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MEETING THE NEEDS OF YOUTH-AT-RISK IN CANADA:

LEARNINGS FROM A NATIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

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Meeting the Needs of Youth-at-Risk in Canada:

Learnings from a National Community Development Project

Office of Alcohol, Drugs, and Dependency Issues
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Acknowledgments

While completing this project, the consulting team lost a mentor and a good friend. Dick Weiler passed away in July 1995. For 30 years, Dick worked tirelessly to promote the cause of social justice and equality. His commitment to community development made him a well-known figure in the justice, literacy and health communities across the country. He gave generously of his time and energy, serving as a volunteer on numerous community boards and committees. Dick was positive, forward-looking and optimistic. He touched those around him with his seemingly boundless energy and infectious excitement. We are grateful for having had an opportunity to have him involved, even for a brief time, in this project.

We would like to thank the many individuals who helped to make this project an exciting and valuable experience. The National Steering Committee members provided guidance and support throughout the course of this project. Their advice and suggestions helped in many ways. In each of the sites, dedicated individuals shared their experiences and gave us candid insights into their lives.

In April 1997, we lost yet another dynamic and dedicated youth worker. Gale Kozun, former Executive Director of Egadz Downtown Youth Centre in Saskatoon, touched the lives of many young people in her community and always felt that they had a right to a better life. Gale initiated the street outreach program at Egadz, and went on to establish a teen parenting program, a temporary walk-in clinic and a literacy program. Like Dick, Gale was involved in a number of volunteer activities and advocated for the rights of children and youth on several comunity boards and committees. Gale was well-respected for her considerable knowledge and expertise and was often asked to accept speaking engagements to share her experiences. Her wealth of experience contributed to many of the learnings cited in this document. Her death was a tragic loss to her family at Egadz, the community of Saskatoon, and her friends across the country.

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1.   Introduction

The challenges facing young people in Canada have received increasing attention over the past several years. Media accounts have highlighted issues such as youth violence, juvenile prostitution, teen pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, substance abuse and the appearance of growing numbers of street youth in many Canadian communities. Health Canada has responded by undertaking a variety of activities aimed at assisting youth-at-risk, or what it has termed "out-of-the-mainstream youth." Health Canada has sponsored numerous community consultations and programs as well as research projects to gain a greater understanding of the challenges facing youth-at-risk. This information represents an important knowledge base for governments, communities and service agencies seeking to develop more effective strategies for responding to the needs of these young people.

This document reports on the results of a national community development project aimed at youth-at-risk called the Community Development — Out-of-the-mainstream Youth (CD-OOMY) project. The purpose of this project was to support community development and youth participation activities aimed at improving programs and services available to youth-at-risk. It came about, in part, as a result of a series of four workshops sponsored by Health Canada in 1993 and 1994 in selected locations across Canada. Workshop participants included representatives of various departments of the federal government, Health Canada's regional offices, community-based youth-serving agencies, young people and provincial/territorial government representatives responsible for funding the health and social services available to youth.

Information gathered from these workshops and through extensive consultations with youth and service providers revealed that traditional services are not meeting the needs of youth-at-risk. In many cases, the services were described as being inappropriate, having been designed primarily for mainstream clients. Many existing services are neither culturally nor socially sensitive to the needs of youth-at-risk. Moreover, clients often have to go to several different offices and deal with a number of workers to get the help they need. This fragmentation and lack of accessibility often discourages youth-at-risk from seeking and obtaining services. The young people participating in the workshops also noted that youth were seldom involved in the design and delivery of these services.

In addition to identifying problems associated with existing services for youth-at-risk, the people consulted offered a variety of suggestions for improving the existing situation. Chief among these was the need for greater cooperation by the agencies providing services to youth-at-risk. Many of the participants identified community development as a major way of helping to address the difficulties of the youth services system. Many felt that community development activities could result in better communication among agencies and would encourage the creation of more effective and efficient means of delivering needed services. Scarce resources could also be maximized if agencies working with the same client population shared information and cooperated to reduce duplication for meeting existing needs.

An important suggestion was the need to include young people, from the outset, in the planning, design and delivery of services. The participation of young people could ensure that the services are relevant to the target population, that they are socially and culturally appropriate, and that they are accessible.

1.1   Objectives of the Project and the National Steering Committee

The national community development project (CD-OOMY) was developed on the basis of the information gathered in the four workshops mentioned above and from a national consultation conducted as a part of a strategic plan developed by the Office of Alcohol, Drugs and Dependency Issues. Health Canada hired a consulting team to design and implement a plan to assist selected communities with their community development/youth participation efforts. The team consisted of Mr. Glen Murray, Mr. Richard Weiler and Dr. Tullio Caputo. This team worked with project participants in individual sites, offering advice, support and technical assistance where required. Among other activities, the consulting team helped participating communities conduct needs assessments, organize community meetings and address the challenges of fostering youth participation in community development groups.

A National Steering Committee was established to guide the project. The National Steering Committee comprised provincial/territorial representatives from each of the five sites, Health Canada representatives, youth representatives and the consultants. During the course of the CD-OOMY project, the National Steering Committee met three times to review activities taking place at each site, to provide guidance to the consultants on issues that had emerged in undertaking this project and to provide advice on the form and content of the final report.

One goal of the CD-OOMY project was to support communities in pursuing community development for youth-at-risk. The term "out-of-the-mainstream youth" has been used by Health Canada to refer to the alienated and marginalized youth who are characterized by: adopting the street lifestyle, academic failure or dropping out of school, involvement in alcohol and/or other drug use, and involvement in illegal behaviour (Anderson, 1993).

These young people face a number of immediate and long-term challenges to their health and well-being. Many suffer from the physical problems associated with life on the street, including respiratory illnesses, malnutrition and other diseases associated with poor nutrition and hygiene. Many come from home situations that include psychological, physical and sexual abuse (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1990). As a result of this type of trauma, they have considerable mental health needs. Those that turn to the streets are exposed to the dangers of street life, including violence, alcohol and other drug use, and the health risks associated with participation in high-risk sexual activities (Kufeldt, 1991). In the long term, many of these young people face economic marginalization as a result of periods of employment at poor-paying jobs interspersed with lengthy bouts of unemployment and welfare (Brannigan and Caputo, 1993).

A second objective of this project was to document the activities of the participating communities across the country engaging in community development activities aimed at improving the services available to at-risk youth. The consulting team worked with key actors in each site to record project activities and developments so that the lessons learned from these experiences could be made available to others interested in working with this population. This report contains the lessons learned from the experiences of CD-OOMY project participants,

including a brief history of the activities undertaken at each site. It also includes general lessons drawn from a review of relevant community development/youth participation literature and related materials.

1.2   The Five Sites Participating in the Project

At the outset of this project, Health Canada invited all provinces/territories to take part. After some discussion, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec and Nova Scotia agreed to participate. Consultations with the provincial/territorial partners resulted in the identification of five sites (13 projects in 42 communities) as suitable locations for CD-OOMY project initiation or support. Some of these sites already had community development efforts in place; others did not. The consultants worked closely with representatives from Health Canada's regional offices and the provincial/territorial representatives. In many sites, the national CD-OOMY project built on the work already initiated by the Health Promotion and Programs Branch (HPPB) regional office.

A detailed account of what took place in each of the five sites is presented in Appendix A of this document. Below is a brief introduction to the sites and a short description of the activities that were taking place when the CD-OOMY project got under way.

In the Yukon, the consultants worked with the Youth Empowerment and Success (YES) project. YES was formed after the 1994 Edmonton workshop on "out-of-the-mainstream youth" sponsored by the Canada's Drug Strategy Secretariat and the Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon and Northwest Territories, HPPB offices. YES is made up of a group of people from Whitehorse and outlying communities across the Yukon interested in working with youth-at-risk. Its membership includes both adults and youth from Yukon First Nations, government and non-government agencies and other community members. The group has a variety of goals that reflect a community development and youth participation approach. It enjoys substantial financial and policy support from the territorial government. At the time CD-OOMY began, YES was in the process of hiring two full-time coordinators, one adult and one youth, to build on the momentum of the Edmonton workshop and to begin working on some of the group's goals.

The second site involved two communities: High Level in Northern Alberta and Hay River in the Northwest Territories. These two communities undertook a "twinning" exercise to encourage cooperation and the sharing of resources and information by small Northern communities. When the CD-OOMY project began, the High Level/Hay River site enjoyed the support of both the provincial and territorial governments, the regional office of Health Canada and various representatives of youth-serving agencies in each community. However, no community development activities related to the CD-OOMY project had formally begun.

Manitoba and Saskatchewan also included the participation of multiple communities in the CD-OOMY project. In this case, key stakeholders in the region decided to build on existing community development/youth participation projects that were already in various stages of progress in nine different locations across Manitoba and Saskatchewan. One of the main objectives in the Manitoba/Saskatchewan site was to document the history of the various projects that were under way so the lessons that had been learned about community development and youth participation could be shared with other Canadian communities.

The project in Quebec was located in downtown Montreal. The objective in this site was to establish a multi-agency, interdisciplinary, community-based network for addressing the needs of youth-at-risk in the area. Montreal Centre is an area facing a number of serious issues related to youth-at-risk, and there is considerable support for addressing these issues. An existing interagency network focusing on homelessness in the community provided a forum for youth-serving agencies to connect with each other. This existing link was seen as the basis on which to build a wider community-based network focusing on youth-at-risk issues. The provincial government committed staff and office resources to support the project.

The final site was Halifax, Nova Scotia. Here, the consultants made contact with an existing community group called the Community Youth Network (CYN). CYN is a network of community-based agencies that provide a variety of services to youth-at-risk. CYN was started some 10 years earlier by staff in employment-training agencies such as the YMCA Job Generation program and Options Youth. Its activities include sponsoring workshops and conferences for individuals working with youth. At the time the CD-OOMY project began, CYN was preparing to broaden its focus and reach out to a wider audience of community-based, youth-serving agencies. Its objective was to promote community development activities to enhance youth services, especially those for youth-at-risk in the region.

1.3   Outline of This Report

The report has been designed to be useful to individuals and agencies interested in community development as a means to address the issue of youth-at-risk. It is based on both project experience and a review of relevant community development/youth participation literature. It outlines a general model of community development, noting steps taken at different stages in the process. It also highlights key aspects of the experiences of the five sites participating in the national CD-OOMY project. An important objective was to identify common patterns and practices, build on successes and outline how the sites dealt with the challenges they encountered.

In Section 2, a definition of community development is presented. As well, some of the advantages of taking a community development approach to address the needs of youth-at-risk are considered. Various issues related to youth involvement in community development are discussed and the increasing support for youth participation by government, youth-serving agencies and young people themselves is considered. Section 3 provides a detailed discussion of the community development model. Included here are the lessons learned from reviewing relevant literature on the subject and from the experiences of the five sites that participated in the project. The conclusions and implications drawn from the CD-OOMY project are discussed in Section 4. A short history of each of the five sites is presented in the Appendix A at the end of this document.

2.   Defining Key Concepts

It is important to have a clear understanding of the key concepts guiding this project before examining the experiences of the different project sites. Some confusion may arise, however, since the participating sites were at different stages of development when the CD-OOMY project activities got under way. In particular, it is important to recognize that some sites were interested in working directly with youth-at-risk to undertake community development activities in order to better meet their needs. In these cases, the activities usually involved implementing some form of youth-centred project, such as a stay-in-school initiative or developing a youth drop-in centre. In other communities, however, much of the focus of the CD-OOMY project activities was on establishing relationships between agencies working with youth-at-risk. In these sites, community development activities consisted of network building, including youth empowerment, or enhancing the ability of youth-serving agencies to work better together. Through enhanced collaboration in the latter approach, these agencies would be able to work more effectively together in meeting the needs of youth-at-risk in their communities and foster greater youth participation.

While these different approaches can be defined as community development, they require fundamentally different strategies and approaches. The former approach involves community representatives and young people working on a specific project. The latter approach focuses primarily on the relationships that exist among youth-serving agencies in a community. It addresses interagency collaboration and the need for agencies to establish appropriate strategies that will allow them to work together more effectively.

2.1   Community Development

"Community Development is the process which involves reaching out into the community, identifying key groups and leaders, working with them on problems of mutual concern, helping to empower the community and thus strengthening its own inherent organization and its support systems, and to take the initiative in coping with its own concerns." (City of Toronto Health Department, 1991)

In this definition, the ideas of **community** and **development** are front and centre. Community development is identified as a **process** whereby individuals, defined as the community, either support themselves or are supported by others in a variety of activities, such as problem identification, planning and decision making. These activities are intended to **develop** the ability of these communities to address their own problems and meet their own needs.

2.2 The Idea of a "Community"

First, what do we mean by a community? In general, people who are members of a community belong to an identifiable social group, often sharing common goals, values and interests. More commonly, when we refer to a community, we think of a particular place or location. There is no guarantee, however, that people living in a particular geographical location either see themselves as members of the same community or share values, beliefs or common interests. This second point reflects one of the challenges we face in modern society. That is, although many people live near one another, they do not necessarily have common bonds or the types of relationships we would commonly associate with people living in an ideal community.

Some young people, however, do not feel that they belong to a community and this is a source of real problems for them. For example, Malidoma Somé argues that young people have to be welcomed formally into their community through initiation rituals or other rites of passage in order to acquire a sense that they are accepted members of the community. Somé notes that this rarely happens in our society. As a result, many of our youth have no sense of the values of our society or of their place in it. This sense of place he argues, *"fuels a continued sense of belonging which is so much lacking in the heart of modern youth. Until that day, gangs will remain an understandable alternative to the failure of community to relate to youth. A criminal youth is only trying to send the word across that he is entitled to the support of the community. When initiation is restored and granted to its demanding youth, this culture will stop worrying about crime, abuse, suicide, and depression."* (Somé, 1994, p. 68)

Some young people may have trouble because they feel marginal or that they do not belong. As a result, they may find it difficult to develop a sense of community. Many youth feel that mainstream society has not embraced them but has cast them off. Unable to be part of a mainstream community, they create their own groups and develop a sense of belonging by "hanging out" with peers or by joining gangs.

Even more troubling is the possibility that we in "mainstream" society do not know what values and beliefs represent the glue that binds us together. We have abandoned many of the trappings associated with traditional expressions of community idealized in the images of life in smaller rural towns and villages. How, then, can we expect our youth to know these things? The hesitancy of adults to embrace and work with youth in some of our projects may very well be a demonstration that we need to reconsider what is required for building safe and healthy communities.

Somé stresses the importance of initiation, a welcoming of our youth into the culture, through *"a recognizable, wholehearted embrace and valuing of the initiates' power to contribute to the community . . . this last stage must make the returning men and women want to maintain the pride of their community."* (Somé, 1994, p. 68)

But perhaps the reason we do not practise traditional initiation rights of our youth in our society is because we have no sense within ourselves of what it is that we are initiating them into. There are no clear markers of when a young person is old enough or mature enough to begin playing an adult role. Young people remind us that we lack a definition of ourselves as a society — as a community.

2.3   The Idea of "Development"

Just as we see with the notion of community, the meaning of development has many dimensions. In general terms, we refer to development in relation to creating or expanding the capacity to do something — to act. When we compare a community that is more developed with one that is less so, we assume that the more developed community has a greater capacity to act on its own behalf. Evidence of this would be that the more developed community has active leadership and organizational resources that can be used to meet various community needs. Stated simply, a more developed community is better able to identify and meet the needs of its members. Seen in this way, development is tied directly to increasing a community's ability to act on its own behalf.

Translating this to the youth-at-risk situation, a developed community is one where all members are working together to create a healthier situation for themselves and their youth. Presumably, the community is being influenced by interested adults and by youth who have the capacity to act in their own interest and for the benefit of the broader community. Personal and group capacity building is therefore an important part of community development.

2.4   Community Development: Processes and Projects

When we combine the terms "community and development" and return to the formal definitions we began with, we can think about community development as a process. This process involves such things as identifying individuals and groups in a community with common interests, defining a problem or objective that the community wishes to address, and establishing the organizational means of achieving this objective, and so on. As this list suggests, there are many ways for communities to approach community development. These can include both **processes**, such as those aimed at enhancing interagency communication, and **projects**, such as building a coalition to establish a youth drop-in centre or a youth training program. These differences are described in greater detail in the following examples.

In some cases, the focus of community development is on the relationships between youth-serving agencies. In such a circumstance, community development refers to the efforts of these agencies to establish better interagency collaboration. This may include such things as creating better communication systems and referral procedures, or making better use of each other's services. By working on establishing better interagency relationships, the capacity of these agencies to serve their clients is increased. The result is a community that is more developed since the ability of its members to meet community needs is enhanced. The focus of community development activities in these examples is on group processes, such as collaboration and communication. They usually do not result in a specific project as such, but involve agencies working better together. In this project, examples of such a process come from Halifax and Montreal.

An alternative example of community development is found in the efforts of individuals — both adults and youth — in a community to address common concerns. This may involve responding to a problem such as youth violence or the lack of a place for young people to "hang out." In this example, the focus of community development activities is on developing specific projects to address common concerns. For example, a community may decide to pursue a project

in order to establish a youth drop-in centre. Similarly, a project can be started to address the problem of violence in schools. In these examples, community development is much more concrete and goal-oriented than it was in the previous example, where the emphasis was on enhancing relations between youth-serving agencies.

In both examples, the objectives of the community development activities are the same. Both seek to increase the capacity of the community to meet its own needs. The difference rests in the way this objective is approached. It is important here to recognize that both types of activities — interagency relations and community projects — can be considered community development. However, it is equally important to recognize that each approach has its own unique characteristics and demands. For example, working on interagency relations requires a knowledge of the agencies involved and their previous history of working together. Community development is more likely in this example if the participants set attainable goals and are realistic about the potential roles each agency can play. While agency knowledge is important in the other approach, it is less important to the success of the community development group than factors such as involving broad target group participation and building group capacity.

Understanding the focus of the community development activities you are interested in will help you to get the most out of the information contained in this report. The lessons and insights presented address various aspects of community development which include both process- and project-oriented activities.

2.5   Community Development and Youth Participation

The importance of youth participation is becoming increasingly clear to governments, youth-serving agencies and community representatives. As the quote from Somé pointed out, young people have to be welcomed into our communities. We have to ensure that youth have a legitimate place and role to play in our society. We can begin by making sure that young people are included in the decisions that affect their daily lives. Our failure to include youth has resulted in many of them feeling marginal, alienated and with a feeling that they do not belong. According to the definition of community development, youth have to be a part of the development process. They have much to offer and much to gain as equal contributors in our communities.

To do this, however, two ingredients are necessary. First, youth have to be given an opportunity to learn the specific skills they will need to be equal contributors. Second, their legitimacy in the process of community development and planning has to be recognized by the adults involved. Their legitimacy is founded on their ability to speak to the wider community on youth-related issues. These connections are also the basis of their legitimacy with government and non-government agencies which work with young people. Many communities are interested in developing youth participation in decision making simply because they perceive that they themselves do not understand youth issues very well. They are also unsure of how they should respond.

