

the self esteem project



A Report by the Community Foundation of the South Okanagan / Similkameen
and the United Way of the Central & South Okanagan / Similkameen

July 2013

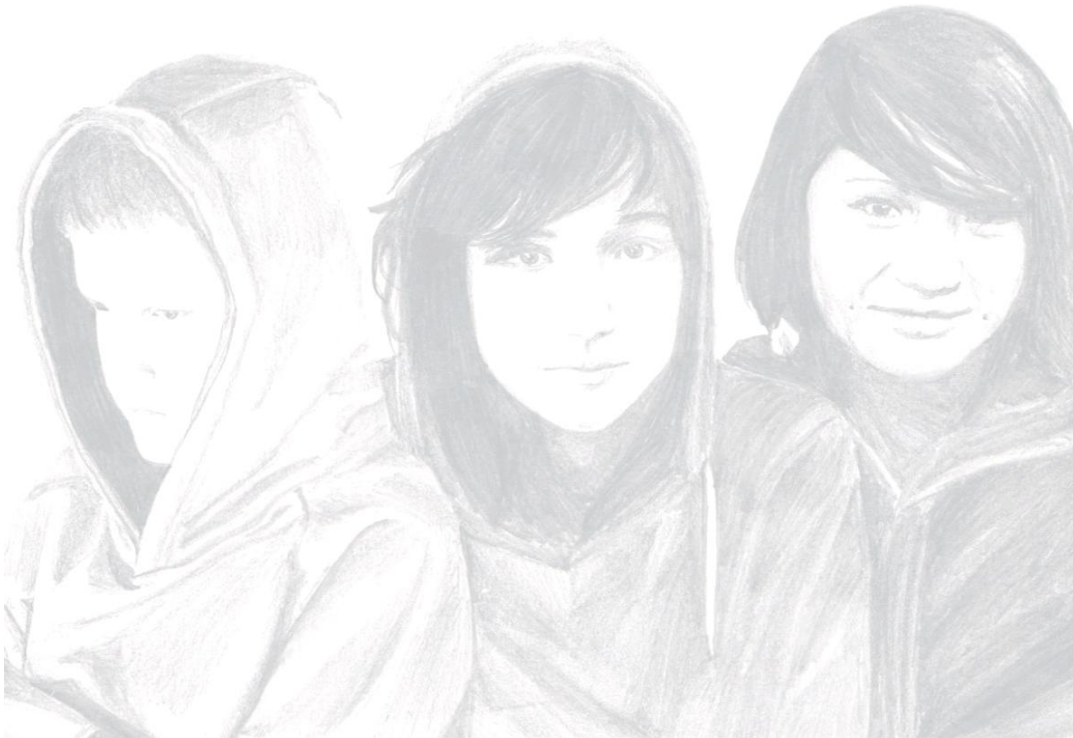
Acknowledgements

The Self-Esteem Project report was written by Amy Woodruffe, MSW, on behalf of the Community Foundation of the South Okanagan / Similkameen and the United Way of the Central and South Okanagan / Similkameen.

The author would like to begin by honouring and giving thanks to the Okanagan Nation, the Syilx speaking people, for their territory where the work for this project has taken place.

The author thanks all of the youth who shared their stories and knowledge; the service providers who lent an enormous amount of information; and to the Aboriginal Elders who offered their wisdom and reminded us what is needed specifically for Aboriginal youth.

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Executive Summary

The Self-Esteem Project

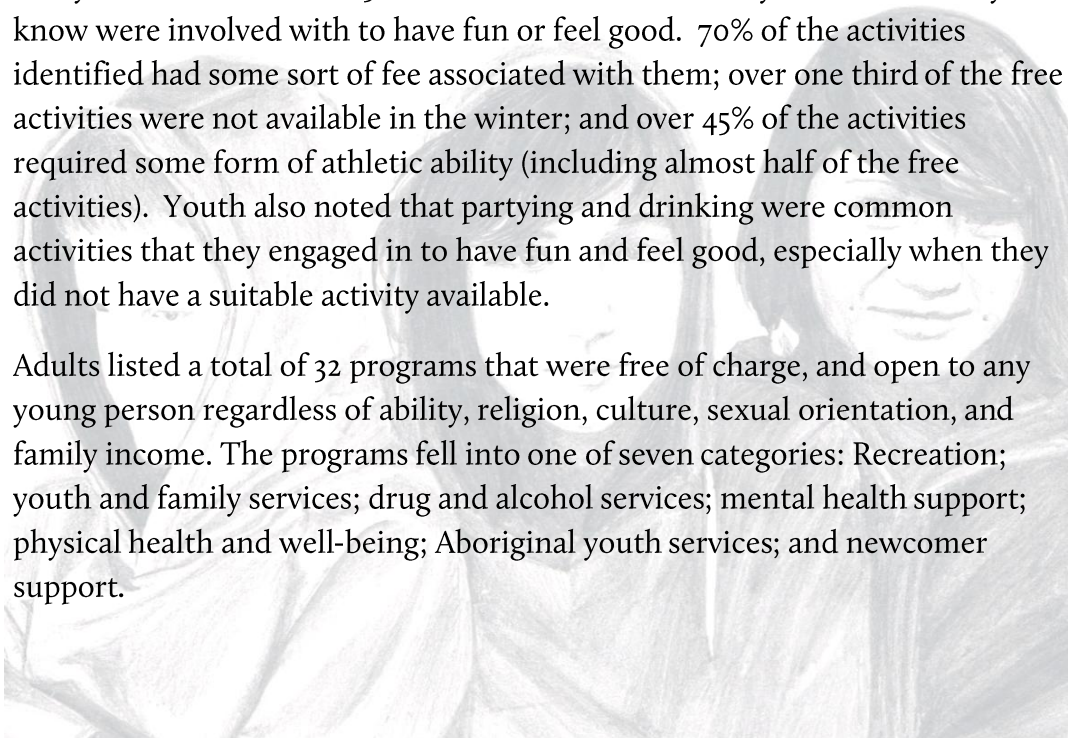
The Self-Esteem Project is an initiative designed to support youth in Penticton to feel good about themselves through building and maintaining positive self-esteem and working to ensure a healthy and thriving youth population within our city.

To achieve the goal of supporting positive self-esteem for youth, an exploration of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth took place from April to June, 2013. 50 young people (the youth) from across Penticton participated in focus groups and 40 youth service providers (the adults) were interviewed. Hundreds of stories were shared about: Issues facing young people living in Penticton; opportunities and resources that build positive self-esteem; and what young people need to feel good about themselves.

Youth Self-Esteem Resources

The youth identified over 50 different activities that they or someone they know were involved with to have fun or feel good. 70% of the activities identified had some sort of fee associated with them; over one third of the free activities were not available in the winter; and over 45% of the activities required some form of athletic ability (including almost half of the free activities). Youth also noted that partying and drinking were common activities that they engaged in to have fun and feel good, especially when they did not have a suitable activity available.

Adults listed a total of 32 programs that were free of charge, and open to any young person regardless of ability, religion, culture, sexual orientation, and family income. The programs fell into one of seven categories: Recreation; youth and family services; drug and alcohol services; mental health support; physical health and well-being; Aboriginal youth services; and newcomer support.



Issues Facing Penticton Youth

Although more than 80 resources were identified as supporting positive self-esteem, both youth and adults indicated a number of significant issues facing young people:

There is a severe lack of resources for youth in Penticton, especially affordable or free activities. For example, although there is a senior's drop-in centre in Penticton, there is no youth drop-in centre; and there are no programs for Aboriginal youth living off-reserve from September to June.

There are almost no free youth activities in the summer months, and just two free evening activities for 13 to 15 year old youth from September to June.

RCMP report a 90% increase in youth related crimes in the summer months, mostly due to a lack of structured or free activities.

Many youth are at risk and engage in unsafe sex, drink alcohol, or do drugs in the absence of structured, affordable activities. During the time it took to conduct interviews and focus groups for this project, one service provider noted that five different female youth disclosed that they had been sexually assaulted.

There are significant mental health challenges for Penticton youth, and a very limited number of accessible resources to help them.

Many youth in Penticton are living in poverty. Penticton ranks in the top 10 places in the province with the highest number of children and youth living on welfare.

There is no emergency housing for youth who find themselves homeless, or in danger, and needing a safe place to stay (for example, fleeing a violent situation at home). The closest safe-house resource is in Kelowna.

There are no culturally based life-skills training programs for urban Aboriginal youth. Aboriginal youth are disproportionately in need of life-skills training because they are six times more likely to be taken into foster care than non-Aboriginal children. Once they age out of care they usually have no parents to help them when they become independent at age 19.

There is no dedicated youth employment resource in Penticton.

Possibilities for Penticton Youth

A review of recent research indicates that positive self-esteem increases with social and peer supports, participation in sports, and cultural and ancestral knowledge. Positive self-esteem in youth has been linked to decreased suicide, obesity, self-stigma and depression, as well as increased mental well-being, coping skills, and school performance.

Both youth and adults were asked to consider what resources or activities would be helpful towards strengthening positive self-esteem for young people living in Penticton.

Young people proposed possibilities within four themes: A dedicated youth centre in Penticton offering free resources and services; more job opportunities in Penticton; coordinated youth communications strategy; and more free alternatives to drugs and alcohol. Aboriginal service providers proposed a culturally based life-skills program for urban Aboriginal youth. Non-Aboriginal service providers identified a range of possibilities for youth, with the top four ranking options being a youth centre; emergency housing; counselling support; and more youth driven activities.

Recommendations to Strengthen Self-Esteem

Based on all of the stories heard from youth and adults, a series of recommendations were crafted to build or strengthen positive self-esteem for Penticton young people.

Youth Centre: A youth centre was the most commonly recommended strategy to help build and strengthen positive self-esteem for young people in Penticton. A community youth centre could offer emergency beds, a range of youth driven activities and counselling support (including sexual health, drug and alcohol services, mental health, and employment support) that would help to meet diverse needs and mitigate issues facing young people in Penticton.

Accessible Youth Activities and Programs: Almost everyone we heard from emphasized the need for a greater and more diverse range of free or affordable programs or activities for youth, to occur in the evenings and throughout the year, with special attention to the summer months when school is out. These

activities would help to increase positive self-esteem for young people, offer alternatives to using drugs or alcohol, and contribute to crime prevention efforts.

Youth Communications Strategy: Penticton needs a comprehensive youth communications strategy that will help the community to better understand the needs of Penticton youth. A communications strategy may help to educate the community on the positive attributes of Penticton youth; create broad awareness amongst youth about events, resources and activities; and establish a strong youth presence in Penticton to represent the voices and needs of young people.



Introduction

The “Self-Esteem Project”

The Self-Esteem Project is an exploration into the world of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth (youth) in Penticton. The project aims to support youth ages 12 to 18¹ to feel good about themselves through building and maintaining positive self-esteem².



Research tells us that positive self-esteem in youth has been linked to overall health and well-being³. The ultimate goal of this project is to support a healthy and thriving youth population within our city.

The Self-Esteem Project was created to honour the life and generosity of Ms. Rohan Crompton-Bell, who made significant donations to the Community Foundation of the South Okanagan / Similkameen and the United Way of the Central and South Okanagan / Similkameen. With the help of Ms. Jane Drapeau, her executrix, the vision of dedicating the funds to improving youth self-esteem in Penticton was born.

This gift ignited a spark within the city of Penticton towards considering the ways we can support youth to be the best that they can be. Conversations were held with both youth and adults to learn about issues facing young people in Penticton; opportunities and resources that build positive self-esteem; and what young people need to feel good about themselves.

Over the course of three months, hundreds of conversations were summarized and contributed significantly to this report, which is intended for youth and adults alike. In addition to providing a snapshot of young people living in Penticton, the following report gives a summary of who we talked to and what we learned, and offers recommendations to strengthen positive self-esteem for Penticton youth.

