

TOP LEFT: ENGAGING YOUNG MEN AND BOYS
GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS REPORT AND COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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Background

The Top Left Project is a two-year Status of Women Canada (SWC)-funded program that focuses on engaging young people who identify as men and boys in partnership with those who identify as young women and girls and those who identify as neither on the issue of violence in women's lives. The project is administered by the Students Commission of Canada and conducted in four communities: Miramichi, N.B., Saskatoon, SK, Toronto, ON and Victoria, B.C. Year 1 of the project has focused on assessing community needs and conducting gender-based analysis through regional events in the four communities. As of December 31, 2013, three communities had conducted their regional event: Saskatoon, SK on November 14-15, Miramichi, N.B. on November 27 and Toronto, ON on December 4-8, 2013. The Victoria site will complete their regional event in February 2014.

The following report summarizes key findings from the gender-based analysis and community needs assessments up until December 31, 2013. Results from the gender-based analysis and community needs assessments will be used to inform weekly youth group meetings in the four communities. The weekly youth group members will spend time drafting community action projects. Each site is responsible for delivering 15 projects in their community that engage at least 25 people on the issue. Youth group participants will present their community action project plans to other Top Left participants at the National Unite and Ignite Conference in March 2014. Young leaders will deliver the projects in their communities from April 2014-March 2015.

The Process

Each Top Left project site has specific populations that they are currently working with as outlined in the project proposal. Top Left project site organizations were selected based on two criteria: 1) their expertise in gender-based violence and 2) their expertise in recruiting and engaging young people who identify as men and boys. In Miramichi, N.B., two staff were hired from the Youth Matters network with expertise in gender-based violence and in engaging young men-identified people in closed-custody situations. As a result, the young people from Miramichi, N.B. are from the New Brunswick Youth Centre (NBYC): a closed-custody correctional facility for youth. In Toronto, ON, the Students Commission of Canada's (SCC) Central Hub in downtown Toronto hired two project staff from the newcomer and visible minority community with experience working through violence issues and in recruiting young men-identified people from newcomer and visible minority populations. As a result, the young people from Toronto, ON are primarily newcomers and visible minorities.

In Saskatoon, SK, the SCC connected with Core Neighbourhood Youth Co-op (CNYC), an organization based in Saskatoon's core neighbourhood that provides apprenticeship and alternative education opportunities for youth who may not be well supported in their day-to-day lives. CNYC primarily supports young people who

identify as men from the Aboriginal community. The Top Left project has been added as a program of the organization for participants. As a result, Top Left in Saskatoon primarily supports young Aboriginals. Finally, Project Respect in Victoria, BC works to combat sexualized violence against women and focuses on engaging young people who may have had experience with gender-based violence. Project Respect has also added the Top Left project to their program options. As a result, Top Left in Victoria, BC primarily supports young people with experience in gender-based violence. All project sites are not exclusive to these groups, there are many other diverse groups of young people represented at each Top Left site. Finally, each project site is supported by an experienced GBA-facilitator who serves as the project administrator.

With Top Left project teams in place, several project calls occurred in the lead-up to engaging youth participants. These project calls focused on training and supporting project site staff in completing Top Left project deliverables with a specific focus on supporting staff in gender-based analysis facilitation methods. Through open conversation and the creation of a 'safe space', project staff began discussing some of the complex inter-connected systemic issues that play a role in violence against women. The calls were used as a forum to ask key questions and hear from the rest of the group on their perspectives. In many ways, the calls were a pilot test of how staff would engage their young people on the issue. The calls were facilitated by the project administrator and used the Young Decision Makers model as the engagement/discussion method. The Young Decision Makers model focuses on looking at critically thinking about issues from an individual, community and systemic perspective. Participants share their own individual experiences on a topic, what they've seen in their community, which can be defined broadly (e.g. geographically, ethnically, religious, LGBT, all gendered, etc.). Finally, participants look at the role the system plays on the issues and how everything may or may not be interconnected. Once participants have looked at the perspective from all of those lenses, they discuss how to take action on the issue. For the purposes of the project calls, discussions on the issue influenced the processes that were put in place for regional events and weekly youth group meetings.