To date, our experiences in the national CD-OOMY project indicate that youth participation in community development is more the ideal than the reality. While support for increased youth participation is increasing, there is little to suggest that this support has been translated into concrete action. Very few of the sites/projects had youth involved from the outset

in the planning of the community development process. Few had developed a systematic way of ensuring that youth could participate in an ongoing manner. This is an important lesson with serious implications for community development projects.

What seems to be at issue here is the legitimacy of the youth who are trying to participate in community development activities. Generally speaking, the youth in the project described themselves as being disenfranchised. They do not see themselves as playing an integral part in community life or in the decision-making process. This is particularly troublesome for them in matters related to the delivery of services regarding youth themselves. Both youth, and the literature, suggest that much of the peer association and gang involvement is related to the need for a sense of belonging. They report that they have not been welcomed into conventional society; they see themselves as "outsiders" with neither the power nor the "mainstream" communication skills to negotiate entry. This is particularly the case with youth-at-risk.

With this in mind, the community development process must be designed with and for youth, in such a way as to provide for themselves many of the things that are otherwise missing in their lives. What we will see in this report are ways in which group formation can occur so as to meet the needs of the youth who often feel separated and distanced from adult decision makers. The design of group process must also include opportunities for training and development, enhancement of communication skills, as well as basic skills in organization and leadership. Many of the high-risk youth will also need a group which is able to provide some healing resources so that they can stabilize their lives while engaging in larger community activities. This challenges the project group and its members.

3. A Model of Community Development for "Out-of-the-Mainstream Youth"

The goal in this section is to identify and describe the series of steps that characterize the community development process, keeping in mind the unique characteristics of the population being served and the youth who are involved in the CD-OOMY project. We use information gathered through site visits and interviews with adults and youth in each of the sites to illustrate the experiences of these participants and the lessons learned.

The model outlined below describes the activities that are important at each stage of the community development process. One assumption behind this model is that a group's success will depend, in part, on how it deals with the challenges encountered at each stage. Most of the sites in this project were started by some type of government funding. All of the community development groups were started by adults and all were characterized by a group of individuals who came together to address a common concern related to youth-at-risk within their communities. Although these conditions may not always be present in community development initiatives for youth-at-risk, we believe that the essential core of the model we have developed will remain the same.

The model contains a number of steps and two general phases. The first phase is what we refer to as the **group development phase.** It is characterized by the group's efforts to develop and maintain itself. This includes the development of group capacity and legitimacy as well as the beginning of the formation of relationships with other community partners. The second phase is referred to as the **community partnership phase.** During this phase, the project group becomes involved with other community partners in joint power sharing and decision making.

The primary focus of the discussion in this paper will be on group development for two reasons. First, the relative inexperience of the youth involved in the community-based projects raised unique and important issues regarding group formation and development. Second, only one of the thirteen groups participating in the CD-OOMY national project developed beyond the first phase.

The stages and steps within the community development process do not always occur in a natural order where the end of one step sees the beginning of the next. For example, although we discuss issues related to group maintenance as the first step of phase one, some of the unique characteristics of youth-at-risk required persistent and ongoing group maintenance throughout the life of the community development effort. These projects moved on to other steps while still spending a good deal of time attending to group maintenance. The phases and steps in the model are as follows:

Group Development Phase	Community Partnership Phase
Step 1: Developing and Maintaining the Group	**Step 6**: Identifying Community Need Areas
Step 2: Connecting to the Target Audience	**Step 7**: Involving the Broader Community in Decision Making
Step 3: Developing Group Capacity	**Step 8**: Selecting a Collective Community Goal
Step 4: Developing Legitimacy	**Step 9**: Developing a Mechanism for Implementation
Step 5: Negotiating and Contracting Partnerships	**Step 10**: Sustaining the Community Development Effort

3.1 Phase 1: Group Development Phase

3.1.1 Step 1: Developing and Maintaining the Group

Soon after a group has come together to pursue community development objectives, some attention must be directed to group development and maintenance to support its effective operation and long-term sustainability. Objectives to be pursued in this step include: members having a wide variety of backgrounds, talents and skills; members able to identify with the group's goals; adults and youth participating as equal partners in decision making; the group having sufficient numbers with ongoing recruitment so that membership grows with needs; group members being trained to conduct the business of the organization; and the group having some mechanism in place to ensure conflict resolution and communication between the adult and youth members.

The Key Issues:

- ☑ How can adults and youth work together effectively?
- ☑ How can we encourage the development of a clear focus for the group?
- ☑ How can youth issues be translated into action strategies?
- ☑ Is there a difference between community issues and youth issues?
- ☑ How do we get youth involved?
- ☑ How can adults be involved?
- ☑ Are roles and responsibilities clear?
- ☑ Paid coordinators, paid staff or volunteers?
- ☑ Is training necessary in the group development stage?
- ☑ How do we deal with turnover of core group members?

In the early stages, groups working toward community development face a number of important questions over such things as membership, organization and recruitment. This is a crucial period for most groups since they are struggling to identify who they are and what they are trying to do, while trying to keep the group together and focused. The questions outlined below speak to various aspects of group development and maintenance which are very important for influencing the success and long-term sustainability of the group.

Q *How can adults and youth work together effectively?*

Many of the groups created through the CD-OOMY project were initially formed by adults interested in finding solutions to the youth problem in their communities. For many of these adult groups, there was implicit recognition that there were problems in their community and that youth had to be involved in their solution. As such, the groups, each in their own time, included youth participation. In some cases, youth participation was extended to the day-to-day project work only, while the management of the overall project was left to adult steering committees. Those projects which demonstrated the greatest success were those where youth and adults shared responsibility at both the management and the project operational level and where this adult/youth partnership was developed early.

"There was never any intention that the youth would take over the project. It was too big for the youth to handle. In terms of policies, decision making and implementation, the youth were the key through their partnership with adults. We didn't want them to work on tedious reports. Kids are doers. We wanted them to work with us on tactics."
(Member of project management committee, Meyo Pimacihewin)

➤ In the Assiniboine and the Meyo Pimacihewin projects, the initial project developer insisted throughout the early stages that youth not only be included in the early group formation, but that they be active decision makers in the goals and objectives of the group.

■ ■ ■

LESSON: **Success in youth-based community development initiatives is enhanced when adults and youth are involved in both the management and the operational level in a partnership-sharing arrangement.**

Activities aimed at developing a group focus are essential in all stages of group development. They help the group to clarify its purpose and objectives. While group-focusing activities occurred at both the management and the operational level, it is important that the governing body take a lead role in this process.

> ➤ The steering committee of the Assiniboine project in the Manitoba/Saskatchewan site had to return repeatedly to strategic planning to keep its focus on the reason for the project and the need it was trying to address. Although the members never swayed away from their primary objectives, they had to stop occasionally to refocus. This occasional refocusing was an important ingredient in the development of the steering committee in this group. When asked to define the primary role of the steering committee in this type of project, their response was *"To keep the vision."*

"The committee members retained control but they could never make up their minds about what they wanted to do. The bureaucrats on the committee, who were the most articulate and convincing, were the least inclined to be action-oriented. The committee changed its mind frequently and would rescind earlier motions. I should have exercised more control and been a stronger chairperson but in a small community I couldn't take charge because I didn't want to offend people. Often, I backed off at times when I should have moved things forward." (Southey Project Chairperson)

At the operational level, a different kind of focusing occurred. All of the projects felt the need to clearly define youth issues in the community as an important starting point. Many of the projects in the Manitoba/Saskatchewan region used youth retreats or workshops to serve this purpose. These events were useful in recruiting membership to the project and in providing some type of common bond during the initial stage of group development. Once this stage was complete, however, keeping the group focused became more difficult.

> ➤ The sites used different strategies to assist them in clarifying their focus and defining youth issues in their communities. One common approach was to conduct an extensive community survey. This was done in the Halifax project, the Manitoba Interlake School Leavers project, the Brandon: Developing Youth Today for Tomorrow project, the Northern Saskatchewan Youth Initiatives project, the High Level/Hay River project, and the Southey Alcohol and Drug Awareness project. In some of these cases, the surveys asked youth attending school for their opinions about some of the most important issues affecting themselves and other youth in their communities. In other cases, youth-serving professionals were asked to identify youth-related issues in the community. The surveys were conducted as a source of information about youth issues, to begin planning and informing the community about these issues, and as a method of recruiting youth and others to the project. In

most cases, the surveying was done by the youth involved in the project under the direction of a consultant, a mentor or a project coordinator.

In the groups where the project boundaries had already been clearly defined by original project objectives, the groups had more success in developing a clear sense of purpose — that is, a strong focus. On the other hand, the projects that did not have a strong focus at the outset found developing and sustaining their group's focus to be much more difficult.

➤ The Southey Alcohol and Drug Awareness project wanted to develop recreational programming as a response to alcohol and drug problems in their community. They went on to do just that, irrespective of the formally stated objectives of their project. Similarly, the Interlake School Leavers project focused its efforts exclusively on designing programs to keep more youth in school. This provided a strong focus for group members throughout the project.

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LESSON: **One of the primary responsibilities of the steering committee (or other governing body) is to ensure that there is clear focus to the community development work.**

PATH
November 9, 1995

DREAM
- Healthy community with youth respected and part of it
- Sense of belonging
- More "+" lifestyle choices
- Youth feel "ownership" for the community
- Community ownership for youth issues (not "we" - "they")
- Youth be empowered to make changes for themselves

GOALS (MEASURABLE)??
- Develop sense of pride in community
- Youth related agencies/groups work together with youth
- Ongoing support for youth initiated projects
- Roles models/peers - connections
- Kids be aware of more options
- Problem solving approaches used/owned by all
- Affected drop-out rate, reduced vandalizing
- Reduced alcohol/substance abuse, less gang involvements
- Sustain Project past funding

NEXT FEW MONTHS
- Survey teens - find out what is currently available
- Networking (i.e. regular meetings)
- Interagency meeting
- Identify possible role(s) before approaching
- People for long term

NEXT STEPS
- Kid friendly "Directory" of youth related options (by youth - presented by youth)
- Westdale Community Club partnerships (i.e. youth dances, fund raising, etc.)
- Child & Family Services (Community Outreach) Person + Marie
- Engage new/additional members of Steering Committee
- Think on-going Project needs (i.e. past funding or alternate funding)
- Revisit "Model" - narrow/wider focus??
- Help Drop-In re-establish itself

BUILD STRENGTH
- Marie !!
- Teen support
- Drop-In coordinators
- ASSD
- Community willingness to help
- Financial resources
- Ideas
- Steering Committee

ENROLL
- Youth (in and beyond)
- Parks & Rec
- Charleswood United Church
- Parent reps
- AFM
- ASSD reps
- Park West Mall (business people)
- Community Center (Westdale)
- Drop-In reps
- Community Police
- Child & Family Services
- Consistent + Adult-Youth Role Models (Stable - "gotten over" youth)
- "At Risk" funding ASSD Community
- Community Center reps
- Parents of target group kids

NOW
- Drop-In support
  - volunteer training
  - location
  - youth
  - Steering Committee
- Staff perons
- Community contacts and partners
- Drop-in center manual
- Political concepts (elected reps)
- Contacts with school
- Support from ASSD
- Media coverage
- Networking with other projects (i.e. CDS)
- Workshops, i.e. skills development

Assiniboine's Strategic Plan.

Overall, the project groups had little difficulty identifying the issues affecting youth. The necessary first step in building group cohesion for community development. The problem for many of the groups, however, was to translate these issues into concrete strategies for action. In the groups which had little adult involvement and support, the problem of translating group needs into concrete community action became overwhelming.

►   The Southern Saskatchewan project held an excellent workshop early in its development, where youth came together, bonded and clearly articulated the issues affecting them. For the next year and a half the group struggled, trying to develop concrete action plans to bring about community change. They knew what they wanted to do, but not how to do it. Other groups had more success in developing specific action plans, but many struggled hard and long to achieve them.

"It's misleading to think that you can have a youth council and that they can make decisions that the board can turn around and smash them. We have a strong commitment to youth involvement but I think for practical purposes, it doesn't work." (Halifax adult)

■ ■ ■

LESSON: Youth and adults need to work together to develop concrete community action strategies. The mix of adults and youth brings balance to group capability.

Participants of the Interlake School Leavers Project map out their project ideas at a spring 1995 retreat.

Community development eventually involves the formation of partnerships between the project group and other stakeholders within the community. Some of the groups in the CD-OOMY project were formed to address an issue that was generated by the community. In other cases, the project group generated the issues from within and then went to the community to seek partners to solve them. Many of the externally generated community issues revolved around youth crime and violence, while those that were developed internally by the group members had to do with more personal youth issues such as discrimination, self-esteem, lack of jobs, and so forth. Difficulties arose throughout many of the projects in attempting to marry these two sets of needs. While the potential adult partners had difficulty in relating to the issues identified by youth, the project groups had difficulty relating to the issues that were identified by the larger community. In some cases, these differences in focus became a major stumbling block to the development of a common language for the formation of partnerships between the project groups and the community.

The project groups did not appear, at first, to be aware of the difference between the two sets of needs. When the youth-based groups came together to identify needs and issues, they were doing so in the early stages of development. They naturally focused on their own needs and not on the needs of the larger community. This makes sense, but when they went out to meet with other community members, they discovered that those people were not particularly concerned about youth needs. They had their own problems involving youth.

"The issue is that adults are always running things and making decisions for the youth. The youth will avoid you if you are making decisions for them. Slowly, the adults are getting off their high horse and listening to what the youth are saying." *(Saskatchewan youth)*

➤ Eventually, some of the groups realized that they had to get beyond their own needs and begin to interact with community partners. This happened in the Winnipeg, the Assiniboine and the Interlake groups. Once they had gone through their own inward-focused developmental stages and gained a certain degree of confidence and maturity, they were able to think about the needs of others. When they did this with service providers (Winnipeg), community recreation centres and malls (Assiniboine), and the schools (Interlake), they began to be heard by these potential partners as having something to offer. This helped to create their legitimacy as an equal partner in community problem solving.

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LESSON: **Youth need time in community development group formation to address their own needs prior to addressing the youth issues of the larger community.**

Most of the groups we dealt with were started by adults who expressed interest in youth participation, although a few had youth members involved in the decision making from the outset. Getting youth involved was a challenge. Many of the youth-at-risk had no previous experience in working in groups. Some were suspicious at the beginning, but once they were committed to project activities, many stayed on to become leaders in the work of the group. A good deal of previous work has been done in the area of youth participation in group formation and is referred to in the bibliography.

➤   Some projects had ongoing problems with recruiting and keeping youth involved. The Winnipeg project had an ongoing problem with recruiting, while the project in High Level never got off the ground because the youth in the community were not interested. The project coordinator tried to interest youth in the project but had little success. Even a recruitment basketball tournament did not attract much interest. There are probably a number of reasons for this lack of interest. In some cases, young people are difficult to motivate because they have been let down in the past by other adults failing to follow through on promises. Other youth deny that problems exist in their communities or they do not trust the process and are unwilling to get involved in trying to change the existing community relationships.

"I don't think that boards of agencies are particularly expert, knowledgeable, or committed to youth participation. When push comes to shove, they want to make their own decisions according to their own agendas. They obviously have a commitment to the client group but if they say - Who makes the decisions? they will say -We do. They are responsible legally for the decisions". (Halifax adult)

Turnover among youth is a problem cited in much of the literature, and we experienced a high turnover rate in the CD-OOMY project. Youth are, by definition, in a period of transition in their lives. To add to this, many of the youth who became involved had very unstable home lives, and personal problems affected their ability to contribute on a long-term basis.

"The youth would drop off because they wanted things to move much more quickly than we could move. That's why they like the drop-in centre board work. The ones who stay are the ones who are the most patient." (Adult steering committee member)

Through a series of interviews with the youth involved in the project, we discovered that many stayed involved because it provided meaning in their lives. Some appreciated the social contacts that the project provided, while others said that it was an excellent source of skill

development for future job opportunities. Overall, those projects which involved youth immediately in task assignments and which were accompanied by some coaching were the most successful in recruiting and retaining youth. The greatest source of frustration among youth who left the project groups was the lack of direction or that there was nothing to do but attend meetings.

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LESSON: **Youth recruitment and retention has a greater chance of success when youth are given concrete project-related jobs to perform that they perceive as being important.**

Q   *How can adults be involved?*

The involvement of adults in community development group formation and maintenance played an important role in the success of the groups associated with this project.

▶   The development of the School Leavers initiative in the Interlake project was strengthened by having the project originate from a group of concerned adults. In this, and the Assiniboine project, the adults who were originally involved in the development of the project had both a strong commitment to the goals of the project and a strong desire to have as much youth participation as possible.

"It has been our experience that the relationship of the Strategy Committee to the Youth Core Committee has been more directive than supportive; a parent/child relationship more than a true partnership." (Final project report of Winnipeg project)

In some of the projects, where these two ingredients were in place at the beginning of the project, adults felt that once youth were involved, they could take a back seat and leave the running of the project to the youth. These projects achieved little success. In other cases, the adults involved discussed youth involvement in decision making but never allowed control out of their hands. Their success was not much better.

▶   In other cases, the adults wanted to work in partnership with youth. This was tried in Halifax when the Steering Committee became involved with Auburn Air, a local high school media group, to help organize and put on a youth-run "media forum" in which youth and adults, including representatives from print and electronic media, discussed the portrayal of youth and related issues. The Halifax project also established an Advocacy sub-committee which included a member of the Steering Committee and youth volunteers. This sub-committee involved youth from the outset in planning and implementing youth advocacy projects.

► Perhaps the most interesting group from an adult involvement perspective was the Youth Sharing Today Leading Tomorrow project in Winnipeg. Adult service providers were the original project developers and formed the steering committee. They encouraged youth participation in project work but never allowed the youth a full say in decision making. When the youth recognized what was happening, they presented a "manifesto" to the steering committee, demanding more say in the direction of the project. Some of the adult members felt uncomfortable with this and withdrew from the project. Eventually, the project became youth-directed and floundered for some time as the adults were left in the background. Over a period of about two years, the project developed direction, and the adults who remain are committed and have developed an equal relationship with the youth in the project.

"A lot of youth don't want to come to a meeting where there's ten adults...They just felt that they could recruit youth a lot easier if we just had a youth core where it's just young people that come and we could maybe have one person (adult) rotate to those meetings to provide support and stuff." (Winnipeg youth)

Sharren Breen, Project Coordinator, in the circle at the Yukon planning meeting, June 1995.

