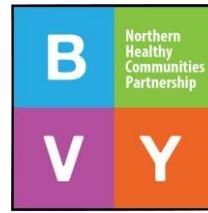




Northern Healthy Communities Partnership



Building Vibrant Youth

Northern Youth Role Model Project

**Northern Healthy Communities Partnership
Building Vibrant Youth**

Final Report

June 2015

Acknowledgements

The Northern Healthy Communities Partnership would like to express gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of the Northern Youth Role Model Project. For their significant contribution to the tour and community projects, without which this project would not have been possible, a special thank-you goes to:

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To the young people of Father Gamache Memorial School, Island Lake School, Opawikoscikan School, and the Pelican Narrows Youth Council, and to their adult allies, thank you for your participation and enthusiasm in the Youth Leadership Workshops and community projects planned by the Northern Youth Role Models.

The Northern Youth Role Model Project would not have been possible without the contributions of these and many other people. It is through the dedication of people like these that young people in northern Saskatchewan continue to have valuable opportunities to learn, grow and contribute to their community.



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Northern Youth Role Model Project Overview

The Northern Youth Role Model Project was designed as an upstream population health promotion approach to positive youth development. Positive youth development refers to the intentional efforts of youth, adults, communities and agencies to provide opportunities for youth to grow their skills, abilities and interests. It is an evidence based contributor to preventing suicide, substance abuse, violence and other risk behaviours.

Project Goals:

1. Create an awareness and understanding of the positive youth development approach
2. Energize current positive youth development efforts through recognition and an opportunity to share their stories
3. Foster and support leadership within youth currently identified as leaders
4. Foster and support leadership within groups of youth across the north through peer mentoring

Components of this project included:

- Completing photos shoots with the youth role models and their adult support person.
- Developing and distributing to schools, health facilities, and band/municipal offices, a 7-poster series, profiling the Northern Youth Role Models and their adult support person.
- Supporting the Northern Youth Role Models in the planning, implementing and evaluating of youth focused community development projects.
- Supporting the Northern Youth Role Models to develop and conduct Youth Leadership Workshops in northern communities.
- Coordinating the logistics of the Youth Leadership Workshops in the northern communities.

The Northern Youth Role Model Project was undertaken by the Building Vibrant Youth Team of the Northern Healthy Communities Partnership (NHCP). Large and multi-faceted, the Northern Youth Role Model Project was completed between November 2013 and March 2015. The project was funded through a \$15,000 Embracing Life Committee grant and a \$10,000 contribution from the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, in addition to \$17,000 from Northern Healthy Communities Partnership (NHCP). This project stretched and challenged the capacity and commitment of the NHCP Building Vibrant Youth team, as well as the northern Saskatchewan adults and youth who were engaged in the project. In spite of these challenges, the NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Team is proud of what we have accomplished together and what we have learned and will continue to learn from this experience.

Northern Youth Role Model Application and Selection Process

Nominations for Northern Youth Role Models between the ages of 17 and 12 were solicited from Northern Saskatchewan Population Health Unit and Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority partner communities using print, radio and social media advertisements. The opportunity for youth to be nominated was also promoted through the personal and professional networks of NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team members. A total of 20 nominations were received.

Two NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team members, using pre-defined requirements, determined five nominations were ineligible for the Northern Youth Role Model Project. The remaining eligible nominees, were interviewed using a standard set of questions by an NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team member to learn more about the youth, their role in their community and their proposed community project. NHCP Building Vibrant Youth team members also interviewed each of the eligible youths' adult nominators using similar standardized questions.

Each eligible youth was independently scored by four NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team members using information from the applications and interviews. Scoring was based on multiple pre-defined criteria in the categories of Involvement with Community, Leadership and Community Project Plans. The nominee from each geographic sub-region with the highest average score was chosen as a Northern Youth Role Model. Additional role models were chosen based on scores and consensus from the selection team.

Five of the nominees were selected as Northern Youth Role Models for the project. Of the selected youth, one chose to withdraw from the project as she was unable to commit to all of its requirements. The Northern Youth Role Models participating in the Northern Youth Role Model campaign were:

- **Claude Bridges**, Sandy Bay
- **Simon Crookedneck**, Island Lake First Nation
- **ShayLynn McAuley**, La Ronge
- **Summer Michel**, Pelican Narrows

The adult mentors, whose support was critical to the role models' nomination and selection, and to the Northern Youth Role Model Campaign, were:

- **Darrell Sewap**, Sandy Bay
- **Melissa Martell**, Island Lake First Nation
- **Jenna O'Connor & Connie Venne**, La Ronge
- **Angie Merasty**, Pelican Narrows



Youth Leadership Workshops

A major component of the Youth Role Model project was to support the youth role models to plan and deliver a youth leadership workshop to northern youth groups or schools.