¹ For the purpose of this report, 12 year olds are included as “youth” as this age group participated in the Middle School focus groups. The project originally aimed to focus on youth ages 12-24, because of the intention to include Aboriginal youth groups where youth is defined beyond 18.

² Self-Esteem has been defined in this report as a positive or negative feeling towards oneself and the personal judgment of worthiness (Friedlander et al., 2007)

³ Birndorf et al., 2005; Feinstein et al., 2012; Harder et al., 2012; Harris-Britt et al., 2007)

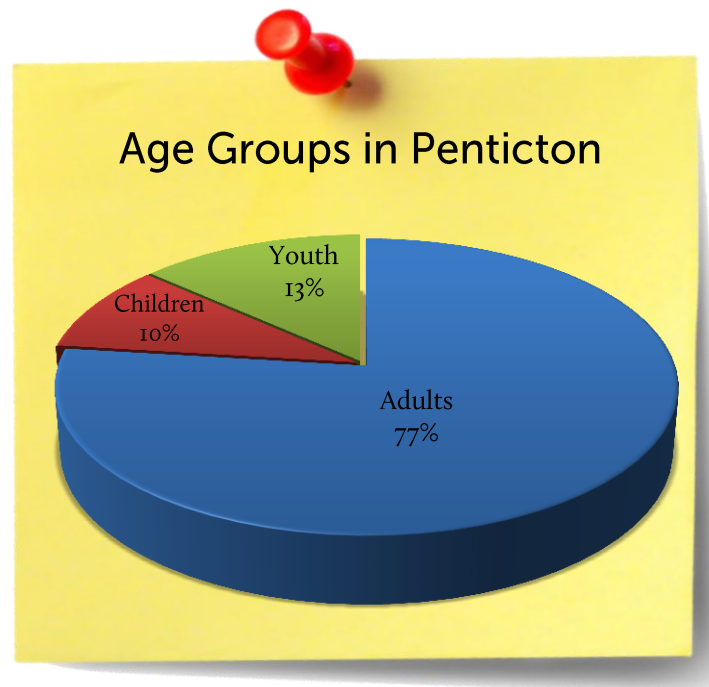
Section 1: Background

A Snapshot of Youth in Penticton

Penticton's Youth Population

Penticton is home to 32,880 people, including more than 4,400 youth⁴. Compared to the rest of Penticton's population, youth are significantly outnumbered by adults and senior citizens, who together make up more than three quarters of the city⁵. Compared to other cities like Kelowna or Vancouver, Penticton has a much bigger adult population versus youth population (Kelowna's population is 72% adults and 17% youth; Vancouver's population is 72% adults and 16% youth).

For every one youth living in Penticton, there are two senior citizens.

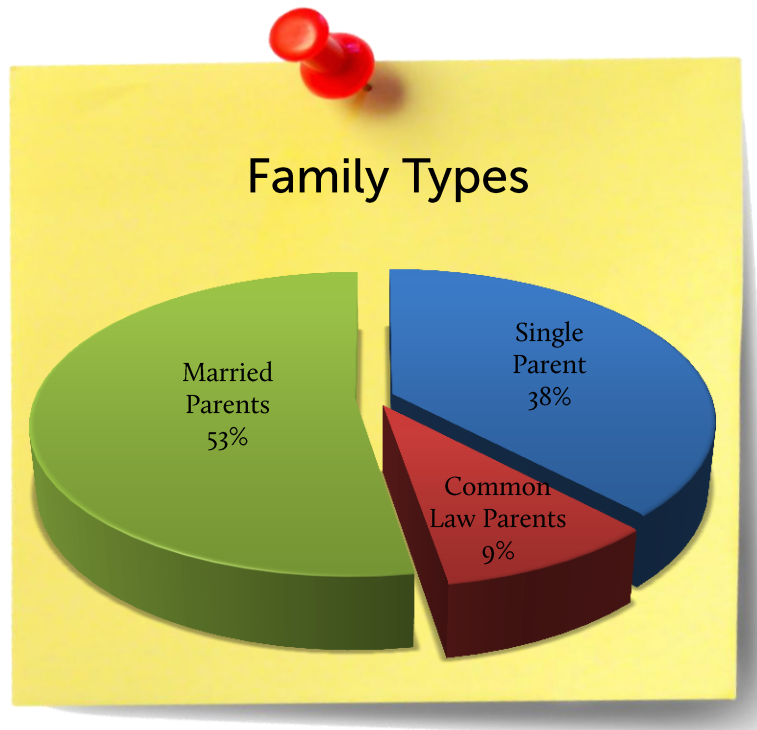


⁴ Statistic Canada's 2011 National Household Survey (www.statcan.gc.ca).

⁵ For the purpose of this statistic, youth have been grouped as ages 12-24, while adults have been grouped as young adults (25 to 44 years); middle age (45 to 64 years); seniors (age 65 and up). While there is no agreement in the literature on actual age breakdown of middle age, for the purpose of this report, definition has been borrowed from American Psychiatric Association, which defines middle age as 45 to 65 years.

Youth and Their Families

Families and Parents: Penticton families come in many shapes and sizes. Of the 4,360 families living with children in Penticton⁶, more than 53% of them have two parents that are married, 38% are single parent families (almost 80% single mothers), and 9% are common law couples with children.



Family Finances: A lot of families in Penticton are struggling financially. Penticton ranks in the top ten places in BC with the highest rate of children living on welfare⁷. The average income for Penticton citizens in 2009 was \$35,366, while the average income for BC was \$39,754⁸.

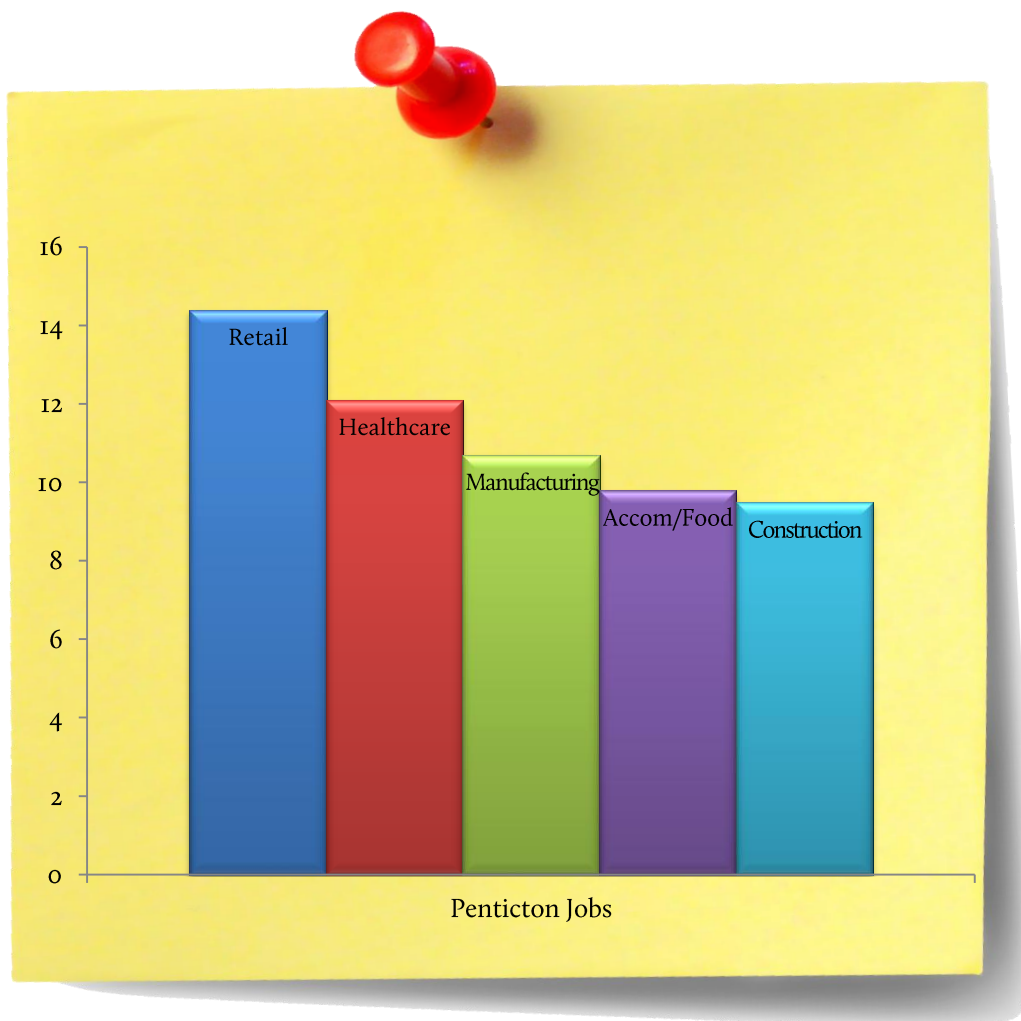
⁶ Statistics Canada. 2012. Penticton, British Columbia (Code 5907041) and Okanagan-Similkameen, British Columbia (Code 5907) (table). Census Profile. 2011 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-XWE. Ottawa. Released October 24, 2012. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

⁷ Source: BC Stats Socio-Economic Indices: <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/SocialStatistics/SocioEconomicProfilesIndices/SocioEconomicIndices/LHAReporsts.aspx>

⁸ This is based on the most recent data available from the Canada Revenue Agency, cited on Community Facts Sheet. Source: BC Stats. 2013. Community Facts, Penticton City. <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/SocialStatistics/CommunityFacts.aspx>

Family Homes: More than one third of Penticton citizens rent their home, and paid an average rent of \$735 per month. This is in line with the provincial average where 33% of British Columbians rent their homes, and paid around \$750 per month in rent⁹.

Where are Parents (and employed youth) Working? The top five areas that people work in Penticton are in the retail trade; health care and social assistance; manufacturing; accommodation and food services; and construction.



⁹ Community Facts Sheet. Source: BC Stats. 2013. Community Facts, Penticton City.
<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/SocialStatistics/CommunityFacts.aspx>

The Ethnic and Cultural Identities of Penticton Youth

Most of the youth living in Penticton are white (Caucasian). That is, more than 88% of people living in Penticton are white, while just over 6% identify as having Aboriginal ancestry¹⁰, and just over 5% of people are non-white (sometimes referred to as visible minorities), mostly of South Asian or Chinese descent¹¹.

It is unknown how many people in Penticton practice their unique culture, but statistics show that Penticton has over 2000 people who identify as Aboriginal, and more than 4200 immigrants, mostly from the United Kingdom (23%) and India (11%). The three most frequently reported ethnic origins in Penticton are English (35%), Scottish (24%), and Canadian (22%)¹².