► The involvement of adults in the Southern Saskatchewan project is instructive as well. The youth in this project were brought together for a retreat in Saskatoon and then were asked to return to their communities to develop adult/youth working groups. Unfortunately, most did not have the kind of adult support they needed in their own communities to get the work under way. The successes that the youth experienced in getting groups organized in their own communities were limited. Much more on-site adult participation and support would have been necessary for success.

"We tried to initiate some meetings when the project started — a talking or healing circle among youth — but they never came out. The youth always said that they weren't being listened to. There were 15 youth who came to the first meeting which was before the project started. They wanted to participate but they said that the adults took over." (Saskatchewan project sponsor)

■ ■ ■

LESSON: **Both youth and adults play an essential role in group development. Both seem to be necessary for community development projects to succeed.**

LESSON: **One of the key roles of adults in youth-based community development is that of affirming the work done by youth.**

$\mathcal{Q}$ *Are roles and responsibilities clear?*

▶ The Yukon project provides a wonderful example of successful adult/youth cooperation. Although this project had many other things going for it, one of the keys to its success was the working relationship between the youth and adult coordinators. It appears that the cooperation and support, as well as different expertise that each brought to the project, provided a model for other adults and youth involved. Generally speaking, the youth coordinator brought credibility and linkages with the youth-at-risk target group, while the adult brought organizational skills and linkages with the adult decision makers in the community. The Yukon project, with two project coordinators, is worth examining as a model of successful adult participation.

"The youth organizing the youth conference just can't do it. They can do specific tasks but not the overall coordination." (Yukon coordinator)

■ ■ ■

LESSON: **Adults bring a number of important assets to the group, including organizational skills, connections to the wider community and knowledge of how to achieve the objectives of the project.**

LESSON: Where possible, shared leadership responsibility between paid coordinators, adults and youth in project coordination is desirable. This is particularly the case when each is aware and respectful of the unique role the other is playing in the achievement of project goals.

Q *Paid coordinators, paid staff or volunteers?*

There is no question that the amount and kind of support that the group has will influence the type of community development experience they have. In the Yukon and Halifax examples, the former had paid coordinators, but both relied on volunteers. It is important to note, however, that the type of community development work each did was different. While the CYN in Halifax focused on the coordination of youth-serving agencies, the YES group in Whitehorse was more involved in attending community-based group meetings, hosting territory-wide youth events, writing proposals and maintaining ongoing contact with the youth-at-risk population. This level of activity would be difficult to maintain with a completely volunteer staff.

➤ The YES project had two full-time, paid staff members. In this multi-site project, even the presence of two full-time coordinators was not sufficient to allow regular visits by the coordinators to the 15 communities involved in the project. Because of the difficulty of maintaining contact, the project focused its efforts on Whitehorse and built its program base there before moving out to the outlying communities. Almost all of the projects in the Manitoba/Saskatchewan region had either full- or part-time coordinators.

➤ The evidence of the importance of paid, full-time staff people in the projects is best represented by the examples where no full-time help was available. In a number of the Manitoba/Saskatchewan projects, the coordinators resigned. The positions were left vacant for different periods of time. The Winnipeg project was without a paid staff member for seven months following its very successful conference in December 1994 called "Building the Bridges." The group failed to capitalize on the momentum that had been generated at the conference. Project participants identify this as one of the main reasons for the project's lack of productivity during this period. It took them several months after hiring new staff to get the project up and running again.

"In our project we relied on two outside consultants to manage our project for us, rather than hiring our own project coordinator. That was the biggest mistake we ever made. We tried to run this thing and get community involvement, but we couldn't. We have two staff members in our agency who already have full time jobs. It was left in our lap and we just couldn't manage it." (Volunteer project coordinator)

► Overall, the volunteer commitments made to the projects were continuous and of high quality. Volunteers took up a number of roles in the projects as technical advisors, steering committee members and mentors. In cases such as Southern Saskatchewan, Winnipeg and Brandon, the staff members with the sponsoring agency put in many volunteer hours. In Halifax, the CYN had been in existence for over 10 years, relying exclusively on volunteer labour. Its success and longevity may have important lessons regarding sustainability for other community development initiatives. When the issue of paid staff was discussed with the CYN steering committee, some members expressed the opinion that if CYN was valuable to the members, they would support it by providing volunteer work, resources such as office space, photocopying and a telephone, and come out to planned events. Their feeling was that the community would stop supporting CYN if and when it was no longer valuable to them.

"A project like this would not have happened without federal funding. You need to have a paid coordinator to connect the youth with the adults in the community. Youth just won't or don't follow through with many of the things they start." (Adult steering committee member)

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LESSON: **The maintenance of youth-based community development groups is enhanced by having full-time, paid staff but may lessen community ownership for the issues. Depending on the size of the project, having full-time youth and adult paid staff members enhances the chance of success even further.**

LESSON: **The presence of adult volunteers lets youth know that there are adults in the community who care about youth issues and who are willing to contribute their time and energy to addressing them.**

"Some frustrations still exist over the role or job description as project coordinator. There is a feeling that too many 'hats' of responsibilities and roles are worn in carrying out the project's directions." (Assiniboine project coordinator)

Ryan Aubichon, the Yukon Youth Project Coordinator, makes his point at the Russell Manitoba sustainability workshop.

Q *Is training necessary in the group development stage?*

Training was identified as one of the primary motivators by youth for their involvement in the community development group. As we will see, training needs to occur at different stages in the community development process. The training that is required in the early stages of group formation relates specifically to group cohesion and acquainting the youth group members with basic organizational skills. As the youth quote indicates, the training and work was hard work for many of youth who became involved.

"My friend said 'you've got to do this, you've got to come to the retreat. You can hang around and you party and we have a lot of fun and its good kicks and everything. Do it for me.' I said okay and I got there and found out how the youth and service providers can work together and we are going to be working from such and such a time to such and such a time. I was so mad! I came here and I worked more than I work at home! I was so...the first day I was ready to leave...It was like, 'this sucks' and I'm out of here! The next day it was better...But now I think, if this project ends, that's going to be a bummer...we ended up working our butts off." (Youth participant)

► Although none of the projects specifically designed and delivered structured training programs for the group members in this stage of their development, most undertook informal training. The most commonly used method was to deal with issues as they arose and then debrief with the group about what lessons were learned.

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LESSON: Formal and informal training should occur early in group development in such things as how to run meetings, communication skills, conflict resolution, facilitation skills, public speaking, writing, motivational skills and group dynamics.

Q   *How do we deal with turnover of core group members?*

Turnover of youth membership is an inherent difficulty in doing community development where a high percentage of group members are youth. All of the groups in the CD-OOMY project experienced a high rate of turnover. For community development to be successful, a **core group must** remain stable, continuously reaching out to other adults and youth in the community.

➤ Many groups in the project did not pay attention to this important need. **Core group** membership dwindled seriously in the Winnipeg, Northern Saskatchewan, Southey, Meyo Pimacihawin and High Level projects. There appears to be a direct correlation between declining membership and the number of tasks which the group asked its participants to perform. The projects that lost members the most had, for one reason or another, lost their community development focus and had little for group members to do.

"It is a challenge to stimulate interest in our project which has diminished over the summer. It takes time to build trust with youth, especially the youth-at-risk of leaving school with whom we want to work." (Interlake project coordinator)

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LESSON: Group members, particularly youth, will be more motivated to stay involved in the group when there is a clear sense of direction and concrete tasks to perform.

3.1.2 Step 2: Connecting to the Target Audience

One of the major sources of credibility and legitimacy for the group in the community development process is the relationship that the group has to the target group, in this case, at-risk or "out-of-the-mainstream" youth. The objectives of this stage include: target group members are comfortable in their relationship with the core group (both youth and adults); ongoing communication channels have been established so that the core group does not lose sight of the needs of the target group; target group youth are recruited wherever possible for core group jobs;

and target group members see the community development organization as one of the vehicles for a safe and supported exit from the street.

The Key Issues:

    ☑ What is the nature of the contact with the target group?

    ☑ How are the contacts with the target group maintained?

    ☑ Location! Location! Location! — How do we select an appropriate place?

    ☑ Does the target group have an opportunity to participate?

Through its membership and ongoing contacts, the community development group is able to gain credibility and legitimacy with the rest of the community by providing appropriate contact to the target group. This contact can become extremely important when the broader community is trying to deal with a problem, such as youth violence or youth homelessness. Police, traditional service agencies, store keepers, politicians or other community members who are experiencing problems with youth have a difficult time getting in touch with the young people involved in these activities. The community development group can use its position to act as liaison between these community stakeholders and the target group of youth.

Q   *What is the nature of the contact with the target group?*

How is the community development group connected to the target population of youth? Do these connections rely on specific individuals? Are members of the target group involved with the community development group? What is the nature of their involvement? Do they share in the decision making? Are the activities of the group being communicated to young people in the target group?

These questions were explored in interviews with project group members. Each of the projects had a different method of developing and maintaining contacts with youth-at-risk.

> ➤ The Brandon project hosted a Friday and Saturday night drop-in for youth-at-risk at the YMCA. The Regina Street Workers Advocacy Project conducted participatory research and established, for a short time, a drop-in centre for sex trade workers. The Mayo Pimacihewin project was housed in an alternative school for primarily Native youth. The youth project coordinator in the Yukon held talking circles and frequently had coffee with youth-at-risk in an informal setting. The Southey and High Level projects attempted to engage youth through recreational activities. The Assiniboine and Southern Saskatchewan projects maintained contact through the youth drop-in centre while the Interlake School Leavers Project engaged high-risk youth in both recreation and school-based activities.

"We didn't think our project coordinator would have to go out to the street and recruit youth. We figured we'd be turning people away instead of trying to fill all the spaces." (Winnipeg youth)

These methods all served to maintain contact between the community development group and the high-risk youth of the community. Their purpose was to maintain legitimacy, stay current on youth-based issues, and recruit youth into the community development group activities.

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LESSON: **Ongoing contact between the community development project and the youth-at-risk target population must be created in a way most suited to the needs of the target population.**

Y.E.S.
Youth Empowerment & Success

Member
Phone: 403 667-2884 / Fax:667-4237
4061-4th Ave., Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 1H1

Q *How are the contacts with the target group maintained?*

As the community development group stabilizes and begins to move increasingly into contact with "legitimate" partners in the community, the tendency is for youth-at-risk to shy away. Unless group members are constantly aware of the need to maintain contact with the target group, their focus can easily be diverted away from maintaining these relationships. Their own organizational needs, goals and objectives can quickly overshadow the importance of the connections the group has to the target group. Paid staff, contact with traditional agencies, media and public attention are all factors that can distract a community development group from maintaining its connections to the youth-at-risk. Later, when formal partnerships begin to develop, there will be a tendency on the part of project organizers to be "co-opted" by the more

powerful partners in the community. Maintaining connections is a critical point since these connections are the source of the project's legitimacy with both the youth and the community partners.

One of the most effective ways we have seen in maintaining these connections is to engage the at-risk target population in some of the specific duties of the project. For example, when the media ask for information, the community development group acts as a broker and sets up interviews between the media and those youth who may or may not have been involved previously in the project.

"If I had to do it all over again, I would have the employee report to one person. Having them report to a committee created some problems. There was constant discussion regarding the salary, the number of work hours and the way in which the work was to be done. They had trouble drawing the line between personal and professional issues and felt they were taking some risks in conducting the research out on the streets." (Project sponsor)

➤ The Yukon project, when contacted by the media, arranged for the interview to be held with street-involved youth. The youth project coordinator did not provide the information directly or take the spotlight away from the other youth in the project or community. The media and other community partners learn quickly that the best way to connect with youth-at-risk is to go through the community development group. This, in turn, increases the legitimacy of the group, solidifying its role in the wider community and its access to needed resources.

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LESSON: **One of the most effective ways for the project to maintain contact with the target population is to act as a broker or liaison between these youth and the community partners who are asking for youth input.**

The old lesson from the real estate industry can be applied to community development. Location is crucial for the success of services aimed at high-risk youth. Several of the projects experienced difficulties with location. The interim evaluation report of the Winnipeg project mentions the unsuitable location of the office space that was selected for the project.

"The present location is not convenient for youth. I would like to have seen it somewhere in the downtown area. I mean, downtown is walking distance for most of the youth." (Winnipeg project coordinator)

► The Winnipeg office was eventually relocated to the basement of a youth hostel, a location much more accessible and friendly to youth in the downtown core of the city. Although there are problems with seating and heating, the office location and decor are much more user friendly.

► Office space was also a problem in the Whitehorse project. The original office was located in the Sport Yukon building but the project coordinator reported that the location and "feeling" within the office did not make the youth participating in the project feel particularly welcome. They have since moved to a larger, more user-friendly space.

Creating a sense of belonging, where youth can come and go as they wish, is essential in the selection of the location for the project. Many of the participants reported that for the projects to attract youth and adults alike, there must be a place where the two can meet and where both can feel comfortable.

► In the Brandon project, the YMCA hosted the project and offered office space. The youth from Brandon who would normally not feel comfortable in a structured YMCA program felt that they were among friends in their weekend evening program.

► In the Assiniboine and Southern Saskatchewan project, the drop-in centre was used for the same purpose. People in both of these projects emphasized the importance of having a setting which is both safe and non-threatening. The Meyo Pimacihewin project is located in the Joe Duquette Native alternative school in Saskatoon, allowing both access and a non-threatening environment.

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LESSON: **The project office should be located in a setting which is safe, non-threatening, and accessible to both youth and adults.**

Saskatoon Youth Retreat, March 1995 (preparing for workshops back home).

Q   *Does the target group have an opportunity to participate?*

Transportation and communication became issues for many of the sites.

►   A workshop held for the Interlake School Leavers project in May 1995 was affected by a number of transportation problems getting youth to the site. The geographical separation of communities in the Yukon, Interlake and the Southern Saskatchewan projects became real issues in organizing and involving multiple communities. Distance also played a role in the High Level/Hay River site. Travelling back and forth between these communities proved to be expensive and hindered core group communication.

The issue of accessibility for youth is related to transportation and communication. Simply getting to group meetings is a difficult task for many of the youth involved. Having access to transportation, money for bus fare and day care facilities should be a consideration for all community development groups.

"Transportation was one of the most difficult organizing factors of the workshop due to the distance and accessibility factors between the communities. Transportation from the communities included cars, vans and buses. Those youth who had to take the bus and pick up students in various communities along the way were least satisfied with the transportation." (Evaluation report: Interlake school leavers project)

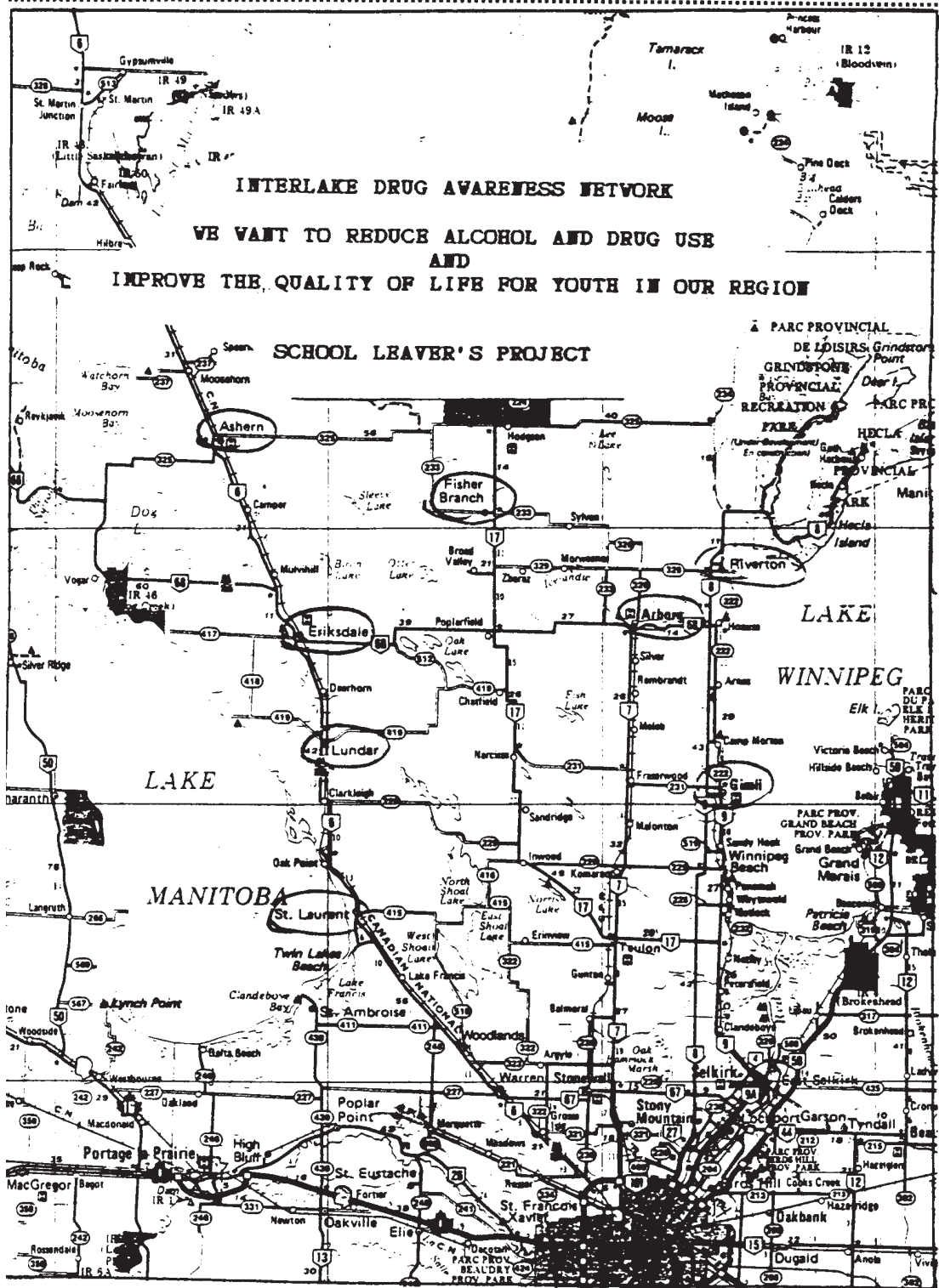In many of the projects, the issue of communication was raised a number of times.

➤ The Southern Saskatchewan project held extensive discussions about the need for a newsletter. They, along with the groups in Halifax and Winnipeg, decided that a newsletter was a good way of making youth aware of what was happening.

Newsletters were seen as a way of keeping in touch and reaching out to interested youth and youth-serving agencies in the community. Newsletters were also useful since upcoming events could be advertised, issues could be raised and discussed, and people could become better informed about what others interested in youth issues were doing. The groups came up with several other ways to improve communication and maintain connections to the target group, including holding social nights, dances and recreation events.