Developing the Youth Leadership Workshop

A two day Northern Youth Role Model Gathering was held on September 6th and 7th, 2014 in La Ronge. The Northern Youth Role Models worked with a facilitator, Shelly Panko Schultz, to develop the content for an interactive youth leadership workshop designed for a group of no more than 15 youth between the ages of 11 and 15. The gathering also included team building, developing confidence in leading a workshop and presenting to others, and the youth sharing their personal stories.

Youth Leadership Workshops

All Northern Saskatchewan Population Health Unit and Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority partner communities were invited to apply to host a youth leadership workshop. The opportunity to apply was promoted using posters and through the personal and professional networks of NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team members. Applications to host were received from a total of eight northern Saskatchewan communities.

Host communities for the youth leadership workshops were selected based on pre-determined criteria, the most important of which being that an NHCP BVY member and their organization had completed the NHCP Commitment Process (described below). The NHCP Commitment Process was used for the first time with the Northern Youth Role Model Project and was used to identify which NHCP partners were able to commit the time required to support the Northern Youth Role Models to travel to communities in their geographic area. Seven of the eight communities met this eligibility criterion.

The highest ranking communities from each of the geographic sub-regions (north, east, west, and south) were selected. Three additional communities were selected by the NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team by consensus based on the financial feasibility and proximity to one of the main communities selected. Four trips were planned to conduct youth leadership workshops in the seven selected communities. The logistics of the trips was planned at a September 2014 in-person NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team meeting.



The communities we planned to visit over four weekends were (original communities selected by geography in bold):

- **Pelican Narrows** and Sandy Bay
- **Fond du Lac**
- **Cumberland House**
- **La Loche** and Beuval/Ile-a-la-Crosse (one workshop for the two communities)

The youth leadership workshops proved to be the most challenging part of the Northern Youth Role Model Project due to the complexity of the logistics for each trip, the large time commitment required of the youth and their chaperones, and the large geographic area of northern Saskatchewan. In the end, only two youth workshops were held – Fond du Lac and Pelican Narrows. However, participant evaluations from the completed youth leadership workshops were positive. Of those who participated in a youth leadership workshop and completed an evaluation, 73% said “This workshop taught me about changing my community” and 50% said “The youth role models inspired me.”

Community Projects

Each Youth Role model received \$1,000 to plan, implement and evaluate a youth-focused community project. To complete their project, the Northern Youth Role Models were guided by their adult mentors and the NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team member responsible for their community. These community projects were well-received in the Northern Youth Role Model’s home communities.

Overview of Youth Community Projects:

1. **Island Lake First Nation (Simon Crookedneck)**

Simon’s project was a “Gym Blast” youth gathering for grades 6-12 at the school. The gathering focused on decision making, making positive choices, and dealing with peer pressure. A variety of team building activities were conducted with the youth. Simon also shared the inspirational story of how he handled the death of his parent and the negative effects that drugs and alcohol have had on him and his family. Simon involved elders, school staff, a local DJ in the youth gathering.

2. Pelican Narrows (Summer Michel)

Summer's project was to work with the Pelican Narrows Youth Council to establish a Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD) chapter. The chapter was launched with a Red Ribbon Campaign. Working with the local youth council and RCMP, the SADD team stopped 25 vehicles to speak to drivers about the dangers of drinking and driving and hand out SADD red ribbons. The SADD chapter in Pelican Narrows won an award from CAA Saskatchewan for its Red Ribbon Campaign.

3. La Ronge (ShayLynn McAuley)

ShayLynn organized a "Funky Fresh Kids" dance workshop. The workshop targeted children ages 5-8 who may not otherwise have an opportunity to participate in dance. ShayLynn taught three styles of dance and lead games with the participants. The dance workshops were provided on two evenings at Bell's Point Elementary School and included time for a healthy snack.

The community project planned for Sandy Bay (Claude Bridges) faced several challenges and was not held. These challenges included building community support for the project and securing support from local leadership. As well, the NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team member working with Claude was not based in Sandy Bay, making it very difficult to provide him the support he needed to overcome these challenges and successfully implement his community project.

Promotion of the Northern Youth Role Models and Positive Youth Development

Northern Youth Role Model Poster Series

Professional photo shoots were conducted with each of the Northern Youth Role Models and their adult mentors in their home communities. Interviews were conducted by an NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team member with each of the Northern Youth Role Models and their adult mentors to learn more about their experiences, ambitions and messages for others. The photos, along with the information gathered by NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team members, were used to design a series of posters featuring the youth and their mentors.

The seven-poster Northern Youth Role Model Poster Series included messages from the youth and their mentors encouraging youth leadership and adult and community support for young people and positive youth development. Two hundred copies of each of the seven posters were professionally printed. The poster series was distributed to over 165 schools, health centres and clinics, band and municipal offices and friendship centres in over 30 northern Saskatchewan communities. Copies of the posters and the series were also given to the Northern Youth Role Models and to their adult mentors.



