

Youth Forums 2005-2006 Evaluation Report



August 14, 2006

“The Youth Forum was an excellent way to bring students from Alberta together to voice our opinions and challenges in our schools and communities.”

“It was great to be here in a comfortable environment, full of fun, pride and lets me be me and get a chance to speak and lead.”

Youth Participant Comments

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Introduction

Alberta Children's Services 2006-2009 Business Plan indicates a core business goal is to promote healthy communities for children, youth and families. Strategy 5.6 states that we will:

“Facilitate, promote and recognize youth engagement by supporting youth forums, youth networks and youth consultations.”

Youth Forums are opportunities for young people to come together and discuss important issues in communities across the province. Young people express their thoughts, concerns and recommendations to government and community leaders. Staff from the Youth Strategies Branch provide leadership training to a mentor and a youth leadership team who wish to host a Youth Forum. The mentor then works with the youth supporting them in the planning and logistics for the forum. The forums are planned for youth by youth.

Children's Services has provided approximately \$210,000 in financial support for Youth Forums in 2005-2006. Youth Strategies Branch provides staff to support each planning committee. Youth Forums encourage partnerships with communities, including Family and Community Support Services, youth-serving agencies, and Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSA).

“These events are incredible experiences for both the youth and the mentors – something that builds leaders for the future.”

- Youth Forum 2005/06 Mentor

Youth Forum Statistics

The following table demonstrates growth in Youth Forums since 2004.

Youth Forums: Key Statistics			
	2004	2005-2006	Increased By
Number of Youth Forums	15	32	113% (17 Youth Forums)
Total Participants	400	2,490	523% (2,090 participants)
Communities Represented	72	102	42% (30 communities)
Aboriginal Participants	36.8% (147 youth)	36.8% (916 youth)	0% (769 youth)
Participants Receiving Intervention Services	8.6% (34 youth)	11.0% (273 youth)	2.4% (239 youth)

Impacts from the 2005-2006 Youth Forums

Participants at each Youth Forum are asked to complete an evaluation. 1331 (53%) of the 2490 participants completed the evaluation. The results are used to improve Youth Forums and report results to the Minister and senior executives.

Impacts on Children's Services

1. Established empowered youth in Alberta who are aware of available resources in their communities. Youth developed meaningful partnerships with community leaders.
82.9% of Youth Forum participants responded they strongly agreed or agreed they learned about the resources and agencies available to them in their communities.
2. Initiated communication with local CFSA's and Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) offices. These agencies supported Youth Forums; these partnerships are valuable in creating Youth Networks.
83.8% of Youth Forum mentors, representing community agencies including FCSS and CFSA offices, responded that communications with the Youth Strategies Branch were clear.
3. Built sustainable partnerships between Children's Services and Alberta community leaders, who serve as mentors on Youth Forum planning committees.
82.2% of Youth Forum mentors responded they would definitely participate in future Youth Forums.
4. Encouraged the youth voice across Alberta and provided venues for youth to express themselves.
82.6% of Youth Forum participants responded they strongly agreed or agreed they felt safe to speak up during their Youth Forum.

5. Provided the Youth Strategies Branch with a group of experienced youth and adult facilitators to support future Ministry projects, events and consultations.
Most recently, over 30 youth volunteers, who were involved with Youth Forums, Youth Networks and youth consultations, attended the World Conference on Prevention of Family Violence 2005, in Banff, Alberta.