"I think we had bigger dreams then. We're more realistic [now] but I think we did well. I think we have a solid group of people that will meet once a month. There have been new people come on board as others have left and I think that that's what will hold us in for the next year and a half as we move forward." (Halifax adult)

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LESSON: **Projects with multiple community sites must have the necessary transportation, communication and staff resources to provide the kind of support necessary to do community development with youth.**

INTERLAKE DRUG AWARENESS NETWORK

WE WANT TO REDUCE ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE
AND
IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR YOUTH IN OUR REGION

SCHOOL LEAVER'S PROJECT

Interlake School Leavers Project Catchment Area.

3.1.3 Step 3: Developing Group Capacity

The community development process is more likely to succeed if its members, individually and collectively, have the skills and abilities they require to link the target population with the community decision makers. In this way, they are more able to achieve their own, as well as the wider community objectives. The objectives of the group capacity stage include: attending to the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual needs of the members; members being trained in the skills they will need to perform their group functions in the wider community; members, individually and collectively, feel they can perform community development functions (self-efficacy); and the group recognizes its own power.

The Key Issues:

☑ Do group members have the skills they need to be involved in community development?

☑ Does the group have the appropriate "mix" of skills among its members?

☑ What kind of structured training is necessary to increase capacity?

☑ Is participant wellness an essential ingredient to youth participation in community development work?

Due to the short duration of the CD-OOMY project, many of the groups did not reach the stage of fully developing their group capacity. As noted above, many spent a great deal of time and effort on the first two steps of the group development phase: group development and maintenance, and connecting to the target population. Developing group capacity involves three types of activities: ongoing self-help or support for group members; structured training in the specific tasks of the community development process; and the development of confidence in both individual group members and in the group as a whole. Structured training is the most obvious way of developing group capacity. However, the other two aspects are equally important for the group's overall performance. Support for group members is necessary to encourage participation and to avoid burnout. Having supportive practices in place and providing required training can both contribute to the development of confidence in the group. In this way, developing group capacity refers to a related set of processes aimed at strengthening the group and increasing the likelihood of its success in its later interaction in the community.

Q *Do group members have the skills they need to be involved in community development?*

One adult member of a project group asked, "*When do we know when we are ready to engage in partnership development?*" The answer addresses not only the issues related to group process, knowledge and skill acquisition, but also the feeling of confidence the group members have in their ability to interact with the wider community. There is no simple answer. The group members will be ready to act when they feel they are ready to do so.

► Some of the groups in the CD-OOMY project were "pulled" into wider community interaction in spite of their reluctance to do so. These were not planned activities, but resulted from requests made by community partners. This occurred in the Yukon when the Minister of Health and Social Services put a high priority on youth crime and violence issues in response to a public outcry for action. He directed his senior bureaucrats to involve the YES project in the Youth Initiatives Working Group, a group composed of senior policy makers. YES became involved in these discussions and soon became a central focus for government-sponsored youth initiatives throughout the Yukon.

► In the Assiniboine project, an issue arose with one of the community recreation centres. The project personnel were invited to participate with the managers of the community centre in solving a youth loitering problem in their parking lot.

"On Tuesday two of our youth became the first to ever present to the Brandon Youth Services Council. The youth gave a recap of the survey that they had participated in doing during the past year. Reaction to the survey and its results was a round of applause, and some follow-up questions were handled brilliantly by the youth."
(Project coordinator)

Projects which were not pulled into community action made some preliminary steps in engaging community partners in problem solving around youth issues. The Brandon project approached the Brandon Youth Services Council, an umbrella organization whose membership is made up of 22 youth-serving agencies in the community. Winnipeg approached three youth service agencies to offer their service as evaluators.

The accompanying examples illustrate that many groups have to face the question of whether they have the ability to engage in community development work. Do group participants have the skills needed to deal with others in the community? For most of the groups, the answers to this question suggest that they might not have been ready for the challenge when they first got together. However, the experience of interacting with key stakeholders in the community provides a way of developing group capacity. It gives the group the opportunity and motivation to learn the skills its members need to establish and maintain ongoing relationships with community partners through experiential learning opportunities.

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LESSON: **Working on youth issues with community partners provides community development group members with an opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills and experience they need to do this kind of work. This helps develop group capacity.**

Q   *Does the group have the appropriate "mix" of skills among its members?*

The capacity of a community development group often depends on the skills and experience of its members. In most cases, current members either have the necessary skills or they can learn them quickly. In other cases, new members with specific skills can be encouraged to join. Having access to young people who have some communication skills and who are willing to invest their time and energy in community development work is very important.

"I would have liked to have seen a few gang members and stuff like that there, but it's difficult to have gang members and severely troubled youth without them trying to derail what's going on and without them having to work through their own stuff. We didn't want it to be a healing retreat." (Winnipeg youth core group member)

To get the skills they needed, some groups in the CD-OOMY project recruited youth and adults who were not a part of, or associated with, the youth-at-risk population. This included young people active in their high schools and adults from various segments of the community. This mix of group personnel caused some group dynamic problems but, in the end, made for a healthier, more capable group.

The other aspect of this question has to do with links to the wider community. What are the intentions of the group? Does it plan to reach out to other sectors of the community? If so, which sectors? Has the group developed any contacts or included any representatives from these sectors in its membership? Having someone in the group who is familiar with potential contact groups, both youth and adult groups, is important in increasing the group's capacity to interact with these external groups.

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LESSON: **The community development group is enriched by having a broad mix of youth and adults, not all of whom are from the target population.**

LESSON: **Inviting members to the group who have contacts with key stakeholders in the community is important in increasing the group's capacity to eventually form partnerships.**

Youth from the Winnipeg Project performing their play at the PRIDE conference in May 1995.

Q   *What kind of structured training is necessary to increase capacity?*

The key ingredient to building capacity is having the means and opportunity for members (especially youth) to learn how communities really work, including the networks that exist and the different relationships between groups. Youth across all of the projects report that one of the things that kept them involved in the project work was acquiring new skills and the opportunity to test these skills through concrete work for the project. Unfortunately, we saw very little in the way of a systematic effort to involve youth and adult participants in this kind of training, although learning went on constantly as the group members became involved in the community. This is experiential learning and is most effective when both youth and adult members are engaged in problem solving out in the community under the guidance of a tutor or mentor. Sometimes this role is played by the project coordinator, while at other times it is a mentor or friend of the project.

> ► In Halifax, a workshop was held on community development issues which included both youth and adults. In the afternoon, workshop participants broke into smaller groups to do a planning exercise in which they applied some of the skills they had learned in the morning. These types of workshops were held in several of the sites. It is important that group members have an opportunity to use the lessons learned in these formal sessions when they are actually doing group work. This is where a mentor can play an important role in supporting the development of new skills.

"I've come to deal with some of my own prejudices. I mean we all have them, and to shed that and just know that they (youth) have some insight and have also learned that listening doesn't come with years of experience is important. I've led a very

sheltered life in comparison to where some of these kids come from and the fact that they've survived it obviously means they have a lot of room to continue on." (Adult participant)

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LESSON: **Experiential learning opportunities in the community should be encouraged with support by coaches or mentors who can debrief with the group participant in order to identify the lessons learned.**

Q *Is participant wellness an essential ingredient to youth participation in community development work?*

Most of the youth involved in the CD-OOMY project were either living in high-risk conditions at the time of the project or had been living in such conditions in the past. For many, this trauma led to anger, depression, alcohol and other drug use, and resulted in emotional, physical and spiritual needs not being met. There is no question that participant wellness is essential in capacity building. The primary needs of these young people have to be met before they can be expected to be able to deal with larger issues within the community.

"In the old days our ancestors never had alcohol and drugs to abuse. In this regard we were a much better people because of it. Today is a different story. Drugs and alcohol keep us from getting in touch with our roots. The old ones say that if a plant loses its roots it dies." (Excerpt from Meyo Pimacihewin project pamphlet)

► The groups in the CD-OOMY project found a variety of ways to deal with the issue of youth wellness. In some groups such as the Yukon, formal talking or healing circles were established as an integral part of the group's work together. Some of the projects in drop-in centres or other places where adult helpers were available were able to provide healing support to group members. In other cases, informal peer helper arrangements were established in the group by members acting on their own. Many of the adult group members were part of the helping profession and provided this kind of assistance when needed.

"One of our youth needed an ear desperately during the Saturday night get together. The family problems had gotten so bad that he was not allowed to go home that night, and it looked as if he could be going to live with an uncle in Ontario. We made arrangements with a friend of his that I knew, for him to stay the night there. He talked for some time about the problems at home and he was feeling better when I dropped him off later that evening with his friends." (Brandon project coordinator)

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LESSON: **Whether it is a spontaneous development or a planned activity, some kind of healing capability will develop within the group where youth-at-risk are involved. This should be encouraged as a necessary precondition to further capacity building.**

Hay River group plans their future using a "snakes & ladders" approach.

3.1.4 Step 4: Developing Legitimacy

The community development group is seen by potential partners as able to perform functions within the community that are valued contributions that add quality to the current decision-making process. The objectives of this step include group demonstration of its value in real situations such that the public or the decision makers see the value that has been added; there is demand for the group's participation in problem solving youth issues in the community; and the group itself knows the reasons why their contribution is valued.

The Key Issues:

    ☑ What is legitimacy?

    ☑ Can I create my own legitimacy or must I wait for others to see it?

    ☑ How do you identify who are the potential partners in the community?

    ☑ How do we develop a mission statement and identify our key roles?

    ☑ Caution! How do we avoid becoming a service delivery agency?

☑ How do we prepare ourselves to play our role?

☑ Do youth want to move beyond their own issues?

This step in the community development process involves the interaction between community development groups and their community partners. These interactions will be based on some equality between these two if the community development group has some legitimacy in the eyes of other community members. The question is, "When does a community development group have legitimacy to act as an equal partner in the wider community?" This is a difficult question to answer. Somé gives us some idea with his discussion of initiation rights. He asks, "when is a young man or young woman ready to take his/her place within the tribal village?" (Somé, 1994-) Without a clearly defined initiation ceremony, it is difficult to pick the exact point when legitimacy can be recognized by other members of society. In the case of community development, the groups involved must earn their right to sit at the table as equal partners with community partners.

"I would use services administered by Aboriginal staff, preferably street people or ones that understand. A lot of street women use drugs and when they need a fix they will end up slashing their prices by five or ten dollars to make up the difference for the amount they are short. Some of the services I would utilize would be counselling, a self help group or even a place to have a coffee and warm up. I have been on the street for a couple of years because I cannot function on welfare alone." (Regina street prostitute)

In *Collaborating: Finding Common Ground for Multiparty Problems,* Barbara Gray (1989,) talks about the difficulty that arises when people with power invite those without power to discuss common needs. For this to occur, those with power must perceive that there is some benefit to them, since by definition, there is a degree of power and legitimacy granted in these discussions to the less powerful. Simply being invited to participate in such discussions gives them more power than they had. Knowing that they will be giving up some of their power, we should not assume that powerful groups or individuals in the community will want to engage with less powerful groups, such as those working with youth-at-risk. This represents a challenge for community development groups seeking to reach out to community partners. Their success will depend in part on their credibility and legitimacy with the wider community.

➤ The Working Group on Youth Initiatives invited the YES group to participate in the distribution of $100,000 for community-based youth groups in the Yukon. This is, to date, one of the few examples in the CD-OOMY project where some real power sharing has been undertaken by key decision makers.

Legitimacy is established in community development work when others in the community begin to recognize that the project group has something to offer which none of the other decision makers in the community can provide. There are two tests that can be applied to see whether or not the group has legitimacy. The first is that the group and its power is recognized by other community partners. The second is the recognition by these partners that effective solutions to community youth issues cannot be accomplished without the participation of the community development group.

➤ Examples from the CD-OOMY project where legitimacy has been established include: when the media realize their stories are enhanced when they speak with youth-at-risk about youth issues in the community (Brandon); when the Minister of Health and Social Services realizes that he/she cannot deal effectively with youth crime and violence without participation by youth-at-risk in the design of programs and strategies (Yukon); and when the recreation centre realizes that the most effective solution to loitering and vandalism included involving the project participants (Assiniboine).

"When you see the impact you make on the people in the audience. It's getting the cards and letters from people saying 'I want your proposal, phone me up, I want to talk to you.' Being invited to speak at other places. It's that *which makes you say it was all worth it. All those nights you stayed up until like 3:00 in the morning because you got that inspirational flash." (Youth participant)*

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LESSON: **In order for the community development group to gain legitimacy, the community partners must recognize that the group brings a perspective on youth issues that is needed for the solution to community problems related to youth.**

Project targets dropouts

A school leavers project has been initiated through the Interlake Drug Awareness Network.

Its goal is to develop local strategies to deal with the causes of youth dropping out of school, according to coordinator Cheryl Lawrie. The project is also designed to create greater community awareness of the youth dropout problem.

Lawrie will be interviewing youth in the Lakeshore and Evergreen School Divisions and St. Laurent area to identify the factors related to youth dropping out of school.

Following the completion of this research, workshops will be held with interested youth participants to identify strategies for change. Further workshops will encourage community groups and youth to work together to discuss ways to prevent students from leaving school. Completion of this phase of the project is slated for June.

Lawrie attended a networking and evaluation workshop in June with other representatives of projects in Manitoba and Saskatchewan funded by Canada's Drug Strategy

The Interlake Drug Awareness Network is a group of representatives from communities in the Interlake region (originally formed in 1988). Funding for the program is coming from the community support program of Canada's Drug Strategy.

For further information contact Cheryl Lawrie at 895- 0035.

Interlake Spectator, Monday, October 10, 1994.

Q *Can I create my own legitimacy or must I wait for others to see it?*

The answer to this question lies, in some measure, on the size and complexity of the community. It can be argued that some of the reasons why the YES group in the Yukon gained legitimacy so quickly was because of the small size of Whitehorse (approximately 15 000 people) and that it is the territorial capital. Many in power recognized the political importance of the YES group shortly after it was formed. Even though the group was already recognized as legitimate, the project members aggressively pursued a media policy, made significant contributions to the meetings with senior government bureaucrats and actively engaged powerful partners in the solicitation of funding for government-sponsored programs.

In larger communities, where the demands on politicians, bureaucrats, media and other power brokers are greater, this is not such an easy task to accomplish. There are examples in the CD-OOMY project where the community power brokers were in denial about the nature and the extent of youth related problems and refused to participate with the project in spite of its aggressive efforts to involve them.

➤ In some cases, the groups could not, or would not, prepare themselves for interactions with the larger community. The Meyo Pimacihewin group became so overly involved in its internal politics that it was never able to get beyond these to reach out to the larger community, despite some of the key power brokers in the communities sitting on the steering committee. The Southern Saskatchewan group focused for so long on its own identity that it never developed the capacity or the confidence to move into

the larger community. In spite of its best efforts, the Brandon group ran into resistance by the youth-serving agencies in the community.

"One principal, when asked for a list of his school leavers, thought that he probably wouldn't be able to provide many names because he had a small school population. When he returned with the list he said: 'Wow, we have a lot more students on the list than I thought we had. I would like to keep a copy of this list." (Excerpt from Interlake School Leavers Project report)

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LESSON: **The community development group must recognize its own legitimacy first and then actively promote its assets to the community at large, specifically to potential future partners.**

$\mathbb{Q}$ *How do you identify who the potential partners are in the community?*

At the same time as some of the basic questions about internal group processes are being addressed, some groups begin to ask whether they should reach out to other members of the community? One of the first questions that is asked is *"Who are our potential partners?"*

To answer this question, many of the groups in the CD-OOMY project were unable to shift their focus from their own needs to those of the larger community. The needs of potential partners must be considered at this stage. The groups and their members must become convinced that the long-term solution to their own problems rests in attempting to deal with the problems of others in the community. Some of the groups within the CD-OOMY project came to realize this after frustrating months of trying to get their issues on the community agenda. They began to realize that they were not going to be invited to sit at the decision-making table unless their legitimacy was recognized by others and were prepared to devote their attention to larger community problems.

"This is scary for the youth because we got the lime light put on us and we're not necessarily sure how to deal with it all the way through and it's scary for the adults because it means they have to give up some of their sense of power to an age group that they've been taught not to trust. They have these stereotypes and we are upsetting them now." (Winnipeg youth)

► The Regina Street Workers Advocacy Project had a number of partners both initially and throughout the project. These included Family Services Bureau; Circle Project, Saskatchewan Action Committee on the Status of Women; Isabel Johnson Centre; Social Services of the City of Regina; National Association of Women and the Law;

Downtown Chaplaincy; Regina Friendship Centre; Riel Local Parent Aid Program; Saskatchewan Métis Women; Rainbow Youth Centre; City of Regina Social Development Unit; Gabriel Dumont Institute; Regina Health District Street Nurses; Regina Council on Social Development; the YWCA; and others.

