of adult mentorship to bridge these gaps.

Key elements of three successful youth programs profiled in the study include a clear mission focus, a critical mass of impact within a defined geographic area, provision of a range of services, and the mobilization of many community partners.

This study found that youth programming contributes to positive youth development by facilitating young people to be leaders in their communities, their schools, their families and their own lives. Through these programs, participants develop important social, life and employment skills, as well as expand and solidify critical social and community support networks. Both existing and future youth programs in Amherst are essential in building community capacity for addressing the areas of concern for successful futures for youth.



### **Obstacles and Challenges:**

The most reported obstacle for local youth oriented organizations was a *lack of integration* and *collaboration* amongst various youth service providers, closely followed by a shortage of stable *funding*. Other commonly reported challenges included the need for more *inclusive* and comprehensive *outreach* and recruitment, as well as a lack of organizational *capacity* for longitudinal program *evaluation* for *sustaining* long term *engagement* of youth participants, alumni, volunteers, mentors and all *support persons*. Many programs attempt to address these organizational capacity issues through enlisting community members as volunteers, mentors, facilitators, and by attempting to develop strategic partnerships, as well as by using community meetings and outreach in an effort toward sustaining engagement.

### **Identified Gaps:**

The identified gaps from the research emerged through the three iterative rounds and were as follows: **Round one** - Mental Health and Addiction , Youth Involved in Crime, Low Income families, Physical Activity, and School Readiness. **Round two** - Awareness, outreach, dedicated youth space, mental health and addiction, collaboration, youth led programming, inclusion, voice, youth recognition, safe free programs to address and in **Round three** - Low Income Families, Homelessness, Mental Health and Addictions, Volunteering, Youth Involved in Crime, Physical Activity, Drop-out Rates, and School Readiness. (See Appendices 4, 5 & 6)

### **Recommendations:**

The *Future Visions for Youth* Study for the town of Amherst makes the following recommendations:

- Open a **Youth Neighbourhood House**, centre, hub or resource centre, a safe accessible place staffed by youth volunteers primarily along with a very small adult cognate of service providers. This safe space will act as the one stop shopping model for ALL youth programs and programmers. The meeting place of the YLN mentioned above and the safe space where counsellors, educators, youth programmers and coaches offer FREE programs across all domains of concern, especially mental health and addictions programming. The youth

neighbourhood house could also house free internet and cell phone use. They could offer free workshops on the YLN, as well as Youth Outreach Leadership training sessions.

- The development of a Town of Amherst **Youth Led Network (YLN)** to enhance collaboration, communication and coordination among ALL youth programs, programmers and both the Amherst Youth Town Council and the Amherst Town Council. This network would have several elements including a technological foundation driving it. The *Future Visions for Youth* could become a website which includes the Amherst mapping tool, a blog, and be linked to the existing AYTC Face Book page, Twitter, Linked in and possibly linked to the Town of Amherst web site.
- The facilitation of more effective outreach and inclusion by training an Amherst **Youth Leadership Outreach Team**, comprised of a cohort of 5 youth annually, from diverse backgrounds, each of whom will take the lead on one priority issue each year. This cohort will then train peers as leaders, outreach workers and volunteers to do community service work on the priority issues. This team would grow annually to become a resilient force of 25 youth leaders 2-3 years into the future, creating an ongoing cycle of successful youth leadership.
- Create an informal system that could follow youth through programs addressing different stages of youth development and into different streams of interest via mentoring programs where both adults and youth are able to register on a **Mentoring Database** and apply to be a mentor or to receive a mentor; and make this service available throughout Cumberland County. The mentorship database could be part of the FVY website and access could be made through the school system, to ensure safety for all concerned.
- Launch a **Comprehensive Public Education Campaign** to bridge gaps regarding awareness of the needs of ALL youth and access to resources to meet those needs. Offer FREE monthly Youth and Family seminars to build community capacity across the priority areas of Mental Health and Addictions, Youth and Justice, Labour Market Information on opportunities for employment and skills training, Physical Activities, School Readiness and Programming. These inclusive and diverse seminars will serve to erase the stigma associated with vulnerabilities and build on collective resilience through enhancement of the 5 C's Confidence, Competence, Contribution, Character and Connection.

## Future Visions for Youth Study: Definitions of Terms

### Glossary of Terms:

**Gen Y** – millennial, often referred to the generation following generation X, beginning with the 80's, 90's and 2000's. Used to describe teens of today – the echo boomers are this generation, those who possess much more civic mindedness and a deep sense of community engagement

**Global Citizens** – are youth who have a strong sense of the global community, place their identity with the greater community, as opposed to individuality, an identity that transcends geographical borders

**Media Revolution** – is the revolution cycling around us and is only in its infancy - it is the myriad of technological devices and advances that drive corporate states and social identity, changing us both personally and professionally

**Capacity Building** – the art and concept of development which focuses on understanding the obstacles which inhibit people, often referred to the strengthening of competencies in people and communities

**Confidence** – trust or faith in a person or thing, a trusting relationship, self confidence stresses trust in one's self sufficiency

**Competence** – the ability to do something well, successfully and efficiently, to be proficient or accomplished

**Character** – there are 6 pillars to character- trustworthiness, caring, respect, responsibility, fairness, and citizenship

**Connection** – a relationship in which a person, thing or idea is linked to something else, and one's relevance to another, partnership and collaboration within and around entities

**Contribution** – a payment exacted for a special purpose, an impost or levy, sharing of gifts and skills with one's community, a commitment in thought and deed to the betterment of one's community

**Interconnectedness** – the links between all things, a world view that sees the oneness in all things, that there is no true separation deeper than appearance

**Youth** - encompassing the ages between 11 to the late teens, 18-19. The term reflects both a period (being a youth) and a process (making the transition to adulthood)

**Vulnerable youth** - are defined as those who while transitioning through adolescence and young adulthood, are not headed on the "typical" path to adult roles and responsibilities. By "atypical" we do not mean youth who merely express their individuality but instead we mean a group of youth who are currently struggling to be successful in their roles as adolescents and who are socially, educationally, and economically disadvantaged



relative to their peers. These are youth who are often not connected to education, employment, or organizations that prepare them for successful adulthood.

**Priority Youth** – those who are at greater risk of homelessness, school drop-out rates, social exclusion, addiction and other health compromising behaviours. They are sometimes disconnected from meaningful relationships. (Mc Creary Report, 2013). Note: for the purpose of this study vulnerable youth and priority youth are interchangeable terms.

**Youth Priority Programs** – act on the premise that every young person should thrive – youth priority programs build a sense of identity and community and are built on the philosophy of positive youth development (PYD)

**Convergence** – the possible phenomenon of multiple services being connected through a single source line – centre or web

**Mentor** – one who offers encouragement and practical plans for dealing with personal issues – one who imparts wisdom and meaning and shares knowledge with a less experienced colleague?

**Collaboration** – to work with another person or group to achieve something – to cooperate with willingly especially as in intellectual endeavours

**Asset Mapping** – is a capacity focused way of redeveloping communities using a positive approach and building on existing protective and resiliency factors

**Consciousness** – the quality or state of being aware of an external object or something in oneself

**Self development** – activities that improve awareness and identity, develop talent and potential, build human capital and enhance quality of life

**Youth led programming** – is the engagement of young people as active participants to recognize their unique perspectives, skills and values (J.W.McConnell Family Foundation, 2014)

**Leadership** – a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in accomplishing a goal - to freely offer to do something of value , to be of service, to perform a service willingly and without pay

**Safety** – is the state of being safe, the condition of being protected against physical, social, spiritual, financial, political and emotional harm, both an internal and external construct

**Access** – a means of approaching, entering or communicating with, or making use of, and the ability or right to approach, to belong and engage with

**Self worth – self esteem** – the emotional evaluation of one's worth, one's attitude, judgement and self concept

**Critical needs** – are the basic needs of human persons: physiological, safety, sense of belonging, esteem, and self actualization

**Positive Youth Leadership Development** - a form of youth development programming that utilizes a model of positive development to target specific leadership competencies and relevant experiences

**Youth Outreach Team** – promotes opportunities for youth to become involved in their communities while developing youth capacity to work toward positive social change

**40 Developmental Assets** – A framework that is commonly used in the field of child development and which together is meant to outline the competencies, skill sets, and opportunities necessary for children to develop as vibrant adults

**“What is necessary to change a person is to change his awareness of himself.” (Maslow)**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - p. 1**

**INTRODUCTION - p.11**

**SECTION I: Research Methodology - p.11**

**SECTION II: Positive Youth Development (PYD) and Future Visions for Youth (FVY) - p.12**

**SECTION III: FVY Study: Definitions of 8 Areas of Concern Regarding Amherst Youth – p. 14**

**SECTION IV: Literature Review – p.16**

**SECTION V: Asset Mapping Inventory of Local Assets for the Town of Amherst – p.18**

**SECTION VI: Review of Existing Youth Town Council Policies and Activities – p.20**

**SECTION VII: Identifications of Current Gaps in Available Services for Youth in Amherst – p. 21**

**SECTION VIII: Persistent Vulnerabilities and Problems in the Youth Sector – p.24**

**SECTION IX: Best Practices in Youth Success Strategies in Amherst – p. 24**

**SECTION X: Local, Regional and National Youth Program Successes – p. 28**

**SECTION XI: Future Visions for Youth Data Collection and Study Findings – p. 31**

**SECTION XII: Future Visions for Youth Recommended Strategies and Action Plans - p.37**

**SECTION XIII: Conclusion – p. 41**

**SECTION XIV: References – p. 42**

**SECTION XV: Appendices – p. 44**

## INTRODUCTION

This report is the outcome of a research project conducted by Dr. Lena Walker for the Town of Amherst regarding the need for a Future Vision for Youth in Amherst, one which will guide needed and wanted youth initiatives across 8 broad domains of concern, delineated by the Amherst Town Councils. Some of the best practices in youth programming utilize a positive development model to enhance life skills in youth participants and to help facilitate their emergence as leaders in their communities. It accomplishes this by focusing on experiential learning through capacity-building exercises and support for youth-led initiatives. This researcher undertook this study with the following goals of the Town of Amherst in mind:

1. Identifying the Town of Amherst's asset base
2. Identifying best practices for youth programming, Locally, Regionally, and Nationally
3. Developing a more integrated network of Amherst youth, adult stakeholders, Amherst Town Council, Amherst Youth Town Council, and other invested community members
4. Helping youth enhance their capacities across all 8 designated domains by recommending strategies for facilitating collaborative initiatives for the future
5. Helping to give youth a voice in local decision-making processes, and dovetail goals and programs with the priorities as mandated by the 2 Town Councils
6. Making recommendations concerning *Future Vision for Youth* of Amherst
7. Providing a sample of a draft toolkit for Youth Leadership Development
8. Making a dynamic and collaborative community presentation regarding the findings of this study
9. Making both hard copies and digital copies available to the ATC

### SECTION I:

#### Research Methodology

The Research methodology for this study was qualitative in nature, involving three levels of data collections: 1. In Depth Interviews, 2. Surveys and 3. Focus Groups. The study also involved a preliminary round table discussion involving three key questions and a case study on homelessness (See Appendix 11). It is important to note that the *Future Visions for Youth* study also used a standard confidentiality agreement for the protection of study participant's contributions. (See Appendix 7)

Qualitative research is defined as an exploratory method and is used when we do not know what to expect. We employ it when we are trying to define a problem and develop an approach to the problem. It is also used to delve deeper into areas of interest or concern and to explore less visible aspects of the problems at hand. Common data methods used in qualitative methods research are focus groups, triads, dyads, in-depth interviews, uninterrupted observation, bulletin boards and ethnographic participation.

In the *Future Visions for Youth* study qualitative research was used to:

- Develop an initial understanding of issues or problems
- Look for a range of ideas and feelings about something
- Understand different perspectives between groups and categories of people
- Uncover underlying motivations and factors that influence decision making and opinions

(Relevant Incites LLC, 2010)

The growth in qualitative research is a well-noted and welcomed fact within the social sciences. However, there is a regrettable lack of tools available for the analysis of qualitative material. There is a need for greater disclosure in qualitative analysis, and for more sophisticated tools to facilitate such analyses. This study involved a comprehensive thematic analysis of qualitative material, presenting as transparent as possible a view of the study participants input. (Jennifer Attride-Stirling, 2001)

## SECTION II:

### Positive Youth Development (PYD) and Future Visions for Youth (FVY)

Many youth programs have moved away from a focus on deterrence of problem behaviours such as: drug and alcohol abuse, unsafe sex, and crime related behaviours, toward a model of Positive Youth Development, (PYD). PYD works on the assumption that despite the fact that youth may be problem free it is not indicative that they are fully prepared, and thus youth must be treated as **resources to be developed** rather than problems to be managed. (Roth, 1998)

Expanded models of PYD are the future vision of successful youth strategies and initiatives. The 40 Developmental Assets for youth development are targeted by the PYD model, and include: Conflict resolution, planning, decision making, interpersonal competence, community service and self esteem. Future programs which build on the PYD will go far in developing youth competencies and leadership through providing challenging and relevant experiences. PYD is a collective resilience driver. (Lerner, Almerigi and Theokas, 2005) The PYD model provides the conceptual framework for the *Future Visions for Youth* study. The future of PYD will emphasize building capacity around the 5 C's.

## 5 C's

Youth represent nearly 50 percent of the world's population and have a major stake in global leadership and citizenry. *The Future Visions for Youth Study* helps examine the vital challenges youth face as an emergent workforce of global citizens and leaders. Currently we are witnessing and experiencing a subtle but powerful shift in the workplace, as Boomer leaders and managers make room for Gen Y to take their rightful place in the constellation of leadership, citizenry and as a sustainable labour force. Across generations, we are asking critical questions regarding the true purpose of each. Before one maps a journey one often determines one's purpose and possible challenges which may present themselves along the way, and as such, one must look back while simultaneously looking forward. This study is part of "looking forward."

The media revolution spearheaded by youth is enabling them to look forward with an expansive web of collective eyes. It is their revolution and they are using it to strengthen the 5 C's: **Confidence, competence, character, connection, and contribution.** (Kinkade and Macey, 2003) This potent medium is crucial to the future career paths youth are creating. It is a powerful bridge upon which they emerge as global citizens of the future. Youth leaders, as emerging leaders, are engaged in a vital conversation with peers worldwide, asking questions about things such as: Peace, environmental issues, employment prospects, educational opportunities, sustainability, and various other critical questions of the day. Although youth are struggling with career path decisions and transitions they refuse to passively sit by without answers. As Martin Luther King professed "We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity ....and so, we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice." (Martin Luther King Jr., 1963). Freedom and justice come with opportunities, opportunities for a future that is bright, filled with promise, exciting careers, prosperity and the fulfillment of one's dreams. Youth in the 21st century seek freedom, justice and opportunities for their futures. They have come to cash their check and it is imperative that existing leaders and mentors assist them in being ". . . able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope"(Martin Luther King Jr., 1963).

Various bridges serve to strengthen the inter-connectedness of all things, across generations, sectors, cultures and geographies. These bridges are held up by the pillars of humanities collective values; values of love, peace, wisdom, health, and wholeness. One of our greatest challenges as educators and mentors of youth is to keep the parts from destroying the whole. We must do this if we are to keep hope alive for our youth. Engaging youth in this study is necessary if we are to strengthen transitions for them from youth to adulthood.