Impacts on Youth and Communities

1. Created opportunities for youth to develop new skills, when making important life decisions.
87.9% of Youth Forum participants responded they strongly agreed or agreed that the information they received will help them make better choices.
2. Provided opportunities for youth to share their concerns with members of their community. Youth participants helped identify areas of enhancement.
86.9% of Youth Forum participants responded they strongly agreed or agreed they felt listened to when they had concerns or suggestions, and 84.9% indicated they had the opportunity to voice their questions or concerns.
3. Youth shared meaningful feedback with decision makers through consultations.
Alberta Education and Children's Services, Youth Strategies Branch, consulted with youth on high school completion rates at two Youth Forums in 2006. Alberta Education will continue to consult with youth across the province in the coming months. This feedback will be presented at a symposium in September 2006 to create solutions that work in Alberta schools. Youth Forums have resulted in other consultations on issues that affect them, including the Crystal Methamphetamine consultations in February and March 2006, on behalf of the Crystal Meth Task Force.
4. Youth enlisted the participation of their peers and presented them with positive opportunities to become engaged in their communities.
24% of Youth Forum participants responded they had previously attended a Youth Forum in their community; 76% of participants in 2005-2006 were recruited to attend a Youth Forum for the first time.

Impacts with Marginalized Youth

1. Increased participation of Aboriginal youth in the Youth Forum process.
Involvement from Aboriginal youth increased from 147 youth in 2004 to 916 youth in 2005-2006. Youth Forums that were organized and attended primarily by Aboriginal youth include:
 - *Niitsiitaappi Youth Conference (Lethbridge)*
 - *Kainai Youth Council Youth Seminar (Blood Reserve)*
2. Engaged youth with disabilities to plan and host a Youth Forum.
The Youth with Disabilities Youth Forum on March 18, 2006, was innovative in that it focused solely on issues faced by youth with disabilities. It was the first time a planning committee was made up primarily of youth with disabilities.

3. Increased participation by youth receiving or having received intervention services from Children’s Services in Youth Forums.

Participation by youth receiving intervention services increased from 34 youth in 2004 to 273 youth in 2005-2006. Youth Forums engaging youth in and from care include:

- *Coalition for Street Youth (Edmonton)*
- *Spirit of our Youth (Edmonton)*
- *Alberta Youth in Care and Custody Network (Calgary)*

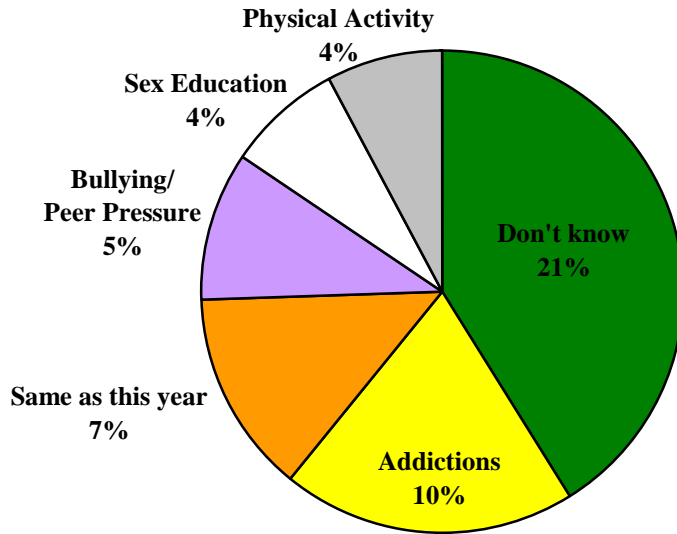
Common Youth Forum Themes

The following chart indicates the frequency of topics that were discussed at Youth Forums across Alberta in 2005-2006.

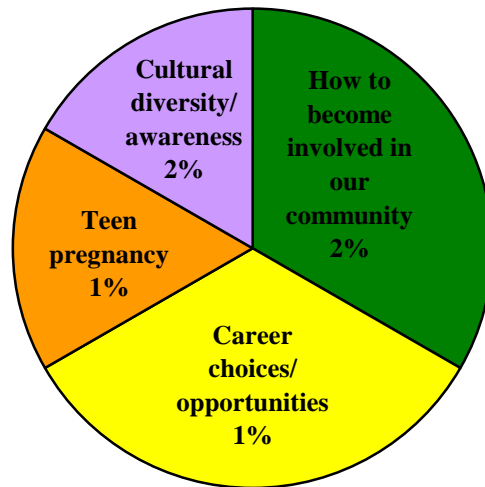
Topic and Frequency of Times Discussed at Youth Forums					
Region	Addictions	Sexually Transmitted Diseases	Bullying	Healthy Relationships	Leadership
1	3	1	0	1	0
2	2	0	0	0	0
3	0	1	0	1	0
4	2	1	2	1	1
5	1	1	1	1	1
6	5	2	4	1	2
7	0	1	1	0	2
8	4	4	2	3	1
9	--	--	--	--	--
10	1	1	0	1	0
Total	18	12	10	9	7
% of Total Forums (32)	56%	38%	31%	28%	22%