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LESSON: **Before the community development group can be recognized as a full and equal partner in the community, it must shift its focus away from its own individual needs solely and turn toward the broader needs of the community.**

Q *How do we develop a mission statement and identify our key roles?*

The process of developing a mission statement within the community development group usually requires answering three basic questions: What do we do?; Who do we do it for?; and How do we do it? These questions remind group members to focus on the important things that they have to offer. In most communities, the most important thing the community development group does is link the target population of youth-at-risk and the wider community, including government and youth-serving agencies. Keeping this role front and centre is useful during the development of a vision or mission statement. It helps to remind members of why they are there and why their efforts are important.
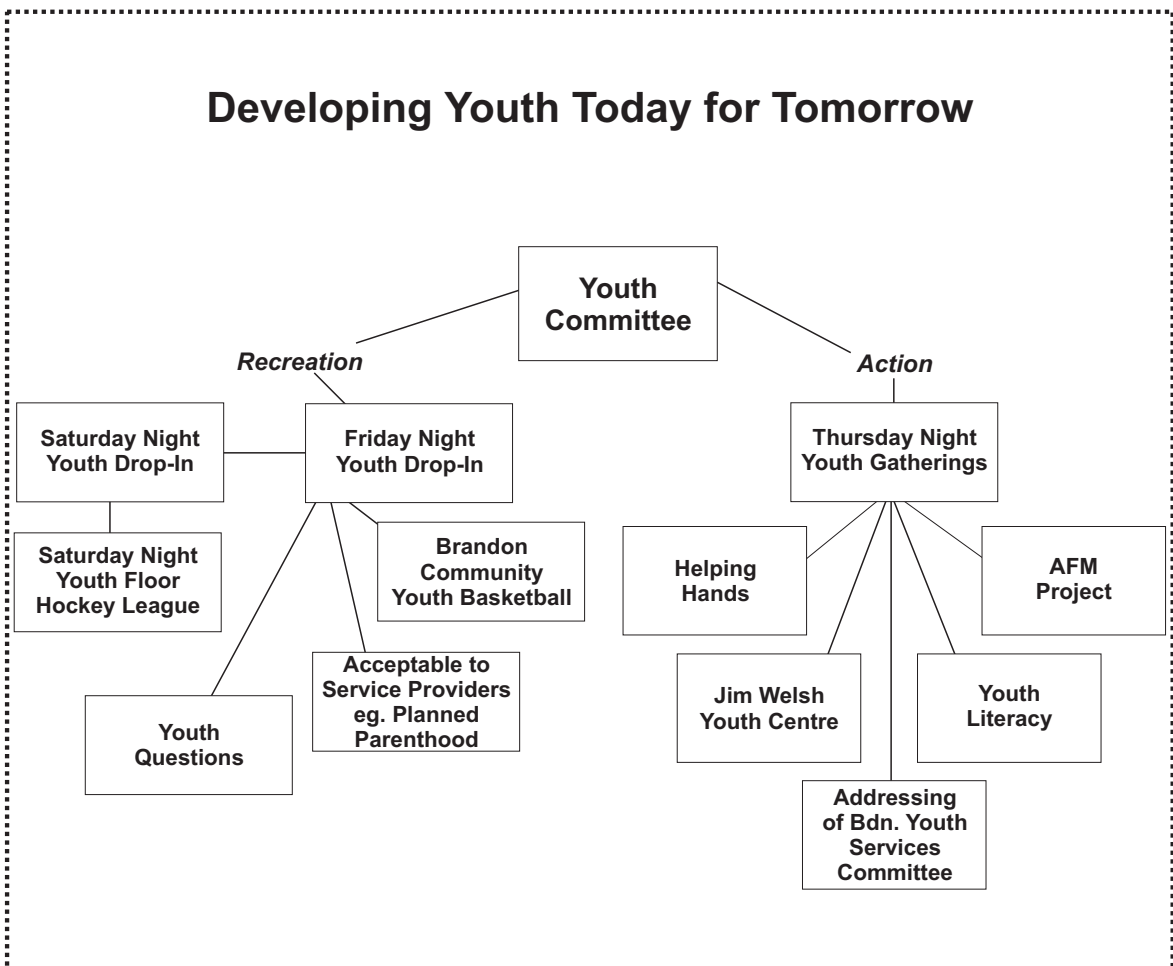
If the vision of the group is to act as a link between the target group and the community partners, what are the key roles for the project and its members? This is an important question, since many of the projects feel that their primary role is to act as an advocate on behalf of youth-at-risk. While they may be able to play the advocacy role, many of the projects have forgotten that their primary function is to link youth with community partners. This requires a role which is much more facilitative. Their function is to **"broker"** youth-based information to those in power who want this information. Their job is not to speak on behalf of youth but to facilitate youth to speak for themselves. This takes us back to the early definition of community development as offered by the Toronto Board of Health. The purpose of community development is to "empower the community and thus strengthen its own inherent organization and its support system to take the initiative in coping with its own concerns."

"I think we learned not to try to go for the whole sky when all we really have is the resources for one cloud at a time. There's no real resources to support that. I think I'm a lot more cautious now than I was a year ago." (Halifax adult)

► The Regina Street Workers Advocacy Project had as its original project sponsor the Saskatchewan Action Committee on the Status of Women but, by May 1994, the project was sponsored by the Circle Project. This change gave the project much more legitimacy with the target group as well as stronger connections to the sex-trade workers it was trying to reach.

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LESSON: **The role of the community development group is to link up potential partners in the community with the youth-at-risk target population, not to perform this function itself.**

Developing Youth Today for Tomorrow

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                        Youth
                       Committee

         Recreation                      Action

 Saturday Night    Friday Night        Thursday Night
 Youth Drop-In     Youth Drop-In       Youth Gatherings

 Saturday Night          Brandon      Helping              AFM
 Youth Floor            Community      Hands             Project
 Hockey League          Youth Basketball

                   Acceptable to      Jim Welsh        Youth
        Youth      Service Providers   Youth Centre    Literacy
        Questions  eg. Planned
                   Parenthood          Addressing
                                       of Bdn. Youth
                                       Services
                                       Committee
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Brandon maps out its role in the community.

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In dealing with youth-at-risk, there is a natural tendency for the people associated with the project to become involved with the personal lives of its participants. While this is inevitable in some cases, it should not become the primary focus of the group. One thing that distinguishes the community development group from other partners and allies within the community is its role as a facilitator of youth empowerment. While a service delivery agency is focused on its own institution and organization, the community development group is focused on the wider community of youth-at-risk. Where a service provider is an independent decision maker, the project group is interested in community-based, joint decision making. The service it offers is **community empowerment** and not counselling or programs. The community development group is interested in the process of community decision making and change, not in products or services. During times of budget restraint, it is particularly important that the group not be seen as a competitor for scarce resources with other potential partners who may be sitting at the table.

"Working with the service providers, I was nervous when I first tried to approach them, being a facilitator of the group with an adult. One thing I noticed with the service providers is that you've got to remember they're human too and they have feelings. I guess you have to respect them for what kind of job they have. As I look at it they're of the line...like they may be the lowest person or something or they may be head of the company, but they got there somehow and they've got to follow rules. They don't make the rules, they just have to follow them." (Winnipeg youth)

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LESSON: **The primary focus of the community development group is to empower youth-at-risk to make their own decisions, not to be a service provider or a spokesperson for its members or the youth-at-risk target popuation.**

LESSON: **To achieve legitimacy in the large community, the community development group must maintain a balance between the needs of the partners and those of the target group.**

We have no examples in the CD-OOMY project where youth-at-risk have been warmly welcomed to the partnership table. In fact, the only examples we can provide where the project group has been contacted by partners, either individually or collectively, is when one of those potential partners has had a problem with youth in the community. Whether it be a convenience store owner who has a problem with loitering youth, or a government person wanting to deal with the issue of youth crime and violence, the common thread has always been that the partner has some kind of problem with youth.

Problem solving is one of the key skills that the project group can bring to these discussions with partners. We have no evidence that any of the projects engaged the youth in any type of systematic training in problem-solving skill development. However, many of the projects did report that they were often faced with group and project-related problems that needed to be addressed. From problems of group development and friction, to fires burning down their buildings, to living without a project coordinator, each of the groups faced a multitude of problems in its development and many developed problem-solving skills in working out solutions to their own issues. The experiences of some of the groups demonstrated to others, and to themselves, how they could work with community partners to address common concerns. Having problem-solving skills is an important aspect of working with others in the community.

"There's a sense of being with people who want to work together to address some of the problems in the community. I care personally. Even though I work for the School Division, I care personally about the kids. I know that as a professional we can't do this by ourselves. The payback for me is that there are more resources available to deal with youth issues. As a School Division representative, we have a better relationship with the parents." (Assiniboine adult volunteer)

➤ Although not a part of the CD-OOMY project, the Calgary Police Service project for youth crime and violence provides an excellent training model. Here, a number of community partners came together to address the issue of youth crime and violence, and decided to establish task groups to address each problem individually. They set up a model that involved four phases: i) **scanning** (identifying where the problems are arising); ii) **analysis** (identifying the nature of the problem, who owns it, and the difference between symptoms and causes); iii) **response capability** (involving key groups associated with the problem, identifying alternative responses, selecting the best response and then implementing it); iv) **monitoring and evaluating** (identifying whether the problem has been solved or needs to be re-addressed).

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LESSON: The community development group should see itself as a helper in the problem-solving process and should receive structured training in problem-solving techniques.

Youth program out to nip street crime in the bud

By Dean Pritchard
For the Sun

Brandon street youths may have a new place to turn to thanks to a federal grant awarded to the Brandon Youth Services Council.

"There have been projects in other communities working with youths, but usually not until after they have a problem or are in jail," said BYSC chairman Marty Snelling.

The $47,000 grant will be used to establish a series of youth forums to find what the problems facing youth are and how best to solve them.

"The unique part of this program is that we are meeting with the youths themselves to find out why they do what they do," Snelling said.

The project is targeted at Brandon youth aged 12 to 19 who may be at risk of abusing alcohol or drugs. Many could be street kids or members of low income, single parent families.

Three people will be hired for the one year project, one of whom will be aboriginal, another with a rural background.

"The people we hire will have the ability to talk straight with these kids and not be judgmental," said Snelling.

"They will be able to ask 'Why did you throw that rock through that window' or 'Why did you rip off that car antenna? Were you drunk? Is there something that you need?"

Snelling hopes the project will realize a number of objectives.

"We want to find out what contributes to teen drug use, what makes them resort to crime and violence, how to deal with youths on probation, and how to establish better support programs for youth," he said.

"In Brandon we have a different type of street kid than in a city like Winnipeg where there are a lot more ways for a kid to go wrong.

"Here we have a better chance of identifying a problem earlier and helping them."

The first forum, administered with the help of the Brandon YMCA, is expected to take place this summer.

Brandon Sun, April 29, 1994.

Q *Do youth want to move beyond their own issues?*

All of the above discussions on legitimacy presupposes that youth are prepared and able to move beyond their own issues to begin dealing with community issues. Is this a reasonable expectation of youth who have come from troubled backgrounds, some of whom currently live in unstable life situations?

Our experience in the CD-OOMY project revealed two things. One, that the group process, training and exposure to people outside their own peer group is therapeutic in itself. Many of the youth who have come from troubled backgrounds have shown amazing skills in dealing with some of the complex tasks associated with community development work. While it is difficult to tell to what degree the community development process has been of help to these youth, a number of personal testimonials suggest the groups have provided a powerful healing process. The CD-OOMY project, for many, has been the greatest growth experience of their lives and many have responded beyond their own expectations.

A second thing we learned is that the youth participants in the group will use a self-selection process depending on their own individual readiness to participate in wider community activities. Some of the groups have set up a formal or informal peer-mentoring process within the group, using more experienced youth to work with those who are less experienced or less self-confident. The youth who feel that they are ready will take up the challenge and move beyond their own issues to those of the wider community. In so doing, they seem to be addressing their own developmental needs at the same time.

Youth, even those at risk, seem to know that broader community work is in their own best interest. However, the projects which spent too much time in group process, or waiting for group members to be ready to act, had the poorest success in moving through the next stages of community development preparation. The adage, ***"learn it, then teach it, then do it"*** has worked wonders for some of the groups in this project.

> *"A lot of the service providers refused to assist us when they refused to agree to be interviewed for our survey. They said they didn't have the time or just closed the door to us. We were not allowed to interview students in the schools without parental consent."* (M/S youth participant)

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LESSON: **Youth are not only ready to move beyond their own issues into larger community issues, but want to do so and learn valuable lessons from the experience. They seem to know intuitively when this should happen.**

LESSON: **Rather than waiting for youth to be "ready," trial by fire under a properly coached or tutored situation is often the best approach.**

3.1.5   Step 5: Negotiating and Contracting Partnerships

To achieve its objectives, community development groups often have to reach out to other members of the community. Knowing how to identify potential partners, assessing partner needs and forming relationships that meet both group and partner needs is a part of this step. Other objectives might include the partner(s) working as equals with the group in planning, decision making and implementation; shared and open information between the partners; that the partners recognize their mutual need for one another; that the partners all contribute to the effort according to their capacity to do so; there is mutual trust established; and there is some organization in place for the partners to interact and achieve their mutual goals.

The Key Issues:

- ☑ How do we become equal with other partners within the community?
- ☑ How do we define who the best partners are?
- ☑ How do we avoid selling out the interests of youth to the partners' needs?
- ☑ How do we know who is ready to become a partner?

The last step in the **group development** phase is characterized by the establishment of interdependent relationships with other partners in the community around youth issues. In this step, we will continue with the belief that the best entry point for youth groups into the community is in joint problem-solving on youth issues.

Q *How do we become equal with other partners within the community?*

To create a condition of equality, the project group must be seen as useful by the partner who is attempting to join forces with the group in solving a problem. Creating equalities, therefore, is associated with how the partners define the common problem. As Gray points out, *"The common problem definition around which parties can unite is rooted in their* underdependence. *The recognition by stakeholders that their desired outcomes are inextricably linked to the actions of the other stakeholders is the fundamental basis for collaborating. Getting parties to the table is often accomplished by heightening their awareness of the forces that join them and of their collective ability to manage these forces. Skillful governors are able to appreciate and to articulate these interdependencies . . . There are five interrelated judgments that stakeholders weigh in deciding whether or not to collaborate: i) Does the present situation fail to serve my interests? ii) Will collaboration produce positive outcomes? iii) Is it possible to reach a fair agreement? iv) Is there parity among the stakeholders? v) Will the other side agree to collaborate?"* (Gray, 1989;)

If we look at this same list from a motivational point of view, partners are more likely to include youth-based community development groups as partners when involving them will serve their interest; lead to more positive outcomes; improve the probability of reaching a fair agreement; improve parity; and demonstrate that youth will collaborate.

One of the key questions in considering Gray's model as suitable for discussion of the community development project for youth-at-risk is the place of youth in the collaborating process. Two ingredients seem essential. The first is her comment that *"the collection of stakeholders should include those whose expertise is essential to constructing . . . a comprehensive understanding of the problem."* (1989;) When we consider the efforts which the groups are making to change the conditions for young people in their communities, what better expertise than the youth-at-risk themselves! The second ingredient is the legitimacy or capacity of the stakeholders to be equal partners in the collaboration process. Where do our youth find this legitimacy? Gray responds by saying that *"their capacity comes from their acknowledged expertise with respect to the issues under consideration."* (1989;) In our case, their capacity is their expertise in youth-related issues.

Gray's collaboration model goes on to describe a problem-solving model where the parties agree on a superordinate goal, establish ground rules, organize subgroups, search for information, explore options, reach agreement and then implement the solution. This is surprisingly similar to the model used in the Calgary Police Service project.

There are some excellent examples from the CD-OOMY project where the youth-based groups have attempted to demonstrate their legitimacy and equality through awareness programs with the key stakeholders in the community. A part of this awareness has been to demonstrate to other key stakeholders and the community that their interests are tied to those of the youth within the project.
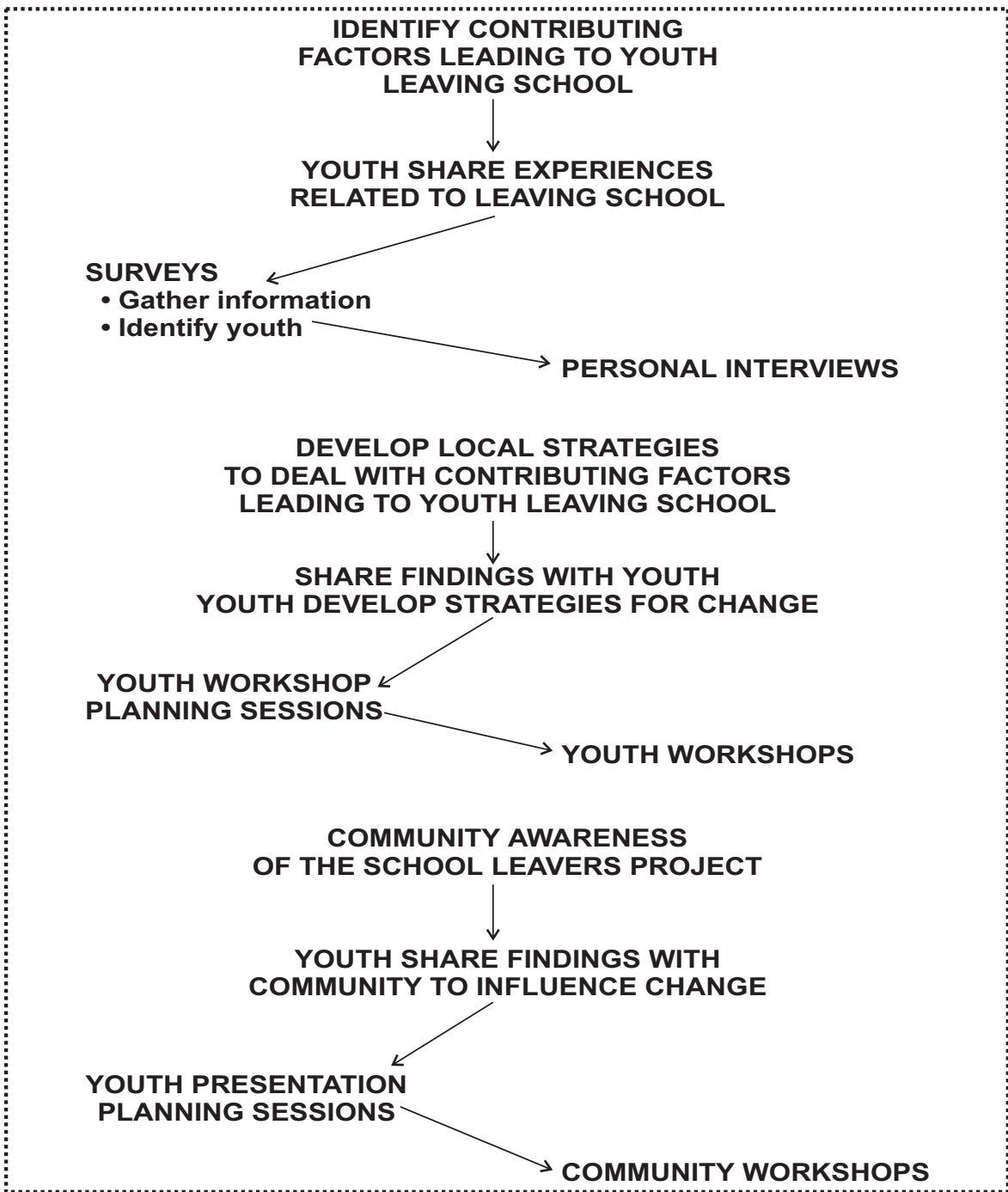
► In the Assiniboine project, the school board was a full partner in the design and development of the project from the beginning. Its contribution included financial and other resources as well as continuing membership and leadership on the project steering committee. The parents and members of the School Division saw that they had a problem with youth attendance and behaviour in the school system. By joining forces with the project committee, they saw their own interests being served by having youth (the experts in the field of youth issues) involved in the development of solutions.

► In the same community, a manager of one of the local malls was having problems with shoppers feeling uncomfortable around some youth. They approached the project to see if the hours of the drop-in centre could be extended, since they saw a decrease in the number of problems at the mall during the hours when the drop-in was open. The mall offered to pay for any additional costs associated with extending the hours in which the drop-in was available to the youth. Its interests were served by getting the youth of the project involved in solving a problem it was having.

"I believe the media is focusing on positive youth initiatives and including youth in the discussion because the YES office has been sharing information about at risk youth issues and advocating for youth involvement in the issues that affect them." (Yukon project coordinator)

► Similarly, in the Interlake School Leavers project, one of the schools saw its best interest being served by working with the community development group to establish a peer helper program. The Winnipeg project has recently decided to develop the skills of youth in offering evaluation services to some of the youth-serving agencies in the city. Those agencies which have expressed an interest in having this kind of evaluation done see these evaluations as helpful in improving their agency's capacity to service their clients. In Brandon, both the YMCA and the City Parks and Recreation Department have used the youth project to recruit youth-at-risk to some of their programs. The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba is currently considering having some of the youth involved in its project to assist in the design of a youth gambling project. In Whitehorse, the YES youth have assisted the local newspaper to develop better coverage of local youth stories, and five ministries of the territorial government have consulted the project youth on joint ventures.