¹⁰ Of the 3,675 Aboriginal people living in Penticton and on the Penticton Indian Reserve, 1,670 live on reserve and 2,005 live off-reserve

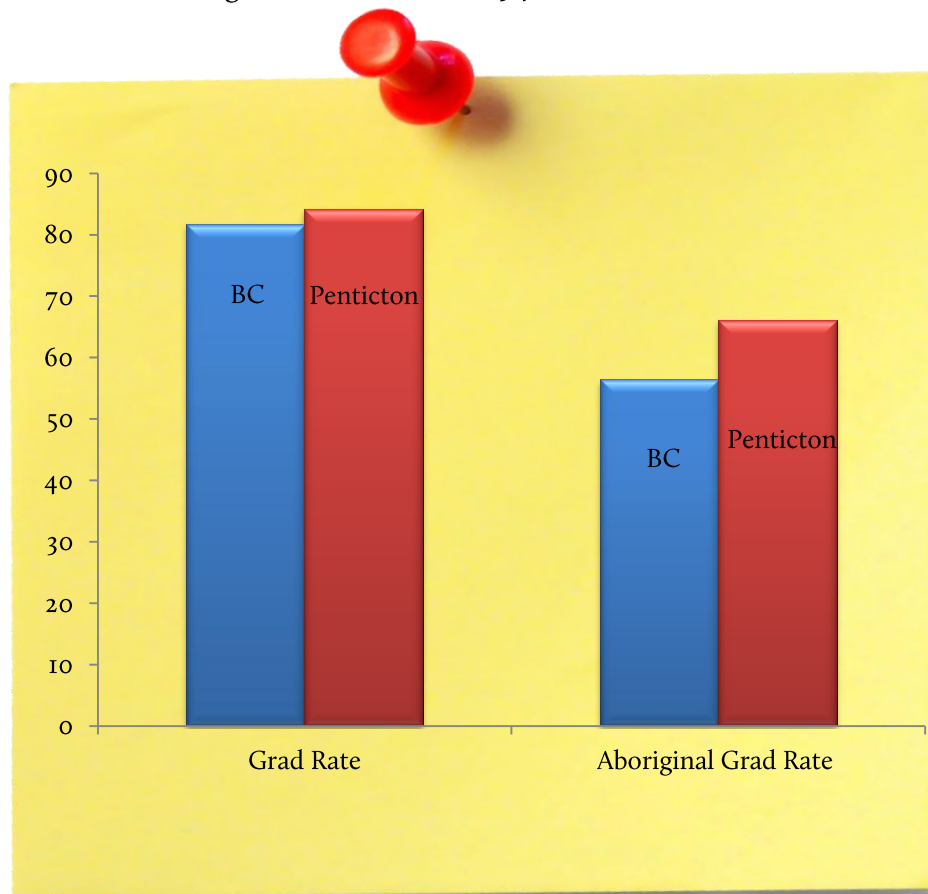
¹¹ Source: Statistics Canada National Household Survey, Penticton CY, British Columbia, 2011: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5907041&Data=Count&SearchText=penticton&SearchType=Begin&SearchPR=01&AI=All&BI=All&Custom=&TABID=1>

¹² Statistics Canada National Household Survey

Youth in School

Of Penticton's total youth population, just about half, or around 2,355 young people are secondary school age (12-18 years).

In terms of school performance, Penticton's grade 12 students, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, do better in school than the average British Columbian in grade 12. Over 82% of Penticton's grade 12 students graduated from high-school last year¹³. Of these graduates, 86% graduated from high-school on time¹⁴, compared to the BC average of 81%¹⁵. However, it is notable that the number of first time graduates has steadily declined in Penticton since 2007, when the first time graduation rate was 94%.



¹³ Source: Ministry of Education website:

<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/district.php?mode=District&report-school-district=Okanagan+Skaha+SD%23067&district-index=38>

¹⁴ On time refers to the First Time Graduation Rate, which is students who complete grade 12 on time (the year they were assigned to grade 12), while Eligible Graduation Rate refers to all students who complete grade 12 (whether it is students' first time in grade 12, or who in the past did not successfully complete grade 12 in their assigned year.)

¹⁵ Source: Ministry of Education website: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reports/pdfs/graduation/prov.pdf>

Section 2: Methodology

How We Approached the Project

To begin our learning journey for the Self-Esteem Project, we adopted a “Community Development” approach to the work. This approach builds on the principle that youth and adults living in Penticton already have the resources, knowledge, and experience that can help to build positive self-esteem for youth living in Penticton¹⁶.

A Community Development Approach is a way of working with communities so that everyone, including ordinary people and people in positions of power, can take part in the issues that affect their lives.

The project involved four major steps:

Understanding Self-Esteem: We explored what had already been written about self-esteem, both locally and across Canada and the United States.

Gathering Local Knowledge and Information: We heard from youth in Penticton through focus groups and from interviews with adults who work directly with youth in Penticton, or who support youth programs.

Summarizing our Learning: Once we heard from everyone, we analyzed and summarized the stories, and sent the learning back to the youth and adults for further feedback.

Final Report: After collecting all feedback, recommendations were crafted and this report was finalized and sent to the Community Foundation and United Way of the South Okanagan Similkameen.

¹⁶ Definition of Community Development has been adapted from the Community Development Exchange’s definition, as cited on Wikipedia:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_development#cite_note-2

Understanding Self-Esteem

To learn more about what types of resources existed in Penticton to support positive self-esteem for youth, we first began our journey by exploring what reports and scientific experiments had to say about “youth self-esteem”.

*The Self-Esteem Project
heard from a total of 50
youth and 40 youth
service providers*

When we cracked open the information vault, we learned that there are thousands of research studies on youth and self-esteem problems! To help us narrow down our search, we decided to read about the studies that focused on what helps young people to feel good about themselves (versus the studies that looked at things that make young people feel bad). (See Appendix I for the report “Discussions on Youth Self-Esteem: A Review of the Literature”.) Several people in Penticton have already been studying and writing about this subject, and valuable information has been collected¹⁷.

Positive self-esteem has been linked to decreased suicide, obesity, self-stigma and depression, as well as increased mental well-being, coping skills, and school performance¹⁸. Social and peer supports help to protect against low self-esteem¹⁹, and participation in sports has been shown to build self-esteem²⁰. For Aboriginal youth, increased knowledge of traditional culture and spirituality helps to increase self-esteem and reduce suicidal tendencies²¹. For youth who have recently moved here from other countries, a strong connection to their culture helps to increase self-esteem²².

¹⁷ See McCreary Centre (2008). Adolescent Health Survey IV 2008. Available through School District 67; Kalaski, T., Boehm, M., Challenger, G. (2012). Penticton Youth Centre and Housing Project Report. Available through Penticton Health Centre, Interior Health.

¹⁸ Birndorf et al., 2005; Feinstein et al., 2012; Harder et al., 2012; Harris-Britt et al., 2007)

¹⁹ Friedlander et al., 2007

²⁰ Brown, 2002

²¹ Harder et al., 2012

²² Raj, 2005

Gathering Local Knowledge and Information

Who did we hear from? From April to June 2013, the Self-Esteem Project heard stories and input from 90 people in Penticton: 50 young people²³, mostly between the ages of 12 to 18 who attended KVR Middle School, Princess Margaret Secondary School, and Penticton High School; and 40 adults (service providers) who either worked directly with youth, or supported people who worked with youth.

We listened to youth through “focus groups” (a group of diverse young people who gathered together to focus on one issue), held over the lunch hour in three different schools. Two youth facilitators and one adult facilitator joined together to ask questions and better understand self-esteem from youths’ perspective. Pizza and drinks were served to the youth, and free movie passes were provided as a thank you.

We also listened to adult service providers through “interviews” (face to face, and over the phone conversations). The group of service providers included anyone who provided or oversaw youth programs in Penticton: frontline workers, managers, senior leaders, and Aboriginal Elders.



How did we find people to talk to? Young people were invited to speak to us in two different ways: Youth were invited to self-register by way of posters placed in three schools advertising the focus group and a free lunch (for a copy of the poster, see Appendix 2), or school guidance counselors and/or principal’s handpicked youth and invited them to participate.

²³The focus group scheduled with the First Nations youth group from the Penticton Indian Band was cancelled due to the tragic death of a youth at the time of the project.

Adults were identified through a “snowball sample” approach, that is, known youth service providers were approached for interviews, and asked if they knew anyone that we should speak to. People continued to suggest names of other individuals we should speak to throughout the project.

What did we ask them? The questions we asked youth were: What are the top three things youth do to feel good and have fun in Penticton? What would be the best thing ever that could happen in Penticton for youth feel good about themselves and to have fun?

Questions for Adults included: What resources do you currently offer youth? What are the demographics of the youth that access these resources, and some of the issues facing the youth? How do the resources build or support healthy self-esteem? If there were no limits to funding, what ideal resources or services would youth in Penticton be able to access to support and build self-esteem?

What did we learn? After all the stories had been collected from youth and adults, we were able to summarize what we learned in three areas: Self-esteem resources for youth; issues facing youth in Penticton; and possible approaches to strengthening positive self-esteem for Penticton youth.



Section 3: Key Findings

Resources for Penticton Youth

Both youth and adults provided a long list of resources and activities in Penticton that were considered to build or strengthen positive self-esteem for young people.


The Youth. Young people listed over 50 different activities that they or someone they know were involved with to have fun or feel good. (For the full list, see the table below on pages 18-19). Youth were asked to consider all activities, including those that were free of charge and that happened anytime throughout the year, regardless of season.

Most of the activities identified had some sort of fee associated with them (almost 70%); over one third of the free activities were not available in the winter; and over 45% of the activities required some form of athletic ability (including almost half of the free activities). Youth also noted that partying and drinking were common activities that they engaged in to have fun and feel good, especially when they did not have a suitable activity available to them.

The Adults. Adults listed a total of 32 programs (see table on page 20), including programs for specific groups (such as Aboriginal youth and immigrant youth), that fell into seven categories: Recreation; youth and family services; drug and alcohol services; mental health support; health and well-being; Aboriginal youth services; and newcomer support. (For a full description of programs, see Appendix 3).

Adults told us about resources that didn't cost any money, were designed for youth between the ages 12-24, and welcomed any young person, regardless of ability, religion, culture, sexual orientation, and how much money they or their family had.

YOUTH LIST OF ACTIVITIES

Youth Activity	Cost	Free	Seasonal
1. Apex - Skiing / Snowboarding			
2. Basketball			
3. Beach cruising			
4. Boating			
5. Bowling			
6. Building a car			
7. Cadets			
8. Community centre (gym and pool)			
9. Concerts			
10. Cricket			
11. Cues (to play pool)			
12. Dance class / practice			
13. Dirt biking			
14. Driving around			
15. Exercise			
16. Football			
17. Frisbee			
18. Gaming (video)			
19. Going to beach			
20. Going to the park			
21. Gymnastics			
22. Hang out with friends			
23. Hanging out at mall			
24. Hanging out downtown			
25. Hiking			
26. Hockey			
27. Horseback riding			
28. Library			

YOUTH LIST OF ACTIVITIES

Youth Activity	Cost	Free	Seasonal
29. Mountain biking / road biking		✓	✓
30. Movies	✓		
31. Open gym ("Youth Etcetera" Program)		✓	✓
32. Open mic nights		✓	
33. Parkour		✓	
34. Partying / drinking with friends on weekends	✓	✓	
35. Penticton Speedway	✓		✓
36. Pottery	✓		
37. Reading		✓	
38. River channel		✓	✓
39. Rugby	✓	✓	✓
40. Shopping	✓		
41. Singing (and singing lessons)	✓	✓	
42. Skate park		✓	✓
43. Snowmobiling	✓		✓
44. Soccer	✓	✓	✓
45. Spending time with family		✓	
46. Stand up paddle boarding	✓		✓
47. Tae kwon doe	✓		
48. Various paid jobs		✓	
49. Various sports (in school or outside of school)	✓	✓	
50. Water sports	✓	✓	✓
51. Working with kids		✓	
52. Yoga	✓	✓	
53. Youth group		✓	

Organization	Youth Program Name	Day	Evening	Drop-in
Okanagan Boys & Girls Club and City of Penticton	Youth Etcetera		✓	✓
First Baptist Church	The Ark		✓	✓
Penticton & District Community Resources Society & Okanagan Boys & Girls Club	Integrated family development	✓	✓	
Arc Programs	Family Treatment Program	✓		
Arc Programs	SOAR WRAP	✓	✓	
Ministry for Children and Family Development	Child Protection Services	✓	✓	
Interior Health	Substance Use Counselling	✓		
Pathways	Pathways Addiction Centre	✓		
Ministry for Children and Family Development	Child & Youth Mental Health Counselling	✓		
Penticton Mental Wellness Centre	Martin House	✓		
Penticton Mental Wellness Centre	Mental Health Peer Support	✓	✓	✓
Penticton and District Community Resources Society	Flying Dragons		✓	
Penticton and District Community Resources Society	After School Program	✓		✓
Penticton and District Community Resources Society	Sexual Abuse Intervention Program	✓	✓	
Penticton and District Community Resources Society	Family Outreach Program	✓	✓	
Okanagan Boys & Girls Club	Get Busy Program	✓		
Okanagan Boys & Girls Club	Positively Pregnant	✓		✓
Okanagan Boys & Girls Club	Youth Community Kitchen	✓		
City of Penticton	Girls Expanding Boundaries	✓		
Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Okanagan	Teen Mentorship Program	✓		
Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Okanagan	Healthy Living Program	✓		
Penticton Indian Band	R Native Voice		✓	✓
Penticton Indian Band	First Nations Youth Leadership	✓	✓	
Ooknakane Friendship Centre	ROOTS program	✓		
Ooknakane Friendship Centre	Aboriginal Family Outreach	✓	✓	
South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services	Newcomer Youth Mentorship	✓	✓	
Options for Sexual Health BC	Opt Clinic		✓	
Penticton High School	Girls/Boys Group	✓		
Penticton High School	Smoking Cessation Group	✓		✓
Get Bent Arts and Recreation	The Esteem Team		✓	

Issues Facing Penticton Youth

Both youth and adults discussed a range of issues for young people in Penticton that created challenges to building or maintaining positive self-esteem. All of the youth we heard from spoke about the overall lack of social resources and activities dedicated to young people in Penticton. The following points highlight specific issues youth identified in the focus groups:

Most youth reflected on the fact that there is an overall lack of resources for them in the summer, which can lead to youth “getting into trouble”. Many youth said they thought the focus of Penticton seems to be on senior citizens and tourism rather than on them.