Future Youth Forum Topics

Youth were asked to provide feedback on what topics they would like discussed at future Youth Forums. The most frequently mentioned topics included:



Other Topics Suggested



Conclusion

Youth Forums have proven to be an excellent vehicle for improving youth engagement. Feedback from Youth Forums has informed the policy direction of the Ministry. One program which received important feedback through Youth Forums is the *Advancing Futures* bursary program. The Youth Forum model has been embraced by other Ministries as a method for engaging youth. For example, Aboriginal Crystal Methamphetamine Youth Consultations were completed by the Solicitor General and Ministry of Public Security, completed from March 20 to 24, 2006.

The evaluations indicated the excitement generated in communities about youth engagement. Seventy-seven percent of participants said they would definitely participate in future Youth Forums. Communities who have hosted Youth Forums are eager to continue engaging youth by developing Youth Networks.

Recommendations

1. That the Youth Strategies Branch staff work with new communities to initiate Youth Forums in their communities.
2. That Youth Forums be a consultation tool used by youth for youth.
3. That Youth Forums continue to serve as a catalyst to Youth Networks.
4. That Children's Services continue to support Youth Forums, as they encourage all levels of government and communities to listen and respond to the youth perspective on important issues.
5. That the Youth Strategies Branch continues to create links with communities and other Ministries within government to encourage consultations with youth for issues that impact them.

Appendix 1 - Youth Forums 2005/2006 Summaries

2005 Summaries

Region	Youth Forum	Youth Forum Date	Hosting Community	Hosting Agency	Theme	Youth Forum Issues	Number of Evaluations Returned	Registered Participants	% of Participants Receiving Intervention Services	% of Aboriginal or Metis Participants
Region 1										
1	Niitsiitaapii Youth Forum	18-Mar-05 to 20-Mar-05	Lethbridge	Sik-oooh-kotoki Friendship Society	Balancing our Future	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Crime Prevention 2. Suicide Prevention Education 3. Tobacco Reduction/Cessation 4. HIV/AIDS 5. Hepatitis C 6. Teenage Pregnancy 	72	250	9.70%	84.70%
2	Pincher Creek Youth Forum	06-May-05	Pincher Creek	Town of Pincher Creek	Respect	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Suicide 2. Self-Respect and Healthy Relationships 3. Alcohol and Drugs 4. Active Living 	16	40	12.50%	75.00%
Region 2										
3	40 Mile Fun Fest	27-Aug-05	Forty Mile Park (Foremost/Bow Island)	Forty Mile Family and Community Support Services	Be your own leader	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Body Art as a Form of Self Expression 2. Self Defense to Protect Yourself 3. Promoting Positive Choices (Addictions) 	32	45	6.30%	12.50%
Region 3										
4	Alberta Youth in Care and Custody Network Youth Forum	18-Jun-05	Calgary	Alberta Youth in Care and Custody Network	Advocacy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Youth Advocacy 	24	20	66.70%	45.80%