In all of these cases, key stakeholders have seen the advantage of having youth provide input to a problem they were experiencing in their community. In all cases, the power the youth bring to the collaborative process is based on their particular expertise on youth issues. They are providing this expertise as problem solvers, and therefore come to the table with their own legitimacy, capacity and equality. They add a dimension to the discussions that could not be brought by anyone other than youth themselves. As a result, their contribution is valued by those stakeholders who need their expertise to deal with a youth-related problem.

"I had to become involved because of my son and because of the apathy of the community. They put the responsibility on the schools but the problem is bigger than what the school board can possibly handle." (Adult volunteer steering committee member)

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┊       FACTORS LEADING TO YOUTH           ┊
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┊                   ↓                      ┊
┊                                          ┊
┊        YOUTH SHARE EXPERIENCES           ┊
┊        RELATED TO LEAVING SCHOOL         ┊
┊                                          ┊
┊   SURVEYS  ↙                             ┊
┊     • Gather information                 ┊
┊     • Identify youth                     ┊
┊                      →  PERSONAL INTERVIEWS ┊
┊                                          ┊
┊                                          ┊
┊        DEVELOP LOCAL STRATEGIES          ┊
┊    TO DEAL WITH CONTRIBUTING FACTORS     ┊
┊    LEADING TO YOUTH LEAVING SCHOOL       ┊
┊                   ↓                      ┊
┊        SHARE FINDINGS WITH YOUTH         ┊
┊   YOUTH DEVELOP STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE    ┊
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The Intelake Project maps out its plans for partner involvement.

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LESSON: Equality in partnership is created when both parties see that they need one another to solve a commonly defined problem.

When we first began this project, we believed that the best partners would be social service, education, health providers and senior government policy makers. We also thought that the best strategy for undertaking community development would be to organize key community stakeholders across a wide range of services and work with them to endorse the community development model. This approach has proven to be a failure.

What has emerged in its place is a model which is much more "ground up," where the project itself has demonstrated its legitimacy to some community members who have engaged the project in wider community discussions. With the exception of the Yukon, all of the projects to date have achieved their partnership successes in one-to-one relationships, rather than with multiple partnerships. Based on the experiences of the community development groups, it appears that the best type of partners are those that have a problem to be solved and where the partner recognizes the valuable input that can be made by the youth themselves. These have not tended to be traditional health and social service providers. Those who approached our groups contacted the project because of its solid link and access to the constituency of youth-at-risk in the community. We had no groups that were successful in attempting to form community partnerships prior to establishing their own legitimacy. The "top down" approach did not work.

► We anticipate that as these groups achieve success with single partners, the valuable contribution which they have made to the problem-solving process will be recognized by other potential partners in the community. As this happens, there will be ever-increasing demand for the project to link community partners with the youth-at-risk population. Even with its short history, this has already begun happening in the Yukon project where the YES group members are in high demand to become involved with all youth-based initiatives. As demand goes up, so does legitimacy and the recognition by the community that the project has become a valued key stakeholder in itself.

We have also learned that even in small communities, some of the best partners are independent business owners. These businesses, which may be experiencing a problem with youth, at first seem reluctant to become involved in discussions with youth groups. Over time, they have come to see the advantages to their businesses in talking with the youth groups. We have also discovered that the media are quickly able to grasp the significant contribution which the youth in the project can make to their work. As a result, throughout the life of the CD-OOMY project, we have encouraged the community groups to broaden their definition of potential partners.

"The adults actually realize now that youth can get together and do something substantial. We got together along with the help of adults and developed the retreats, a workshop and strategies. Now, all the strategies came from us, the youth, so it wasn't like the adults or the service providers or anybody else was throwing in anything to

help us make a decision. It was us making a decision, so we proved to them that we can actually do it. We can set our minds to do it and we can do it." (Winnipeg youth)

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Drugs and Alcohol (youth group)
408 Mackenzie Place
Hay River, N.W.T.
X0E 0R0
(tel)874-2445
(fax)874-3922

Dear Business or Organization;

We would like to take this time to introduce ourselves.  We are the
Drug and Alcohol Youth Group of Hay River.  The group is made up of
D.J.S.S. students and volunteer adults.

As a group we are trying to assist the town with solving it's drug and
alcohol problems.  Our mission statement is: Promote alternative
choices in order to stop drugs and alcohol.  The group would like to
provide activities for the youth in town that would promote awareness
to alternatives to drinking or taking drugs.

This group is new in the community and we are asking for support from
local businesses and organizations.  We are not asking for any
donations at this time but wanted to make you aware of our group's
existence.  We hope that we can count on your support should we need
your assistance.

Thank you so very much for your time,
            The D&A Youth Group
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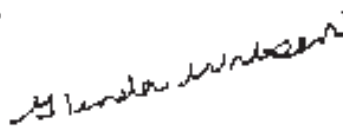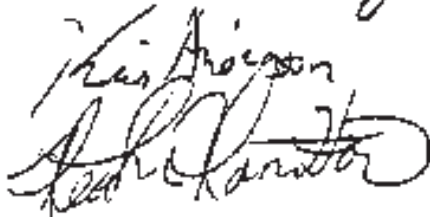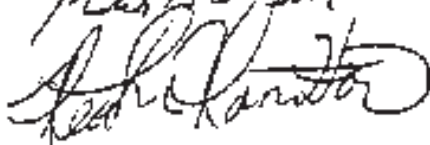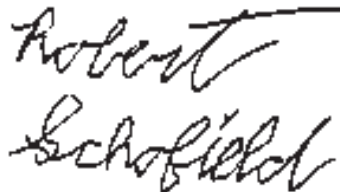
Hay River group makes a "pitch" to the community.

■ ■ ■

LESSON: Youth-based, community development projects are much more likely to succeed when they are started by individuals and groups from within the community.

LESSON: Health, education and social service providers have proven to be the most reluctant partners in including youth-based projects in their decision-making and policy discussions.

LESSON: Community development groups should include a broad definition of potential community partners in their working strategy. These should include media, corporate and business partners as well as government and non-government agencies.

Q *How do we avoid selling out the interests of youth to the partners' needs?*

We provided a caution in the last section that the project should not become too involved in actual service delivery. We issue a second caution with respect to dealing with the partners who request our assistance to help solve problems in the community. There will be a tendency for the project participants to put their interests and needs in the background once they begin to have contact with the more powerful partners in the community. Youth in some of the community development sites said that they get tired of being ignored, ridiculed or laughed at by agency representatives, government officials and potential partners. These comments are characteristic of the division that exists between adults and youth in their language, lifestyles, values and dress. These are the very problems that this project was trying to address.

Although our experience base is limited in terms of groups which have actually reached the partnership development stage, some of the experiences have been instructive. Some limited successes have been achieved among the groups which see the overall function of their community development group as a link between the partners and the target group. How they play their role in partnership meetings is important. They are, after all, there as helpers to assist others in solving problems. Their strength lies in their linkage to the target group and in having up-to-date information on issues and problem-solving strategies appropriate for these groups. Their overall interest is in the wider youth-at-risk target audience.

When the groups stick to this agenda, refrain from creating a threat to the potential partners and act as consultants or facilitators to the community development process, these problems do not arise. They are respected for their contribution and invited to return.

■ ■ ■

LESSON: The role for the community development group in partnership meetings is to provide problem-solving assistance, linkages with the target group and up-to-date information on the youth-at-risk issues. By keeping this in mind, the group representatives will be less likely to be co-opted by the powerful interests in the community.

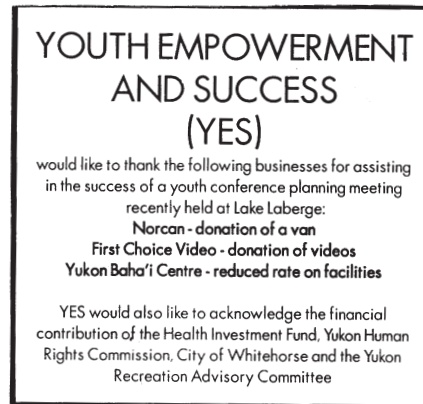*The Hay River group's webbing exercise to identify the key youth issues.*

Q *How do we know who is ready to become a partner?*

We have encouraged many of the groups in this project to scan the community environment, read newspapers, link with the wider community and stay attuned to what is happening in their community. Our experience has been that many of the groups have formed preset notions of who their partners should be. In some cases, they have spent frustrating weeks and months in pursuing a partner who they believe has a problem. For example, youth in some of the projects believe that the schools have problems with youth that need to be addressed. Although they may be right, the schools themselves do not believe that they have a problem they are unable to solve. Approaching partners under these circumstances has not been successful.

■ ■ ■

LESSON: **The community development groups should be constantly scanning the environment to identify individuals and groups who may have a need for their assistance.**

**YOUTH EMPOWERMENT
AND SUCCESS
(YES)**

would like to thank the following businesses for assisting
in the success of a youth conference planning meeting
recently held at Lake Laberge:

**Norcan - donation of a van
First Choice Video - donation of videos
Yukon Baha'i Centre - reduced rate on facilities**

YES would also like to acknowledge the financial
contribution of the Health Investment Fund, Yukon Human
Rights Commission, City of Whitehorse and the Yukon
Recreation Advisory Committee

3.2   Phase 2: Community Partnership Phase

The next five steps in the community development process occur once the partnership has been developed and there is agreement by the partners to work together toward a common end. It marks the end of the discussions of the internal group formation and addresses group concerns about wider community involvement.

In our opinion, none of the groups involved in the CD-OOMY project arrived at this phase. This is not through any fault of their own, but due to the short time for this project and the need for most community development groups to go through years of internal development before they reach this phase. As such, this section presents only a brief description of what each step entails without providing any case examples.

3.2.1 Step 6: Identifying Community Need Areas

When the core community development group has formed partnership agreements with other stakeholders, this new partnership group arrives at some understanding and agreement of what community needs should be addressed. The decisions are arrived at with full and equal input into decision making by both or all of the parties. The objectives of this step include the following: having opportunity for all partners to provide information and state their view on needed solutions to youth issues; having the partners who are most familiar with the problem have a greater say in developing solutions; developing more broadly based participatory research mechanisms for identifying need; partner involvement in joint information searches; and having multiple solutions put forward for the whole group to examine.

The strategy that is decided upon should, if we return to the original definition of community development, *"work on problems of mutual concern, help to empower the community and thus strengthen its own inherent organization and its support systems."*

In this step, we must also be conscious of Gray's comment that there must be general recognition by all the parties involved and that no one partner can solve the problem on its own. This inherent respect and recognition of the need for others is the basis for healthy communities and the driving force toward the creation of superordinate community goals. As the partners work together toward solving the larger goal, they see their own goals being met at the same time.

There are some excellent examples in Canada involving youth-at-risk where this step has been taken. The Dufferin Mall in Toronto, Ontario and the Marlboro Mall example in Calgary, Alberta are two cases in point. There is every reason to believe that youth-at-risk can make a significant contribution to this planning stage where the identification of a superordinate community goal can meet the needs of corporate interests and those of youth as well.

3.2.2   Step 7: Involving the Broader Community in Decision Making

This step is characterized by the involvement in decision making, not only of core youth group members in the wider community partnership, but also a variety of other people and organizations who will be affected by the group. The objectives of this step will include: the decision makers in the community group will recognize the importance of having more, rather than less, input into decision making; the broader group develops innovative ways to involve key stakeholders, including youth-at-risk, in decision making; decisions of the group are done through consensus building; information is shared equally among all partners; and the individual interests of the partners are accommodated in decision making.

As mentioned, the overall benefit to a partnership group is that it can accomplish objectives beyond the scope of any one individual or organization within that group. The partnership must ensure that it keeps the overall goals at the forefront of its work. Some mediation mechanism may have to be put in place to ensure that this happens. To the extent possible, the membership in the partnership must be committed to the overall goals of the alliance and be as broadly based as possible.

Some of the specific functions of the partnership may include discussions on how the partnership will be resourced (e.g., staff time, office space and equipment, coordination of meetings). The partnership should develop some mechanism for information gathering and have the resources available to enable the members to implement whatever plans are developed. The greater the degree of partner commitment to the resources of the partnership, the greater will be its ownership of the intended outcomes.

A good partnership will perform a number of functions in the larger community. It will provide leadership in the community to the youth-at-risk issues, foster community action, develop public policy regarding youth issues, raise overall community awareness and act as a catalyst for institutional change.

Normally, in partnerships that perform well, there is a champion or lead person or agency who keeps the momentum going. It is not likely that this will be the community development group until the group has developed full legitimacy, both within the partnership and the larger community.

The youth-based community development group can, however, play other important roles. One of its key roles is its access to information on some of the youth issues in which the partnership is involved. This role will be most valuable in the information-gathering stage of problem solving.

One of the other qualities of a successful partnership is its ability to engage in joint decision making. For this to occur, partners must be respectful of one another and see the value of joint decision making over individual partner action.

3.2.3 Step 8: Selecting a Collective Community Goal

This is an advanced stage of partnership group growth. It is the step where the community group moves beyond the identification and solving of specific member or group issues and begins to establish broadly based community goals or vision statements for the future. It is the beginning of a healthy community's wish to improve the living conditions of at-risk youth and to eliminate the conditions that lead them to being at risk. Objectives of this step include the group having a broader vision of healthy youth; the vision is shared by the entire community; and the public and all significant stakeholders have had ample input into the decision about the nature of the community vision.

Once the partnership has achieved some success in dealing with youth-related issues, it may develop the capacity to engage in more broadly-based community planning. We are not familiar with any examples currently in Canada where a partnership has developed around youth-at-risk issues broad enough to address community-wide goals. Normally, such a plan would include extensive community input, the development of comprehensive policy directions regarding youth-at-risk, the establishment of prevention and health promotion programs, as well as early intervention, crisis intervention, habilation, transition and community support services.

3.2.4 Step 9: Developing a Mechanism for Implementation

By now, the broadly based community development group has agreed upon a community vision for creating wellness among the community's youth. The objectives of this step will be directed toward the implementation of the vision and will include a mechanism for sustaining the group; an agreed upon joint action plan for working toward the vision; an action plan that has been decided upon and agreed to by all members; collective contribution by all members of the resources for its implementation;, and, the development of a feedback mechanism to ensure that the action plan is being monitored and changed as necessary.

3.2.5 Step 10: Sustaining the Community Development Effort

We have made the assumption throughout this report that many of the groups involved in this project will sustain themselves beyond the end of federal funding. This assumption is based on our belief that these groups have undertaken at least the initial stages of community development. It is our belief that community development through partnerships will inevitably lead to sustainability.

Our belief is based on the way in which we have described the steps in the community development process. Through its work in developing and maintaining the group, the group will have stabilized itself to the point where it is unlikely to break apart. By developing capacity through training and experience, the group will develop its own membership commitment through the rewards that group members will receive. This will also help to attract new members.

But group formation and stabilization is not all that it takes to be self-sustaining. The group will also need to be resourced and supported by the community. We believe that this will occur when the community sees the need that the group is filling. The community partnership phase in the model addresses the formation of partnerships around fulfilling a community need. Once this is done, the group is needed by the community to continue to serve it in this particular way. This provides the group with legitimacy which, in turn, makes the task of resourcing the group much easier. This will be true for both partners and the wider business community.

In our model we do not believe that sustainability is about fund raising. It is about fulfilling a community's need to have the group provide a valued service while meeting its own need of empowerment and community change. The group's obligation and challenge is to match community need with its own, and to ensure that the partners recognize their value in doing so. The resources will take care of themselves as the broader community partners contribute resources to the need which they believe is being met with the full group of partners working together in meeting their goals and those of the wider community.

4.   Conclusions

This report presents the experiences of five sites that took part in a national community development project aimed at high-risk, or out-of-the-mainstream, youth. At the beginning of this report, we defined community development as a process which involves community members coming together to work on problems of mutual concern. The definition implies that as communities "develop," they gain the ability to meet their own needs more effectively. These are consistent with those contributing to the current thinking on population health. Research on population health has found that the health of a population rests, in large part, on its ability to take control of their lives and meet their own needs (Hill, 1991; Igoe, 1991). This requires increasing self-efficacy, raising the level of community dialogue and including greater community participation in decision making. This is especially important for vulnerable or high-risk populations, such as out-of-the-mainstream youth.

Population health also emphasizes the importance of addressing some of the issues in the community that increase risk conditions. Among the health determinants identified by the population health approach are low education levels, restricted access to health services, poor social support networks, low income and social status, poor health practices and coping skills and relative underemployment. Population health theorists suggest that programs are required that develop people's skills, strengthen community action, promote healthy public policy, create supportive environments for people and re-orient existing health services in these directions (Hill, H. et al., 1994/1995; Kaskutas et al., 1991/1992).

The evidence from the CD-OOMY national project supports many of the ideas emphasized in the population health literature. For example, the experience in some of the sites showed that involving youth in community development work was an important developmental experience for these young people. Working on the project actually changed some of their personal determinants of health or risk factors. In some cases, the sites experienced a degree of change at the community level as well. In these sites, networks were developed by the community development groups with other partners in the community.

One of the challenges encountered in this project was that community development takes time to unfold. Many of the community development groups simply did not have the time to develop to their potential as community change agents. Moreover, the time factor is related to the issue of sustainability. Many of these groups will continue on after the federal funding for this project has ended. As they continue to develop, they will solidify their gains and acquire other sources and forms of support. This will bring these groups the necessary resources to continue in their community development activities. They will achieve the legitimacy and credibility required to undertake the steps in the second phase of the community development model presented in this report.

A number of important lessons were learned in the CD-OOMY project. It is clear from the participants that community development is a process. It takes time, a lot of effort and a great deal of patience. We also learned that more and more people are realizing the importance of involving young people in the decisions that directly affect their lives. However, turning this realization into action has a long way to go.

We also discovered something about timing and people's commitment. Both the adults and youth involved in the project's groups faced a number of challenges related to **time**. For some, impatience and the need to see immediate change caused them to become quickly disenchanted with a process that is, by nature, slow and full of obstacles. For others, the familiarity of attending meeting after meeting numbed them to the urgency that others among them felt.

Some participants told us that the best way to account for our results was to consider "the timing" of our project. What they meant was that things were changing very quickly for some of them at the very time the national project was getting started. In one project, six members of the community development group who worked for different youth-serving agencies had either left or found new jobs. Others reported that the current economic climate has forced those in youth-serving agencies to focus their energies on surviving the next round of budget cuts. It is not surprising given these "times" to find limited responses to community development projects.

