

Inventory of Aboriginal Services, Issues and Initiatives in Vancouver

Youth

Relevant Details

- Approximately 60% of the Aboriginal population is under the age of 25.
- Aboriginal youth represent about 4% (5,500) of the city's total youth population of 139,600.
- Up to 85% of Native students leave high school before graduation.
- Up to 40% of Vancouver street youth in are Aboriginal (City of Vancouver, Dr. Penny Perry)
- Aboriginal youth are 4-7 times more likely to commit suicide than non- Aboriginal youth (Choosing Life).
- More than 50% of Aboriginal youth live in single parent households, which are surviving on less than \$10,000 annually.
- Up to 60% of the prostituted adults and youth are Aboriginal (Adolescent Street Unit).
- Aboriginal youth are much more likely to go to jail than their peers.
- A recent study of Youth at Risk indicates that 67% of the youth are not attending school and that 55% of respondents are First Nations (Vancouver Police Department, 2002)
- The Canadian Council on Social Development published the results of a study that indicates in 1995 Vancouver had the highest urban poverty rate in Canada for its Aboriginal population.
- Aboriginal youth who have a supportive family, a support network, and knowledge of where to go for help are much more likely to finish high school, and refrain from negative behaviors such as using alcohol and drugs and gang activity.
- The Vancouver School Board 2005 report shows that those Native youth who finished grade twelve English, Communications, and Math during the years 1994-2004 consistently achieved equal to or higher success rates than their non-Native peers.
- Native youth have identified community supports, a safe place to go, and individual supports as their top reasons for their success in moving beyond their challenges in life.
- Over the past ten years, Native business start-ups across Canada have exceeded those of the rest of the population by 105%. A primary focus on Native business development is youth, the largest group (approximately 50%) of the current Native population.

"The Aboriginal population in Canada is growing faster, and is much younger, than the general Canadian population... the median age for the Aboriginal population is 23.5, compared to that of the Canadian population which is 38. In 2001, over one third of Aboriginal youth

were under the age of 14.... These demographic indicators suggest that the well-being of Aboriginal people in cities has a direct impact on the well-being of the cities themselves, most especially in western Canada where a substantial number of Aboriginal people reside."

- Urban Aboriginal Youth: An Action Plan for Change
Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, October 2003

Who's Involved?

Redwire Native Youth Media Society (Vancouver)

- Not-for-profit organization since 1997
- A media and arts organization dedicated to providing Native youth with an uncensored forum for discussion, in order to help youth find their own voice and to be by, for and about Native youth; all content, editorial decisions and associated media projects are initiated and led by youth, inspiring creativity, motivation and action.
- Redwire is the first Native youth run quarterly magazine. It is distributed nationally.

RedwayBC (440 Cambie Street)

- A website completely driven, designed, created and maintained by Urban Aboriginal Youth in the Lower Mainland. Over 45 youth researched over 340 pages of content and helped publish 30 e-zines since November, 2003.
- A broad, but critical mission of: Harnessing Technology to Inform, Honour and Connect Urban Aboriginal Youth to Services, Opportunities, the Community and Each Other.

Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association (2019 Dundas Street)

- Not-for-profit since 2003.
- Mandate is to advocate for urban Aboriginal youth within the Greater Vancouver area, encourage and assist urban Aboriginal youth to assert their voices and to foster participation within Aboriginal communities.

Urban Native Youth Association (1640 East Hastings Street)

- Not-for-profit since 1989
- Offers 18 diverse programs and services from tutor/mentors to a safehouse
- Over 90 community partnerships including organizations, schools, and community centres
- One of the four Ministry of Children & Family Development designated Youth Hubs for at-risk youth in Vancouver
- Is in the midst of a \$40million capital campaign to build a multi-purpose Native Youth Centre at Hastings and Commercial. The land is already secured.

Warriors Against Violence Youth Program (2425 Oxford Street)

- Works to help Aboriginal families unlearn abusive and violent behaviours and reclaim their traditional values of honour, respect, and equality.
- Provides counselling, group work and cultural ceremonies, and public education.

Broadway Youth Resource Centre (691 East Broadway)

- A part of the Pacific Community Resources Society, not-for-profit since 1984.
- One of the four Ministry of Children & Family Development designated Youth Hubs for at-risk youth in Vancouver.
- A unique hub that is a partnership of 8-10 organizations who offer intergrated programs and services out of one site.
- Many Aboriginal youth and adults in the Mount Pleasant access BYRC's programs and services.

Covenant House Vancouver (575 Drake Street)

- Services for youth aged 16 - 24 who have either willingly fled physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse or those who have been forced from their homes.
- Many Aboriginal youth access their programs and services.