One crucial way we can do this is to build inter-generational bridges. While their challenges are great, youth filled visions and rigorous actions can sustain us. Across the globe youth are changing history, igniting the fire of human consciousness as they resist the status quo and demand change and opportunities for hope. Currently they are mapping future leadership in Africa, in Libya and in Israel. "Every wall is a door," Emerson correctly said. "Let us not look for the door, and the way out, anywhere, but in the wall against which we are living. Instead, let us seek the respite where it is - in the very thick of the battle" (Greenleaf, 1970). Engaging youth is a battle but it is one they must fight with us at the helm. We are their leaders, parents, mentors and wise elders. They will be the next generation of Canada's dynamic workforce and cadre of leaders. This study's recommendations will serve as part of the bridge building, mapping an action plan to help youth get to where they want and deserve to be. *The Future Visions for Youth Study* is a sustainable, engaging and enlightening research project which hopes to serve as a guide for Amherst youth toward self development, future employability and global wholeness.

### SECTION III:

#### **Future Visions for Youth Study: Definition of 8 Areas of Concern Regarding Amherst Youth**

1. **Youth Volunteering** – youth volunteer training requires a dual emphasis on professional development and personal youth development with the capacity to deliver both effectively as contributions to the community
2. **Youth Homelessness** – youth without a safe home or shelter to dwell in, couch surfing and or without a fixed address, youth who are unable to acquire and maintain, regular, safe, secure adequate housing, a lack of a fixed address or night time residence
3. **School Readiness** – programs which focus on early literacy skills and the development of adaptation skills, group work, experience phonetics, social etiquette and awareness and enhancing vocabulary skills
4. **Mental Health and Addiction Services** – substance related disorders are mental health issues and addiction is a neurobiological disease which results in many other psycho-social difficulties which influence development of children and youth. Addiction is characterized by the 4 C's: loss of control, compulsivity, craving, and continued use despite harm. Mental health is a state of emotional and psychological wellness wherein one feels high levels of resilience and competency; where cognitive and

emotional capabilities are maximized in society. Mental Health and Addictions Services promote mental health.

5. Youth Involved in Crime – youth who are in conflict with the law, via participation in illegal activities; this area of concern involves examinations of general violence prevention, school-based violence prevention programs, bullying prevention, sexual abuse prevention, mediation, justice circles, restorative justice practices, gang prevention and positive police engagement in the community
6. Physical Activity – youth engagement in those activities that serve to keep one fit, balanced and emotionally stable, this area of concern involves exploring both the barriers that stand in the way of youth participation in social recreation activities as well as proven strategies for increasing their participation and enhancing the benefits that they derive from these programs
7. Low Income Families – often exist in low income neighbourhoods and sometimes lack opportunities to advance themselves economically. The barriers they often face result in an array of related problems. This area of concern is a topic that leads to a discussion of broader conceptual frameworks and strategic approaches to engaging low income youth, as well as specific tactics for undertaking outreach to at-risk youth who are considered at risk due to low levels of family income.
8. Drop-out Rates – refer to leaving school prior to grade 12 graduation, in other words without a high school equivalent. Students from low income families are 2.4 times more likely to drop-out than middle income families. First Nations and African Canadians are much more vulnerable to this phenomenon. Many socio-economic and cultural factors contribute to this dynamic.

#### Other Areas of Concern

- a) **Services and outreach to “priority and vulnerable youth”** - a field whose findings emphasize strategies for engaging youth through schools, social activities, outreach, leadership and meeting these youth where they are
- b) **Youth engagement** - a very specialized area of social recreation, promoting youth leadership, including youth-led initiatives, and facilitating the involvement of youth in community organizing, social activism and civic engagement
- c) **Youth mentoring** - to include both adult mentors of youth and peer mentors of youth, outlining the development and maintenance of the mentoring relationship, the importance of partnerships to recruit mentors, and the staff skills required to deliver a mentorship program

## SECTION IV:

### Literature Review

The literature review for *The Future Visions for Youth Study* involved: a systematic scan of 10= academic research papers, reports, and various youth programs across physical, psychological, spiritual and emotional development. The following excerpts are from current regional research projects. The findings of the *Future Visions for Youth study* are consistent with the existing findings of both these works.

OVER THE COURSE OF MY INVOLVEMENT WITH NUMEROUS PERSONS IN THE COMMUNITY WHO ARE WELL CONNECTED TO YOUTH IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED THAT THE TOP 10 NEEDS OF OUR VULNERABLE YOUTH FOR THE CITY OF HALIFAX INCLUDE THE NEED FOR:

- Developing more consistent **youth programming** in safe spaces for youth
- Developing more **inter-agency collaborations** on programs for youth of various ages
- Holding **intergenerational events** that bring together children, teens , adults and seniors
- Identifying **role models and mentors** for youth and developing youth mentorship programs that provide opportunities for adults and seniors to share their own life experiences with youth
- Developing more youth **employment opportunities**, especially for those who are not pursuing academics
- Developing and **recognizing the leadership inherent within the various youth groups** and assisting them in further developing their leadership skills and visions through youth led programming
- Developing individual and group youth **counselling programs** that focus on sexual health, employment, addiction, trauma, education, youth parenting, financial management, housing and other issues
- Providing opportunities and spaces for youth, adults and seniors to come together to share experiences and build a **sense of community** through meaningful interactions, connections and social networks
- Developing programs that instil **cultural pride** in more marginalized and vulnerable groups of youth

- Training youth outreach workers and hiring community organizers to develop employment, education, training, and leisure and recreational programs for youth (Walker, 2013)

Dr. Ingrid Waldron, a local scholar and researcher has been working on a 5 year project entitled *Can We Talk* - looking into the needs of the people living in the North End of Halifax. Dr. Waldron's research findings include incites regarding the needs of youth. Some of which are listed below.

**(DR. WALDRON - DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS RESEARCH, FEB. 2012)**

- Developing more consistent youth programming
- Developing more inter-agency collaborations on programs for youth of various ages
- Holding intergenerational events that bring together children, teens and seniors;
- Identifying role models and mentors for youth
- Extending Family SOS to engage youth in leadership activities
- Engaging youth in community meetings and other important community events

#### **The Formal Research Report**

- Developing more youth employment opportunities
- Hiring community organizers to develop sport and recreational programs and events for youth

THERE EXISTS A MAJOR GAP BETWEEN OUR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND OUR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, ESPECIALLY FOR VULNERABLE YOUTH. THAT IS TO SAY, YOUTH WHO HAVE NOT SUCCESSFULLY EXITED HIGH SCHOOL MAY BE UNABLE OR INELIGIBLE TO TRANSITION BACK IN. ARE FALLING THROUGH THE CRACKS. (WALKER, 2013)



- Developing individual and group youth counselling programs that focus on sexual health and education, youth parenting, financial management, housing and other issues
- Providing opportunities and spaces for youth, adults and seniors to come together to share experiences and build a sense of community through meaningful interactions, connections and social networks (e.g. recreational and sports activities, such as ball and basketball tournaments and outdoor games)
- Developing youth mentorship programs that provide opportunities for adults and seniors to share their own life experiences with youth
- Providing opportunities for youth to reach out to and connect with seniors in the community (e.g. a program that enables youth to volunteer a few hours of their time every week visiting seniors in their homes)
- Offering after-school programs during the days and evenings and throughout the week that provide youth with opportunities to participate in recreational, educational and creative activities
- Developing youth programs that are offered during the days and evening and throughout the week, weekends and summer that engage youth in outdoor recreational activities
- Developing programs that instil cultural pride in Aboriginal and African Nova Scotia youth

## SECTION V:

### **Asset Mapping: Inventory of Local Assets for the Town of Amherst**

Asset Mapping is an important activity in strengthening communities by assessing strengths within its institutions, community organizations as well as its individuals. It is a methodology that seeks to analyze and build strong communities; considered an essential tool in community building and economic development. There are many layers of assets, but for the purpose of this study there are three broad categories:

1. Institutional Assets – are assets that include all the institutions in a community such as government offices, schools, hospitals, court houses, policing, churches and correctional facilities and the like.
2. Community Assets – are those community organizations that serve the needs of its people alongside institutions, but separate from them, for example: day cares, social services agencies, YMCA, shelters, fire halls, parks and nature trails, food banks, recreational facilities, legal aid etc.

3. Individual Assets – critical important citizens who are instrumental in building capacity in their communities. In conducting the *Future Visions for Youth* research the study found many individuals who are assets in the Town of Amherst. They occupy positions across all sectors and generations.

<b>INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTERISITCS</b>	<b>COMMUNITY CHARACTERISITCS</b>	<b>INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISITCS</b>
Integrate participants into the organization or program	Possess strong facilitation skills and Outreach skills	1-1 support
Strategic partnerships	Mediate interpersonal conflicts and encourage strong relationship building skills	Leadership
Evaluations	Help youth understand and respect their peers point of view	Mentorship
Leverage online technology	Teach youth inclusivity and offer diversity training	Relationship Building
Leverage volunteers	Facilitate a fair process of decision making	Volunteerism
Are usually well established, stable entities	Encourage goal attainment	Education

\*\*Amherst asset map link:

[HTTP://MAPSENGINE.GOOGLE.COM/MAP/EDIT?MID=Z8UAOLZ7VUN8.KFDGOYXONWPG](http://mapsengine.google.com/map/edit?mid=z8UAOLZ7VUN8.KFDGOYXONWPG)



## SECTION VI:

### Review of Existing Amherst Youth Town Council Policies and Activities

The Amherst Town Council is one of Amherst's greatest assets. Through their progressive efforts on behalf of Amherst youth they have developed an Amherst Youth Town Council, also one of Amherst's greatest assets. "The Amherst Youth Town Council will act as an advisory body to Town Council on those matters within the influence of the Town of Amherst which have an impact on the youth of the town, regardless of their cultural and religious identity, socio-economic background, intellectual and physical abilities, sexuality or gender. The Amherst Youth Town Council will improve the image of the Town of Amherst by raising the profile of the town's youth. The Council will create community awareness of youth facilities, youth services, and youth organizations and the opportunities and programs they provide." (Town of Amherst Policy # 10350-21, 2013)

#### **ROLE OF COMMITTEE:**

1. The Amherst Youth Town Council will identify and bring forward issues which have impact on the youth of Amherst and, while not directly under the control of the Town of Amherst, may be of sufficient significance to warrant the town's consideration or support.
2. The Amherst Youth Town Council shall encourage its members to become more familiar with the workings of local government through education, involvement and participation.
3. The Amherst Youth Town Council will, through researching issues and presenting constructive solutions, acts as a realistic advocate for the youth of our community.
4. The Amherst Youth Town Council will endeavour to participate actively in community events and activities in Amherst and through this involvement, foster a positive image for all young people.
5. The Amherst Youth Town Council may address, foster discussion or make recommendations to Town Council on issues pertaining to all levels of government.

#### **MEMBERSHIP:**

1. The Amherst Town Council shall appoint members of the Amherst Youth Town Council by resolution.
2. All members shall be residents of the Town and include up to twelve positions plus a member of Town Council and designated staff liaison.
3. The term for citizen youth appointees shall be one year, and members may be re-appointed to the Committee without limitations. Citizen appointee terms shall

be by fiscal year. 4. In September of each year, advertisements for expressions of interest will be posted using appropriate media to reach youth. Council will appoint members for the new term prior to the end of October each year.

#### **MEETINGS:**

1. Meetings will be scheduled by the chairperson in consultation with staff. Generally, meetings will commence at 4:00 PM.
2. The committee will meet bi-monthly or as required. The Amherst Youth Town Council will meet on at least two occasions annually with Amherst Town (Town of Amherst Policy # 10350-21, 2013)

#### **SECTION VII:**

##### **Identifications of Current Gaps in Available Services for Youth in Amherst**

The identified gaps from the research emerged through the three iterative rounds and were as follows: **Round one** - Mental Health and Addiction, Youth Involved in Crime, Low Income families, Physical Activity, and School Readiness. **Round two** - Awareness, outreach, dedicated youth space, mental health and addiction, collaboration, youth led programming, inclusion, voice, youth recognition, safe free programs to address critical issues, and in **Round three** - Low Income Families, Homelessness, Mental Health and Addictions, Volunteering, Youth Involved in Crime, Physical Activity, Drop-out Rates, and School Readiness.

Confidence was rated #1 as strength, and Confidence was rated #1 as weakness, both. This is a fascinating study finding which emerged from the round three research. It is very paradoxical in nature. The paradox exists in the fact that what the Future Visions for Youth study participants identified as a crucial gap was also identified as crucial resiliency factor. When asked which of the 5 C's, confidence, competence, character, contribution and connection is your greatest strength? 50% of participants answered confidence. When asked which of the 5C's is your greatest weakness 50% of participants answered confidence. This speaks to a common phenomenon which often occurs at the collective level; whereby resiliency sometimes emerges from the perceived weakest link.

A concrete example of this phenomenon may be found at the Amherst Skate Park, where many “vulnerable youth” gather, and while on an individual level these youth are considered vulnerable, as a collective, the power inherent in the group is a major protective or resiliency factor within the community of Amherst. Below is a quote from Teens Now Talk (TNT), a youth voice magazine in Halifax, wherein these young men are speaking to the same phenomenon.

“Having a strong support system is needed in whatever you choose to do. The Studio to me means moral support. I don’t sing or rap, I play ball. But these are my friends and I come here to hang out with my bros when they are rapping and give them feedback and support: the same thing they do for me on the court.” (Trey, Cunny, Johnathan, 2013)

The phenomenon of connection. One feels stronger when one is CONNECTED. Connection is the key.

On the following page is a user friendly matrix outlining the Needs, Assets, Gaps, and Recommendations which flow from this study. While this portal provides an expansive view of the situation in the town of Amherst, it does not provide a complete picture as many needs, assets and gaps are often hidden. It is important to note however, that future studies or the implementation of this study’s recommendations will result in a much clearer view of things as Amherst moves toward her future visions for youth.