Region	Youth Forum	Youth Forum Date	Hosting Community	Hosting Agency	Theme	Youth Forum Issues	Number of Evaluations Returned	Registered Participants	% of Participants Receiving Intervention Services	% of Aboriginal or Metis Participants
Region 4										
5	Project Teen Explosion	17-Sept-05 to 18-Sept-05	Blackfalds	Blackfalds Youth Octagon Club	Smells like teen spirit	1. Bullying 2. Stress 3. Drug/Alcohol Abuse 4. Drop Outs	57	70	7%	7%
6	Drayton Valley and Rocky Mountain House Youth Forum	28-May-05	Drayton Valley	Central Alberta Child and Family Services Authority		1. Drugs and Alcohol 2. Safe Sex 3. Career Choices 4. Suicide and Depression 5. Tattoos and Piercing	11	25	36.40%	27.30%
7	Wetaskiwin Youth Forum	14-May-05	Wetaskiwin	Wetaskiwin Boys and Girls Club	Mission possible	1. Bullying 2. Suicide 3. Self-Esteem	-	30	-	-
Region 5										
8	Wainwright Youth Forum	09-Apr-05	Wainwright	Boys and Girls Club of Wainwright and District	Today's youth, tomorrow's voice	1. Drug Awareness 2. Teen Sex, Pregnancy and STDs 3. Leadership Games 4. Healthy Relationships 5. Teen Stereotyping 6. Bullying 7. Body Art and Piercing	23	30	8.70%	21.70%
Region 6										
9	Coalition for Street Youth	18-Jun-05	Edmonton	Boyle Street Educational Centre	Break it down	1. Drugs and Alcohol 2. Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)	24	40	37.50%	70.80%

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10	City of Edmonton Youth Council Forum	06-Jun-05	Edmonton	City of Edmonton Youth Council	Youth affecting change	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organizational Skills 2. Global Catastrophes and How to Help 3. Poverty and Globalization 4. Racism and Discrimination 5. Peer Pressure and Bullying 6. How to Use Your Assets 7. Inclusion and Disabilities 	17	25	11.80%	5.90%
11	McNally School (Mentoring)	13-May-05 to 14-May-05	Edmonton	McNally High School	Y2Y mentorship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Drinking and Driving 2. Creating a Youth Forum 3. Stereotypes 4. Bullying 5. Healthy Relationships 6. Anti-Racism 7. Drug Awareness 	32	50	9.40%	6.30%
12	Parkland County Youth Forum	22-Apr-05	Stony Plain	Alberta Parenting for the Future	Youth committed to community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bullying 2. Sex Education 3. Drugs 4. Family Violence 5. Resiliency 	62	75	8.10%	14.50%
13	St. Albert Youth Council Forum	19-Oct-05	St. Albert	St. Albert Youth Council		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Travel 2. Teen Power 3. Youth Entrepreneurs 4. Careers 5. Youth Leaders 6. Colour Spectrum 	66	85	13.60%	9.10%
14	Sturgeon County Youth Forum	19-Apr-05	Namao	Sturgeon County Youth Council	Youth committed to community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bullying 2. Media Influence 3. Addressing Diverse 4. Hip-Hop (keeping active) 5. X-treme Staying Healthy 6. Stepping Out of Your Bubble 	16	30	0%	12.50%

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15	Youth in Transition III	07-May-05	Edmonton	Supporting Culturally Diverse Youth		1. Racism 2. Body Image 3. Youth Media 4. Street Life 5. Life After High School	-	60	-	-
16	Edmonton Youth Forum	03-Jun-05 to 05-Jun-05	Edmonton	Spirit of our Youth Homes	Helping youth help youth	1. Advocacy 2. Justice 3. Empowerment 4. Resources 5. Issues Facing Youth 6. Diversity 7. Pregnant and Parenting Youth	26	35	61.50%	61.50%
Region 7										
17	Region 7 West Youth Forum	17-Sep to 18-Sep-05	Jasper	North Central Alberta Child and Family Services Authority	Youth committed to community	1. Youth Empowerment 2. Team Building 3. Bullying	40	50	7.50%	20%
18	St. Paul Youth Forum	24-Sep-05	St. Paul	St. Paul Family and Community Support Services	Youth committed to community	1. Youth Empowerment 2. Sexual Health 3. Self-Esteem 4. Racism 5. Staying in School	50	60	30%	72%
Region 8										
19	Grande Cache Community Youth Forum	08-Apr-05	Grande Cache	Grande Cache Family and Community Support Services	The choice is yours	1. Teen Pregnancy 2. STD Prevention 3. Healthy Relationships 4. Good Mental Health Matters 5. Cultural Awareness 6. Drug and Alcohol Abuse	49	90	2.00%	20.40%