If youth are not athletic or sports-oriented, there are very limited free activities that are an alternative to sports.

“Maybe that’s why we get into trouble... There’s not much to do with the amount of money we have”

There is an overall lack of affordable or free social activities for Penticton youth. Of the activities that do exist, most of them cost money, which make the activities unattainable for youth without money, (including those coming from poor or low income families).

One young person noted: “There is nowhere to go on a date in Penticton other than the beach, or the movies. If it is the beach, it has to be in summer, and if it is the movies, you have to have money. That is why we just go to each other’s houses, which leads to other things...”

A number of young people explained that the lack of affordable or free youth activities in town in the evening time leads to youth getting together to party and drink alcohol or do drugs.

In the absence of structured, affordable evening activities, many youth choose to party and drink alcohol with friends

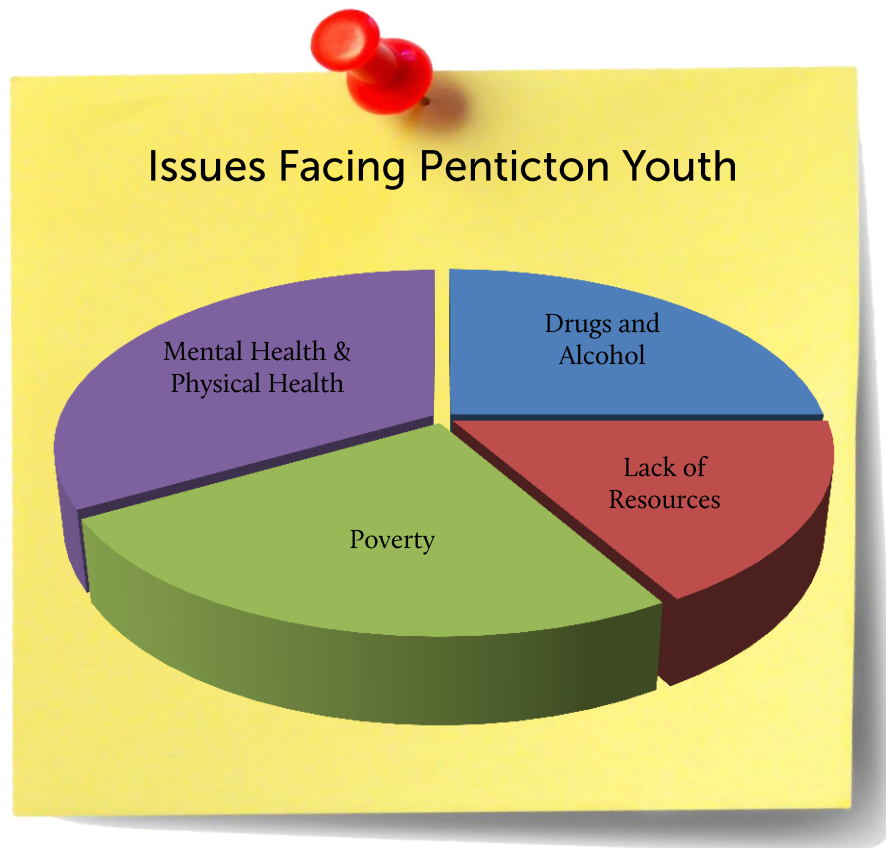
Service providers were asked their thoughts about the biggest and most current issues facing youth in Penticton. Four overall issues were raised as being the top issues facing young people in Penticton (for full description, see pages 23-27):

Mental and Physical Health: More than one third of the people interviewed reported issues related to youth mental and physical health.

Drugs and Alcohol: One quarter of the people interviewed discussed issues related to youth using and abusing drugs and alcohol.

Poverty: One quarter of the interviewees noted that poverty was a top issue for many youth in Penticton.

Lack of Resources: Almost 20% of people interviewed indicated that youth in Penticton face a lack of overall resources dedicated to them in many areas including social, health, housing, and recreational.



Mental Health / Physical Health Issues

Anxiety: Many respondents discussed the fact that anxiety seems to be on the rise for young people living in Penticton, mainly in the areas of social anxiety, family and relationship angst, and school related anxiety. The use of social media was noted as a contributing factor to increased anxiety as youth continue to try to manage rapid modes of communication and information sharing.

The increasing use of social media tools was noted as a contributing factor to a rise in youth anxiety levels.

Sexual Health: A number of respondents noted that many youth are practicing unsafe sex, sometimes as a weekend recreational activity. At the time of the interviews for this report, one service provider reported that within the last three months, five different female youth disclosed that they had been sexually assaulted.

Youth tend to have unsafe sex in the summer months as a way to occupy their time and at unsupervised parties, as a result of less or no adult supervision. A number of people linked this fact with anecdotal evidence that there appears to be an increase in teen pregnancy and births in February and March each year. Some service providers discussed the reality that when youth are not occupied, they will use or abuse substances, party, or have sex.

With regards to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) youth, when asked, respondents reported that there are no current resources for LGBT youth. However, on further investigation, the Opt Clinic advertises that they provide counselling services and support to LGBT youth. Historically there has been a “Gay Straight Alliance” at Penticton High School, but it was not active in 2012/13.

“Within the last three months, five girls have come forward to report that they were sexually assaulted at different times”

Violence and Abuse: There is no safe house in Penticton for youth who are fleeing violence or abuse, or any situation that warrants a safe place. For example, if a youth is aged 16 or older and is in urgent need of a safe place to live, there is often nowhere for them to go in Penticton if emergency foster care is unavailable²⁴, except for friends' houses, or the street. The woman's shelter in Penticton is not able to admit anyone under the age of 18 for legal reasons. If youth are homeless and/or are in danger, they must travel to Kelowna to the nearest youth safe house.

Suicide: Aboriginal service providers reported that suicide was a significant and increasing issue for First Nations and Aboriginal youth. In the time of writing this report, one Aboriginal youth died from a drug overdose / suicide, and it was reported to this author that at least three youth from the same community attempted suicide within the same month.

Drug and Alcohol Issues

Partying: As mentioned in the section above, most of the individuals interviewed noted that there are no free structured or supervised programs for Penticton youth in the summer time, and so to occupy time, youth are turning to partying with drugs and alcohol, and/or using or abusing substances.

“When youth are not occupied, they will use or abuse substances, party, or have sex.”

Crystal Meth: Over half of the interview respondents reported that a significant number of young people in Penticton are struggling with issues related to drugs and alcohol. For instance, many respondents noted that the use of Methamphetamine (Crystal Meth)²⁵ was on the rise. Two people went as far to say that they have never seen so many kids using this substance before in Penticton.

²⁴ Youth over the age of 16 can request foster care services from MCFD, who will then consider all other alternatives to foster care first, that is, family options, and then youth agreements.

²⁵ Methamphetamine is a highly addictive substance and is known by a number of names such as crystal meth, speed, meth, or ice. Speeding up the central nervous system, it can be smoked, snorted, taken orally or injected in order to experience a high, which can last between six to twelve hours. Users experience increased wakefulness (kids have reportedly been awake for two or more days), decreased appetite, and a sense of wellbeing (Source: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health: www.camh.ca)

Crime: The RCMP note that there is close to a 90% increase in youth related criminal activity over the summer months in Penticton²⁶. Youth tend to drink more in the summer time, and simultaneously have less supervision because of the lack of structured summer programming. As a result, the majority of youth crimes are alcohol and/or drug related, and there is a significant rise in policing costs²⁷.

There is a 90% increase in youth crime over the summer.

Treatment Options: A few respondents noted that the treatment options for youth with problems related to drug and alcohol use are limited, and for Aboriginal youth living off-reserve, there are no cultural treatment options. For example, there is no youth detox resource in Penticton, and the closest resource for substance treatment is in Keremeos, following a peer-led model (noted by two service providers as a model not suitable to every youth needing help).

Poverty

Homelessness: Many interviewees identified that youth homelessness is an issue in Penticton. In particular, youth who are aging out of foster care²⁸, or who under 19 years and living on a “Youth Agreement”²⁹, have limited means to pay for appropriate shelter in town. After a few months, their shelter allowance is reduced to \$350 per month compared to the average rent of \$543³⁰ for a bachelor apartment in Penticton. Many youth who cannot find a place to live in Penticton end up couch-surfing (temporarily staying in someone else’s home) or living on the streets.

Transportation: For First Nations youth living on the Penticton Indian Reserve, there is no public transit to take them into town. For youth who do

²⁶ Youth crime increased by 88.5% in summer of 2012 (Source: Penticton RCMP)

²⁷ Penticton spends 14% of its total budget on policing costs (Source: City of Penticton www.penticton.ca)

²⁸ As of May 2013, there were 38 youth on youth agreements in the South Okanagan, and 146 children living in foster care. 80 of these children will age out of foster care as they are on “continuing care orders”, of which 61% are Aboriginal children (Source: MCFD).

²⁹ Youth Agreements are legal agreements between young people between the ages of 16 to 18 who do not have parents or anyone else who are willing to take responsibility for them or they cannot return home to their family for safety reasons. Youth Agreements offer support to help the young person gain independence and return to school, and/or gain work experience and Life-skills.

³⁰ Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2013, Housing Market Information, Rental Market Information, British Columbia Highlights, http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/64487/64487_2013_BoI.pdf?fr=1373398322076

not have a car or access to one, Penticton bus service has limited hours with most routes ending at 6 or 7pm, and one night bus that goes until 10pm.

Sports: Most sports teams and activities, both in and outside of school, have user fees associated with them. Sports and other activities are often unattainable for youth who cannot pay, have families who are unable to pay, or who do not know about or do not qualify for specific sports subsidies³¹. Although Penticton does have a skatepark, it is only accessible by a few: for those who like to skate the park is only available if they have transportation or live close by.

Going to the Movies: It was noted that many youth in Penticton cannot afford to go to the movies because the high costs associated at the new cinema in town. The cost of the old theatre used to be around \$8, but the new theatre costs between \$11 and \$14 for a regular show.

Lack of Resources

Summer time: In Penticton, there are no free weekly structured or supervised programs for youth during the months of July and August.

Weekends and Evenings: From September through to June, there are a total of two evening drop-in programs that are free of charge for more than 2,300 youth³² in Penticton. These both occur on Friday nights for two to three hours, and largely cater to youth ages 13 to 15. There are no other free structured or facilitated evening activities for youth in Penticton throughout the week or on weekends. This was identified by many interviewees as a challenge for young people as there are no safe alternatives offered to partying. One service provider pointed out that even though Penticton has over 4,400 youth³³, there is no youth drop in centre, but the town

Although Penticton has a senior's drop-in centre, there is no equivalent resource for youth.