**Future Visions for Youth: Needs, Assets, Gaps and Recommendations for the  
Town of Amherst**

<b>NEEDS</b>	<b>ASSETS</b>	<b>GAPS</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
Mental Health and Addictions Services	Schools Plus	Mental Health and Addictions	Open a Youth Neighbourhood House Develop a Youth Led Network Develop a Youth Leadership Outreach Team Create a Mentoring Database
Community Awareness	YMCA	Community Awareness	Launch a Comprehensive Public Education Campaign Develop a Youth Led Network Develop a Youth Leadership Outreach Team
Outreach	Maggie's Place	Outreach	Develop a Youth Led Network Develop a Youth Leadership Outreach Team Create a Mentoring Database
People, places and programs to address critical youth needs	Police and Restorative Justice Initiatives	People, places and programs to address critical youth needs	Open a Youth Neighbourhood House Develop a Youth Led Network Develop a Youth Leadership Outreach Team Create a Mentoring Database Launch a Comprehensive Public Education Campaign
Safety and safe spaces	Amherst Town Council	Safe spaces	Open a Youth Neighbourhood House Create a Mentoring Database
Inter-agency collaboration	Amherst Youth Town Council	Inter-agency collaboration	Develop a Youth Led Network Develop a Youth Leadership Outreach Team Create a Mentoring Database Launch a Comprehensive Public Education Campaign
Leadership	Department of Community Services	Leadership	Open a Youth Neighbourhood House Develop a Youth Led Network Develop a Youth Leadership Outreach Team Create a Mentoring Database
Inclusion	Parenting Journey	Inclusion	Open a Youth Neighbourhood House Develop a Youth Led Network Develop a Youth Leadership Outreach Team Launch a Comprehensive Public Education Campaign
Mentorship	Early Childhood Intervention	Mentorship	Create a Mentoring Database Launch a Comprehensive Public Education Campaign
Access	Family Resource Centre	Access	Open a Youth Neighbourhood House Develop a Youth Led Network Launch a Comprehensive Public Education Campaign

## SECTION VIII:

### Persistent Vulnerabilities and Problems in the Youth Sector

There are a number of persistent vulnerabilities and problems in the youth sector. These are cited repeatedly by experts working with youth. They include:

- A) Funding – problems securing funding is a concern as when external funding is project based, it is difficult to sustain projects over time or implement longitudinal studies to assess program effectiveness
- B) Ongoing engagement – often the second most common obstacle to program implementation. Maintaining mentorship and relationships requires much time and effort
- C) Evaluation – is often cited as a major obstacle to program success. Rigorous evaluations of youth programs are rare, and thus systematic effectiveness is rarely determined. To determine what works is often grossly undermined
- D) Empowerment – in a study of several youth programs offered through the YMCA, only 37% of respondents felt their program was valued by participants.
- E) Outreach/recruitment- organizations often agree that outreach is a big struggle and that only through consistent collaboration across sectors and organizations can effective outreach be sustained.
- F) Organizations capacity – there is consistently a need to enhance institutional capacity as there is a lot of fragility in the youth sector. For example, the time it takes to train volunteers is often exorbitant. (Bonnell and Zizys, 2005)

## SECTION IX:

### BEST PRACTICES, LEADERSHIP AND YOUTH SUCCESS STRATEGIES IN AMHERST

#### Best Practices:

Best practices offer opportunities to build and nurture a sense of community, belongingness, and *connection* with others. They offer opportunities for youth to feel accepted, valued and feel a sense of place within the community. The dynamics of best practices involve:

- a) Meaningful programs that reflect everyday challenges - identifying and closing gaps



- b) **Creating safe and healthy communities and collaborative health promotion strategies – outreach training**
- c) **Tackling disparity - youth vs. vulnerable youth – under respected and misrepresented and under engaged employment, education and training**
- d) **Creating awareness and access through promotional strategies**
- e) **Collaboration partnerships**
- f) **Youth Leadership Development**
- g) **Peer and adult mentorship programs**
- h) **Aligning strengths of young people with resources**
- i) **A positive youth development approach and an asset based approach**
- j) **Real life activities, training, experiential, and empowering learning**
- k) **Community engagement/Service learning**
- l) **Youth Led Programming**
- m) **Peer to peer engagement**
- n) **Capacity building for social action**
- o) **Neighbourhood House**
- p) **Volunteerism**

### **Characteristics of Youth Leadership:**

- Youth who think for themselves
- Communicate their thoughts and feelings
- Help others understand and act on their own beliefs
- Work with groups of peers to achieve their common goals
- Work toward positive social change
- Possess the skill set and competencies to achieve goals

### **6 Stages of Leadership Development:**

- Create an empowering atmosphere
- Provide meaningful youth/adult and peer to peer partnerships
- Recognize young people’s experience, knowledge and skill
- Support Youth led projects
- Provide meaningful and authentic activities
- Encourage youth to learn from their successes and mistakes



## Youth Success Strategies in Amherst:

Indicators of youth program successes are often difficult to quantify and sometimes challenging to assess. However, many of these success indicators emerged from the *Future Visions for Youth* Study literature review, focus groups, interviews and survey:

### Youth interest

Increased community engagement

Leadership and life skills development

Changing values

Network development

Creation of youth led networks

### Sharing best practices

Doing education and outreach training for youth

Creating a program directory and information portal

Improving sector evaluations

Developing strategic partnerships

An example of a success model is the Amherst Schools Plus Program, which exemplifies many of these success indicators. Amherst Schools Plus is a program comprised of all three categories of assets: Institutional, Community and Individual. This fact drives its success, in as much as it provides for a solid foundation upon which to build. The institutional aspect is the school in which it is located, a good safe, youth friendly space. A place where it is relatively easy to integrate youth participants into the program. It is a strategic partnership amongst key youth stakeholders. The institution of the school is a place that could have many more volunteers. The community aspect of Amherst Schools Plus incorporates the skills of mediation, relationship building and peer education regarding respect for diversity and inclusivity. The community aspect also offers ample opportunity for youth to be exposed to mentors and leaders who will better enable them to attain their respective goals. The individual aspect of Amherst Schools Plus offers one to one support, peer leadership opportunities, a chance to be a mentee, and become better educated on issues concerning life skills, personal growth and development. In essence Amherst schools plus is a living example of the 5 C's in play. They are building capacity in youth character, confidence, competence, and contribution by keeping the youth **CONNECTED**.

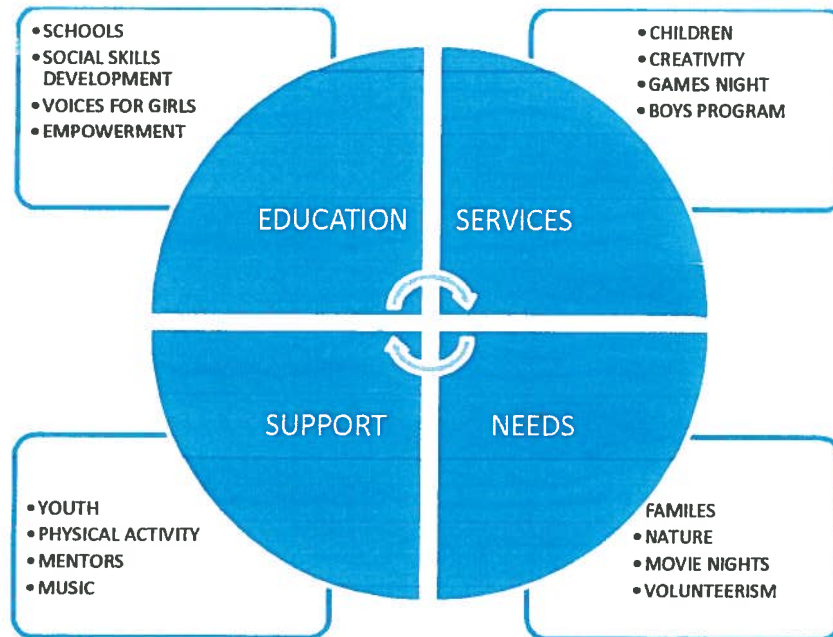
**A LOCAL SUCCESS MODEL:**

**Schools Plus -AMHERST NOVA SCOTIA**

Schools Plus is a comprehensive and collaborative interagency approach to educating and providing service to the whole child and family, with the school as the center of service.

The focus of Amherst Schools Plus is to support referred students and families by helping them attain timely and effective services that meet their identified needs.

ADDITIONALLY, AMHERST SCHOOLSPLUS PROVIDES A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES TO STUDENTS AND FAMILIES WITHIN THE 6 SCHOOLS IT SERVES (SPRING STREET ACADEMY, CUMBERLAND NORTH ACADEMY, WEST HIGHLANDS ELEMENTARY, NORTHPORT CONSOLIDATED ELEMENTARY, E.B. CHANDLER JUNIOR HIGH, AND AMHERST REGIONAL HIGH).



## SECTION X:

### Local, Regional and National Youth Program Successes

#### Local:

**Who – Heartwood Center for Community Youth Development**

**Where - Halifax, NS**

**Mission – Offer leadership training programs to youth and professional development workshops and services to adults. Our direct work with youth keeps us connected and relevant to issues and approaches critical to youth, while our capacity-building and consulting work increases the ability of organizations and governments to reach a diversity of young people across the province.**

**Contact – Executive Director – Maria Cain**

**Heartwood Center for Community Youth Development**

**5516 Spring Garden Road, Suite 202, Halifax, NS B3J 1B6**

**Phone – 902 – 444 – 5885**

**Email: home-place@heartwood.ns.ca**

**[www.heartwood.ns.ca](http://www.heartwood.ns.ca)**

**Who - Pathways**

**Where – Spryfield, NS**

**Bit of history – launched in Spry field in partnership with local community group, Chebucto Connection, after hearing from students and families that greater success in education was desired in the community.**

**It is a national, community-based program; supporting youth education and helping students reach high school graduation**

**Mission - It provides 4 key supports: Academic – tutoring in 5 core subjects, social – group mentoring for grade 9 & 10, career mentorship for grade 11 & 12. Financial – such as free bus tickets, tied to attendance and up to \$4000. In scholarships for post-secondary, Advocacy – Student-parent support worker help to connect students, parents, school administrators, teachers and community agencies**

**Results – High School grad rates have doubled – 1:24 \$ return on investment – 300 % increase in university and or college attendance**

**The issue – High School drop-outs**

**In low-income communities the drop-out rate can soar to 70%**

**Provincial drop-out rates range from 25-30 %**

**In affluent communities that rate drops to 6-11 %**

Contact – President and CEO Vivian Prokop

[www.Pathwaystoeducation.ca](http://www.Pathwaystoeducation.ca)

**Who - Best Practices for Family Literacy in NS**

**Where – Nova Scotia**

**Vision – Family literacy is an approach to literacy development that builds on family strengths and connections within the context of the communities and cultures in which families live and learn**

**Mission – to confer a high degree of lifetime immunity against poverty, ignorance, education failure, low self-esteem and poor health**

[www.cehlibrary.ednet.ns.ca](http://www.cehlibrary.ednet.ns.ca)

**Who – SHYFT – Supportive Housing Youth Focus Team**

**Where – Box 2000 – Yarmouth, NS**

**Mission – Offers outreach support for homeless and at risk youth in Digby, Shelburne and Yarmouth Counties. Offers programs and workshops for youth between ages of 16-24.**

**Programs and workshops determined by youth**

**They come together to address crisis in youth homelessness in Yarmouth, NS**

**They have purchased, renovated and furnished a home. It has a full time Project Manager and Community Support Worker and partnerships with other community organizations**

**Phone – 902 – 881 – 3111 or 1 – 855 – 781 – 3111 also on facebook and twitter**

[www.shyft.ca](http://www.shyft.ca)

### **Regional:**

**Who - Chevron Open Minds 5 C's Program**

**Where – Different programs throughout Calgary, Fort McMurray, St. John's NFL**

**Mission – Chevron has a commitment to community engagement and corporations regionally**

**Vision – to be the global energy company most admired for its people, partnerships and performance. They promote basic human needs, education, skills training, and promoting economic development through community capacity building**

**Some programs they are supporting are – Zoo School, Calgary; Museum School, Calgary; Science School, Calgary; The Rooms School, St. John's, NFLD; heritage Park Museum School, Fort McMurray, BC**

**Designer of program – Gillian Kydd**

[www.chevronopenminds.com](http://www.chevronopenminds.com)

**Who – Youth Entrepreneurship Development Initiative -YEDI**

**Where – Moncton, NB**

**Mission – The program gives youth free opportunity to develop an idea, research its possibilities, conceptualize and pitch the idea to a panel of expert judges**

**Opportunity for youth to show their innovation and engagement – also an opportunity for community to come together and show our youth the possibilities that lie right here in the province**

**The challenge aims to recognize and reward various initiatives**

**68 projects were presented in 2012 from students across NB – There were 11 students chosen with two groups representing 10 projects selected to compete this year**

**In 2010 the competition was recognized by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)**

**Contact – Jane Harwood – Manager, Communications and Public Relations – Enterprise Greater Moncton - Office phone – 506 858 9550 ext. 104 – cell – 506 961 – 1994**

[www.greatermoncton.org](http://www.greatermoncton.org)

#### **National:**

**Who – youth Transitional Employment Assistance & Mentorship Program – MYTEAM**

**Where – Winnipeg, Manitoba**

**Vision – to honour spirit of ancestors and seek their wisdom to guide our peoples back to balance and wellness. We are self determining, healthy, happy and respected for our culture**

**Mission – create relevant programming in partnership with community – it is a 4 year pilot project – it provides guidance and other opportunities working toward personal goals and greater independence for 16-21 year olds**

**Phone – 201 942 4216**

[www.Kanikanichihk.ca](http://www.Kanikanichihk.ca)

**The Butterfly Club – Program for girls 9-13**

**Where – Winnipeg, Manitoba**

**Mission – Engage, motivate, and support academic, cultural and leadership development activities, self-confidence, and a sense of belonging – guided by mind, body and spirit**

**Phone – 204 953 5820**

[www.Kanikanichihk.ca](http://www.Kanikanichihk.ca)

**The Girls Project – Program for girls 15 – 21**

**Where – Winnipeg, Manitoba**

**Mission – Program for skill building, goal setting, youth designed programs, build on decision making, planning, self-determination and leadership**



## SECTION XI:

### Future Visions for Youth Data Collection and Study Findings

#### Round I Data

As an introduction to the *Future Visions for Youth* Study, the AYTC were asked the following three questions:

1. What three goals would you like to see our *Future Visions for Youth* Project reach?
2. What three skills would you like to contribute to the realization of these goals?
3. In consideration of the 8 areas of concern for Amherst youth what are your top three priorities and why?

#### Feedback - Question 1:

Goals:

A) The need for many more youth targeted services, events and activities, education programs, youth days and festivals, justice programs, economic opportunities and free activities for ALL

B) The need for more safe spaces for youth; fence in the skate park, staff the skate park, build homes for the homeless, create safe environments; build a youth activity centre, dedicate safe space to youth and open a youth centre

C) The need for inclusion and expanded collaboration across all sectors. i.e. ALL youth be invited and included within the ATC and the AYTC, regular presentations from Amherst youth to ATC and AYTC, regular presentations from ATC and AYTC to community youth programmers and programs, more and better cross agency communication and cooperation.

#### Feedback - Question 2:

The following compilation of skills were included in response to Question 2: Public speaking, problem solving, helping troubled kids, helping youth have a voice, helping to fence in the skate park, helping to staff the skate park, developing leadership qualities in youth, giving direction and support to youth, organizing events, volunteering, providing instruction for physical activities, modeling leadership experience, helping more, taking a leadership role, organizing free events, helping to host focus groups and do surveys with youth, typing skills, helping youth who are involved with crime, homeless or dropping out, hosting a talent day and youth fest for ALL youth and put together youth presentations

#### Feedback - Question 3:

1. Mental health and addictions services received the highest rating by the majority of youth respondents.



2. Actually, priority two included three equally rated areas of concern: youth involved in crime, physical activity and low income families.
3. School readiness, received the third highest rating. However, school programs that address the needs of vulnerable youth in keeping them connected and preventing drop-out rates were closely linked to one another.