Northern Youth Role Model Radio Spots

Two of the Northern Youth Role Models - ShayLynn McAuley and Simon Crookedneck - recorded interviews with MBC radio. These interviews were edited by MBC radio into 30 second radio spots sharing the stories and messages of the Northern Youth Role Models for other youth and community members. The radio spots were aired regularly on MBC radio from March to June of 2015.

Media Coverage for the Northern Youth Role Model Project

The successes of the Northern Youth Role Model Project enjoyed positive attention from multiple media outlets. The award-winning Red Ribbon Campaign hosted to launch a SADD chapter in Pelican Narrows, Summer Michel's community project, was featured in a press release by CAA Saskatchewan and picked up by PA Now, Eagle Feather News and MBC Radio. The Funky Fresh Kids dance workshops lead by ShayLynn McAuley were featured in an article in The Northerner.

To launch the Northern Youth Role Model Poster Series, a press release was written and sent to northern Saskatchewan and provincial media outlets. The story was picked up by MBC radio news. The Northern Youth Role Model Campaign was also featured in the May issues of Eagle Feather News and the Mamawetan Churchill River Health Region Newsletter.

NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team Evaluation

Following the completion of the Northern Youth Role Model Project, the NHCP Co-coordinators worked with the NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team to complete an evaluation of the project. The objectives of this evaluation were to identify:

- Strengths and weaknesses (internal) of the NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team
- Challenges and barriers (external) faced by the NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team in executing the Northern Youth Role Model Project
- Strategies or processes that were or could be used to increase the NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team's effectiveness in the future

Members of the NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team were interviewed by the NHCP Co-coordinators using a semi-structured interview guide. The feedback from the Action Team members was reviewed and themes relevant to each of the evaluation objectives were identified. These themes were shared and discussed at the NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team meeting in June 2015, at which time "lessons learned" or recommendations were created by the team.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team excelled at planning the Northern Youth Role Model Project. The nomination and selection processes for the Northern Youth Role Models were particularly well done, having been well thought-out and documented in advance. The team also maintained a solution focused and supportive approach to working together, even when faced with sizable challenges in project implementation.

The NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team recognized an uneven commitment or contribution among team members, with substantial follow up regarding tasks required at some points during the Northern Youth Role Model Project. Communication, both within the NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team and between the team members and the Northern Youth Role Models and their adult mentors, was noted as a weakness of the team. This was most evident during the implementation of the youth leadership workshops and the associated travel. It was also recognized that the implementation of the youth leadership workshops, the most difficult part of the Northern Youth Role Model Project, diverted resources from other parts of the project, such as the creation of the poster series, which were easier to execute and could have been used to bolster the morale and motivation of the team.

Challenges and Barriers

Challenges faced by the NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team in the implementation of the Northern Youth Role Model Project included the size and scope of the project, which approached the upper limit of the team's capacity. Unanticipated turnover of staff within partner organizations and, accordingly, on the NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team presented challenges to the continuity of the project's implementation and reduced the capacity of the team, making the size of the project overwhelming.

The NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team encountered barriers in the limited spread of awareness about the Northern Youth Role Model Project in their organizations, in the lead time required for processing payment (honoraria and mileage) for the adult mentors involved in project implementation, and in geography of northern Saskatchewan.

The NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Team recognized that some of these challenges and barriers are known and could have been better anticipated in project planning, such as the size and infrastructure of northern Saskatchewan and its impact on travel and the possibility of staff turnover.

Recommendations

1. Decentralize project planning to broaden involvement and increase responsibility of Action Team members in project implementation.
 - a. Decentralized planning of in-community aspects of youth leadership workshops worked well; team planning meaning in September 2014 was considered a success.
 - b. Broadening involvement in planning should increase resilience of the NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Team to staff turnover in partner organizations.
2. Engage entire NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Team with all youth and adult mentors involved with team projects.
 - a. Establishing multiple connections between the NHCP Building Vibrant Youth Action Team and the youth and adults involved in project implementation should increase the team's resilience to staff turnover and improve trust and communication with external project team members.
3. Include an explicit communication plan in the project plan for large scale projects.
 - a. Communication plan should diagram information flow between all project team members and include multiple means of contact (cell phone numbers).
 - b. Communication plan should establish clear expectations for responding to the team and/or other means to ensure the communication loop is closed.
 - c. Communication plan could include strategies to increase awareness of project within partner organizations and a role for Core Group members.
4. Scale project plans to the capacity of the team and include room for error.
 - a. Scale of large projects should anticipate some staff turnover and plan accordingly.
 - b. Large project plans should consider risks to project implementation and include measures to protect against them where possible.