³¹ There are limited subsidies available for youth for various sport activities in Penticton: There is a sports/activity subsidy available in the schools for students who cannot afford it, however, most people do not take advantage of the subsidy as they either do not know about it, or do not feel comfortable explaining their financial situation. Jumpstart and Kids Sport programs also offer limited subsidies to youth for specific sports that are registered as non-profit societies or belong to Sport BC

³² Ages 12 to 18

³³ Ages 12 to 24

does have a range of free resources for senior citizens including a senior's activity drop in centre.

Life-Skills: Many service providers reported that youth who age out of foster care or live on youth agreements are severely lacking in basic life-skills such as healthy eating, budgeting, and job search skills. Additionally, as Aboriginal children are six times more likely to be taken into foster care than non-Aboriginal children³⁴, there is a disproportionate need for life-skills training for Aboriginal youth, as many of them will have to learn to live independently and support themselves without parents by the age of 19 years.

Foster Kids: One interviewee specializing in drug and alcohol services reported that over 30% of their caseload is made up of youth living in foster care. Although these youth were described as displaying high risk behaviours, there is a severe lack of resources to support them in Penticton.

Employment Support: There is no dedicated youth employment resource in Penticton. Although there is an active employment program in Penticton, to be eligible, youth must be 16 years or older, cannot be registered in school full time and must be able to attend the program during regular office hours. This eliminates the possibility of any youth of school age from accessing employment support. For any youth not registered in school full-time, employment counselling and support is available through the YMCA WorkBC Employment Service Centre. Youth are eligible for job search resources, personal employment planning, workshops, resume writing assistance, and training.

Aboriginal Youth: There is no specific youth programming for Aboriginal young people living off-reserve in Penticton between the months of September to June. Although more than 2,000 Aboriginal people live off-reserve in our city, compared to 1,670 living on reserve, the agency poised to deliver service to the off-reserve Aboriginal population, Oonkanane Friendship Centre, had their youth program funds cut in 2011.

³⁴ Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia *Management of Aboriginal Child Protection Services: Ministry of Children and Family Development* (Victoria: Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, 2008). Available at: <http://fnbc.info/sites/default/files/fck-uploads/file/ChildFamilyWellnessCentre/documents/Auditor%20general%20reports/BC%20AG%20Report%20on%20Ab%20Child%20and%20families.pdf>

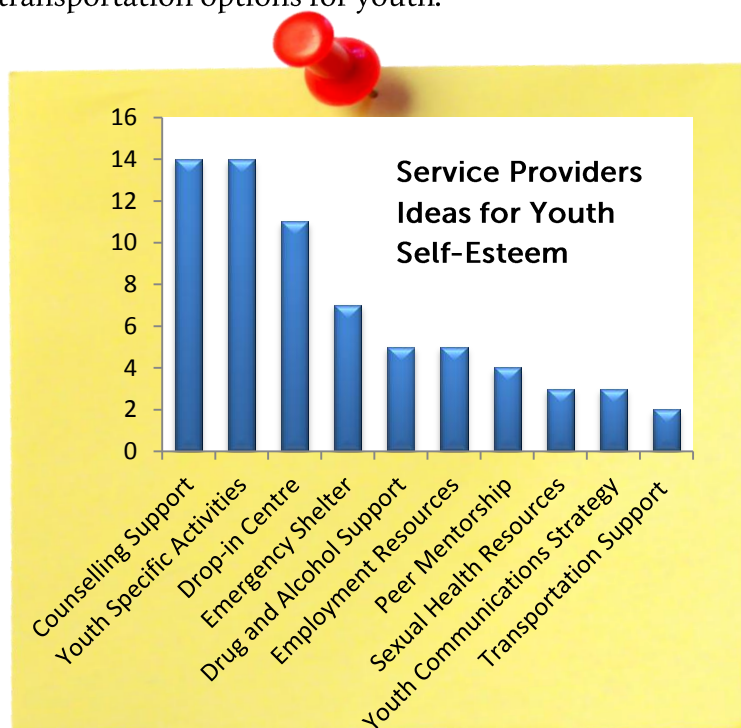
Possibilities for Penticton Youth

Both youth and adults were asked to consider what resources or activities would be helpful towards strengthening positive self-esteem for young people living in Penticton. Youth were asked to consider their dreams and told there were no wrong answers. Adults were asked to consider a scenario where funding was not a limitation to building resources for youth. The following section summarizes what was said.

The Youth: Young people proposed possibilities within four themes: A dedicated youth centre in Penticton offering free resources and services; more job opportunities in Penticton; coordinated youth communications strategy; and more free alternatives to drugs and alcohol (see pages 29-33)

Aboriginal Service Providers: Aboriginal service providers, including Elders, proposed a distinct cultural approach to strengthening self-esteem for Aboriginal youth. See page 34 for possibilities for Aboriginal youth.

The Adults: Non-Aboriginal service providers identified the top four possibilities for youth as counselling support; youth driven activities; youth drop in centre; and emergency housing for youth. Other possibilities included more drug and alcohol support; more employment resources including volunteerism; more peer mentorship opportunities; sexual health resources; a communications strategy to promote positive messaging about youth; and more transportation options for youth.



Youth Ideas for Positive Self-Esteem

Youth Centre

Most of the youth we heard from identified that Penticton needs to acquire a drug and alcohol free youth centre to help deal with the many issues facing young people, as well as help to strengthen positive self-esteem. Youth were very specific in their suggestions for a design for a youth centre, and described the facility, location, operating hours, and what programs³⁵ should be offered.

Youth Centre Location

Accessible by city bus; downtown or middle of town

Accessibility

Flexible hours; open all year long (winter and summer); weekdays after-school to 9pm; weekends 12pm to 10pm; occasionally open 24 hours; no admission cost

Target population

Youth ages 11-19 (exceptions allowed); older youth can work or volunteer at centre and attend specific events; separate age groups for activities and resources, occasionally hold all-ages activities

Facility Details

Multiple floors and/or wings with following elements: common area; sports and recreation space; arts and culture space; dance studio; classrooms; auditorium or performance space; gymnasium; yoga space; lending library; arcade; youth diner/kitchen (including a dessert bar!); gaming room; free store and general store; youth overnight beds; laundry facilities; counselling space



³⁵ In the opinion of the writer of this report, most of the programs/activities the youth identified can realistically operate within a youth centre in Penticton, while a few of the activities identified really reflected the degree of creativity and dreaminess the youth applied to their responses.

Programs and Services Offered at the Centre:

Sports and Recreation Activities: Activities such as floor hockey and basketball; indoor rock climbing; yoga; place to watch movies

Outrips, campouts and retreats: For example, survival camps, archery and/or hunting; mountain bike trips; go-karting; bowling; laser tag

Bicycle Shop: Area for youth to learn how to build/fix bikes for repairs and resale, as well as designing one's own bike, and bike loan program

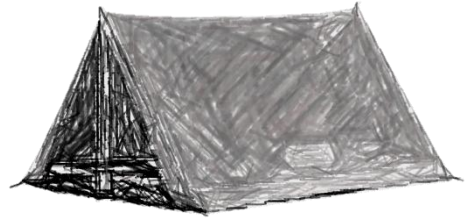
Competitions: Host different types of competitions such as youth cook-off (similar to television's Iron Chef); dance battles; hip hop battle; video games; pool

Counselling Space: Have youth peer counselors on hand, as well as professionally trained youth counsellors (in areas such as sexual health, drug and alcohol services, and employment support)

Store: Have a free store or "swap spot" where people can trade sports equipment, job interview clothes, and other things, as well as a store where youth can resell their belongings such as video games and sports equipment

Performance Space: Place for bands to play, as well as youth to showcase their talents, and host key note speakers

Other: Other activities/programs youth dreamed of for a youth centre include a large BMX track; mini golf; paint ball arena; museum; petting zoo; skateboard park; trampoline room; giant swimming pool with waterslides like West Edmonton Mall; anti-gravity chamber; condensed amusement park including a roller coaster that goes through each floor of the youth centre.



More Job Opportunities

Most of the young people discussed the issue of money as a barrier to participating in a lot of activities and programs that Penticton has to offer. Many of the youth identified the solution as casual, part-time, or summer jobs. The youth have suggested that more job opportunities be made available, including offering youth employment counselling and support, with everything from resumé writing to how to dress for a job interview.

Youth Communications Strategy

Many of the youth suggested increased advertising for youth events, including maintaining a Facebook page and a city-wide poster campaign with a calendar of events. The youth shared that it is difficult or impossible to know about what resources and activities do currently exist for young people because of the absence of a coordinated advertising strategy for youth. One of the youth suggested using the benches at bus stations to advertise for youth events, as well as sharing positive messages about Penticton youth, because “everyone reads the ads at bus stops”.



Alternatives to Drugs and Alcohol

All of the youth we spoke to expressed a need for accessible, affordable fun activities to help them feel good and have fun in a safe alcohol and drug free environment. The activities that they suggested ranged from sports to recreation to entertainment:

Voucher System: A few youth suggested that a voucher system for teens be established in Penticton, where teachers or other adult figures could provide vouchers for reduced price or free admission for many of city activities that cost, such as bowling, Penticton Vees Hockey games, or mini golf.

Sports: Indoor and outdoor sports complex open all year (regardless of weather) with baseball, soccer, basketball and other activities.

Organized, structured city-wide activities: Large scale activities that mix groups from different schools and are age specific such as structured beach parties with music, concession and activities; Movies shown at Gyro Park drive-in style; capture the flag; youth water gun fight; and bonfires.

Youth Outdoors Club: This club would offer free or low cost events, and would meet throughout the week after school from 4 to 6 pm, with special events and outtrips on weekends.

Waterslides: All of the youth from the focus groups were unanimous in their recommendation that the waterslides be rebuilt in Penticton, and that this would be an excellent way to spend time in the warmer months of the year.

Adventure-Based Recreation: Many young people suggested establishing activities such as paintball; an arcade; and increasing the number of mountain bike trails and dirt bike tracks in or near Penticton. Some of these activities are currently available in Kelowna, which is too far for a lot of youth to travel.

Additional Penticton

Skatepark: A few youth asked for another skatepark located either in a more central location, or closer to Skaha Lake. They also noted that it would be helpful if there was skateboard equipment available to rent (such as helmets).



Amusements: Many of the youth talked about the fact that the games and rides during Peachfest were too expensive for them and as a result they could not participate. They asked for more affordable fun in the form of cheaper amusement park rides, and mini golf.

Annual Youth Festival: Many youth stated that the festivals that Penticton hosts each year are geared towards adults, or young children, with very limited offerings for youth. They noted that a youth festival would provide a relevant alternative to young people as well as create more opportunities for youth employment. A youth festival would specialize in music geared towards youth, concession, shows and more. One youth noted that Peachfest brings in music that is usually geared towards “people who are over the age of forty”, and suggested that at least Peachfest have more evening music options that could draw in a younger crowd.

Evening Entertainment: A number of youth recommended that a drug and alcohol free dance club be established that would be open on a monthly basis, as well as opening up one of the night clubs for an alcohol free youth evening. Some youth also asked for more open mic nights that are alcohol free.

Possibilities for Aboriginal Youth

Aboriginal Elders and service providers both on and off reserve emphasized the need for a distinct Aboriginal approach to healthy self-esteem that recognizes the unique historical and cultural factors for Aboriginal youth. Resources to support positive self-esteem for Aboriginal youth in Penticton are especially critical, in light of the recently reported youth suicide attempts in Penticton and tragic death due to drug overdose.

Self-esteem resources for Aboriginal youth are supported by research that shows how increased self-esteem has decreased suicide rates, and how knowledge of traditional culture and spirituality has decreased suicidal tendencies for Aboriginal youth³⁶.

Compared to non-Aboriginal youth, social and economic conditions for Aboriginal youth both on and off-reserve are some of the lowest in the province, and the country.