### Overview of Round I Findings:

Priority 1 is Mental Health and Addictions

Priorities 2, 3 and 4 are Youth Involved with Crime, Physical Activity and Low Income Families

Priority 5 is School Readiness

### Round II Data

During Round 2 of the research respondents were asked a series of 11 questions. These questions were originally put forth by the ATC. These 11 questions are the drivers of the *Future Visions for Youth Study*. The interview questions were sent out to respondents in three iterative rounds including email, snail mail and in person interviews. The 11 questions respondents were asked were:

1. The Youth Council has become an established, respected youth organization that is raising the profile of Youth of Amherst and is operating in accordance with policy, but gaps still exist and persist. Now that the Amherst Youth Town Council is in operation, where do they go from here?
2. In your opinion, what gaps still exist and persist?
3. Does Amherst Town Council continue with the AYTC or address youth initiatives in an alternative manner?
4. Is the current strategy we employ the most effective manner in which to communicate with youth?
5. Are the youth of the AYTC a good representation of Amherst youth, and can their perspectives be generalized to all community youth?
6. What strategies or activities should ATC be focused on to ensure youth needs are being represented?
7. What activities should AYTC be focused on to become creditable in the eyes of Amherst greater youth population?
8. As youth initiatives are a key priority of the Town Councils, what ideas do you have on how best to proceed in 2014 and beyond?

9. Considering the 8 areas of concern, designated as priorities of the town, (youth volunteering, youth homelessness, school readiness, mental health and addictions, youth involved in crime, physical activity, low income families and dropout rates), what are your top three priorities and why?
10. What are the current assets, that is to say, the things that are working BEST for the youth of Amherst?
11. In 2014, what 1-3 initiatives would you like to see the town launch by, for, and about the youth of Amherst?

The feedback to the above mentioned questions elicited the following responses:

**Feedback to question 1:** Regarding the next steps of the Amherst Youth Town Council, there is a need for: More public awareness of ATC and AYTC, the opening of a Youth Centre, expanded Mental Health and Addiction Services, appropriate justice programs, expanded outreach to youth, additional social programs, and career/employment youth programming.

**Feedback to question 2:** Regarding persistent gaps for youth indicated the need for: Homeless shelters, mentors, a dedicated youth space, public awareness, youth led initiatives, more school programs, more inclusion by ATC and AYTC, and more social programs to address: Poverty, Physical Activity and Crime.

**Feedback to question 3:** Regarding whether or not the AYTC should continue as is indicated the need for: More community meetings and outreach by ATC and AYTC, public awareness, focus groups, surveys to youth, and further community building on the part of ATC and AYTC, a youth resource centre, fund raisers and funding, policy changes and the necessity to include Cumberland County. It is important to note that findings showed the AYTC should continue.

**Feedback to question 4:** Regarding whether or not ATC's current youth strategy be changed, respondent's feedback indicated the need for: Youth to youth programs, social media sites, mentors, government funding, an adult school, additional social programs like Cops for Kids, outreach and the inclusion of Cumberland County.

**Feedback to question 5:** Regarding whether or not AYTC is a good representative of ALL Amherst youth indicated a mixed review, yes and no, as well as the need for a comprehensive public awareness campaign.

**Feedback to question 6:** Regarding strategies the ATC should focus on include the need for: Community awareness, youth friendly spaces, additional activities for ALL youth, additional outreach, programs to address dropout rates and justice issues, relationship building, integrated services, inclusion and youth led initiatives.

**Feedback to question 7:** Regarding strategies to engage ALL youth indicated the need for: Inclusion, targeting priority youth, youth led programming, outreach, opportunities for volunteerism, mentors, 24/7 fitness programs which are free to ALL youth , education about our history and youth forums, days and festivals.

**Feedback to question 8:** Regarding future visions for youth indicated the need for: Youth to become a priority of ATC, Jenn Borne to become the Town of Amherst Youth Coordinator, youth led programming, more volunteer opportunities, peer mentoring, integration of the pieces, opening of a Youth Resource Centre, bridging, ATC and AYTC to Schools Plus and proper dance classes

**Feedback to question 9:** Regarding the “*top three priorities*” question: Respondents chose Mental Health and Addictions as priority 1, School Readiness and School Programming as priority 2, and Youth Involved with Crime, Youth Outreach and Youth Volunteerism, as priority 3. (All were rated the same score).

**Feedback to question 10:** Regarding current assets in the Town of Amherst indicated the need for: A study like this, collaboration and connection, student engagement, expansion of programs such as: Schools Plus, Maggie’s Place, Restorative Justice, Parenting Journey and the need for a youth HUB.

**Feedback to question 11:** Regarding future initiatives was covered by question 7.

### Overview of Round II Findings:

Awareness, Dedicated Youth Space, Mental Health and Addictions, Collaboration, Funding, Youth Led Programming, Inclusion, Voice, Festivals, Forums, Youth Days, Outreach, Safe Free Programming to address Critical issues. (See Appendix 8)

### Round III Data

During Round 3 of the FVY Study 2 focus groups were held: Focus Group 1 – Was with 8 Community Youth programmers and involved discussions around 12 Key Questions. Focus Group 2 – Consisted of 22 youth, ages 11- 18, males and females, as well as two adult co-facilitators and Youth Programmers. This also involved discussions around 12 key Questions.

These 2 Focus Groups were preceded by the group signing a confidentiality form, (See appendix TTT)

Following this was the administration of the confidential survey comprised of 12 questions. This round used a

**4 Point Likhert Rating Scale with ratings as follows:**

- 1 – not important**
- 2 – somewhat important**
- 3 – important**
- 4 – very important**

The 12 key Questions were formulated around the 8 designated areas of concern regarding Youth

Youth Volunteering	Youth Involved with Crime	Youth Homelessness	Low Income Families
School Readiness	Mental Health and Addictions	Physical Activity	Drop-Out Rates

Respondents were asked to rate the level of importance each area of concern held for them, and then asked to describe why they felt this way.

Round 3 also asked two other key Questions concerning the 5 C's:

**Confidence, Competence, Character, Connection, and Contribution.** (Kinkade and Macey 2003)

Respondents were asked to name their strongest and weakest C's, as well as, what people, places and programs would serve to strengthen these aspects within them.

The 12 Questions respondents were asked were:

1. Rate **Youth Volunteering** 1- 4 and why? What would you like to see happen to address this issue?
2. Rate **Youth Homelessness** 1- 4 and why? What would you like to see happen to address this issue?
3. Rate **School Readiness** 1- 4 and why? What would you like to see happen to address this issue?
4. Rate **Mental Health & Addictions** 1- 4 and why? What would you like to see happen to address this issue?
5. Rate **Youth Involved in Crime** 1- 4 and why? What would you like to see happen to address this issue?
6. Rate **Physical Activity** 1- 4 and why? What would you like to see happen to address this issue?
7. Rate **Low Income Families** 1- 4 and why? What would you like to see happen to address this issue?
8. Rate **Drop –Out Rates** 1- 4 and why? What would you like to see happen to address this issue?
9. Please share which of these are your strongest areas and why? The 5 C's: **Confidence, Competence, Character, Connection, and Contribution** (Kinkade and Macey, 2003)
10. What people, places and things would make these even stronger for you?
11. Please share which of these are your weakest areas and why? The 5 C's: **Confidence, Competence, Character, Connection, and Contribution** (Kinkade and Macey, 2003)
12. What people, places and things would make these even stronger for you?
13. \*Please add anything else you would like to say.

**Feedback to question 1- Volunteering:**

Rated First – the need for more opportunities and access to them via transportation

Rated Second – it’s a good cause and a good thing to do

Rated Third - build self esteem and self worth

**Feedback to question 2 – Homelessness:**

Rated First – build homeless shelters

Rated Second – youth need safety, shelter and food

Rated Third - address issues underlying homelessness like family supports

**Feedback to question 3 – School Readiness:**

Rated First – it’s good to get help before starting school so you’ll be ready

Rated Second – I don’t think it matters, it is not necessary, kids don’t like school

Rated Third - we need more programs like this and Maggie’s Place, family friendly spaces

**Feedback to question 4 – Mental Health and Addictions:**

Rated First – the need for mental health practitioners and services

Rated Second – harm reduction, visibility and awareness, make mental health more popular, decrease stigma

Rated Third - need more prevention programs and easier access as in schools

**Feedback to question 5 - Youth Involved in Crime:**

Rated First –more supports for families and youth, activities to support youth, education and redirection

Rated Second –safety

Rated Third – education regarding self esteem and self worth, and the future of youth

**Feedback to question 6 – Physical Activity:**

Rated First – community collaboration to provide more services and programs

Rated Second – youth need to get and stay healthy

Rated Third – access to physical activities regardless of income

**Feedback to question 7 – Low Income families:**

Rated First – more social programs to raise income levels

Rated Second – more job opportunities for low income families

Rated Third – provide opportunities for community connections and belonging by having more caring people donating time and/or money

**Feedback to question 8 – Drop-out Rates:**

Rated First – more programs to stay in school and more fun in schools

Rated Second –much better awareness regarding education for future success and job opportunities

Rated Third – opportunities for various learning styles, programs and services

**Feedback to question 9 & 10 regarding the 5 C's and Resilience:**

Rated First – Confidence

Rated Second – Character

Rated Third – Connection

**Feedback to question 11 & 12 regarding the 5 C's and Area of Most Need:**

Rated First – Confidence

Rated Second – Connection

Rated Third – Contribution

**Overview of Round III Findings:**

Three key themes emerged from the findings of Round 3, with one overarching theme:

The three key themes are:

1. **The need for expanded access**
2. **The need for expanded opportunities for developing self-worth and self-esteem**
3. **The need for development of additional people, places and programs to address the critical issues of youth.**

The overarching theme surrounding these three is the need for **SAFETY**.

**SECTION X11:**

**Future Visions for Youth Recommended Strategies and Action Plans for the Town of Amherst**

The *Future Visions for Youth* study's 5 key recommendations are:

- **Open a Youth Neighbourhood House**, centre, hub or resource centre, a safe accessible place staffed by youth volunteers primarily along with a very small adult cognate of service providers. This safe space will act as the one stop shopping model for ALL youth programs and programmers. The meeting place of the YLN mentioned above and the safe space where counsellors, educators, youth programmers and coaches offer FREE programs across all domains of concern, especially mental health and addictions programming. The youth



neighbourhood house could also house free internet and cell phone use. They could offer free workshops on the YLN, as well as Youth Outreach Leadership training sessions.

- The development of a Town of Amherst **Youth Led Network (YLN)** to enhance collaboration, communication and coordination among ALL youth programs, programmers and both the Amherst Youth Town Council and the Amherst Town Council. This network would have several elements including a technological foundation driving it. The *Future Visions for Youth* could become a website which includes the Amherst mapping tool, a blog, and be linked to the existing AYTC Face Book page, Twitter, Linked in and possibly linked to the Town of Amherst web site.
- The facilitation of more effective outreach and inclusion by training an Amherst **Youth Leadership Outreach Team**, comprised of a cohort of 5 youth annually, from diverse backgrounds, each of whom will take the lead on one priority issue each year. This cohort will then train peers as leaders, outreach workers and volunteers to do community service work on the priority issues. This team would grow annually to become a resilient force of 25 youth leaders 2-3 years into the future, creating an ongoing cycle of successful youth leadership.
- Create an informal system that could follow youth through programs addressing different stages of youth development and into different streams of interest via mentoring programs where both adults and youth are able to register on a **Mentoring Database** and apply to be a mentor or to receive a mentor and make this service available throughout Cumberland County. The mentorship database could be part of the FVY website and access could be made through the school system, to ensure safety for all concerned.
- Launch a **Comprehensive Public Education Campaign** to bridge gaps regarding awareness of the needs of ALL youth and access to resources to meet those needs. Offer FREE monthly Youth and /or Family seminars to build community capacity across the priority areas of Mental Health and Addictions, Youth and Justice, Labour Market Information on opportunities for employment and skills training, Physical Activities, School Readiness and Programming. These inclusive and diverse seminars will serve to erase the stigma associated with vulnerabilities and build on collective resilience through enhancement of the 5 C's Confidence, Competence, Contribution, Character and Connection.

The Action Plan for next steps include:

- The dissemination of the FVY report in both hard copy and digital format to the Amherst Town Council
- Formal presentations of the study's findings and future recommendations to the: Amherst Town Council, Amherst Youth Town Council, and the community at large
- Ideas for the location of a dedicated youth space, which are: the old town hall on Ratchford Street, a building or space attached to the Stadium, the big old building Irving owns near the High School, or a house in the downtown core, which could become the youth Neighbourhood House. Key elements of the location need to include accessibility for town youth, as they are accessing it on foot. It needs to be a youth only space, one that is entirely theirs. For it to be successful it needs to be more than one room, a multi-purpose space that could house the diverse groups of youth and the various activities and services it would provide. **Recommendation # 1:** Youth Neighbourhood House addresses most of these concerns.
- Strategies for the best use of Amherst's individual assets as well as best uses for existing community assets must acknowledge and capitalize on the fact that: youth are their greatest asset and the youth dedicated space needs to be staffed by them, older youth mentoring younger youth under the guidance and supervision of their mentors, adult programmers, guests and parents. There also needs to be at least one full time paid staff and a cohort of dedicated volunteers, who perhaps could be paid a monthly stipend for hours worked. The mentors of the youth could also commit a minimum of hours to assist youth at the centre.
- A key element to the success of all future vision recommendations and strategies is to continue to build on what is already in existence and working, as in Amherst Schools Plus. **Recommendations # 2, 3, 4 & 5:** Establishing a Youth Led Network, Training a Youth Leadership Outreach Team, Creating a Mentoring Database, and Launching a Comprehensive Public Education Campaign, all speak to addressing the need to maximize the town's individual and community assets. (See Appendix 10)
- Financial opportunities to support these future visions are in existence and several key resources are as follows:

Who - Clean N.S.

Where – Nova Scotia – operates through NSYCC – Nova Scotia Conservation Corps.- [www.Clean.ns.ca](http://www.Clean.ns.ca)

Who – Grants for Training, Certification, Wage, Support

Where – Center for Small Business Financing - [Grants-loans.org](http://Grants-loans.org)

Who - Skills Link

Where – [www.servicecanada.gc.ca](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca)

Who – Home Depot Canada Foundation

Where - [www.homedepot.ca](http://www.homedepot.ca)

Who – Sport Nova Scotia

Where – [www.sportnovascotia.ca](http://www.sportnovascotia.ca)

Who - Canadian Tire Jumpstart Program

Where – [www.jumpstart.canadiantire.ca](http://www.jumpstart.canadiantire.ca) and [www.heritagecanada.ca](http://www.heritagecanada.ca)

Who - eHow - Funding for Youth Development Programs

Where – [www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com)

Who - YEAH Foundation

Where – [www.snapscarborough.com](http://www.snapscarborough.com)

Who - Opportunities for Young Entrepreneurs

Where - [www.canadabusiness.ca](http://www.canadabusiness.ca) and [www.site.stfx.ca](http://www.site.stfx.ca)

- A tool kit for engaging youth – this tool kit would be an excellent resource for developing youth leadership - (See Appendix 9 – The Tool Kit: Resources, Tools, and Strategies for Youth Engagement – An Initiative of Halifax Regional Municipality - 2004)

#### Ideas from the Study's Participants

- Distribution and dissemination of this material for a broad based audience as in the entire public community of Amherst
- Make community presentations regarding the study's findings
- Host a Future Visions Youth Forum to spread the word
- Develop a Youth Networks
- Set up a Future Visions web site
- Enhance outreach for youth by training youth outreach workers
- Integrate, coordinate, and evaluate youth led programming
- Open a youth centre, and staff it primarily with youth and run a wide range of youth programs

SECTION X1II :

Conclusion

The Town of Amherst is a dynamic progressive town with a myriad of assets, openness to future visions, and an ethic of care for their youth. The recommendations laid out in the *Future Visions for Youth* study will help the Amherst Town Council, the Amherst Youth Town Council, and all Amherst youth and youth stakeholders map a path for next steps.