Project Staff Questions, Findings and Decisions

Several calls took place between May and December 2013. Calls will continue to take place throughout the project. Key questions for staff included:

- 1) What is gender?
- 2) What are your experiences with gender in your day-to-day lives?
- 3) How does gender influence individual people in their day-to-day lives?
- 4) How does gender influence young people in their day-to-day lives?
- 5) What role does gender play in the lives of young people?
- 6) What is violence in women's lives?
- 7) What role does gender play on the issue of violence in women's lives?

- 8) How can we have these conversations with young people who identify as boys and young men?
- 9) What are some strategies and techniques that we can use to sustain engagement of those who identify as boys and young men on the issue of violence in women's lives?
- 10) How can we encourage young men-identified people to take action on the issue of violence in women's lives?
- 11) How do we hold sensitive conversations in large group settings?
- 12) What support does this group need when experiencing sensitive conversations?

Key Staff Findings and Decisions

- Important to hold the discussion of gender at the beginning of the process with young people so that they can see the systemic influence that gender plays in the day-to-day lives of young people.
- Gender will be defined as an identity choice for participants, not something that is ascribed; when recruiting and holding conversations with young people, staff will use the terms boy-identified, girl-identified, all gender. Integrate a preferred pronoun exercise as a community building activity so that young people can begin to discuss the issue of gender outside of a binary lens. More importantly, the activity can ensure that young people's gender identities aren't ascribed by project facilitators.
- When holding discussions on gender, focus questions and discussion on the concept of a gender 'galaxy' and not a binary lens. Use questions to encourage participants to think outside the gender box. Utilize key activities like the 'gender box' exercise or the gingerbread binary building activity. These creative activities will make facilitation of the topics easier.
- Partnership with girl-identified and trans-gendered young people will enhance the diversity of the conversation for boy-identified people; they will be able to hear from other young people who do not share the same perspectives that they do. Facilitation of the conversation should be supported by young men-identified and young women-identified people. This will model the healthy relationships that young people should emulate with people who don't identify through gender.
- Emphasis should be placed on ensuring that young men-identified people feel 'safe' when having the conversation at weekly meetings and regional events. Ensure that the conversation doesn't turn into an attack on masculine norms. Unpacking the conversation should be done gradually so that young men-identified people feel part of the solution, not the problem
- Concrete defined goals for the weekly youth groups with opportunities for partnership with other gendered people will ensure sustained engagement of young men-identified participants.
- When discussing the issue of violence in women's lives directly, provide space for young men-identified people to express their opinions and

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thoughts on why expectations for men and/or masculine norms may be a leading cause for violence to occur against women.

- Ground all discussions in the Students Commission’s Four Pillars: Respect, Listen, Understand, Communicate.™ Respect everyone’s unique gifts and opinions. There may be young people who will find the conversation very threatening to their beliefs and norms. Encouraging discussion and critical thinking will be more effective than imposing an adult and/or controlling perspective on youth participants.
- When setting up the discussion either in the regional event or in weekly discussion, focus initial activities on building a sense of community and on curiosity and shared learning amongst participants; this will lead to honest and open discussions on sensitive topics.

These key findings and program decisions from the gender-based and program discussions with key staff guided the development of the programming for the regional events and weekly youth group meetings. Below is a sample from the four day national “Top Left Youth Conference” in December 2013.

Wednesday, December 4 2013: Community Building

8:00 a m - 5:15 p m	Travel to Tim Horton Onondaga Farms, St. George, Ontario and Registration
5:15 P M- 7:00 p m	<p>Opening Ceremony Drum Groups Facilitators Introduce the Conference Conference Goals The Four Pillars Large Group Community Builder Theme Team Selection</p>
7:00 p m - 8:00 p m	Our First Community Dinner and Activity
8:00p m - 9:30 p m (Breakout Rooms)	Community Building and 4 Pillars (Establishing Community Values and Guidelines) Introduction to HHFS
9:30p m - 12:00 a m	Evening Activities: News Team; Movie Night; Sharing Circles

Thursday, December 5 2013

8:00 a m - 9:00 a m	Breakfast
9:15 a m - 10:15 a m	<p>News Team Update Four Pillars Presentation from Groups Community Guidelines</p>
10:15 a m - 10:30 a m	Theme Team Travel Time
10:30 a m - 12:15 p m	<p>Studying The Issue: Our own experience and the experiences of those we know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is gender? • How does gender influence our day-to-day lives? (e.g. individually,