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20	Peace Regional Youth Forum	07-May-05	Peace River	Sagitawa Friendship Centre	The ripple effect	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teen Pregnancy 2. Drug Abuse 3. Bullying 4. Nutrition 5. Career Planning 6. Depression 7. STD Awareness 8. Alcohol Abuse 9. Suicide Awareness 10. Healthy Lifestyles 11. Post Secondary Education 12. Racism 	34	50	2.90%	38.20%
21	Valleyview Youth Forum	21-Apr-05	Valleyview	Hillside Jr/Sr High School	Be here, be heard	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family Violence Awareness 2. School Bullying 3. Substance Abuse 4. Stay in School 5. HIV 6. Youth Connections 7. Students Against Drunk Driving 8. Aboriginal Culture 9. Student Leadership 10. Hip-Hop Dance 11. Stress Relief 12. Self-Defence 	110	400	4.50%	19.10%
Region 10										
Aboriginal Reserves										
22	Kainai Youth Forum	30-Mar-05 to 01-Apr-05	Kainai Nation (Standoff)	Kainai Youth Council	In unity we have the strength to reclaim our identity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Healthy Relationships 2. Racism 3. Cultural Identity 4. Conflict Management 5. Life Skills - How to be a True Niitsitaapii 	87	100	21.80%	78.20%

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Region	Youth Forum	Youth Forum Date	Hosting Community	Hosting Agency	Theme	Youth Forum Issues	Number of Evaluations Returned	Registered Participants	% of Participants Receiving Intervention Services	% of Aboriginal or Metis Participants
Region 1										
23	Niitsitaappi Youth Conference 2006	24-Mar-06 to 26-Mar-06	Lethbridge	Medicine Tree Centre (Crazy Horse Youth Council)	Effects of Drinking/Drugging and Driving	1. Mothers Against Drunk Driving 2. Drinking/Drugging and Driving	83	300	3.60%	86.70%
Region 2										
24	Foremost Youth Forum	29-Mar-06	Foremost	Forty Mile Family and Community Support Services	Make A Difference...Change Begins With You!	1. Drama 2. Kickboxing 3. Self-Defense 4. Car Makeovers 5. Drug Dog 6. Makeovers 7. Internet Safety 8. Art 9. Yoga 10. Dance 11. Running Club 12. SADD 13. Drumming 14. Cultural Awareness 15. Smartboard Presentations	90	105	2.20%	10%
Region 3										
25	Alberta Youth in Care and Custody Network Youth Forum	22-Apr-06	Calgary	Alberta Youth in Care and Custody Network	Self Care	1. Physical Health 2. Spirituality 3. Youth in Care Issues 4. Mental Health 5. Intimacy/Relationships	30	35	76.70%	20%