Still, we did find considerable support for encouraging community development for at-risk youth. Both young people and those who work with at-risk youth voiced the potential benefits of establishing community-based networks. Many saw these networks as a viable way of improving the services, especially with shrinking budgets and the disappearance of resources at the community level. Our surprise was finding natural supporters outside the traditional health and social service networks.

A key finding of this project is recognizing the role that a community development group plays. In the more successful projects, the group realized that its main strength — what it had to offer — was contact with at-risk youth. Community agencies wishing to make contact with this target population could do so by working with the community development group. The groups were able to gain a degree of legitimacy and credibility by acting as honest brokers between the young people and those in the wider community wishing to address at-risk youth-related issues. This role as broker helped clarify both the internal operations of the community development group and its relationship to the broader community. Internally, playing the role of broker helps to remind the community development group of why it has come together and to express this unifying force in its vision and mission statements. Externally, the community development group is reminded that its role as broker serves to legitimize its activities in the eyes of the wider community. This, in turn, forms the basis of its power. Having something of value to offer makes identifying partners easier. It also keeps the group focused on what it is trying to accomplish.

It is easy for community development groups to become overwhelmed with their new roles. Their focus on group goals and objectives can be quickly diverted by the agendas and interests of other, more powerful community actors. The danger here is that the group can lose sight of its reason for being and begin to ignore the very thing that brings it success — its contact with the target group. If the group does not pay enough attention to nurturing these contacts or in maintaining legitimacy with the target group, then one of its major assets is at risk of being lost. This makes the role of "broker" a delicate one for community development groups to play. Handled properly, it can be the source of strength and the means of achieving community goals and objectives.

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Appendix: A

Site Summaries

YUKON YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND SUCCESS PROJECT

In March 1994, Canada's Drug Secretariat, in partnership with the Yukon territorial government, as well as other provincial and territorial governments, hosted a workshop in Edmonton. The purpose of the workshop was to bring together youth and service providers to begin planning for the development of community-based programs for at-risk youth. Among the participants from the Yukon at that workshop were Charlotte Hrenchuk from Alcohol and Drug Services, Carol Cunningham, Ryan Aubichon, Sandy Michaner and others who felt a strong commitment to get some youth-at-risk programming under way in the Yukon. Following the workshop, these same people got together with other youth and service providers back home and put forward a proposal for funding a Yukon-wide effort. They titled that effort the Youth Empowerment and Success project.

The overall goal of the project is to help Yukon youth who are "at risk" to learn the skills they need to start acting on their own behalf — developing, creating and delivering their own social and recreational programs. The project originally identified five project objectives:

1. to establish a viable network and thriving organization capable of responding to community and member needs on the issues of youth-at-risk;

2. to develop working relationships with other community resources working with youth-at-risk;

3. to develop a centre point youth centre in Whitehorse, based on youth ownership and empowerment;

4. to work with youth-at-risk; and

5. to increase public awareness of the issues and problems of out-of-the-mainstream youth.

The project faced a number of obstacles in its early stages. Creating a board of directors with representatives from all 15 communities in the territory proved unworkable. It became clear after a meeting in June 1995 that territory-wide meetings were difficult to organize and expensive to hold. Because of these difficulties, a decision was made to establish an executive council in Whitehorse that would assume many of the duties of the board of directors between meetings.

The project was the only one in the national project to have both an adult and a youth coordinator. Their idea was to combine the experience and skills of an adult coordinator, with the relevance and credibility of a youth in training. This arrangement has worked well and is credited with much of the success the project has enjoyed.

At the June meeting, participants were asked to identify some of the issues affecting youth in their communities. Although many of the issues they identified were found in other parts of the country, some were new, and some received a higher priority than they did elsewhere. Some of the issues that appeared on the regional lists included racism, no role models, abusing parents, poor stereotyping by television of First Nation peoples, and no political support from leadership.

The representatives thought that having similar workshops in their own communities would be a good idea. This would allow local people to become involved in planning their own programs. Other program ideas included identifying youth for positions in local government, setting up a resource and information trailer where youth could meet or have youth organize a public meeting. Communication and information needs were at the head of the list of program ideas in most of the communities. Unfortunately, the summer months interfered with the execution of many of these community plans.

In the fall of 1995, a meeting of youth from the Yukon was held to form a steering committee to plan a territory-wide youth conference. Fifteen youth and five adults worked on plans for a conference that is scheduled to take place in March 1996.

Over the past several months, YES has begun to work closely with the local media. Through YES, young people are now being given the opportunity to speak on issues that involve them. For example, CBC Radio has contacted the office to speak with youth on the issue of vandalism, on issues affecting youth-at-risk, and to ask for their reactions to the work being done by the Youth Initiatives Working Group.

> *"I believe the media are focusing on positive youth initiatives and including youth in the discussion because the YES office has been sharing information about 'at-risk' youth issues and advocating for youth involvement in the issues that affect them."*
> (Project coordinator)

The YES project has also come closer than any of the other CD-OOMY projects to a basic goal of community development which is: rallying those with power in the system around a superordinate goal identified as important by youth. Evidence of their success is found in the fact that a specific objective of the Working Group on Youth Initiatives for the 1995-96 year is:

> *"To continue support to YES to ensure their goals and objectives are successfully achieved."*

At the same time, the YES project has worked on its own agenda as well. It has begun to raise public awareness of youth issues through its involvement in the media; it has established a talking circle to deal with youth who are in a healing process; it has set up the organization for the youth conference; and it has initiated efforts to get a youth resource centre under way. The biggest challenge for the YES project in the near future is to maintain its balance by not becoming too bureaucratized by association with government and community power brokers, and losing touch with the at-risk youth constituency that is the foundation of its strength and credibility.

There were no project-related activities under way at the time the national CD-OOMY project began. The first step taken by the project team was to consult with the regional Health Canada and provincial representatives supporting the project. A decision was made to canvass key actors in the local youth services community to determine if there were any existing community-based initiatives addressing the at-risk youth population that we could work with. We discovered that two such initiatives existed: one, sponsored by the municipal government, involved the establishment of a youth-at-risk committee among municipal departments, the educational system, the police and other municipal agencies; the other was the Community Youth Network (CYN), an organization of community agencies working with various sectors of the youth population. After some discussion with people in each of these groups, the project team decided that it should approach CYN since it fit the requirements of the CD-OOMY project more closely.

The CYN has been in existence in Halifax for over 10 years. Its mission is to provide relevant programs and resources to its members. CYN represents the concerns of its members to government and society at large. It works to improve cooperation, communication and networking among its members and it takes a leadership role in bringing the community together on topics of concern related to youth. Prior to its involvement with the national project, CYN had met its members' needs by providing timely and useful workshops on issues of concern to youth-serving professionals. Over the years, CYN had focused primarily on those working in the youth employment field. As CYN evolved, its mandate began to change. In addition to deciding to expand its membership and reach out to others in the community, CYN was considering greater involvement in advocacy, public education, promoting the recognition of youth culture and increasing youth participation. These emerging goals, coupled with its long-standing commitment to community development through network building made collaborating with CYN a natural choice for the Halifax site.

A meeting between project officials and the CYN executive was held on February 24, 1995. The project team explained the purpose of the national project and the expectation it had of CYN. Basically, the objective of the project team in approaching CYN was to offer some support for its community development activities in exchange for being allowed to document its efforts to addressing at-risk youth issues. As it turned out, the timing of our request was perfect. CYN had been considering expanding its activities just at the time the project team approached it with the offer to collaborate. After having its questions answered by the project team members, the CYN executive committee agreed to participate in the national project.

CYN held its Annual General Meeting on May 25, 1995. Plans were discussed for a community meeting to be held later in the spring. Jennifer Moore was hired to organize the community meeting. She worked with Janet Kenny, a member of the executive, in planning and coordinating the day's activities. In all, 64 agencies were contacted and invited to participate. A package of information was sent to prospective participants containing a list of youth-related issues that had been identified for action at a prior CYN workshop. Participants were asked to consider these issues, identify one they wished to work on and indicate the type of commitment they were willing to make in terms of staff or other resources they could provide. Follow-up telephone calls were made to remind people of the meeting and asking for their commitment.

The community meeting was held on June 26, 1995. More than 75 people attended, including 25 young people and representatives from some 30 youth-serving agencies in the community. In the afternoon, participants broke into four task groups and worked on issue identification and the development of a workplan. By the end of the afternoon, a number of objectives were identified, including starting a newsletter, improving the image of young people in the media, doing advocacy and public education, putting the youth issue on the public agenda in Halifax, etc. The groups scheduled meetings for September to begin the work they had planned.

During the summer, the CYN executive undertook a needs assessment based on a perceived unease in the youth-serving community over funding cutbacks and changes in funding priorities for youth services. Nadien Godkewitsch, a university student with the appropriate research skills, was hired in June to undertake this study. A total of 35 youth-serving agencies were contacted and representatives from 29 agreed to participate. An additional 8 interviews were conducted with representatives of various funding agencies in the region, including federal, provincial and municipal governments.

The findings of the study revealed considerable concern over funding cuts and shifts in funding priorities related to youth services. Many had experienced cuts. Ironically, 6 of the 29 agencies that participated in the study were no longer in existence 8 months after it was completed. Many of the remaining agencies continue to fear for their future. A great deal of uncertainty was expressed over forthcoming changes to the Canada Assistance Plan, the development of Regional Health Boards, and the impact that amalgamation of the region into one large municipality might have on the youth service system in the area.

Study participants identified a number of ways of responding to their concerns. One of the most important strategies was to promote community development and increase the cooperation and collaboration of existing agencies. Another strategy involved establishing partnerships with other community members such as the business community. The participants also identified a much larger role for young people throughout the youth service system and at all levels. Youth-initiated projects and youth empowerment were seen as ways of counteracting many of the negative stereotypes associated with youth. The use of volunteers was also mentioned as a way of meeting some of youth needs during this era of decreasing resources.

A follow-up meeting to discuss the results of the study was called for November 24, 1995. Over 100 reports were sent out to CYN members with an invitation to attend the meeting, provide comments on the report and discuss future action based on the findings. While some 30 people attended, there was some disappointment among the CYN executive that the response was not stronger. The report generated a great deal of verbal and written feedback, however, few members appeared willing to do anything based on the report findings.

The experience with the research report reflects one of the most pressing concerns of the current CYN executive. CYN has a lot of moral support among its membership and is encouraged to keep working. The problem is that this support seldom translates into the membership taking on the responsibility for acting. The CYN executive is expected to do the work on community projects. However, members of the executive are already over-burdened and cannot realistically be asked to take on any more responsibilities. The executive attempted at the June meeting and with the research report to get the community to act on its own behalf on

issues that it had identified. Again, while much moral support and some verbal commitments were made, the bulk of the work has fallen to the CYN executive.

In considering this problem, members of the executive offered several explanations. To begin with, some noted that the timing is poor for starting community development activities in Halifax. People are concerned about their own jobs and agencies. They are having to make do with less and CYN work would be on top of already heavy workloads. Secondly, CYN had been largely involved in sponsoring useful seminars and workshops for its members. CYN was venturing into new territory asking members to become involved in advocacy. Given the uncertainty of the political climate, few appear to be inclined to do so at the moment.

CYN has taken these events in stride and continues to pursue its objectives. Its advocacy role is still at the forefront as Nadien, who is now on the executive committee, is developing several projects based on the research report. As well, CYN sponsored a media forum involving young people and representatives from the print and electronic media in the community. The goal is to open up a dialogue in hopes of countering the negative stereotypes of youth currently portrayed by the media. CYN has also prepared a brochure to advertise itself and its activities. A newsletter has been started as a result of the June community meeting and this is going into its second edition. Finally, a youth fair is being planned for late spring. Youth accomplishments would be highlighted at the fair through exhibitions of music, art, theatre, sports, etc. The youth fair may be held at a large, centrally located shopping mall.

Prior to its involvement in the national CD-OOMY project, the at-risk youth issue in Montreal had received considerable attention. A number of studies were published between 1993 and 1994 which focused on youth violence, substance abuse, homelessness and other problems associated with street youth and other marginal youth in the city. Municipal, provincial and federal authorities as well as members of the youth service community noted the increasing numbers of young people using social services in the city. Many appeared to have multiple problems and a large number were much younger than in the past.

The research indicated that many of these young people had been through the provincial youth services system. In general, the existing system had been unable to meet their needs. The research indicated that there are numerous agencies and workers providing services to the same target population. There is a lack of resources, however, to develop mechanisms that promote cooperation, communication and collaboration among these service providers. They often find themselves alone in their efforts, often without the means or support to address the needs of their client group. In many instances, individual agencies have little knowledge about the services provided by others working with the same target population.

At the time the national project began, momentum and support for establishing an interagency network among those working with street youth was gaining support. Problems associated with at-risk or marginal youth had also been made a priority by the provincial government. The objectives of the national CD-OOMY project were consistent with developing a more efficient and effective way for service providers to address the needs of the target population. This could include the participation of young people in this effort.

With this background in mind, a series of meetings was held involving provincial and federal government representatives and members of the project team. Discussions were held regarding the Montreal site and several decisions were made about what was to be done. These discussions led to the identification of a number of objectives. First, the Montreal project would focus its attention on Montreal Centre since it had a visible at-risk youth population and a number of youth service agencies working with these young people. Specific segments of the at-risk youth population were identified for particular attention. These included those with substance abuse problems, those on the run from family homes or the youth service system and those newly present on the street.

An objective of the Montreal site was to work toward the establishment of an interagency network that would help to make youth services in the area more accessible, timely and appropriate for the client group. This would be accomplished through facilitating better and more efficient communications, maximizing the use of existing resources and ensuring that there is continuity in the services being provided. The project also emphasized preventive approaches and encouraged and supported strategies that helped young people develop solutions and meet their own needs. Plans were also discussed about a way of evaluating their efforts to guide their ongoing activities.

In the winter of 1995, Nicole Paré-Fabris, the provincial government representative working on the project, began negotiations with 12 agencies in Montreal Centre that worked with at-risk youth. She was familiar with some of these agencies since they were on a regional committee addressing the issue of homelessness in the city. Participation on this committee provided an opportunity for some of these youth-serving groups to make contacts and develop relationships. Nicole felt that these existing relationships were important and could provide the basis for a strong network of youth-serving agencies in Montreal Centre.

At the same time that negotiations were going on with the community agencies, Nicole was preparing a funding proposal to the provincial government to support the community development activities for a period of two years. She was also negotiating with the regional representatives from Health Canada for support of this initiative. Meanwhile, the negotiations with the community groups indicated that some important decisions would have to be made regarding the organization and staffing of the community development project. For example, while it was clear that a coordinator had to be hired for the project, it was less clear where this person would be housed, who would directly supervise the activities of the coordinator and who would administer the project finances. The potential political nature of these decisions required ongoing contact with agency representatives and careful planning.

By late spring of 1995, funding proposals had been submitted and plans were in place to proceed with the project once funds were available. At the same time, the provincial government was undergoing a large internal re-organization. In June, Nicole was asked to take up responsibilities in another department and was assigned to this new position on a permanent basis in August.

The project was re-invigorated when Claire Blais took over the project file from Nicole in December 1995. With funds in place, Claire was able to build on the work previously completed. She held several meetings with youth-serving agencies and their clients to develop a detailed workplan for the project. These discussions led to the decision to develop simple mechanisms that would promote fast and effective communication among agencies. In turn, these new means of communicating and cooperating would allow a better deployment of existing expertise and resources, resulting in an enriched and effective range of services.

A coordinator was hired in February 1996 to assist in the development of the interagency collaboration. It was clear from the initial contacts with the youth-serving agencies in the area that they were interested in participating in the project. They were well aware of the potential impact the project held for them. They were also conscious of the importance of their involvement in the planning and implementation of project activities. Already, eight organizations were coming together to exchange ideas and discuss their experiences regarding the challenges of working with the target population. Their plan at this stage is to work with existing structures and solidify linkages before instituting new ones. As the group develops, it will be able to take on increasingly larger and more complex tasks aimed at improving the situation of high-risk youth in the community.

The Montreal site provides us with an opportunity to address some of the challenges that can be encountered doing community development work in a large urban area. First, it is clear that the wider political and economic climate can have a direct and significant impact on these types of projects. In the case of Montreal, developments with the provincial government have influenced the nature and timing of activities. In addition to the question of funding, staff

members and changes have also been significant. Secondly, the Montreal experience highlights the difficulties of working with different decision makers in a single project. Youth, agencies, regional, provincial and federal representatives were involved in the Montreal project in one form or another. These participants have different views and interests, and meeting them can be time consuming, tricky and often impossible. Finally, in this period of shrinking resources, there is considerable pressure to develop projects that can generate tangible results in a short period of time. Community development is often a slow and difficult process that takes time to realize. It is also extremely difficult to measure the outcomes of the community development process directly. Decision makers have to be convinced of the value of supporting such efforts in the face of competing projects that offer much more tangible and immediate results. As one member of the Montreal team noted,

> *"It is challenging in this environment to take a local problem to the regional, provincial and federal levels without being put in a straight jacket."*

While all parties wanted the Montreal site to be autonomous, they all wanted to see their own objectives met in the project.

The possibility of participating in the national CD-OOMY project was part of the ongoing discussions of a key group of individuals in High Level/Bushie River Reserve, Alberta and Hay River/Hay River Reserve, Northwest Territories. Some of the early members of the group were Penny Mossman from the regional office of Health Canada (later replaced by Joanne Laskoski); Susan Yazdanmehr, a program consultant for the Northwest Territories; John Campbell with Alcohol and Drugs of the territorial government Health Services Department, Darlene Gartner, Gerry Cyr and Pat Chemago from Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, Joanne Barnaby and Norman Yakeleya of the Dene Cultural Institute in Hay River and Glenda Wilson of the Hay River Alcohol and Drugs Program.

These talks progressed through the late summer and early fall of 1994 until a decision was reached to include High Level/Bushie River Reserve and Hay River/Hay River Reserve (HL/HR) as a "twinned" site in the national CD-OOMY project as the communities share similar cultures and geographic location. The rationale for this twinning was to encourage cooperation, collaboration, and the sharing of resources and information among smaller communities of the North. The coordinating group felt that much useful information could be gained to better meet the needs of transient population and culturally diverse youth who live in isolated northern settings.

Once the decision had been made to participate in the national project, planning activities began for a community meeting to be held in early 1995. The meeting was seen as a catalyst for assisting youth and adults in both communities to come together to identify issues of concern to young people in the two communities. Information was going to be provided to the participants about the community development project and they would be invited to discuss opportunities for using the project to address some of their concerns.

The community meeting was held in High Level Alberta in February 1995. Some 60 people participated, including young people from both communities, First Nations representatives and representatives from youth-serving agencies, provincial/territorial and federal governments. Those in attendance had an opportunity to spend time together to get to know each other, to participate in various cultural and recreational activities and to discuss issues affecting the young people in their communities.