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> community-wise) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are gender roles? What role does culture play in ascribing gender roles? How do we learn about gender? How are gendered expectations linked to violence in women's lives?
12:30 pm - 1:30 pm	Lunch Break
1:30 pm - 3:00 pm	Studying the Issue: Gender-Based Analysis Activities (e.g. the Gender Box, Gingerbread Activity, insert more activities) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share your own experiences with gendered expectations and those that you've seen in your community
3:00 pm - 3:30 pm	Break: Prep for Session or Outdoor Activity
3:30 pm - 5:15 pm	Onondaga Farms Camp Activity: Team Building
5:30 pm - 7:00 pm	Dinner: Culture Night
7:00 pm - 8:15 pm	Workshops/Bragging Booth Sessions
8:15 pm - 9:15 pm	Onondaga Farms Camp Large Group Activity: Giant Pictionary
9:15 pm - 9:30 pm	HHFS and Team Check-In
9:30 pm - 12:00 am	Evening Activities: News Team, Movie Night, Sharing Circles, Dance Time

Friday, December 6, 2013

8:00 am - 9:00 am	Breakfast
9:15 am - 10:30 am	News Team Update Presentation on December 6 th Montreal Massacre Moment of Silence Large Group Activity Teams Check-In with Each Other
10:30 am - 12:15 pm	Studying/Discussing The Issue: What does the research say about Gender Expectations and Violence? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the research define gender? What is happening in our own communities as it relates to gender-based violence? What are some of the existing supports in our communities that take action on gender-based violence? Prepare questions that you'd like to ask of other groups (mini-focus groups) Organize information into a mini-community needs assessment
12:30 pm - 1:30 pm	Lunch Break
1:30 pm - 3:00 pm	Studying/Discussing the Issue: Gathering greater youth input from other groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect with other groups, ask key questions of the other groups What are you going to do with what you've learned? How will you apply these findings to your community? Social Media Challenge: 1) Connect with people back home to share what you've learned so far, 2) Post a Status about a Key Question that You'd Like Youth to Answer, 3) Submit your Questions to the Social Media Team

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3:00 pm - 3:30 pm	Break: Prep for Session or Camp Activity
3:30 pm - 5:15 pm	Onondaga Farms Camp Activity
5:30 pm - 7:00 pm	Dinner
7:00 pm - 8:15 pm	Decision Making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide How to Decide (What decision-making process are we going to use?) • Action Planning: What are we going to do with what we've learned? • Production: What support do we need from the production team?
8:15 pm - 9:15 pm	Large Group Onondaga Farms Camp Activity: Egg Drop
9:15 pm - 9:30 pm	HHFS and Team Check-In
9:30 PM - 12:00 am	Evening Activities: News Team; Movie Night; Sharing Circles

Saturday, December 7, 2013

8:00 am - 9:00 am	Breakfast
9:15 am - 10:30 am	News Team Report Exchanges Canada Evaluation Forms Large Group Community Builder
10:30 am - 12:30 pm	Decision Making: Continuing Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Plans: What are we going to do when we get home?, What media supports do we need from the SC Production Team? How will know our community needs? How will we gather information? • What key information do we want to share or decide on with the larger group? • Do we have a strategy that we want endorsed by the larger group?
12:30 pm - 1:30 pm	Lunch Break
1:30 pm - 2:15 pm	Decision Making: Continued. Refining your Pitch to the larger conference
2:15 pm - 3:15 pm	Large Group Report Back and Discussion: Groups 1a), 2a), 3a), 4a)
4:30 pm - 5:30 pm	Teams Check-In with Each Other and Refine Action Plans/Pitches/Recommendations
5:30 pm - 7:00 pm	Dinner
7:00 pm - 8:00 pm	Conference Evaluation/Warm Fuzzies
8:00 pm - 9:30 pm	Onondaga Farms Camp Large Group Activity: Talent Show
9:30 PM - 12:00 am	Evening Activities: News Team; Report-Writing Team; Movie Night; Sharing Circles

Sunday, December 8 2013

8:00 am - 9:00 am	Breakfast
9:00 am - 10:00 am	Elders and Youth Refined Pitches Shared with Large Group (if necessary)

	Next Steps for Participants	
10:00 am - 10:15 am		Closing Speakers
10:30 am - 11:00 am	Team Closing:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check-Out • Submit Refined Action Plans to SC • GBA-Evaluation Questions • Next Steps for Unite and Ignite
11:00am - 11:30 am		Closing Circle Elders and Youth Drum Group
11:30 am - 12:30 pm	Lunch and Travel Home	