The consultant for this study on *Future Visions for Youth* is available to discuss the further development and implementation of strategies associated with the five recommendations, as well as, the desirability and feasibility of incorporating the potential uses for them.

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SECTION XV:

Appendices

Appendix 1

**AMHERST POLICY NUMBER 10350-21**

**PAGE 1 of 2**

**DEPARTMENT: ALL TOWN DEPARTMENTS**

**TITLE: Amherst Youth Town Council Policy**

Minutes reference date: 25 May, 2010 24 October 2011

**PURPOSE:**

To establish a policy for the governance of the Amherst Youth Town Council.

**BASIS:**

The Amherst Youth Town Council will act as an advisory body to Town Council on those matters within the influence of the Town of Amherst which have an impact on the youth of the Town, regardless of their cultural and religious identity, socio-economic background, intellectual and physical abilities, sexuality or gender. The Amherst Youth Town Council will improve the image of the Town of Amherst by raising the profile of the Town's youth. The Council will create community awareness of youth facilities, youth services, youth organizations and the opportunities and programs they provide.

**ROLE OF COMMITTEE:**

1. The Amherst Youth Town Council will identify and bring forward issues which have impact on the youth of Amherst and, while not directly under the control of the Town of Amherst, may be of sufficient significance to warrant the Town's consideration or support.
2. The Amherst Youth Town Council shall encourage its members to become more familiar with the workings of local government through education, involvement and participation.
3. The Amherst Youth Town Council will, through researching issues and presenting constructive solutions, act as a realistic advocate for the youth of our community.
4. The Amherst Youth Town Council will endeavor to participate actively in community events and activities in Amherst and through this involvement, foster a positive image for all young people.
5. The Amherst Youth Town Council may address, foster discussion or make recommendations to Town Council on issues pertaining to all levels of government.

**TOWN OF AMHERST POLICY NUMBER 10350-21**

**PAGE 2 of 2**

**DEPARTMENT: ALL TOWN DEPARTMENTS**

**TITLE: Amherst Youth Town Council Policy**

Minutes reference date: 25 May, 2010 24 October 2011

**MEMBERSHIP:**

1. The Council shall appoint members of the Amherst Youth Town Council by resolution.
2. All members shall be residents of the Town and include up to twelve positions plus a member of Town Council and designated staff liaison.
3. The term for citizen youth appointees shall be one year, and members may be re-appointed to the Committee without limitations. Citizen appointee terms shall be by fiscal year.
4. In September of each year, advertisements for expressions of interested will be posted using appropriate media to reach youth. Council will appoint members for the new term prior to the end of October each year.

**MEETINGS:**

1. Meetings will be scheduled by the chairperson in consultation with staff.  
Generally meetings will commence at 4:00 PM.
2. The committee will meet bi-monthly or as required. The Amherst Youth Town Council will meet on at least two occasions annually with Amherst Town Council. All meetings are open to the public.

## APPENDIX 2

### The 11 Critical Questions the Amherst Town Council Asked

1. The Youth Council has become an established, respected youth organization that is raising the profile of Youth of Amherst and is operating in accordance with policy, but gaps still exist and persist. Now that the Amherst Youth Town Council is in operation, where do they go from here?
2. In your opinion, what gaps still exist and persist?
3. Does Amherst Town Council continue with the AYTC or address youth initiatives in an alternative manner?
4. Is the current strategy we employ the most effective manner in which to communicate with youth?
5. Are the youth of the AYTC a good representation of Amherst youth, and can their perspectives be generalized to all community youth?
6. What strategies or activities should ATC be focused on to ensure youth needs are being represented?
7. What activities should AYTC be focused on to become creditable in the eyes of Amherst greater youth population?
8. As youth initiatives are a key priority of the Town Councils, what ideas do you have on how best to proceed in 2014 and beyond?
9. Considering the 8 areas of concern, designated as priorities of the town, (youth volunteering, youth homelessness, school readiness, mental health and addictions, youth involved in crime, physical activity, low income families and dropout rates), what are your top three priorities and why?
10. What are the current assets, that is to say, the things that are working BEST for the youth of Amherst?
11. In 2014, what 1-3 initiatives would you like to see the town launch by, for, and about the youth of Amherst?

## APPENDIX 3

### AMHERST INTERACTIVE ASSET MAPPING SITE:

<https://mapsengine.google.com/map/edit?mid=z8UaOlz7vUN8.kfDGoYXonWpg>

## APPENDIX 4

### Future Visions Round 1 Data

Group participants were asked to choose their top 3 priorities of concern regarding Amherst Youth.

These are their responses:

<b>8 AREAS OF CONCERN</b>	<b>PRIORITY 1</b>	<b>PRIORITY 2</b>	<b>PRIORITY 3</b>
Youth Volunteering		X, X	
Youth Homelessness	X X	X	
School Readiness		X,X	X, X
Mental Health & Addiction Services	X, X, X	X	X, X
Youth Involved in Crime	X	X, X	X, X
Physical Activity	X, X, X	X, X	
Low Income Families	X, X,X	X	X
Drop Out Rates	X ,X		X

## APPENDIX 5

### Amherst Consultant Study Interview Questions Round 2 Oct. 2013

**Question 1:** The Amherst Youth Town Council has become an established, respected youth organization that is raising the profile of youth in Amherst and is operating in accordance with policy; but gaps still exist and persist. Now that the Youth Council is operating, where do they go from here?

R 1 - No response

R 2 - Needs to be more public awareness; Town Council's doing a great job but people aren't aware; There needs to be more promotion; There needs to be more recruiting of youth

R 3 – Open a Youth Centre, a good location is the Irving owned building near the soccer field or the Old Town Hall on Acadia Street or the Stadium if there was a space. This idea needs to be presented to ATC officially; The new Youth Centre needs to be 2500 square feet, have five staff and its own field (outdoor space)

R 4 – I don't know anyone on the Town Council or Youth Council; awareness – they need to invite us – we need to invite them

R 5 – The Town Council needs to come in to talk about what they do; what do Town Council see as the gaps; Mental Health & Addictions is a critical issue; we need a Youth Outreach Worker

**Question 2:** In your opinion what gaps still exist and persist?

R 1 – Youth homelessness; not enough positive, adult role models; not enough awareness of community activities or how to get involved in them; no dedicated space for regular after school activities or programs

R 2 – I've heard the Amherst Youth Town Council is just a way to make the Town Council look good; lack of awareness of what they do; lack of independent youth led initiatives that are made public; lack of publicity

R 3 – We need more ideas; one day youth forum; county residence need to join the council; ATC & AYTC need to make presentations to schools; the main gaps are poverty, physical Activity and youth involved with crime

R 4 – Homelessness; Lack of community figures; lack of awareness; lack of dedicated space; access issues

R 5 – Mental Health & Addictions; lack of mental health practitioners; justice issues; lack of school programming; lack of career exploration opportunities

**Question 3:** Does Amherst Town Council continue with the Youth Town Council or address youth initiatives in an alternative manner?



R 1 – ATC & AYTC need to have more community meetings, focus groups and conduct surveys regarding youth needs

R 2 – The AYTC is a great way to reach other youth, i.e. Not about me – without me; AYTC is an opportunity for youth to have a voice

R 3 – Yes, but is the Town Council really open to knowing what the real issues are; is the Town Council really open to taking action; there needs to be a youth drop in centre; there needs to be sustainable funding; there was a successful youth centre 15 years ago

R 4 – Yes, AYTC should continue, should do more community building, hold focus groups and conduct surveys

R 5 – Yes, AYTC should continue; the AYTC doesn't get enough support from ATC; funding is a big issue; there is no town budget for youth; why can't we have fund raisers; why can't policies be changed; four years ago we tried to include Cumberland County

**Question 4:** Is the current strategy we employ the most effective manner in which to communicate with youth?

R 1 – No response

R 2 – Youth look to other youth; youth look to media sites; we need to use these to reach youth; we need more adults who are engaged and interested, adults who are beyond collecting a pay check

R 3 – We need Provincial Government Funding; we need an Adult School; both of these were a great success

R 4 – I don't think there is any answer, maybe email; what about Cops for Kids

R 5 – Always reaching out to youth; be more inclusive; be open to Cumberland County, they have five applicants already; they get interviewed and are chosen

**Question 5:** Are the youth of the AYTC a good representation of Amherst youth, and can their perspectives be generalized to all community youth?

R 1 – I don't know; more awareness is needed about who they are and what they can do for us

R 2 – I think they are a true representation; they are strong students with a highly developed social and community conscience; I believe they could share their thoughts with other youth but how do we engage youth who don't have a voice or a strong sense of community

R 3 – No

R 4 – I don't know – re: ATC and No – re: AYTC

R 5 – Yes 90 %, then there is the other 10% that maybe we can't reach; do people know who ATC & AYTC are; if they know them do they really believe they can do anything?

**Question 6:** What strategies or activities should Amherst Town Council be focused on to ensure youth needs are being represented?

R 1 – Raising awareness of activities; youth friendly spaces and the AYTC itself; offering programs and activities that are available to all youth; outreach to youth that are slipping through the cracks – like school drop-outs and those in conflict with the law

R 2 – Go to where the youth are; engage them on their terms; go to the skate park and Wal-Mart and set up tables and have them fill out questionnaires about what's important to them

R 3 – Get to know youth; build relationships; go into schools; engage the larger community of youth

R 4 – Create awareness; create youth friendly spaces; do outreach; open all programs to all youth

R 5 – Focus on weak youth initiatives; make sure WE are on the agenda; what exactly is the ATC doing

**Question 7:** What activities should Amherst Youth Town Council be focused on to become creditable in the eyes of Amherst greater youth population?

R 1 – Activities targeting identified youth with greater needs but exclusive; invite all youth; youth led programming

R 2 – No response

R 3 – Go in to the schools and invite youth to participate and have youth invite in the adults; create opportunities for volunteerism; have adults take five youth out to volunteer placements

R 4 – There is a great need for outreach; there is a great need for 24-7 fitness programs

R 5 – Have a youth forum and invite broader community; have a skate for cancer, sell tickets; have a youth fest; have a skate board competition; have a BBQ; have an Amazing Youth Day; Cops for Kids; learning about history and heritage

**Question 8:** As youth initiatives are a key priority of the town councils, what ideas do you have on how best to proceed in 2014 and beyond?

R 1 – No response

R 2 – No response

R 3 – I'd like to see youth be a priority; I'd like to see Jenn Borne as Youth Coordinator for Amherst

R 4 – Older youth developing youth initiatives, facilitating younger youth programs; more community volunteer opportunities; make better use of what is here, integrate the pieces; have big meetings with key players; bring ATC & AYTC into Schools Plus; open a Youth Resource Centre

R 5 – Dances have gone wrong; offer dance lessons in real dancing

**Question 9:** Considering the 8 areas of concern designated as priorities of the town, ( youth volunteering, youth homelessness, school readiness, mental health and addictions, youth involved in crime, physical activity, low income families, and drop-out rates), what are your top three priorities and why?

R 1 – No response

R 2 – (1) School readiness - develop connectedness to their school community (2) Mental health and addictions – need more clinicians, wait lists are too long, access is a problem (3) Youth volunteering – all youth should be taught the value of volunteering; teach value of volunteerism – it creates a sense of fulfilment that breaches all social and economic values

R 3 – (1) To have a youth outreach worker at every school; to have more outreach workers (2) Have an outreach worker in the elementary schools (3) Have Junior High School kids come to visit High Schools

R 4 – (1) Mental health & addictions (2) Youth involved in crime (3) School programming

R 5 – no response

**Question 10:** What are the current assets, that is to say the things that are working BEST, for the youth of Amherst?

R 1 – No response

R 2 – They live in a town willing to put resources into initiatives such as these

R 3 – We could do what we are really meant to do to engage students in the school community through collaboration and connection

R 4 – (1) School Plus (2) Maggie's Place (3) Restorative Justice (4) Parenting Journey Program (5) A stadium- Rink – a great place for youth hub

R 5 – No response

**Question 11:** In 2014, what 1-3 initiatives would you like to see the town launch by, for, and about the youth of Amherst?

R 1 – No response

R 2, 3, 4, & 5 – same answer – already covered in question 7

## Future Visions Round 2 Data

	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5
Q1: Where does AYTC go from here?	No response	Public Awareness	Youth centre	Awareness	Outreach Mental health & Addictions Justice Lack of Social programs Lack of career & employment programs
Q2: What gaps still persist for youth?	Homelessness Mentors Dedicated Space School programs	Awareness Youth Led Initiatives	Youth Forum County Inclusion ATC & AYTC presentations Poverty Physical Activity Crime	Homelessness Mentors Awareness Dedicated space Access	No response
Q3: Should AYTC continue as is?	ATC & AYTC need more community meetings Focus groups Conduct surveys	AYTC is a great opportunity to do youth outreach	Yes, there needs to be a Youth Resource Centre and sustainable funding	Yes, do more community building Hold focus groups Conduct surveys	Yes, but AYTC needs more support from ATC and funding is an issue Fundraisers are needed Policy changes are needed Include Cumberland Co.