Aboriginal youth are twice as likely to live in poverty than non-Aboriginal youth³⁷, six-times more likely to be taken into foster care³⁸, eight-times more likely to be in youth custody³⁹, more likely to commit suicide⁴⁰, less likely to graduate⁴¹, and on average, will live 7 years less than their peers⁴².



Photo of students at St. Mary's Mission Residential School, Mission BC, which closed in 1985. (Source: Indian Residential School Resources, <http://irsr.ca>)

³⁶ Harder et al., 2012

³⁷ BC Stats (2006). Aboriginal Profiles of British Columbia 2006:

<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/AboriginalPeoples/CensusProfiles/2006Census.aspx>

³⁸ Office of the Auditor General of British Columbia, *Management of Aboriginal Child Protection Services: Ministry of Children and Family Development*, May 2008:

www.bcauditor.com/pubs/subject/social-services

³⁹ BC Stats, 2011: Aboriginal Population in British Columbia, 2011: A study of selected indicators for off-reserve and urban Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations

⁴⁰ BC Stats, 2011: Aboriginal Population in British Columbia, 2011: A study of selected indicators for off-reserve and urban Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations

⁴¹ Source: Ministry of Education website: <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reports/pdfs/graduation/prov.pdf>

⁴² Provincial Health Officer (2007). Pathways to Health and Healing: www.aboriginalactnow.ca/myfiles/abohlth11-var7.pdf

These unacceptable social and economic conditions can be attributed to several factors: A long history of colonization in BC and Canada, systemic discrimination, the degrading experience of residential schools, and other experiences have led to adverse, multi-generational effects on Aboriginal youth and their families. These experiences have been the root of inequities in the well-being of the Aboriginal community and have continued through generations – negatively impacting the social structures, psychology and coping strategies of thousands of Aboriginal children and families⁴³.

Yet, despite these grim statistics, Aboriginal children and youth are the fastest growing segment of BC's general population, and continue to heal from the legacy of residential school and colonization. Cultural approaches to building positive self-esteem play a strong role in this healing, as well as connections with Elders, and traditional knowledge.

As there are no dedicated resources for Aboriginal youth living off-reserve in Penticton from September to June, it was heavily emphasized that urban Aboriginal youth programming be given priority. Specifically, cultural approaches to life-skills training were heavily emphasized given the disproportionate number of Aboriginal youth living in foster care⁴⁴, and the lack of family or community support once they turn 19 when they must transition to living on their own.

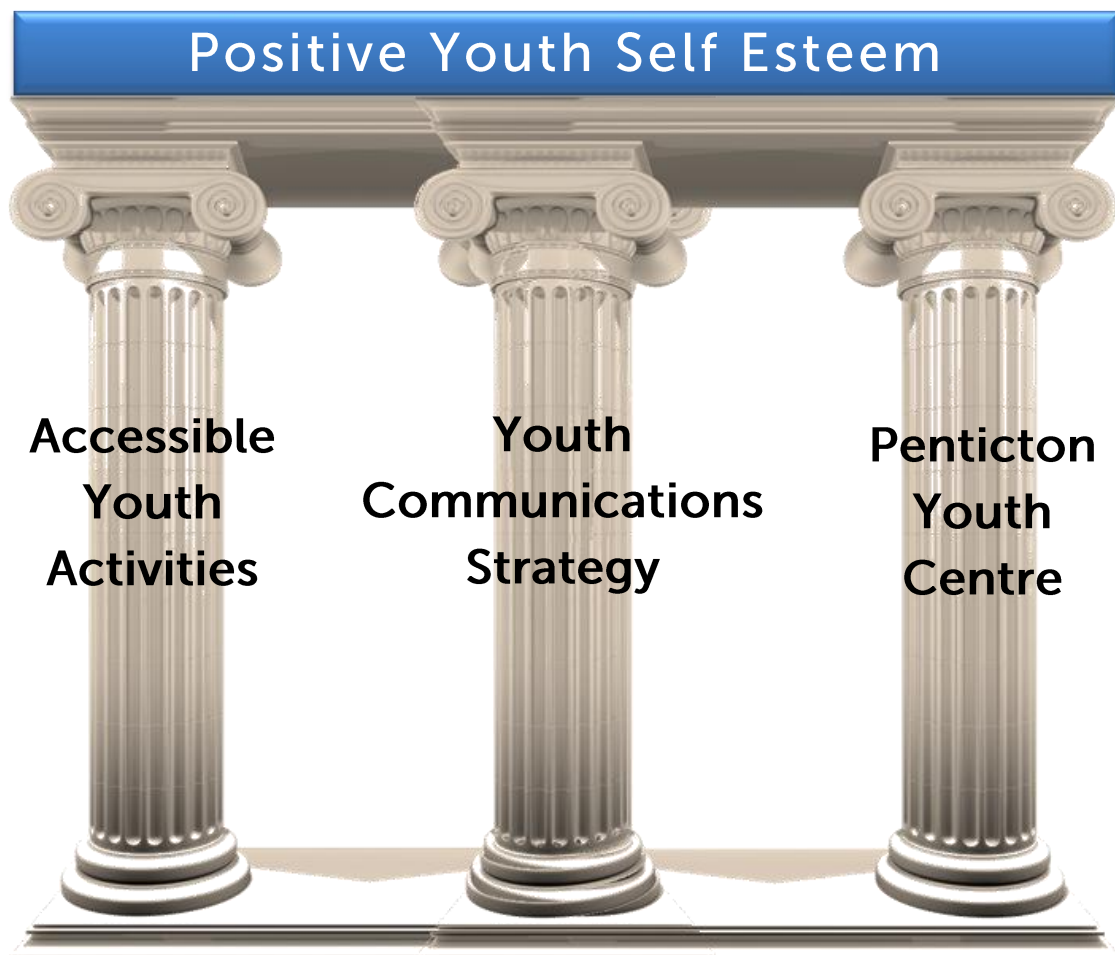


⁴³ Source: Pathways to Health and Healing – 2nd Report on the Health and Well-being of Aboriginal People in British Columbia. Provincial Health Officer, 2007.

⁴⁴ More than 60% of the children in foster care in the South Okanagan are Aboriginal (May 2013, MCFD)

Section 4: Recommendations

Based on all of the stories heard from youth and adults, the following recommendations are designed to build or strengthen positive self-esteem for Penticton young people. The recommendations can be seen as three interconnected pillars that support the goal of upholding positive self-esteem for youth.

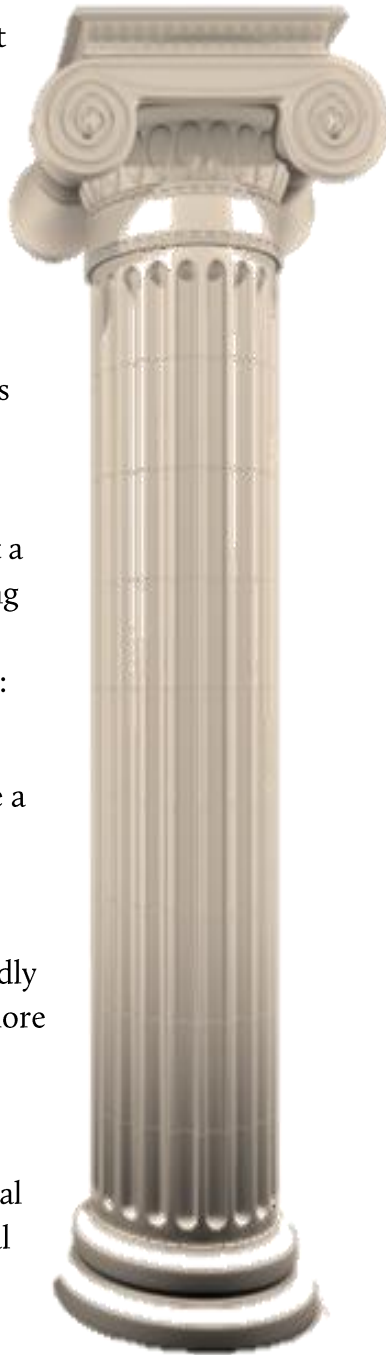


Accessible Youth Activities and Programs

Almost everyone we heard from emphasized the need for a greater and more diverse range of free or affordable programs or activities for youth, to occur in the evenings and throughout the year, with special attention to the summer months when school is out. These activities would help to increase positive self-esteem for young people, offer alternatives to using drugs or alcohol, and contribute to crime prevention efforts. Research has shown that participation in sports and other peer-based activities builds self-esteem for youth, increases stress management skills, and decreases depression⁴⁵.

In addition to activities that could take place at a youth centre in Penticton, various youth serving organizations could sponsor the following programs/activities such as (but not limited to):

1. In partnership with a committee of youth volunteers and the City of Penticton, create a Youth Fest to occur in the summer months
2. In partnership with Penticton's Peachfest, explore options to attract more youth friendly music to the Peachfest evening stage and more affordable amusements for local youth
3. In partnership with an urban Aboriginal organization, establish an Aboriginal cultural life-skills program for off-reserve Aboriginal youth



⁴⁵ Freidlander et al., 2007; Brown, 2002; Babiss and Gangwisch, 2009

4. In a partnership between the City, Penticton schools, and local Penticton businesses that offer recreational activities (pool hall, bowling, Vees hockey, movies etc.), establish a voucher system that awards vouchers to youth to attend activities for free or a reduced price
5. In partnership with a dance venue and a youth service organization, open up a space in Penticton for a monthly drug and alcohol free dance
6. In partnership with the city and youth serving organizations, build an additional skatepark in the South end of Penticton (closer to Skaha Lake)
7. In partnership with Penticton schools and youth serving organizations, establish a youth outdoors club that gathers young people from multiple schools and offers free or low cost events throughout the week after school and on weekends

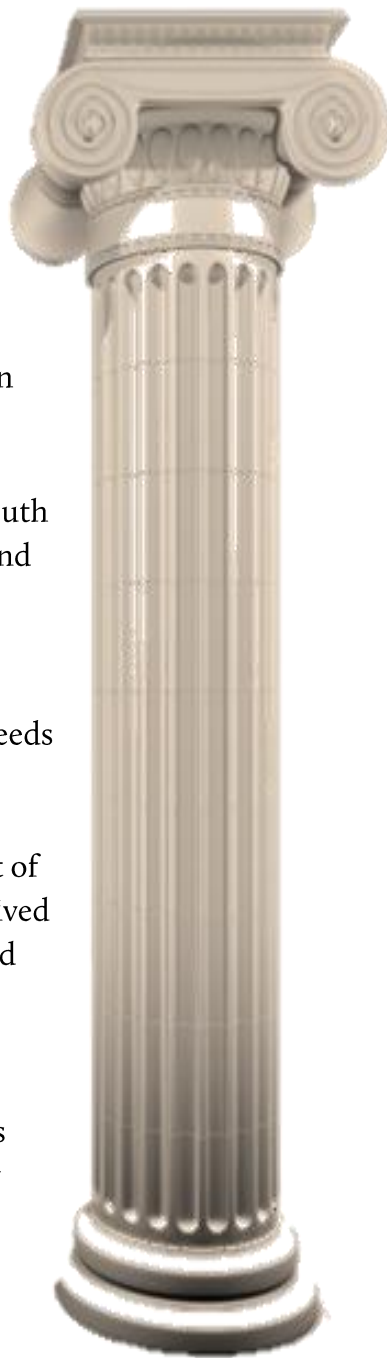
Youth Communications Strategy

As mentioned by a number of youth and adults, Penticton needs a broad communications strategy that will help the community to better understand the needs of Penticton youth. A communications strategy may help to achieve the following outcomes:

- Educate the community on the number of youth in Penticton, their characteristics and positive contributions, their potential, and the positive difference they can make within the community
- Create broad awareness amongst the youth population about youth driven events and activities
- Establish a strong youth presence in Penticton to represent the voices and needs of young people