Downtown Eastside Youth Activities Society (49 West Cordova Street)

- Not-for-profit agency.
- Serves street-involved children, youth, and adults in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and Mount Pleasant areas.
- Many Aboriginal youth and adults in the Downtown Eastside access DEYAS' programs

Musqueam First Nation

- Offers one time, short-term, and ongoing programs to Band members.
- Programming at the Youth Centre includes reading groups, sports and recreational activities, cultural teachings, and workshops.

Watari Research Association (877 East Hastings Street)

- Not-for-profit since 1986.
- Mission is to facilitate positive change in at-risk children, youth, families and communities through the design and delivery of innovative services.
- Many Aboriginal youth and families access their one-to-one workers as well as their alcohol and drug programs.
- They are in the second year of a five-year research project which will measure the success of combining literacy strengthening and family counselling with Aboriginal families in minimizing a young person's risk-taking behaviours.

Urban Multi-purpose Aboriginal Youth Centre Initiative (UMAYC)

- Mandate is to create a network of urban, multipurpose, Aboriginal youth programming that is accessible, Aboriginal community-based, culturally relevant and supportive projects, programs, services and counselling to 15 -24 year old urban Aboriginal youth.
- Vancouver's UMAC program is led by an Aboriginal Youth Council which is elected each year by their peers. Their main role is to promote and support the UMAC initiative, as well as to review and make recommendations on funding proposals.

City of Vancouver Youth Outreach Team

- The Youth Outreach Team provides expertise on how to engage youth meaningfully to other City staff (or the public) who are working on projects that affect youth and therefore should have youth input. At times we've even done the actual workshops used to gather youth input or feedback. But mostly we're "conveners,

conveyors, and connectors." We bridge the gaps between the rest of the City structure and the youth of Vancouver by functioning as guides for youth to access the municipal "system."

Partnerships

- The Urban Native Youth Association partners with the Broadway Youth Resource Centre to house an Aboriginal Youth Worker to reach out and support Aboriginal youth in the Moun Pleasant area.
- The Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association has developed both ongoing and short-term partnerships to host many youth events.
- The Urban Native Youth Association has almost 100 community partnerships that help them to provide a continuum of services to Native youth.

Committees

- Advisory Committee for the Native Youth Centre Initiative that is comprised of the lead agency, Urban Native Youth Association, staff and Board members and all three levels of government. Their primary goal is to provide input and advice on the development and fundraising for the NYC.
- The BC Ministry of Children & Family Development is leading a process to better integrate services to at-risk youth with Vancouver Coastal Health, the Vancouver School Board, and community not-for-profit organizations. Planning involves ensuring programs are in various regions throughout Vancouver, there is Aboriginal-specific programming, that they work towards ensuring there are adequate staffing resources at each site, and addressing diverse issues such as mental health, justice, and young parents.
- Vancouver's UMAC program is led by an Aboriginal Youth Council which is elected each year by their peers. Their main role is to promote and support the UMAC initiative, as well as to review and make recommendations on funding proposals.
- Urban Aboriginal Strategy has identified youth issues as a priority and includes a designated Youth Representative on their committee.

Trends

- Vancouver's Aboriginal youth population continues to become ever more active in many aspects of community life including the arts, culture, and especially youth issues.
- Native youth, and their allies, continually advocate for more youth representation on committees, boards, and other planning bodies to ensure that the largest segments of Aboriginal communities are involved in decision making processes. More youth are being included, but not always meaningfully.
- There are a number of youth led organizations that have become quite successful, including RedwayBC, Redwire Magazine, and the Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association.
- There continues to be a focus on keeping Aboriginal youth in school, but graduation rates have not increased in Vancouver in many years.
- Some Aboriginal youth are gaining more opportunities to obtain on the job training in such successful programs as Bladerunners.
- Aboriginal youth are very active in music, video, multi-media.

- Aboriginal youth are becoming more involved in cultural activities as meaningful opportunities increase.

Gaps

- Native youth, and their allies, continually advocate for more youth representation on committees, boards, and other planning bodies to ensure that the largest segments of Aboriginal communities are involved in decision making processes. More youth are being included, but not always in a meaningful fashion.
- Although 60% of the Aboriginal population is under the age of 25, there are not enough youth focused programs within larger organizations.
- Government initiatives need to increase their efforts to meaningfully engage Aboriginal youth in their processes, and, they should make a special effort to include them in mainstream initiatives as well.

Contact Information

Addresses, phone, fax, email, and website information for any of the organizations above can be found in the Contact Information section of this manual.