Q4: Should ATC's current youth strategy be changed?	No response	Youth to youth Media sites Mentors Adult investment	Government funding Adult school	I do not think there is any Social media Cops for Kids	Outreach Inclusion of Cumberland Co. Openness
Q5: Are AYTC a good representation of ALL Amherst youth?	I do not know Awareness	Yes, they have community conscience A strong will Sense of community Needs to be youth to youth strategy	No they are not	No they are not I do not know	Yes, 90% Awareness Action
Q6: Strategies ATC should focus on:	Raising Awareness Youth friendly spaces Program Activities for ALL Outreach Dropout rates Justice	Outreach Engagement Awareness Survey youth about their needs	Get to know youth Outreach Relationship building Go into schools Inclusion	Awareness Youth friendly spaces Outreach Inclusion	Focus on weak youth initiatives Make sure WE are on the agenda Awareness
Q7: Strategies to engage ALL youth:	Inclusion Target priority youth Youth led programming	No response	Outreach to schools Invite youth in Create opportunities for	Outreach 24/7 fitness programs	Youth forums Skate for cancer Sell tickets Skateboard competition Cops for Kids

			volunteerism Mentors		Barbeque Learn about our history and heritage
Q8: Future Visions:	No response	No response	Like to see youth a priority Jenn Bome as youth coordinator for Amherst	Older youth leading programs & Facilitating younger youth More volunteer opportunities Build on what is here Integrate the pieces Have big meetings with key players Bring ATC & AYTC into Schools Plus Open a youth resource centre	Dances have gone wrong start teaching classes in real dancing
Q9: Top 3 Priorities:	No response	School Readiness Mental health & Addictions Youth Volunteerism	Outreach workers in all schools Have Jr. HS visit HS	Mental health & Addictions Youth & Justice School Programming	No response



<b>Q10: Current Assets in the town of Amherst:</b>	<b>No response</b>	<b>We live in a town willing to put resources into initiatives like this study</b>	<b>Collaboration and Connection Do what we are really meant to do Engage students in the school community</b>	<b>Schools Plus Maggie's Place Restorative Justice Parenting Journey Program Stadium great place for youth Hub</b>	<b>No response</b>
<b>Q11: Future Initiatives</b>	<b>No response</b>	<b>Covered</b>	<b>in</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>7</b>

## APPENDIX 6

### Future Visions Round 3 Data

Q1: Volunteering	It's a good cause and a good thing to do	Build self esteem and self worth	Decreases all negative stuff, mental health problems and addiction and crime	Need more opportunities and access to them via transportation	Not important – let kids be kids	I don't know
R1	4					
R2	3					
R3				2		
R4	3					
R5	3					
R6	3					
R7					2	
R8		4				
R9					2	
R10		3				
R11	3					
R12		3				
R13				2-4		
R14						2
R15			4			
R16				3		
R17				4		
R18				3		
R19	3					
R20					3	
R21				3		
R22				3		
R23	2					
R24		3				
R25		3				
R26				3		
R27			4			
R28				4		
R29		4				
R30		3				
R31						0

Q2: Homelessness	Youth need safety, shelter and food	Build homeless shelters	Nothing can be done about homelessness	Address issues underlying homelessness like family supports	Raise awareness about invisibility of homelessness	I don't know
R1						3
R2	4					
R3		4				
R4		4				
R5		2				
R6			2	2		
R7				4		
R8						
R9				3		
R10		2				
R11			3			
R12						2
R13						2-3
R14		4				
R15				2		
R16		4				
R17		4				
R18	4					
R19	4					
R20	4					
R21					4	
R22		4				
R23					2	
R24				4		
R25	4					
R26	3					
R27	3					
R28					4	
R29						4
R30				4		
R31						0

Q3: School Readiness	It's good to get help before starting school so you'll be ready	Because I know a lot of youth are failing	I don't think it matters, it is not necessary , kids don't like school	It decreases problems like mental health, addictions and it helps parents	We need more programs like this and Maggie's Place, and we need more awareness, family friendly spaces	I don't know/no response
R1						
R2	2-3					
R3	3					
R4		3				
R5	3					
R6			1			
R7			1			
R8			1			
R9			2			
R10	3					
R11			2			
R12			1			
R13						2-3
R14			2			
R15				3		
R16		4				
R17	2					
R18	3					
R19	3					
R20						4
R21			2			
R22	3					
R23	3					
R24	2					
R25	4					
R26					3	
R27					4	
R28						4
R29	4					
R30					4	
R31						0

Q4: Mental Health and Addictions	Need more mental health practitioners and services	Need more prevention programs and easier access, as is schools	More mental health facilities , centres and safe places	Harm reduction visibility and awareness, make mental health more popular, decrease stigma	Education and training for teachers and service providers in schools	I don't know/no response
R1	3					
R2		3				
R3	4					
R4		3				
R5		3				
R6	3					
R7			3			
R8				4		
R9						2
R10						0
R11				4		
R12	4					
R13						2-3
R14	4					
R15		4				
R16	4					
R17	4					
R18	3					
R19			3			
R20			3			
R21				3		
R22				4		
R23			4			
R24						0
R25	3					
R26		3				
R27					2	
R28				3		
R29						4
R30	5					
R31				3		

<b>Q 5: Youth Involved in Crime</b>	<b>Safety</b>	<b>Education regarding self esteem and self worth, and the future of youth</b>	<b>Community building with justice and police</b>	<b>Only a small % of youth are involved in crime and crime is steadily decreasing</b>	<b>More support for families and youth , activities and programs to support youth, education and redirection</b>	<b>I don't know/no response</b>
R1					3	
R2	4					
R3					3	
R4					3	
R5		4				
R6					4	
R7						1
R8					4	
R9		3				
R10					2	
R11					4	
R12		2				
R13	2-4					
R14						2
R15					4	
R16	4					
R17			4			
R18	2					
R19					4	
R20				2		
R21				2		
R22		3				
R23			4			
R24						0
R25	4					
R26					4	
R27				2		
R28				2		
R29			3			
R30		3-4				
R31	4					



Q 6: Physical Activity	Youth need to get and stay healthy	Community collaboration to provide more services and programs	Some people don't like to work out	Access to physical activities regardless of income	Body Image, self esteem, and media messages	I don't know /no response
R1	4					
R2		4				
R3			2			
R4				4		
R5				4		
R6						1
R7		4				
R8		4				
R9				4		
R10		3.5				
R11	4					
R12		3				
R13	3-4					
R14	3					
R15				4		
R16	4					
R17		4				
R18			2			
R19		3				
R20			1			
R21	4					
R22					2	
R23					3	
R24						0
R25						0
R26				3		
R27	3					
R28		4				
R29						4
R30		4-5				
R31	3					

<b>Q 7: Low Income Families</b>	Provide opportunities for community connections and belonging by having more caring people donating time and /or money	More job opportunities for low income families	Affordable cheaper subsidized rent and housing	More social programs to raise income levels	Raise consciousness regarding poverty	I don't know/no response
R1	4					
R2		4				
R3	3					
R4		3				
R5	3					
R6						4
R7			4			
R8				4		
R9				4		
R10				4		
R11				4		
R12		2				
R13						2-3
R14		4				
R15		4				
R16				4		
R17				4		
R18						4
R19				3		
R20		4				
R21				3		
R22		3				
R23					3	
R24			3-4			
R25			4			
R26				3		
R27		4				
R28						4
R29	4					
R30						0
R31	4					

<b>Q 8: Drop - Out Rates</b>	<b>Parental involvement and investment</b>	<b>Opportunities for various learning styles, programs and services</b>	<b>More programs and supports to stay in school and more fun in schools</b>	<b>Much better awareness regarding education for future success and job opportunities</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	
R1	4					
R2		3				
R3					2	
R4		4				
R5			4			
R6			4			
R7					1	
R8		4				
R9			3			
R10				1		
R11			4			
R12				1		
R13					1	
R14	4					
R15		4				
R16	4					
R17		4				
R18				4		
R19			3			
R20					1	
R21				2		
R22			2			
R23				4		
R24					0	
R25	4					
R26			3			
R27			3			
R28				8		
R29					4	
R30			4			
R31				3		

Q 9 & 10: Strongest in youth - The 5 C's 1.confidence 2.competence 3.character 4. connection 5.contribution & Resilience	Recognition from significant others -counsellors -parents -teachers -other adults and -peers	More diversity across schools and communities – more connections	Educational classes talking about self esteem, personal growth and development	Opportunities to help others - volunteerism	I don't know	
R1	confidence					
R2	confidence					
R3		connection				
R4			confidence			
R5		confidence				
R6	contribution					
R7				confidence		
R8	confidence					
R9			confidence			
R10	connection					
R11		character				
R12		confidence				
R13					competence	
R14			character			
R15				character		
R16	character					
R17		confidence				
R18	confidence					
R19	competence					
R20	character					
R21					character	
R22	character					
R23			confidence			
R24					0	
R25					0	
R26					0	
R27		connection			0	
R28					0	
R29					0	
R30					0	
					confidence	

Q 11 & 12: <b>Weakest in youth - The 5 C's</b> 1.confidence 2.competence 3.character 4. connection 5.contribution & <b>Resilience</b>	Self esteem and self worth and personal relationship building	More programs like schools plus and more supportive places	Recognition by significant others	Opportunities to volunteer and help others	Personal and professional supports by parents teachers, and counsellors	I don't know
R1						Connection
R2						Contribution
R3	confidence					
R4		connection				
R5			confidence			
R6				character		
R7				contribution		
R8	competence					
R9			contribution			
R10	character					
R11				connection		
R12				character		
R13						0
R14					confidence	
R15		confidence				
R16					competence	
R17					confidence	
R18		connection				
R19		contribution				
R20			confidence			
R21						confidence
R22			confidence			
R23		connection				
R24						0
R25	connection					
R26						0
R27						0
R28						0
R29						0
R30						0
R31						contribution

## APPENDIX 7

### Non-Disclosure and Confidentiality Agreement for

### THE FUTURE VISIONS FOR YOUTH STUDY

Please read and sign the following Confidentiality Agreement.

I, Dr. Lena Walker, the undersigned Consultant /Researcher for the study:

**Future Visions for Youth** – Town of Amherst – 2013/2014 understand and agree:

- That information provided in this focus group is sensitive and confidential and that its explicit disclosure to others is not an option, therefore at no time will names be used to express these contents. All data collected from this study will be analyzed, synthesized and disseminated as a body of anonymous work, without names attached.
- That I will not disclose any Information regarding the focus group sharing, confidential interview information or the survey information you provided. At no time will names or any other identifying information be used. The term Information does not include any information which is, or becomes, generally available to the public or is already in the public domain.
- That, following this study (Jan. 2014) all of the information you provide will be destroyed via shredding.

Agreed to and accepted:

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

My Name: Dr. Lena Walker \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Telephone No. \_\_\_\_\_ 1-902-9999-5362 \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_ NS \_\_ B3P2B6

## APPENDIX 8

### Ideas Regarding Ways to Address the Top 3 Priorities:

- We must have the inclusion of all youth
- We should fence in skate park
- We should staff skate park
- We should have more youth involved in activities
- There must be community cooperation
- We could give youth a voice
- We could build homes for homeless
- We must lower drop-out rates
- There has to be a place for kids to go to be active
- How about an annual Youth Day
- How about regular youth presentations, from ALL youth, to Town Councils
- How about a youth fest
- We need more help for youth involved in crime
- We need to assist low income families
- There must be a safe environment for youth to learn
- There has to be more safe, free activities for youth
- There needs to be a safe place for youth to go
- There needs to be more youth involved with Town Councils
- We would like a youth centre
- How about youth leadership training and opportunities
- How about a mentorship program to train youth as mentors and one for youth to have a mentor
- There needs to be more and better cross agency communication
- There needs to be more awareness of the desires, strengths, issues and needs of youth





# The Toolkit

Resources, Tools, and Strategies for Youth Engagement

An initiative of Halifax Regional Municipality, Nova Scotia, Canada

# FI GUIDE TO ACRONYMS

<b>HRM</b>	Halifax Regional Municipality
<b>YES</b>	the Youth Engagement Strategy (an initiative of HRM)
<b>RTC</b>	Recreation, Tourism, and Culture
<b>CYD</b>	community youth development
<b>YAT</b>	youth action team
<b>PAR</b>	participatory action research
<b>YAC</b>	youth advisory council

# OVERALL OUTLINE OF THE TOOL KIT

Outline...3

Acknowledgements... 4

## Section I - Introduction... 5

Introduction and context... 5

Background on the Youth Engagement Strategy... 5

Content and structure of the Tool Kit... 5

A Guide to Icons... 6

What is youth engagement?... 7

Principles of youth engagement... 8

A variety of strategies... 10

## Section II ~ Resources, Tools, and Strategies... 11

Stating our assumptions... 11

How we organized the resources... 11

Actions just for you... 13

Actions with others... 21

Actions for the whole community... 37

## Actions just for you... 13

Find out what's going on in your community... 14

Individual research: assess attitudes... 14

Have a conversation with a young person... 14

Get some information... 15

Build capacity... 17

Think of yourself as a learner... 17

Help youth join in and participate... 17

Help youth connect to others... 18

Taking action: when youth step up, adults step back... 18

When a young person asks you... 19

Build relationships... 19

Be a coach, mentor, ally... 19

Create and contribute to an empowering culture... 20

Change attitudes, behaviour, and practices... 20

## Actions with others... 21

Find out what's going on in your community... 21

Group research... 21

Asking good questions... 23

Engage youth in dialogue... 25

Help youth tell their stories... 25

Get more information... 26

Build capacity... 27

As a team... 27

Help youth connect and participate... 29

Taking action: more on experiential learning... 30

Group development/team building... 31

Build relationships... 33

Youth / Adult partnerships... 33

Create and contribute to an empowering culture... 34

## Actions for the whole community... 37

Find out what's going on in your community... 38

Ongoing dialogue... 39

Get information... 40

Build capacity... 41

Of adults... 41

Youth participation and connection... 42

Youth on Boards... 43

Youth Advisory Councils... 44

Youth-run organizations... 44

Taking action... 44

Build relationships... 45

Create and contribute to an empowering culture... 46

Changing attitudes... 46

Changing practices... 46

Policy development... 46

Creating a shared vision... 46

Facilitating informal processes... 47

## Section III ~ Conclusion... 48

Indicators of success... 48

Things you do not have to do – or be... 49

References... 50

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# SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

Introduction & Context... 5
Background on the HRM YES... 5
Content & Structure of the Tool Kit... 5
A Guide to Icons... 6
What is Youth Engagement... 7
Principles of youth engagement... 8
A variety of strategies... 10

## Introduction and Context

Welcome to the Youth Engagement Tool Kit! Many community-based organizations, youth-serving groups, and government agencies are asking profound questions regarding their relationship to young people: "How can we encourage youth to participate in our programs and make better use of our services?" and "How can we meaningfully involve them at the very core of our community life? Of our organizations?" and "How can we work with them – effectively and enjoyably – on goals of mutual interest so that both adults and young people learn and grow from the partnership?" A simpler way of asking those questions is, "How do we engage youth?"

## Background on the HRM Youth Engagement Strategy

In 2000, Municipal Council of the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) expressed a clear and direct desire to address the issues youth face in an effort to improve the quality of life for all who live in this region.

Recreation, Tourism, and Culture (a business unit of the HRM) responded to that desire and in 2004 initiated a partnership with the HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development to facilitate the development of a Youth Engagement Strategy (YES). The goal was to increase capacity to engage youth and communities in the development and delivery of programs and services for youth. The result would be the implementation and execution of various actions that would help make HRM a more youth friendly municipality.

## Content and structure of the Tool Kit

This is a handbook of resources, tools, concepts & ideas, suggestions for action, real life stories, strategies for innovation, tips & reminders as you go along – all to help you in your work with young people. You might be a paid staff person who provides a service to youth (for example, a recreation program leader, or a police officer, or a librarian, etc.). Or, you might be acting as a volunteer (such as an adult supporting a group of youth to organize a skateboard park, or an older youth mentoring younger ones, or a parent who wants her community to be "youth-friendlier," etc.). Whatever your role – and whether your work is clearly seen by others as "youth serving" – if you care about young people, then this is a resource for you!

Much of the information it contains comes from a youth engagement initiative carried out by HRM's Recreation, Tourism, and Culture in Nova Scotia, Canada, and HeartWood. A Report of this initiative has been written, along with an extensive literature review called: *Youth Participation in Governance* (see <http://www.hrm youth.ca/> and [www.heartwood.ns.ca/tools.shtml](http://www.heartwood.ns.ca/tools.shtml)).

Resources that came from specific individuals and organizations are mentioned whenever they appear. We have attempted to identify and acknowledge sources of this material, however there is so much research and innovation happening in the youth development field that this is an almost impossible task. We apologize if we have made use of concepts and practices without proper recognition of original work.

Generally speaking, we have oriented the text toward adult service providers and community development practitioners and we have written it as close to "plain language" as was possible. To avoid grammatical awkwardness, we have used both genders alternately in our choice of pronouns.

# A GUIDE TO ICONS

To help you find things in this handbook, an icon system has been created to tell you what you've got when you come across it in the various sub-sections. These are:



## Concepts

conceptual tools, models, or frameworks, that have been developed in the fields of youth, community, or organizational development that have been found relevant to the practice of youth engagement.



## Stories

real-life stories that can inspire – and teach – us about the art and science of youth engagement.