The communications strategy could be run out of a neutral based organization (that is, not perceived as representing any specific youth interests) and could achieve its objectives through any of the following activities (but not limited to):

- I. In collaboration with youth and Penticton's youth serving organizations, establish a key message campaign. Key messages can be embedded in any external agency communications, and could reflect the positive attributes of Penticton's youth population



2. Establish a strategic media campaign (for example, weekly radio spots featuring positive youth stories, or youth stories featured in the local papers each month, written by a young person or service provider)
3. Establish quarterly youth “updates” on issues and positive accomplishments, to city council, or to the broad community through presentations at Town Hall style meetings (for example, with a youth panel)
4. Establish a Penticton Youth Website featuring event postings and social media feeds, (and also serving the dual purpose of offering a job posting page where the broad community can advertise for odd jobs, and youth can respond to advertisements)
5. Establish a youth advisory committee with diverse membership (age range, socio-economic backgrounds, ethno-cultural identity) to help guide the communications strategy

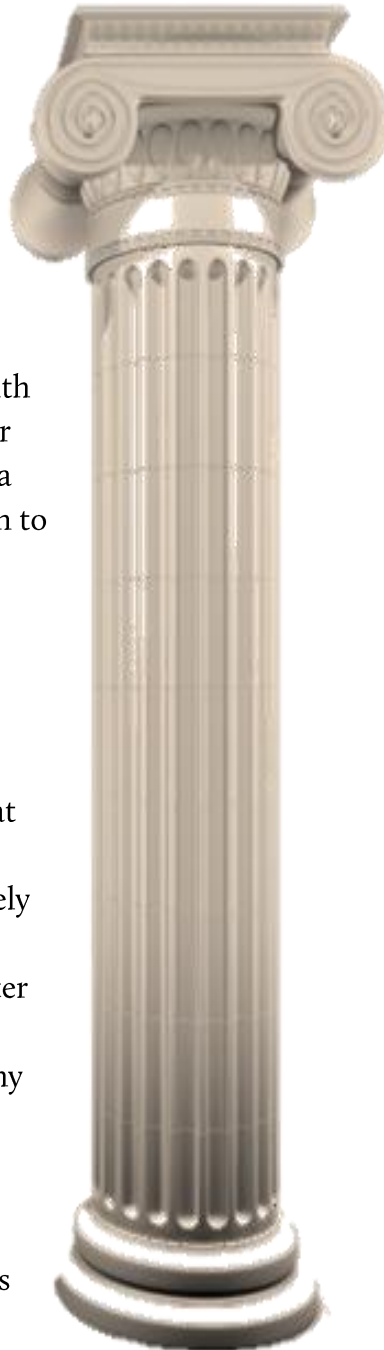
Youth Centre

A youth centre was the most commonly recommended strategy to help build and strengthen positive self-esteem for young people in Penticton. A community youth centre could offer a range of youth driven activities and services that would help to meet diverse needs and mitigate issues facing young people in Penticton.

In a 2012 research report⁴⁶ written by three youth workers in Penticton, (from the RCMP, Interior Health, and Boys and Girls Club), the need for a youth centre was strongly identified in addition to acknowledging the role that it could play as a protective factor for youth and as an effective crime prevention tool.

A youth centre offers an ideal opportunity to young people for meaningful community participation in Penticton. Research shows that youth who have opportunities for meaningful participation in their communities are: less likely to engage in risky behavior; have higher self-esteem; be more physically active; show a greater commitment to friends, families and communities; and more likely to achieve healthy development⁴⁷.

When planning for a youth centre, the facility design needs to be multi-purpose to accommodate the myriad services and activities required. As well, youth need to be an integral



⁴⁶ Youth Centre and Housing Project Report, 2012

⁴⁷ (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, as cited in "Youth Participation in Governance: Creating Youth Friendly Communities" <http://www.heartwood.ns.ca/tools/YouthGovernance.pdf>)

component to its design and delivery, and the operations would benefit from the collaborative efforts of many of the youth serving agencies in Penticton. The youth centre could offer a range of activities as outlined in “Section 3: Key Findings” of this report (pages 29-30) as well as the following activities and services (but not limited to):

1. Community kitchen (teaching nutrition, Foodsafe, basic cooking, Life-skills)
2. Sports and recreation facilities and activities (free or low cost activities for all abilities)
3. Arts and culture facilities (including music practice space, performance space etc.)
4. Counselling space (sexual health, GBLT resources, drug and alcohol, mental health, employment support, peer counselling)
5. Space for a social enterprise such as a general store (or second hand or free store, sports equipment swap, etc.)
6. Laundry facilities
7. Emergency beds
8. Bicycle repair shop

Appendix 1 – Discussions on Self-Esteem: A Review of the Literature

The definition for self-esteem has been in existence since the 19th century, “So, our feeling in this world depends entirely on what we back ourselves to be and do” (James, 1890). In our current definition, self-esteem has been defined as a *positive or negative feeling towards oneself and the personal judgment of worthiness* (Friedlander et al., 2007). Self-esteem can even be divided into further categories or global (overall/evaluative feeling of self-worth) and specific self-esteem (specific competence in a particular area) (Fagg et al., 2013; Friedlander et al., 2007; Kling et al., 2009). Yet given these broad definitions, self-esteem can be interpreted through many different perspectives and has been researched in all stages of life—specifically, positive outlook on self has long been perceived as an essential part of mental well-being (Kling et al., 1999). Self-esteem has broad implications for the well-being and health outcomes for youth throughout all variant socioeconomic statuses, populations, and geographical locations worldwide (Fagg et al., 2013; Marsh, 2008). Youth self-esteem research has been a topic of literature for decades with mixed results, yet has created a breadth of knowledge concerning what builds and hinders youth self-esteem. This brief literature review is intended to explore youth (ages 13-24) self-esteem through a ‘protective’ rather than ‘risk’ based perspective, and to investigate the current literature concerning youth self-esteem in Canada.

Increased self-esteem in youth has been linked to decreased suicide rates; higher academic performance; decreased obesity rates; increased mental well-being; increased coping skills; decreased self-stigma; and lower incidents of depression (Birndorf et al., 2005; Feinstein et al., 2012; Harder et al., 2012; Harris-Britt et al., 2007). However, research has also shown that youth self-esteem is not the one and only predictor of health outcomes and/or risk behaviours such as smoking initiation and alcohol use (Birndorf et al., 2005). It is also clear that many different factors are involved with the development and maintenance of high self-esteem at the individual, family and community level (Birndorf et al., 2005). The difficulty in the determination of self-esteem in youth specifically, is the lack of generalizability of self-esteem over time (i.e.,

from childhood to adolescences) and all age groups (Birndorf et al., 2005). Nevertheless, it is still possible to explore the protective factors that have, indeed, been studied: what build youth self-esteem?

In particular, culture and ancestral knowledge has been associated with increased levels of self-esteem of youth in Canada and in the United States within Aboriginal, immigrant, and low socioeconomic populations. In a sample population of African American youth, if a parent speaks to their child/youth about their particular race, ancestry and culture, that child and/or youth reported an increased level of self-esteem and were then more resilient to discrimination and coped more effectively with racism (Harris-Britt et al., 2007). Suicidal tendencies have lessened in Aboriginal Canadian youth with increased self-esteem due to increased knowledge of traditional culture and spirituality (Harder et al., 2012). In a study concerning new youth immigrants to Canada, researchers found if a youth immigrant maintained their connection to their native ethnic cultures they had increased self-esteem, which led to better school performance, experienced less depression and anxiety, and were better able to handle discrimination (Raj, 2005). It is evident that cultural knowledge is a strong protective factor that builds youth self-esteem in many different populations.

Social and peer supports have been observed to protect against lower self-esteem levels of youth in the United States in both high and low socioeconomic statuses. In a population of youth adolescent first year undergraduate students, having peer social supports was a protective factor that assisted the student to build self-esteem concerning adjustment and stress management skills concerning the continuation of their studies (Freidlander et al., 2007). In a population of homeless youth in Toronto, increased social involvement and peer support has fostered improved perception of self (Kidd and Shahrar, 2008). Almost in parallel, parental support has also been demonstrated to improve youth esteem, especially between fathers and daughters (McVey et al., 2002).

Participation in sports has also been shown to build youth self-esteem. In a small community in the Yukon, a youth 'at-risk' program delivers a snowboarding program to their youth. Self-esteem and confidence levels increased as snowboarding time and skills increased. This snowboarding

program extended an invitation to local RCMP, which led to the start of a better relationship between law enforcement and local youth (Brown, 2002). In a U.S. based study conducted with youth in grades 7 to 12, results indicated that sports participation decreased depression, decreased suicide ideation, and an increased self-esteem and social supports (Babiss and Gangwisch, 2009).

While research pertaining to protective factors for youth self-esteem is apparent in a brief literature review, risk-factor centred research floods the majority of research. Obesity related risk factors demonstrate decreased self-esteem with obese youth (Griffiths et al., 2010). In the U.S., it was found that gender also plays a role in self-esteem risk factors—males appear to have higher self-esteem than female youth (Birndorf et al., 2005; Kling et al., 1999). Poor academic performance has been linked to low self-esteem in youth from all over the world (Marsh, 2008). In the LGB (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual) community, risk factor focus of self-esteem govern the literature—self-stigma and lack of clear sexual identity decreased self-esteem in the LGB populations (Feinstein et al., 2012). Racial discrimination and perceived racism in the African American community in the US and the Aboriginal community in Canada that at times leads to violence, has been linked to decreased self-esteem in youth populations (Harder et al., 2012; Harris-Britt et al., 2007). There appears to be a dichotomous distribution of youth self-esteem literature: risk factor research greatly exceeds protective factor research regarding youth self-esteem. In addition, youth self-esteem research in smaller rural communities/cities is almost non-existent in the literature. Most research is completed in major cities where youth populations are larger. More research regarding smaller populations of youth is greatly needed.

However, in recent literature, self-esteem research has been complemented through the use of a more in-depth measurement, conceptualization, and observation of self, *self-concept*. Self-concept has been broadly defined as an individual's self-perceptions created through experience and interpretation of one's environment, these self-perceptions are then influenced by the evaluation of other people (Marsh, 2008). Self-concept research is more of a theoretical construct to explain how people act: self-esteem in the self-evaluative component, whereas self-concept is the descriptive component of self-perception (March, 2008). Self-concept has attempted to bridge gaps between risk and protective factors by exploring a more 'all-inclusive' picture

of self-perception. Nevertheless, research concerning self-concept and self-esteem is still very much risk factor targeted.

It is clear that youth self-esteem is influenced by various factors, which are socially, physically and culturally constructed. More research is required in smaller communities to represent that particular demographic and environment profile. A greater emphasis on protective factors for youth self-esteem would allow for 'constructive' based actions rather than 'problem' based actions. And increased youth led research initiative (rather than prescribed academic research) would allow for greater acceptance and youth-centred solutions.