Region	Youth Forum	Youth Forum Date	Hosting Community	Hosting Agency	Theme	Youth Forum Issues	Number of Evaluations Returned	Registered Participants	% of Participants Receiving Intervention Services	% of Aboriginal or Metis Participants
Region 4										
26	Wetaskiwin Youth Forum	13-May-06	Wetaskiwin	Boys and Girls Club of Wetaskiwin	The Price is Right	1. High School Completion 2. Cooking Class 3. Youth Volunteerism	39	50	3%	61.30%
27	Youth to Youth Red Deer Youth Forum	21-Apr-06 to 22-Apr-06	Red Deer	Hunting Hills High School	I REALIZE	1. Ideas for Leadership 2. Racism and Discrimination 3. Environment 4. Actions and Consequences 5. Incredible Race 6. Zen Wellness 7. Leading Youth 8. Everyone	32	45	3.10%	3.10%
Region 6										
28	Youth with Disabilities	18-Mar-06	Edmonton	Alberta Association for Community Living	Youth committed to community	1. Education 2. Employment 3. Awareness of Resources	23	50	4.30%	17.40%
29	Sturgeon County Youth Council Youth Forum	27-May-06 to 28-May-06	Camp Nakamun, Busby	Sturgeon County Youth Council	From Me to We	1. High School Completion 2. What Makes a Leader 3. Street Drugs 4. Keeping it Positive 5. Roundabout	26	30	0%	11.50%
30	McNally Y2Y Mentoring Youth Forum	05-May-06	McNally High School	McNally High School	Youth to Youth Mentoring	1. Drinking and Driving 2. Racism, Sexism, Ageism 3. Peer Pressure	67	70	4.50%	7.50%

Region	Youth Forum	Youth Forum Date	Hosting Community	Hosting Agency	Theme	Youth Forum Issues	Number of Evaluations Returned	Registered Participants	% of Participants Receiving Intervention Services	% of Aboriginal or Metis Participants
Region 8										
31	Grande Cache Community Youth Forum	28-Apr-06	Grande Cache	Grande Cache Family and Community Support Services	Take A Stand	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spectrum of Addictions 2. Taking the Fear out of Anger 3. STI/HIV Prevention 4. Positive Relationships 5. Teen Mental Health 6. Learning Clicks - Career Choices 7. Youth Matters 8. Cultural Awareness 	46	85	2.20%	15.20%
Region 10										
Aboriginal Reserves										
32	Kainai Youth Forum	18-Apr-06 to 19-Apr-06	Kainai Nation (Standoff)	Kainai Youth Council	Take A Look In the Mirror	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Two Spirited 2. Life Skills 3. Cultural Identity 4. Racism 5. Sex - Pros and Cons 6. Conflict Management 7. Youth Committed to Community 8. Drugs (Crystal Meth) 9. Bullying/Gang Violence 	47	60	2.10%	89.40%
Total 2005-2006							1331	2490	11%	36.8%

Appendix 2 - Youth Forum Planning Committees

Mentors

Communities that host a Youth Forum have a planning committee that organizes and implements the Youth Forum. Planning committees have at least one adult mentor, and youth leaders between the ages of 13 and 22. Mentor(s) serve as role models and guides for the youth leaders. Mentors ensure the planning and implementation of any Youth Forum is smooth, positive, and empowering, allowing those on his or her team to learn and succeed.

The mentors offered insight on their experience supporting the planning of a Youth Forum. Many mentors said that although mentoring was a time commitment, the positive experience was unforgettable. Many mentors appreciated the quality of ideas that the youth put forward in their committees. Some mentor comments include:

“What I liked most about my role as a mentor was the chance to get to know the youth on our committee...the chance to see what great ideas the youth had.”

“What I liked most about planning and hosting the Youth Forum was the feeling of having responsibility and doing something nice, sacrificing for the benefit of the youth.”

“These kids have great ideas. It was nice to see youth involved in organizing and presenting the forum.”

Youth Leaders

Youth leaders facilitate the Youth Forum process. These youth, with the guidance of mentor(s), plan and implement a Youth Forum in their community. The skills youth leaders learn in the planning process, including leadership, decisions-making and problem-solving skills, are just as important as the pride they feel on the day of their Youth Forum.

Youth leaders offered feedback on their experience with the planning committee. Youth leaders wanted more Youth Forums, and more sustained youth engagement in their communities. Some of the youth leader comments include:

“I love these kinds of things, I feel as though I can make a difference.”

“Thanks so much Youth Strategies for holding these Youth Forums that do so much.”

“Keep this program going the opportunities are endless!”