## Food for Thought

a way of thinking about some aspect of youth engagement. A kind of lens through which you can look at your work in a different – possibly new- perspective. This may help you see possibilities that were not previously apparent, or perhaps it allows you to gain a deeper understanding of what is going on.



## Empowering Questions

every once in a while a question will be posed that will challenge you to think more deeply about your work with young people. Hopefully, it will give you an opportunity for reflection that will help you connect your own work knowledge and life experience to the thinking and practices being presented in this handbook.



## Web Sites

ones that relate to the topic being discussed that you might want to check out for more information and resources.



## Research

this is information that sheds light on some aspect of youth engagement.



## Projects

projects, such as the HRM Youth Engagement Strategy, sometimes exemplify an innovative approach that seems to work well with young people. So, these are examples of "methodology," i.e., what was done and how it was done.

At the back of the handbook is a CD that contains the Tool Kit, the YES Report, and the literature review. As well, HeartWood has provided a number of sharable resources. You are welcome to use these in any way imaginable... just please remember to attribute the source when you do so.

HeartWood will continue to provide more resources in the future. They have created a section of their web site, called *Tools and Resources for Youth Engagement*, and you can freely download whatever you find there. For starters, it contains all the resources on the CD, but there will be new additions from time to time, so keep checking:

[www.heartwood.ns.ca/tools.shtml](http://www.heartwood.ns.ca/tools.shtml)

So, come on in, get started and enjoy!





### A definition of youth engagement

Youth engagement... inclusion, ... involvement, ... development, ... volunteerism — these are some of the terms being used in the emerging youth sector. We also hear community youth development, and more specifically in a municipal or geographic community context, civic youth engagement. At the heart of all these terms is the idea of involving young people in meaningful ways in the essential tasks and processes of community (including the whole community and, more specifically, community organizations or groups, as well as "systems," such as education or health care, for example).

### What is youth engagement?

There is mounting evidence that youth engagement — involvement, inclusion, volunteerism — has a significant positive impact on young people — and their communities! It improves youth health, self-confidence, career outlook, the quality of the relationships they form with peers, older youth, adults, and elders, as well as their ability and inclination to participate in the civic life of the community. It reduces crime, violence, and vandalism. The communities, in turn, benefit from young people's capacity for innovative problem solving, their passion for social justice, their zeal to contribute and serve, their fresh perspective, their ability to rise above traditional boundaries in our society to make new connections, and their courage to pose the tough questions that need to be asked as communities struggle to renew themselves (Garrison, L., 2005).

Municipal leaders regularly make decisions, shape policies and take action on issues that directly affect youth, i.e. public transport, parks and recreation, use of public spaces, health, child care, education, housing, etc. Unfortunately, young people lack access to the official avenues (i.e. voting, courts, trade unions, etc.) through which adults can give their input to governments. Yet, youth are the experts on their experiences, needs, and interactions with their local environments. If governments do not engage youth, well-intentioned programs and policies for youth are more likely to fail. Municipalities and organizations that actually engage youth in decision-making processes will make decisions that are more responsive and appropriate to youth needs and interests (Garrison, L., 2005, p. 15).

In addition to the general positive benefits that youth engagement has for communities, there are more specific reasons to involve young people.

It could also be argued that municipalities have a *legal obligation* to engage young people. Are they not citizens too? Do they not deserve the same access to services and facilities that the community provides to others? Should their voices be heard with the same degree of attention as anyone else?



**Research** shows that youth who have opportunities for meaningful participation in their communities are less likely to engage in risky behaviour. They tend to have higher self-esteem, be more physically active, show a greater commitment to friends, families and communities, and are more likely to achieve healthy development (United Nations, 2004; National League of Cities, no date; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2000; International Institute for Child Rights and Development, & Environmental Youth Alliance, 2004; Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, 2003).



**According to Mayor Nancy Bates of Farmington Hills, Virginia, youth are:** "... a whole resource out there that we're not touching ... [they're] bright, they're articulate, and they're positive ... [they] have good ideas, and they have perspectives that adults don't have and a lot of energy. A lot of intergenerational activity is very constructive for the community" (National League of Cities, 2002).



**Municipalities** have a legal obligation to engage youth. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the most universally supported human rights treaty in history, was adopted in 1989, and states that children (0 to 18 years) have a right to express their views freely and fully participate in all matters that affect them. Since the ratification of the UNCRC, other international and national commitments to engaging youth in governance have been made.<sup>1</sup> These commitments will only be fully realized when they are supported by local governments and rooted in the communities that children inhabit (Garrison, L., 2005, p. 5).

1. Chapter 25 of Agenda 21, signed by world leaders at the 1992 Earth Summit; Habitat II, the 1996 UN Conference on Human Settlements; The UN's World Program of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and beyond; A World Fit for Children, adopted by 180 nations at the 2002 UN special session on Children; Government of Canada's A Canada Fit for Children released in 2004.



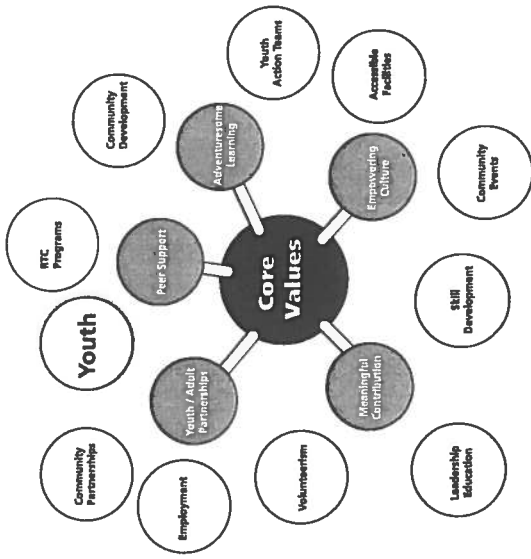
## Principles of youth engagement

The great variety of possible resources and strategies that can be used to engage young people suggests that there is no need for a "cookie cutter" approach; i.e., developing an "excellent" program or service model that can be used everywhere and every time. Nevertheless, groups and communities tend to seek out that very thing, hoping to replicate the success that the original program or strategy was able to achieve. The drawback with the "one size fits all" approach is that every community is unique, so the fit is never exact, which may mean that the program does not work so well in the current circumstances, given local youth issues, the people involved, and so on. More importantly, the community's unique qualities, assets, knowledge, experience, and capacity to engage youth may be under-utilized by a generic approach that can only deal in generalities.

It is far better to use a principle-based approach. That is, if we can discover and articulate the principles, or *core values*, that underlie effective youth engagement, and create a framework that can put these values into action, we will have a solid foundation on which to build. We can then devise innovative programs, services, and strategies that can be used in specific *local* applications, while making best use of available resources. The great advantage of *this* approach is that there is no end to the possibilities and as circumstances change, the strategies will evolve.

The HRM Youth Engagement Strategy adopted – and then adapted – HeartWood's framework for community youth development (CYD), which grew out of their work with more than 25,000 young people over 15 years. HeartWood spent a lot of time reflecting on their experience, conducting research on their approach, and engaging in dialogue with youth, adults, and agencies as to outcomes.

HeartWood's CYD framework looks like this:



### As HeartWood explains it...

"We now understand that most young people, most of the time, are attracted to programs, activities, services, and so on, which embody certain core values, which are: being able to make a difference, connection with others (peers and supportive adults), being able to follow their passion (things that are really important to the young person), having fun, and taking action. These are what draw young people to tasks, events, and processes in organizations and communities. These will also keep them involved for as long as the values are active."

"To put these values into practice on an everyday basis, we discovered that there are 5 program tools, or components, which must be present - and in equal, or balanced, proportions. Different practitioners use different terminology, ours are: adventuresome learning (i.e., learning that is fun, engaging, and challenging), meaningful contribution (i.e., serving others, the community, the planet), peer support (i.e., feeling a sense of belonging, being part of a group, team, or community), adult/youth partnerships (i.e., being in relationship with positive, supportive adults and older youth), and empowering culture (i.e., being in circumstances, and/or a place, and/or with others who appreciate and value the individual's contribution and where he finds the self-confidence to step forward to make a difference)."

"We then learned that youth development couldn't happen in a vacuum - it has to be genuinely connected to an organization, system, or community. When young people are engaged, they need to have the support of individual adults, who, among other things, help the youth get started as a group, get organized to work on an initiative, and help connect them to the greater community. The community itself - represented by individuals, formal agencies and organizations, as well as informal groups and associations - has to step forward and actively support the youth. This is a matter of viewing all youth as "our youth" and thinking in terms of support being given the youth - the time, energy, and resources - as an investment for the whole community, both in the short term and for years to come."



You may want to check out other organizations and initiatives that use a principle-based approach in their work. You will likely find that the essential ingredients are very similar, although different organizations and communities will probably use different words. What is most important is discovering your *own* core values and being clear on their importance to the work you do every day.

### **Resiliency Canada**

Resiliency Canada strives to advance the well-being of children, youth and their families by generating knowledge about - and the ability to assess - the resiliency factors and developmental strengths that are essential to the well-being of individuals and the communities they live in. [www.resiliencycanada.ca](http://www.resiliencycanada.ca)

### **Growing Up in Canadian Cities**

The social inclusion of children and youth implies that all young people are respected for the unique knowledge and assets they possess. It also assumes a responsibility to ensure that their diverse voices are genuinely heard and their needs met within families, communities, and local governance structures. Finally, social inclusion promotes the creation of an enabling environment to allow young people to represent themselves in ongoing decision-making processes that affect their lives and shape their communities and local environment (GUICC Team, 2003). [www.growingupincities.ca](http://www.growingupincities.ca)

### **Health Canada's Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement**

Meaningful youth engagement produces benefits to youth and the community in which they live. Through engagement, youth gain a sense of empowerment as individuals and make healthy connections to others, which result in the reduction of risk behaviours and increases in positive activities. In addition to the social benefits of these behavioural changes the community gains through the energy and ideas that youth bring to organizations, activities, and their relationships with adults. [www.engagementcentre.ca](http://www.engagementcentre.ca)

### **Canadian Volunteerism Initiative**

Canadians have a rich history of volunteering and community involvement. From soup kitchens to fire departments, helpful neighbours to dedicated drivers, volunteers strengthen the fabric of Canadian society. The Canada Volunteerism Initiative (CVI) is a practical way to invest in community and in volunteers. The CVI is a pan-Canadian program that is distinctive in its mixture of national leadership and strategy and local perspectives and delivery. [www.volunteer.ca/volcan/eng/content/canvol-init/canvol-init.php](http://www.volunteer.ca/volcan/eng/content/canvol-init/canvol-init.php)

### **Carnegie Corporation Council on Adolescent Development**

See: *Great Transitions: Preparing Adolescents for a New Century* for a presentation on their principles of adolescent development. [www.carnegie.org/sub/research/index.html#ado](http://www.carnegie.org/sub/research/index.html#ado)

### **Search Institute**

The Framework of 40 Developmental Assets are concrete, common sense, positive experiences and qualities essential to raising successful young people. These assets have the power during critical adolescent years to influence choices young people make and help them become caring, responsible adults. [www.search-institute.org/assets](http://www.search-institute.org/assets)

(Note: the Canadian partner organization to the Search Institute is called Thrive! The Canadian Centre for Positive Youth Development and their mission is to promote Developmental Assets and other strengths-focused strategies within a Canadian context. They also organize an annual education conference to showcase the work that is being done. See: [www.thrivecanada.ca](http://www.thrivecanada.ca).)



## A variety of strategies will more likely serve the various needs of different young people...

Once you have identified the principles and values that will ground all that you do, it is time to consider the grand variety of resources, tools, and strategies... *almost* time, that is.

First, there are good reasons for having such diversity. In the same way that every community is unique, so are young people. What works for one may not work for another. What works this time, may not on the next occasion.

The other reason for a diversity of ideas is to convey to the reader of this Tool Kit, the breadth and depth of possibility – it is *endless!* Use your own experience and imagination to devise strategies that fit your own circumstances. Use what you find here as a starting point, but venture farther than we have!

When you do create your own tools and strategies, please let us know – we would love to learn from your experiences just as much as you learn from ours!



One crucial principle is employing a diversity of strategies for engaging youth... (in governance). Youth councils and youth representation on boards are typically thought of in relation to youth governance. While these strategies tend to allow youth direct interaction with adult decision-makers, and a greater capacity to directly influence planning and decision-making, they generally only reach a small percentage of the youth population, often those youth who already feel comfortable in leadership roles. On the other hand, less formal structures, such as youth action teams,<sup>2</sup> typically engage a larger number and broader diversity of youth. The hands-on nature of youth action teams is appealing to young people's desire for action. To build the capacity of all youth to engage in governance, a framework which incorporates multiple levels for youth participation is the best strategy, including opportunities to engage at the neighbourhood and community level (i.e. youth action teams) as well as opportunities to engage within formal government structures (i.e. youth representation on boards)

(Garrison, L., 2005, p. 6)

2. The term "youth action team" - a YAT - is used widely by various groups, including HeartWood. HeartWood's definition is... an ongoing group of young people who live in a specific geographical community (or, are involved in a "community of interest") in which they take action and/or provide service that contributes to the well-being of others. Older youth and adults have supportive relationships with the team and, because they are so active, the community supports their efforts and holds them in high esteem.\*

# SECTION II

## RESOURCES, TOOLS, AND STRATEGIES

Stating our assumptions... 11
How we organized the resources... 11
Actions just for you... 13
Actions with others... 21
Actions for the whole community... 37

### Stating our assumptions...

In organizing and writing this Tool Kit, we have made some assumptions about you, the reader, and they are:

#### You already know things...

We assume that you have experience and knowledge in this area, perhaps quite a bit of knowledge. Our challenge was to gear the level of the material to an unseen audience, so we had to go for "basic." Nevertheless, even if you find the information too simplistic, you are bound to find some useful tools and resources within these pages. If nothing else, please consider it an opportunity to reflect on your work with an eye to renewal.

#### A cookie cutter approach does not usually work, although we can learn from each other...

We explained above what we meant by this approach and its disadvantages. Having said that, we can learn from each other's experience. We just have to be careful that we don't try to import a good idea into our situation without first adapting it to our local circumstances, capacity, and so on.

**You are interested in engaging youth in a more meaningful way...** Youth work has evolved from youth services, which had a focus on needs and "problems" to youth development, which is strengths-based, to community youth development, where youth develop their participation skills in a real community – their own – for the benefit of all; i.e., it is an excellent strategy for building strong, healthy, and inclusive communities! Where to next? We appear to be in an evolving continuum of possibilities, which means that there is always room to grow, to shift, and to learn.

#### When we say "working with youth..."

We don't just mean that you are a professional youth service provider. You might also be a volunteer in a program or service, or maybe you have no formal role and you are just interested in helping out. Or, maybe you are a parent who wants the community to be a youth-friendlier place for your child to live. Or, perhaps you serve some other segment of the community and you don't really think of yourself as having much to do with youth. Some of the concepts in the Tool Kit may challenge you to re-consider that stance; after all, where is the next generation of leadership and service providers in your service area?

#### How we organized the resources...

Here you will find good ideas, suggestions for action, success stories, innovative strategies, concepts, best practices, tough questions you may need to ask yourself, and approaches that have proven effective in other places, other circumstances... in short, tools and resources that you can use to engage young people in the activities and processes of your organization and/or your community.