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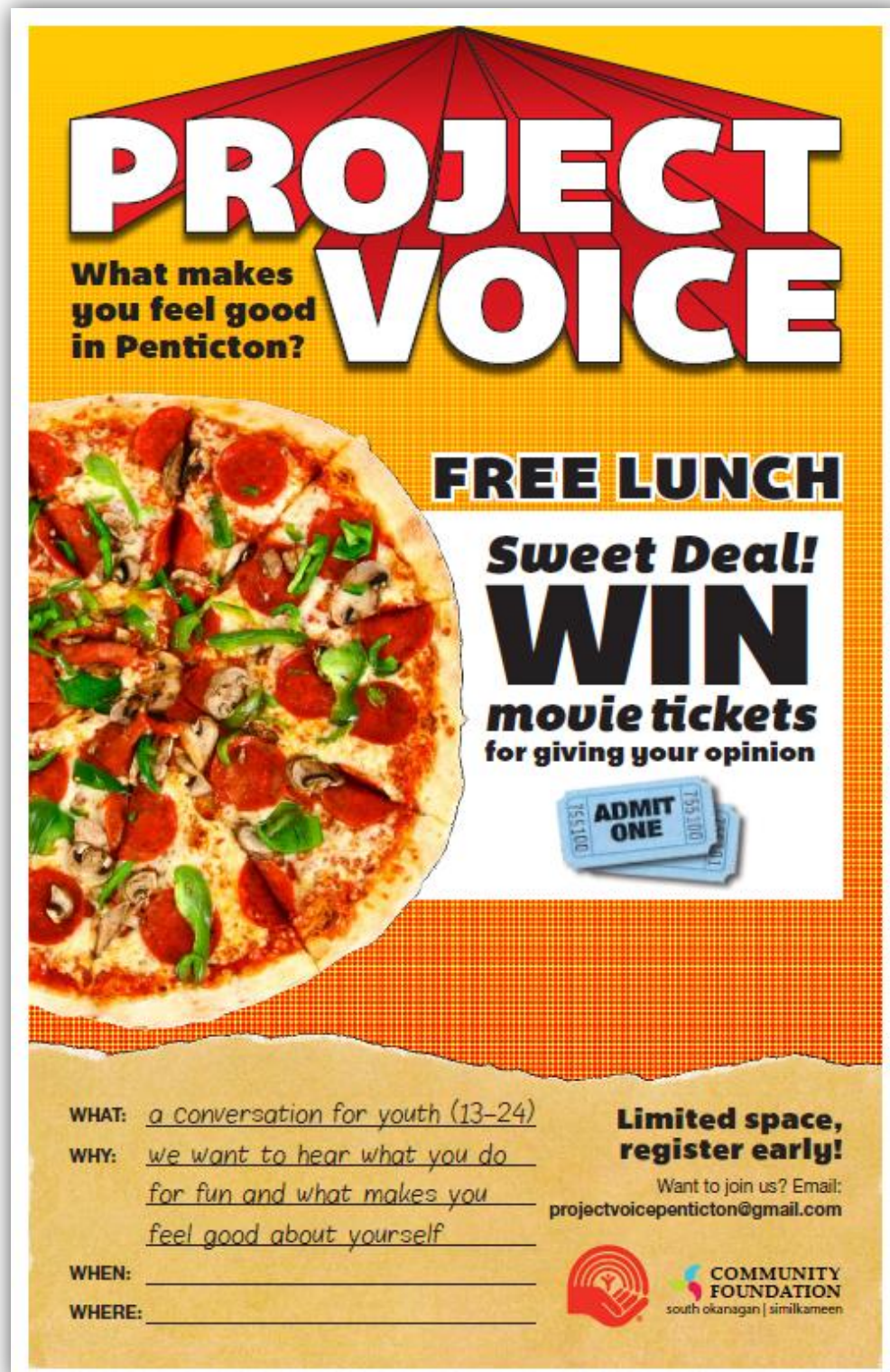
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Appendix 2 – Focus Group Invitation poster

The poster has a yellow background with a red umbrella graphic at the top. The title 'PROJECT VOICE' is in large white letters. Below it, the text 'What makes you feel good in Penticton?' is in black. A large image of a pizza is on the left. To the right of the pizza, the text 'FREE LUNCH' is in bold black letters, followed by 'Sweet Deal! WIN movie tickets for giving your opinion' in bold black letters. Below this text is an image of two movie tickets, one of which says 'ADMIT ONE'. At the bottom, there are four lines of text: 'WHAT: a conversation for youth (13-24)', 'WHY: we want to hear what you do for fun and what makes you feel good about yourself', 'WHEN: _____', and 'WHERE: _____'. To the right of these lines is the text 'Limited space, register early!' and 'Want to join us? Email: projectvoicepenticton@gmail.com'. At the bottom right is the logo for the Community Foundation, which includes a stylized hand holding a heart and the text 'COMMUNITY FOUNDATION south okanagan | similkameen'.

Appendix 3 – List of Youth Resources in Penticton

Recreation Resources

1. **Youth Etcetera Open Gym.** Drop-in program for youth ages 13 to 15 at the Penticton Community Centre, on Friday evenings from September to June. Operated by Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs, with support from the City of Penticton, “Youth Etcetera Open Gym” offers recreational activities to youth aged 13 to 15 in the form of sports, swimming, games, karaoke, and other activities. Youth require parental consent to attend.
2. **The Ark.** Drop-in program for youth generally ages 13-15 at the First Baptist Church, on Friday evenings from September to June. Although this program operates through the church and uses volunteers from the local congregation, the program is non-religious and offers activities such as pool, video games, foosball, and a coffee shop. Older youth are encouraged to return to volunteer at the drop-in, such as to help with clean-up and coffee shop. Youth require parental consent to attend.
3. **Get Busy Program.** Designed for middle school aged kids (11-13 years), this program runs twice per week after school from Monday to Friday in the middle schools from September to June, and offers leadership training and healthy living activities to youth.
4. **After School Program.** Drop-in program for youth ages 13-19 with developmental disabilities, once per week from September to June. Run through Penticton and District Community Resources Society, this program offers recreation, arts and crafts, and outtrips to youth, from a youth-led perspective.

Youth and Family Services

5. **Integrated family development.** Offered through Penticton and District Community Resources Society and Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs for youth of any age, this program provides support and assistance to youth and/or their families to improve family or individual functioning. The program also offers specific support to youth living on

Youth Agreements offering life-skills, mentorship, employment and relationship support.

6. **Child Protection Services.** Provided through MCFD, these services are for any young person who may be abused, neglected, or is for any other reason in need of protection. Social Workers are assigned to work with the young person and may offer additional support to their family, supervise their care in the home, or remove the young person and place him/her to live with foster family, relatives, or in a specialized residential resource.
7. **SOAR WRAP.** Run through ARC programs based out of Kelowna and Penticton, this program offers counselling to youth in care, at risk of coming into care, or returning home to their families. Referrals come from MCFD.
8. **Sexual Abuse Intervention Program.** Run through Penticton and District Community Resources Society, this program offers counselling and support to children and youth who have experienced sexual abuse. Service is flexible and tailored to the needs of children and youth.

Drug and Alcohol Services

9. **Alcohol and Drug Counselling.** Offered through Interior Health Authority, these counselling services are designed for youth ages 13-18 during regular office hours, throughout the year. Youth can be self-referred, or through community services, schools, and parents.
10. **Pathways Addiction Resource Centre.** Individual or family counselling for youth. Youth or parents can self-refer, or referrals can come from school or MCFD's Child and Youth Mental Health team.

Mental Health Programs

11. **Child and Youth Mental Health Program (CYMH).** Funded by the MCFD through the BC Government, CYMH offers crisis support for youth with mental health issues. Referrals come from schools, doctors, pediatricians, hospital, MCFD, other community agencies as well as directly from parents and youth.

12. **Martin House.** Run through the Penticton Mental Wellness Centre (formerly the Penticton Schizophrenia Society)⁴⁸, Martin House is for youth ages 16 and up (capped at age 30) with a history of or current diagnosis of a mental illness, and offers individualized and group support, as well as social activities one to three times per week.
13. **Mental Health Peer Support Program (MHPS).** Operated by the Mental Wellness Centre in partnership with Interior Health's Early Psychosis Intervention team, the MHPS is a weekly support and recreational program for youth ages 15 to 25 with a mental health diagnosis.
14. **School-based Counselling Services.** Offered in all secondary schools, youth attending school have access to this service and may access counselling support for issues related to drug and alcohol, mental health, relationships with family or friends, self-esteem or body image. Available from September to June.
15. **Family Treatment Program.** Run through ARC programs based out of Kelowna and Penticton, this program offers intensive in-home support for children and youth with a mental health diagnosis, and their families. Referrals come through MCFD's Child and Youth Mental Health Team.

Health and Well-being Programs

16. **Opt Clinic.** Sponsored by the nonprofit organization *Options for Sexual Health BC*, the Opt clinic is open two evenings a week in Penticton and offers sexual health services for people of all ages, including youth. Services include birth control options, counseling, STI testing and Pap tests. Youth can access free condoms and STI medication, as well as emergency contraceptives. Youth who identify as LGBT are also able to access counseling, support, and services. The clinic is by appointment only.
17. **Positively Pregnant.** Run through the Okanagan Boys and Girls Club, the Positively Pregnant program is offered one morning per week for mothers who are pregnant or with babies up to six months old. The program is for youth as well as adults and offers peer learning and

⁴⁸ The Mental Wellness Centre has historically run a program for youth with parents diagnosed with a mental illness, entitled "Teens in Control". Currently, this program is not actively running.

networking, workshops, free lunch, bus tickets, gift cards, vitamin supplements, and public health services.

18. **Youth Community Kitchen.** Run through the Okanagan Boys and Girls Club, this program is targeted towards youth who are living on Youth Agreements and offers lessons on nutrition and cooking. The program runs once a month during the school year, and referrals come from school counselors.
19. **Girls Expanding Boundaries.** Operated through the City of Penticton Community Centre, this program runs twice annually (subject to funding) and offers a four week recreation based program to at-risk girls.
20. **Teen Mentorship Program.** Run through Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Okanagan, this program operates in both KVR and Skaha Middle Schools and partners high school students with grade 8 students in mentorship roles to prepare students for high school. Older youth have opportunity to practice leadership skills and gain volunteer experience. Runs once per week for three months (January to May) over the lunch hour.
21. **Healthy Living Program.** Run through Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Okanagan, this program offers students in Skaha Middle School lessons in healthy eating, exercise and relationships. Offered once weekly for 8 weeks. Referrals are from the school counselor, teacher or principle.
22. **Girls' Group.** Based out of Penticton High School, the Girls' Group is for at-risk girls between the ages of 14 to 18, offering relevant support and life-skills training. The groups run once per school year for approximately 20 kids.
23. **Boys' Group.** Based out of Penticton High School, the Boys' Group is for at-risk boys between the ages of 14 to 18, offering relevant support and life-skills training. The group runs once per school year for approximately 10 to 12 kids.
24. **Smoking Cessation Group.** Based out of Penticton High School, this group is offered four times per year on a self-referral basis, and usually attracts up to 30 youth per session.
25. **The Esteem Team.** Run out of *Get Bent Arts and Recreation Centre*, this program is for youth ages 12 to 24 to create workshops for kids in grades five and six, on topics that promote self-esteem, body image, and anti-bullying, and media influence.

26. **The Flying Dragons Dragon Boat Team.** Operated through Penticton and District Community Resources Society, this project runs twice weekly from May through September for youth and adults with developmental disabilities and offers recreation and mentorship through dragon boating adventures.
27. **Family Outreach Program.** Run out of Penticton and District Community Resources Society, this program assists and supports youth (and their families) who are transitioning from middle school into high school in Penticton. Referrals come through school counselors.

Aboriginal Youth Programs

28. **R Native Voice.** Run through the Penticton Indian Band's Youth Department, this program is designed for First Nations youth living on-reserve, and offers weekly workshops to youth ages 13-18. Topics covered include suicide and violence prevention, sexual health and self-esteem, and language and culture.
29. **First Nations Youth Leadership Program.** Operated by Penticton Indian Band's Youth Department, this program is for First Nations youth living on reserve and runs all year, offering leadership skills and culture, as well as recreational programming. Youth participate in canoe paddling program in the summer.
30. **ROOTS program.** Run through the OoKnakane Friendship Centre, this program helps to connect or reconnect youth living in foster care with their Aboriginal ancestry, culture, community and family.
31. **Aboriginal Family Outreach Program.** Run through the OoKnakane Friendship Centre, this program works with children, youth and families to assist and provide support in multiple ways, from a cultural point of view.

Programs for Newcomers

32. **Newcomer Youth Mentorship Project.** Run by South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services, this project partners newcomers (immigrant children) with leadership students in middle schools and high schools in Penticton, targeting issues such as self-esteem, racism and bullying.