Workshops and discussion groups were also held to identify possible activities they could undertake. Some of the things they identified included writing a newsletter, doing a needs survey to find out what youth want, having an opportunity to be involved in decision-making groups, providing young people in both communities with more things (social/recreational) to do. At the time of the meeting, High Level had an interagency committee for youth established, and had invited young people to participate. Hay River was thinking about setting up such a committee and some meeting participants were eager to ensure that youth could participate. A workplan was also developed by each community with a promise to meet again and keep in touch with each other.

The groups in each community met over the next several months. In High Level, efforts were under way to develop a newsletter, to conduct a survey/needs assessment in the high school, and to plan a dance for the fall. Hay River undertook a number of activities to raise the profile of the group including holding a name and logo contest. Jason Brewster submitted the winning design entitled "Teen Power." Hay River also held a pizza party which attracted 24 youth and was covered in the local media. The survey was started before school let out for the summer but it was not completed since some of the high school students could not be included in time. They planned to complete the survey in the fall.

In Hay River, the energy generated by the February community meeting had dissipated by summer. A pizza party was held with over 300 young people in attendance. Glenda tried to get the help of the schools in maintaining support for the youth group. Since there was no interagency committee in Hay River at the time of the community meeting, follow-up activities fell to Glenda and her staff. More support such as a paid staff member would have helped facilitate activities during this period in Hay River. As summer approached, a new youth group leader emerged and it was their intention to complete a youth needs survey by fall. The fall was also the time that a community meeting was being planned in Hay River, so much needed to be done.

Moresette Howlette took over for Penny Mossman in the fall. Many of the service providers that had worked with the High Level group had left their jobs over the summer. When Gerry Cyr fell ill in August, it brought project activities in High Level to a temporary halt. A decision was made to allocate some project resources to hire a part-time coordinator to work with the project in High Level. Carrie Brodie originally volunteered as a project coordinator but was hired as a part time employee in early December 1995. Some of the reasons for the loss of service providers from the original group was high staff turnover among service providers, high case loads and the large geographical areas they cover. Part of the problem in dealing with an over-burdened schedule is the difficulty providing services to distant communities and the inability to attend committee meetings. The service providers who remained with the project experienced the same problems. Some community organizations did not sanction or support the project.

The next major event for the HL/HR site was a community meeting held in Hay River from September 29 to October 1, 1995. The purpose of this meeting was to exchange information and reassess the status of the project. While there had been plans for a number of youth and adults from High Level to attend, circumstances changed at the last minute making it impossible. Gerry Cyr represented the High Level group at this meeting. From Hay River, six youth participated as well as Glenda, Irene and Shaun from the Alcohol and Drug Society (ADS) and Roy from an open custody facility nearby. The group developed a mission statement and developed a workplan. Social activities included a barbecue on the banks of the Hay River attended by the group members and their families.

The Hay River group decided to get a place to meet as soon as possible and received permission from Glenda to use ADS facilities. They identified their goal as "Providing alternative choices in order to 'combat' alcohol and drug abuse." They planned to work with Irene to develop some skills. They were also going to have a contest to name their group. They were also planning to hold a Much Music Video dance in the fall as a way of increasing awareness of their group and its activities.

In November, Glenda resigned her job to pursue other employment and the project was taken over by Irene. The youth started a contest to name the group and have been active in promoting themselves. They have contacted the Town Council and the local MLA to alert them about the group's activities. They are still planning a dance and looking for their own meeting space. The parents' group from the school has agreed to work with the youth on various activities. One is a special needs teacher who will help the young people with peer helper training.

In High Level, the group has been meeting regularly since September. Some of the young people completed the survey of senior high school students with Carrie's assistance. This was also seen as an opportunity to recruit youth to the group. Twenty-five indicated some interest and four asked for more information. Other activities were discussed but there does not seem to be a lot of interest among older teenagers in the community. The group considered approaching younger teens.

Some of the challenges experienced in HL/HR are similar to those found in many other communities. Getting people involved and sustaining their commitment is not easy. While special events can generate interest and participation, it is difficult to have the youth remain actively involved in the day-to-day activities of the group. Some of the special challenges faced by small, Northern communities were mentioned above. Factors such as high turnovers among service providers as well as service providers wearing many hats were present. Other challenges, however, represent specific concerns such as community denial of issues, an accepting attitude by adults and youth "of things the way they are" and a perception by youth and adults of a lack of anonymity and confidentiality. There is also a belief that small towns do not experience the same degree of difficulties as the larger centres.

One of the five sites that was a participant in the CD-OOMY project was the region of Manitoba/Saskatchewan. The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, through Herb Thompson, Colleen Allan and Saskatchewan Health, through April Barry, Leila Campbell and Shirley Highfill, both agreed to be the provincial partners with Health Canada regional and national offices. Ken Horsman and Gordon McGreggor represented the Health Canada regional office.

Within this "site" there were nine projects covering 23 communities that were identified by their partners as being important locations for project support and information about community development learnings. At the time the CD-OOMY project began, each of the nine projects was under way through project funding from the Health Promotion and Programs Branch of Health Canada. The Regina Street Worker's Advocacy Project was complete in that its Health Canada funding had finished. All of the others were in various stages of development and were being supported by regional branch office funding for one to three years. The projects within the Manitoba/Saskatchewan site were as follows:

Winnipeg: Youth Sharing Today, Leading Tomorrow

This project evolved out of the Canada's Drug Strategies Workshop held in Russell, Manitoba in September 1993. The project was initiated by a number of key players, some of whom are still involved today.

"So we went to the Russell conference and we ended up doing a lot of venting about the system, about older youth, about how we talk about things for years and nothing ever changes. So we decided before we left that we were going to do something. I think everyone that was involved initially was from the conference."

The project objectives were:

1. to identify and address the gaps between young people's experience and needs, and the social policies that impact on their lives;

2. to provide youth with a forum that will enable them to address the needs, issues and concerns of youth as they perceive them in the context of the family, peer groups, school, social services and the community environment;

3. to initiate youth group projects and/or activities that are generated and controlled by youth;

4. to provide a forum for youth and community representatives in an effort to foster meaningful communication and understanding between the community and youth; and

5. to organize a youth and service provider workshop, where youth can participate as equal partners, in developing a coordinated community response, long-term strategies, and an action plan to address the needs and issues of youth today.

Assiniboine Youth Community Partnership Project

This project evolved out of a meeting in 1993 between interested volunteers and service providers. Among the participants were school officials who were interested in discussing what could be done to deal with some of the issues affecting the youth in the community. In the fall of 1993, a survey was done in Grades 7, 9 and 11 on alcohol and drug use. The survey revealed that there were a number of problems among youth caused by alcohol and drug use. The project was funded by the Health Canada regional office:

1. to motivate and empower high-risk youth/school drop-outs to deliver better coping skills and to improve self-esteem and for them, in turn, to adopt healthier lifestyles;

2. to increase the capacity of the community to recognize and address the problems related to adolescent substance abuse and to model and promote healthy lifestyles; and

3. to develop an expanded partnership among youth in the community at large, in order to address substance abuse-related issues and behaviours.

The Interlake School Leavers' Project

Within the Interlake region of Manitoba, a network was first formed in 1988 with representatives from four communities. Since that time, the network has grown to include eight communities of the Interlake region (Gimli, Arborg, Riverton, Eriksdale, Fisher Branch, Leunder, Ashern and St. Laurent) The group is made up of adult representatives from a variety of backgrounds, including education, health, probation services, police, Addiction Foundation of Manitoba staff, parents and students.

In January of 1994, the group's work was funded for a project:

1. to identify contributing factors on why youth leave school;

2. to develop local strategies to deal with the contributing factors leading to youth leaving school;

3. to get communities involved in planning; and

4. to foster community awareness of the School Leavers' Project.

Brandon: Developing Youth Today for Tomorrow

Another project which emerged out of the Canada Drug Strategy workshop was the Brandon: Developing Youth Today for Tomorrow project. The project was put forward by the Brandon Youth Services Council, an advisory and information sharing group of 22 youth-serving agencies. The project goals were:

1. identify the needs of the high-risk Brandon youth group through the use of a needs assessment;

2. actively pursue their involvement in planning for change; and

3. develop a long-term approach in working with out-of-the-mainstream youth.

The project was funded and began operations in June 1994. Although it was originally intended to be an eight-month project, funding was extended until March 31, 1996.

Saskatchewan Youth Strategy

The Saskatchewan Youth Strategy project also emerged from the Russell Canada's Drug Strategy workshop. This project was funded for a two-year period between April 1994 and March 1996. It has been able to extend its life beyond this period through conservation of resources.

The project was originally designed to cover eight communities, including Saskatoon, Regina, North Battleford, Prince Albert, Kindersley, Yorkton, Swift Current and Nipawin. The project objectives are:

1. to provide a forum in the form of youth retreats and workshops for at-risk youth to participate in the design and delivery of programs that reflect some of the unmet needs and concerns; and

2. to compile a provincial list of services available to these at-risk youth. This goal was subsequently changed during the first youth workshop in April 1994. The new wording for the goal is: "To encourage and empower youth to actively participate in the youth/adult partnerships, toward shared goal achievement in the programs and policies that affect youth directly."

The Regina Street Worker's Advocacy Project

In 1991, a group of service providers in the City of Regina came together to talk about the types of services that might be appropriate for women in the sex-trade business. In 1993, a workshop was held and it was decided that further research should be done, through a participatory research model, to identify the services most needed and how best to provide them.

In September 1993, what became known as the Street Intervention Committee submitted a project proposal under the name of the Street Worker's Advocacy Project (SWAP) to conduct this research. An application for funding was submitted to the Health Canada regional office. The objectives of the project were:

1. to determine further needs for support services as received by individuals engaged in the street sex trade. The focus will be on drug and alcohol addiction problems and solutions;

2. to produce a written report of the project in cooperation with those providing information in order to develop recommendations for future service, advocacy and support; and

3. to gather information about drug and alcohol addiction, demographics, and the needs of prostitutes in the downtown area of Regina.

Southey Alcohol and Drug Awareness Program

The Southey project was originally developed by the Southey Alcohol and Drug Awareness Advisory Committee which had been formed, within this small community, out of a common concern for issues related to the use and abuse of alcohol and other substances. Overall, the project was directed toward increasing community awareness for the risks associated with substance abuse. The specific objectives of the project were:

1. to conduct a needs assessment on the extent of substance abuse in the Southey community;

2. to develop a partnership with youth and adults to develop awareness and intervention strategies to combat substance abuse;

3. to develop an information telephone line for substance counselling and help;

4. to set up a peer helper program; and

5. to set up a teen weekend drop-in centre.

The project was originally funded for an 18 month period between January 1994 and June 1995. The project was subsequently extended for an additional full year. Southey is a small community of about 700 people situated about a half hour drive from Regina.

Northern Youth Initiatives Project

The Northern Youth Initiatives Project began as a response to a question asked by the mayor of one of the three communities involved: *"What can we do to keep our youth at home in their community?"* The project was intended to address the departure of youth from the three Northern Saskatchewan communities of Beauval, Cumberland House and Pine House Lake, who would leave their communities and end up on the streets of one of the southern cities.

The design of the Northern Youth Initiatives Project was prepared by two Calgary-based consultants who had previously been involved with the three communities in a Healthy Communities project and an evaluation of a mobile treatment program, both run in the early 1990s. By the time the current project began in May 1994, all three communities had active interagency committees in place. The focus of the project was on personal healing, training, and the development of community infrastructure:

1. to create healthy and human community relationships;

2. to promote personal and community healing;

3. to create sustainable economic development;

4. to engage these communities in youth development and training;

5. to increase and sustain people participation;

6. to develop cultural and spiritual programs; and

7. to improve the general health of the three communities involved.

Meyo-Pimacihewin Project

The Meyo-Pimacihewin project was originally started at the Joe Duquette High School in Saskatoon in 1991. The intent was to bring spirituality and community involvement to the high school through the introduction of Native spirituality and culture. A number of workshops were held in this project involving school staff and students, including training trainers, peer helper training, holistic healing and wilderness training.

Some of the people who had been involved with the Joe Duquette school program attended the Canada's Drug Strategy workshop in Russell, Manitoba in 1994. As a result of their workshop involvement, a second project proposal was put forward to extend the first beyond the school into the larger Native community in Saskatoon. The objectives of the project were:

1. to decrease drug and alcohol abuse among high-risk First Nations youth;

2. to increase mutual support, consultations and structures among service providers of high-risk First Nations youth;

3. to establish community-based initiatives with service providers in Saskatoon that advance alcohol and drug abuse prevention and healing; and

4. to establish with Saskatoon service providers, culturally centred approaches to alcohol and drug abuse prevention and healing.

The objectives were to be achieved through a series of strategies, including networking with service providers; educating and supporting service providers; resourcing participants with culturally based prevention, intervention, assessment and aftercare materials; and servicing youth in the evenings and weekends with community-based culturally sensitive programs.

Networking Project

In addition to the above mentioned projects, the regional office also initiated a "Networking Project" to try and link the projects within the Manitoba/Saskatchewan region together. This project was under the auspices of Saskatchewan Institute for the Prevention of Handicaps and had two objectives. These were:

1. to produce a periodic newsletter about youth-at-risk issues and activities within each of the region's projects; and

2. to organize and host periodic workshops and training events for the project participants.

In addition to the above support, the Institute also received some funding to hire a specialist in the area of youth-at-risk programs, to work with all of the Manitoba/Saskatchewan projects. His function was to provide technical support to the projects, to assist in the design and facilitation of the network workshops and to link the Manitoba/Saskatchewan region with other work being conducted in the rest of Canada.

Appendix B

Developing Partnerships for Sustainability: A Manitoba/ Saskatchewan Regional Workshop

Appendix B1

A Summary of the Workshop

A Summary of the Workshop

In summer 1995, the issue of sustainability became a pressing concern in the Manitoba/Saskatchewan region. Funding for some of the youth projects in the region was scheduled to end in March 1996. All of the partners involved in the region agreed that the projects had played a significant role in youth empowerment and community change, and discussions began regarding how the projects could sustain themselves in the years to come.

At the same time, the national community development project was also exploring issues of sustainability. As such, a survey was conducted across the five sites of the project to determine whether a national workshop was required to address these issues. The overall response from the various partners indicated that some type of effort was required. However, the project participants said that they preferred to handle the issue of sustainability in their own way at the regional and local levels.

Since no national effort was required, the Manitoba/Saskatchewan region decided to hold its own workshop on sustainability in January 1996. It agreed, however, that representatives from other sites would be invited to attend. The region convened a planning committee to discuss the agenda and the format for the workshop. The planning committee comprised youth, provincial government representatives, national steering committee members (from the national project), local project coordinators and Health Canada regional program consultants. The committee was responsible for planning the content of the workshop as well as other issues related to logistics and venue. It was decided that the issue of sustainability would be addressed using a problem-solving approach based on the development of community partnerships. A facilitator and workshop planner were hired.

The workshop was held from January 17 to 20, 1996, in Russell, Manitoba. Approximately 55 participants attended, representing 11 projects in the Manitoba/Saskatchewan region, presenters, representatives from provincial/territorial governments, and three representatives from the Yukon site of the national community development project. The letter of invitation sent to the chairpersons of the local project steering committees asked that the projects be represented by members of the steering committee, key stakeholders in the community, project coordinators and one youth representative.

Based on the suggestions provided in the national survey and the input of the planning committee, the agenda was developed around a 10-step process leading to partnership development and project sustainability (see Appendix B2). The overall objective of the workshop was to have each of the projects develop a community-based sustainability plan. In preparation for the workshop, reading materials were circulated. The participants were also asked to have a meeting in their communities prior to the workshop to discuss the issue of sustainability and to identify potential partners.

The workshop was divided into seven segments:

1. Identifying and approaching potential partners

2. Building a coalition around a youth issue

3. Building a communications plan

4. Creating effective relations with the media

5. Organizing to solve youth issues in the community

6. Resourcing the partnership

7. Involving the corporate community

Each of the seven sections included a brief presentation on theory followed by one or two case examples of success from the participating projects. The projects were then encouraged to spend a considerable amount of time in smaller groups developing their own sustainability plans. The projects were provided with worksheets (see Appendix B3). After each session, feedback and a question and answer period was held to do problem solving.

As the groups completed their worksheets for each session, a secretary transferred the information into a written report which was aggregated with the work of the other projects and given back to the projects at the end of the day. All of the groups were provided with a complete summary of the information they had prepared on their own project prior to leaving the workshop. Each group was also given a list of participants with addresses and phone numbers.

The last morning of the workshop was spent with each of the groups recapping what had been learned from the workshop. The participants were then encouraged to participate in a circle in which they made parting comments about their own feelings regarding the workshop.

Although no formal evaluation was completed, the feedback from the workshop participants indicated a high degree of success and a feeling of accomplishment that they had learned about sustainability and developed their own strategies.

Appendix: B2

Agenda

Sustainability Workshop: January 17-20, 1996
Russell Inn, Russell, Manitoba

AGENDA

Wednesday (p.m.)	
12:00-1:00	Registration
1:15	Opening, Introductions and Workshop Objectives Identifying Youth Issues in the Community Identifying Potential Partners
Thursday	
9:00-12:00 *Lunch*	Building the Coalition around Different Kinds of Issues
1:15-5:00	Building a Communications Plan Working with the Media
Friday	
9:00-12:00 *Lunch*	Organizing to Solve Youth Issues
1:15-5:00	Resourcing the Partnership Involving the Corporate Community
Saturday	
9:00-12:00	Sharing Ideas from the Project Sustainability Plans Workshop Closure
Lunch	Take Away or Stay

Appendix: B3

Worksheets

GROUP:

What partners might be interested in working on this solution?

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

What community youth issues might get people to the table to discuss solutions?

_____

_____

_____

Identify some benefits for them to become involved:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Identify some key points in your strategy to approach them:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Map out ideas about what your project has to do to form or strengthen coalitions with "friendly" partners in the community. (Remember: the best partners are those that have problems with youth.)

STRATEGIES:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

What do we want to say?

_____

_____

_____

Who do we want to say it to?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What is our plan for getting this message to our target group:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

GROUP:

Who is affected by this issue and how?

1. _____   _____

2. _____   _____

3. _____   _____

4. _____   _____

What are the ways in which the issue demonstrates itself (what are the symptoms)?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4 _____

What might be some of the **causes** for this issue?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Who is responsible for solving this issue?

_____

When and where are the effects of the issue most obvious?

_____

_____

What are some of the barriers to solving the issue?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

What approach to solving the issue do you think might be useful?

Steps

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

GROUP:

Develop a list of potential partners and resources that can contribute to your project's coalition(s).

PARTNER	RESOURCES
Youth Project	