We imagine that you are already doing some things – maybe a lot of things – to engage young people and, perhaps, you are doing these very well indeed. Carry on! Your strategy seems to be working! Keep up the good work.

On the one hand, you could build on what you are already doing well, perhaps doing it more intentionally and more often, perhaps applying that same strategy to other areas of your work with youth, perhaps to other locations in the community. At the very least, you could share your success with others so that they can benefit from your experience.

On the other hand, we invite you to challenge yourself to explore new ground, try something different, possibly discovering better ways of doing things! Imagine new possibilities to what you are already doing!

The resources are organized into the following 3 sub-sections according to the level of action that would be required to use that particular tool.

#### The levels are:

##### Actions just for you...

simple actions that you can do right away with existing resources that will energize you and that will generate energy, which in turn attracts energy, i.e., mobilizes others.

##### Actions with others...

projects/initiatives (i.e., action that is more complicated) that are short-term and that involve people working together to achieve results that are not possible "going it alone."

##### Actions for the whole community...

strategies (i.e., action that is complex) that are long-term with varying time-frames, involve multiple partners in various roles, and that are designed to have a deep impact on the whole community, the system (like child welfare, education, health, etc.), or between sectors (like public, private, and not-for-profit/voluntary).

IF EACH SUB-SECTOR, THROUGH THE TRAINING  
PROVIDED, WERE TO TAKE THE LEAD AND  
ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE  
PROGRESS OF THE SECTOR,

These are:

**Find out what's going on in your  
community** (i.e., doing formal and informal  
research, talking to people, getting information)

**Build capacity**  
(i.e., for adults: professional and organizational  
development; for youth: skills in participation,  
connecting to others, and taking action)

**Build relationships**

**Create and contribute to an  
empowering culture**



APPENDIX 10

POTENTIAL ACTION PLANS TIMELINES BUDGETS

The next steps will involve a series of community dialogues to determine which recommendations can be acted upon and by whom, and when. Once this is determined then action steps can be put into place. The first steps will involve securing financing and recruitment of both youth and adult volunteers to support the community efforts regarding their youth.

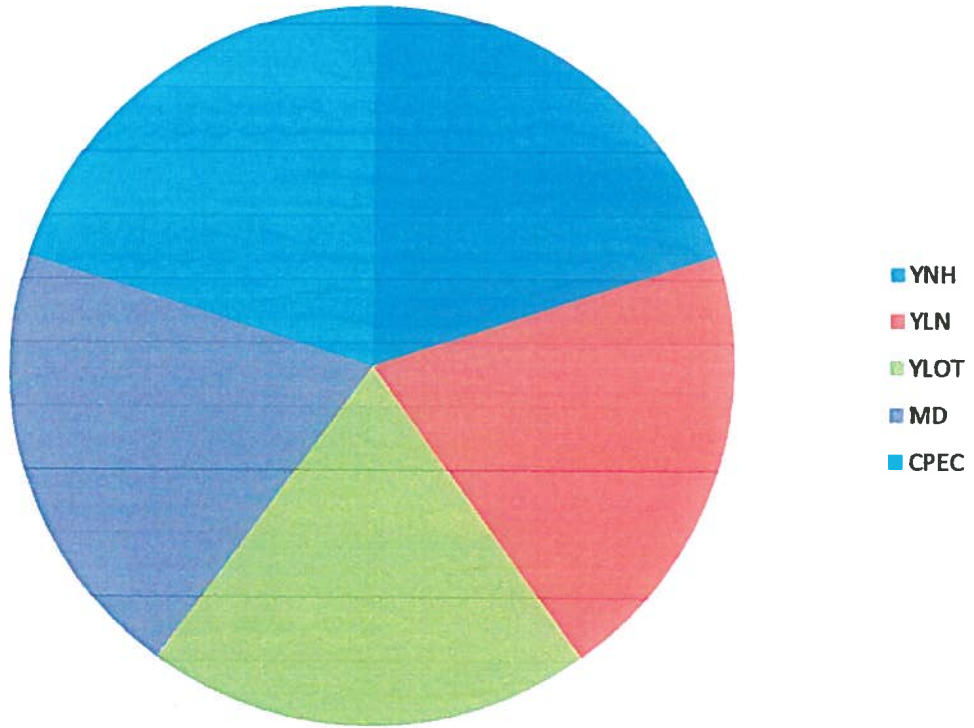
THE 5 RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Open a Youth Neighbourhood House - YNH
- Develop a Youth Led Network - YLN
- Develop a Youth Leadership Outreach Team -YLOT
- Create a Mentoring Database - MD
- Launch a Comprehensive Public Education Campaign- CPEC

Recommendation	Timeline	Budget
1. Open a Youth Neighbourhood House - YNH	3-9 months	\$75,000.00 - \$250,000.00 (1yr's budget including 1 full time staff, furnishings, equipment etc.) - Depending on whether or not the space were owned by the Town of Amherst or be donated by a local philanthropist or needed to be purchased
2. Develop a Youth Led Network - YLN	1-3 months -	\$1500.00 or less annually - Staffed by volunteer youth leaders - Spearheaded by the AYTC and Youth from Schools Plus - Could be funded by small youth grant
3. Develop a Youth Leadership Outreach Team - YLOT	3-6 months	\$10,000.00 ( for the initial round of trainings of 5 youth – 6mons in) - Over the course of 6 months, involving 6 weekend training sessions - Could be funded through a YMCA sponsorship program
4. Create a Mentoring Database - MD	1-3 months	\$2500.00 or less annually - staffed by adult community volunteers - Could be funded by a small youth grant
5. Launch a Comprehensive Public Education Campaign - CPEC	1- 12 months & ongoing	\$12,000.00 per year -with excellent youth leadership and key adult volunteers perhaps 50% of the budget could be cut

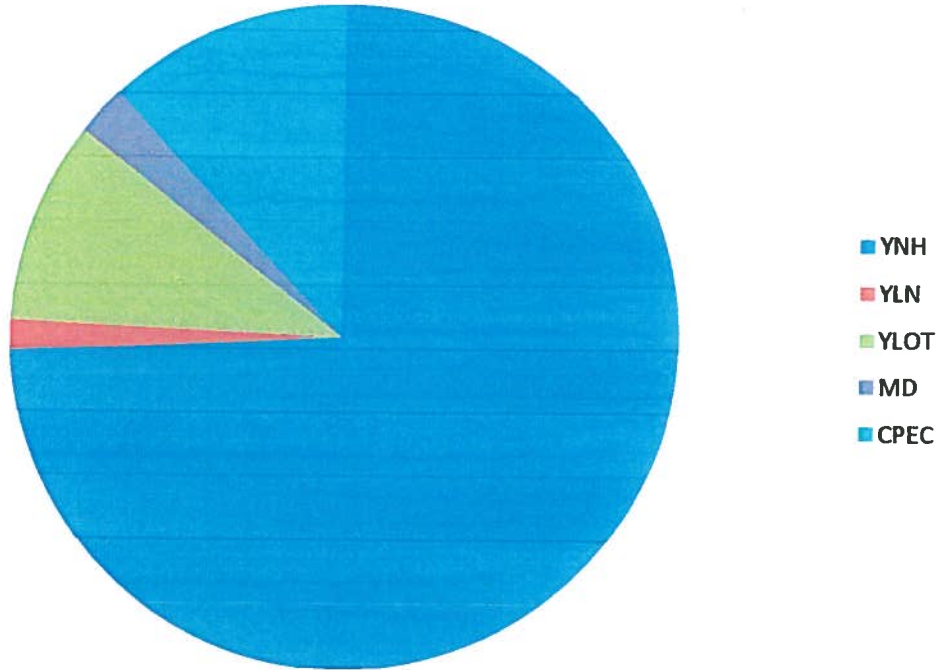


## THE 5 RECOMENDATIONS

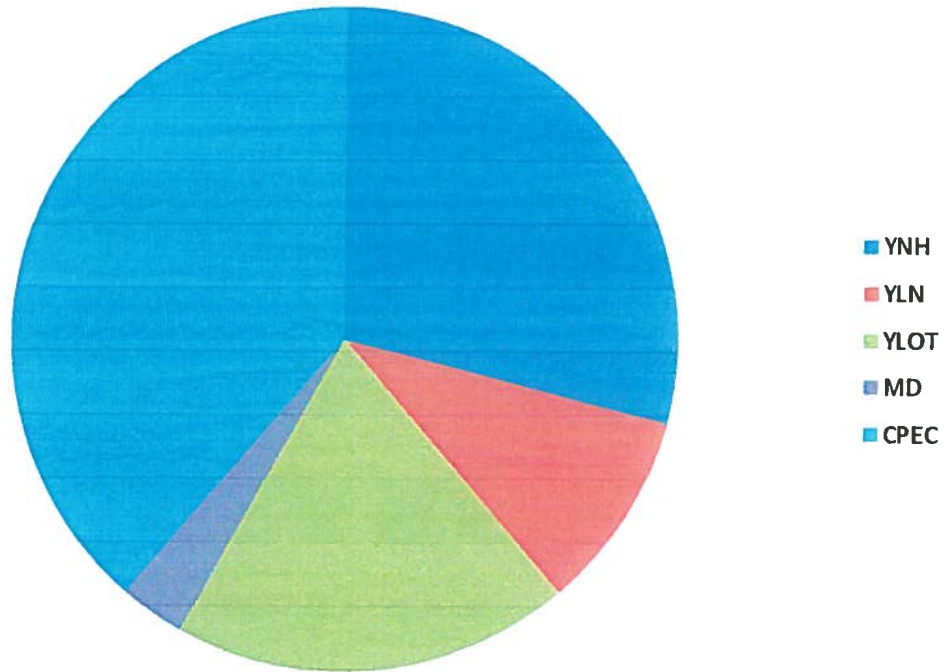




## THE BUDGETARY REQUIREMENTS OF THE 5 RECOMENDATIONS



## THE TIMELINES OF THE 5 RECOMMENDATIONS



## ***The Reality of Homelessness –Billy’s story 2013***

My name is Billy McLaughlin (well was, but I’ll tell you about that later). I turned 16 years old in February. Just before Christmas my mother and step-father kicked me out of the house and told me I could not go back home -ever. I had lived with them and my 10 year old brother in Amherst since I was three years old. I was born in British Columbia and lived there with my mother and grandmother until my mother met my step-father and we moved to Amherst. Anyways...they said I had to leave the house and that I was a “danger” to my brother because I smoke weed. Well, I also fought a lot with my step-father and stole from him. I am angry a lot and do not like to be told what to do. I was repeating grade 9. My parents said I had to leave because I was a “bad influence” on my little brother.

I was kicked out of home on December 21 and not allowed to go back in the house again after that. I stayed at some friend’s homes and other places where I did not even really know the people but I met them on the street and they offered me a place to stay. I guess this is called “couch-surfing”. Sometimes I would get really hungry and one time I got high and went to a store and stole ice crême and got caught. I told the store manager I had nowhere to live and was hungry and she told me to get a job. I was really angry and yelled at her calling her some “not so nice” names. She called the police. I had to go to court for the first time in my life.

I stayed overnight at different people’s houses until I had nowhere to stay. This was in March. I talked to my mother at work about going home and she said I should go live with my grandmother in British Columbia and told me about someone who was driving out there. My mother had some money she would give me if I went but it was not going to be for a couple of weeks that the guy was leaving. She, my Mom, would not let me go stay at home until I left.

At the same time from December until March I was missing a lot of school. In March I got in trouble for fighting and for not getting along with teachers and the Vice Principal talked to me and asked me what was going on. I told him. We talked and I told him I planned to go live with my grandmother in B.C. but that it was not for a couple of weeks that my drive was leaving. Me and the Vice Principal went and talked to my mother. My mother said again that I could not come home even for a couple of weeks.

Then the Vice Principal talked to the social worker at school and some places in town, the *Salvation Army* and some group called *Empowering Beyond Barriers*, gave some money to help me stay at a boarding house until I left to go live with my grandmother. I had good food there and the people were nice.

I went to get the money from my mother so I could leave with that guy and she told me my step-father took it out of her housecoat pocket where she had it. My step-father is a drunk that does not work and that really pissed me off. He had used the money already and said I stole from him before and owed it to him. I ended up telling a teacher off at school and punching a locker and then talking to the Vice Principal again. I told him about the money. He talked to my mother who said the money was gone and the drive had already gone now too.

The Vice Principal took me to the social worker at school. She went with me to try and get welfare. I had already gone to Child Welfare on my own in December but they told me to go home and follow the rules. My step-father would not let me go back home no matter what. The social worker from school was told now that I was now 16 years old and there was nothing they could do to help me with a place to live like a foster-home. We went to the other side of the office and met with someone about welfare. They said they probably could not help me because I was 16 years old but that they could not stop me from applying. They gave me a bunch of papers and said to make another appointment when they were filled out.

The social worker from school took me to the YMCA. They gave me a free pass to use and we met with a lady who was on a group called the *Youth Homeless Committee*. I never knew about that group. She said that group would pay for me to stay at the boarding home until the welfare thing was worked out.

I filled out all the papers to get welfare. The boarding home people filled out papers for me about board. The social worker went with me to my parents and my mother met us in the yard. She agreed to go to the welfare office with us this time and tell them I could not go home no matter what. She came with us and she had to tell them she had no money to even pay their bills because they said I would have to take my parents to court to get money. My mother works part time at a coffee place and my step-father, like I said, does not work. My mother had to explain my birthfather had no contact with me since I was three years old and had no legal rights to me. I was glad when this worker said because he has no legal rights we did not have to try and find him. During the first meeting at the welfare office the lady said I should try and find my father on Facebook. I don't remember ever having met him and I don't want to. My grandmother said when my mother was pregnant with me he pushed her down the stairs and said he hoped she lost the baby –me. The social worker from school and Vice Principal wrote letters to help me get welfare so I could stay at the boarding home until I got a birth certificate and picture ID and then get welfare to go live with my grandmother. The worker at the welfare office was nice and we thought I would get help because we did everything they asked but she told us three days later they could not help me. They said we could appeal, whatever that meant, but it would take over a month to do that.

The social worker called my grandmother and told her what was going on. My grandmother got a credit card and paid for a plane ticket for me to go there. The *Youth Homeless Group* paid for me to stay at the boarding home until things were straightened out so that I could go. The social worker helped me talk to a lawyer and the shop-lifting charges were dropped in court on May 1. I wrote a letter apologizing for what I did and said to the store manager and the Judge said he was glad I did that and he wished me luck in B.C. After the charges were dropped I was allowed to leave the province to go live with my grandmother. The social worker had ordered and paid for my birth certificate to come right away and once I got this we went to Access NS and I got a picture ID taken.

It felt like I was a new person. My mother had registered me in school with the last name of my step-father, "McLaughlin". I was in court with that name. The school could not even change the name on my school records until I got my birth-certificate and showed them my real last name. All my identification

when I got it was in my legal name. I am Billy Wilson. I was named after my grandmother whose name is Billie Wilson.

I left to go live with my grandmother on May 4. The social worker from school took me to the airport. My mother even came with us. She said this was best for me. She was sad. I still love my mom. The social worker took pictures of me and my mother. I asked my mother to move with me but she did not want to go back to B.C. and her and my grandmother do not get along or even talk.

I now live with my grandmother in a small town in British Columbia. It is hard to be away from Amherst but I have somewhere to live and am meeting my grandmother and other family I never saw since I was three years old.