Regional Events

As part of the Top Left project, each project site was responsible for delivering a local regional event that focuses on engaging 25 young people with the majority of them boy-identified people. As a result of the unique target groups in each community, different event structures were put in place for each of the communities. The core engagement model: Young Decision Makers process was used in every site regardless of the event structure. The process as outlined above was used in Miramichi, Saskatoon and Toronto. The process will also be used in Victoria in February 2014. Victoria held an inter-generational community dialogue to kick-start interest in the group in late November 2013 and to gather feedback in the lead-up to their regional event. There was an unexpected ‘bonus’ opportunity for the Toronto event. The Students Commission was able to leverage funding from Exchanges Canada and support from Tim Horton Children’s Foundation to bring in young people from the four communities to attend Toronto’s regional event with other youth from across the country. This greatly enriched the program for the four sites as it resulted in a broader discussion that has helped set direction for the rest of the project.

A description of each regional event and the community dialogue follows, with key findings from each event, written by the site co-ordinators and the lead facilitators.

Miramichi- November 27, 2013 and December 10, 2013

Due to the restrictions placed on the young persons in the New Brunswick Youth Centre (a closed custody facility), an overnight regional event was not possible. Top Left Project Staff instead broke up the content over two days in late 2013 connecting with about 25 male-identified young persons each time.

To gain access to the New Brunswick Youth Centre permission had to be granted by the institution's superintendent along with the management and clinical team. A meeting was conducted with both teams where an overview of the intent and process of the project was presented. Special attention was given to issues that were of particular importance inside a closed custody facility for youth such as privacy and confidentiality and the nature of the subject matter. Protocol was developed with the management/clinical team. Confidentiality forms needed to be signed but could not leave the premise as per the YCJA. Also, a reporting system was developed so that if a youth felt discomfort, required immediate assistance or eventual follow up from a facility social worker/psychologist – we would have a plan in place as to how to contact staff. Once all of these concerns were addressed the management at NBYC were very pleased to be part of the project and looking forward to having their youth involved.

The first meeting took place on November 26, 2013. All youth attended the meeting (21 in total). This was very exciting as it was not expected that that many youth would come. In addition to the youth, eight correctional officers and three NBCC shadow students were present. We found this to be a bit oppressive in the room and did discuss this with the staff. It does indicate the interest from the staff in learning about this type of youth programming. The original plan was to have approximately three officers, so we made note of it to discuss with management.

Overall the first meeting went very well. There were two youth in the group from the Youth Matters leadership team that have been involved with many events in the past so they were immediately engaged and actively participated in the check in. This was great for breaking the ice as it allowed the other youth to participate freely without having to worry too much about saving face. There were some boundary testing issues at various points but altogether the young persons were not disrespectful.

Some challenges that were identified during the first meeting:

- Gender dynamic- because the youth have little opportunity to mix genders, there seemed to be heightened attention given to gender. There are some relationships within the facility as well that were a bit distracting.
- Amount of officers in the room. We discussed if having the officers in the room impacted the space and they unanimously stated that they were not bothered by it.
- Talking amongst the youth. Once again, because there is little opportunity for interaction amongst youth on different units some of the youth did talk quite a bit. We wanted to address this in such a way that did not seem too overbearing but protect the safety of the space. The youth themselves came up with the saying “get it, give it” to discuss respect so we used that as a quick check in line. Will start with “dexterity checks” energy-level builders next meeting.
- The final issue was more institutionally based. Because there was food available to the youth there was a bit of movement occurring (ie. Youth

getting up to get a drink). While this may not be an issue in a meeting in the community, inside a facility this can be problematic and movement is limited. We made note of it and did discuss it with the youth centre to assure them that this would be more structured for the next meeting

Highlights of the meeting:

- The youth were very positive when they arrived and while tentative, were looking forward to having an opportunity to “get off the unit.”
- The highest point of the meeting came during the gender breakdown activity. The youth were very actively engaged during this and many freely expressed themselves. This activity seemed to be the time when they realized that Youth Matters facilitators were there to hear their opinion and that there would be no judgment. Once they fully realized this they jumped right in and there were great moments of sharing.

Results of Gender-Based Analysis Critical Thinking Activities (Day 1)

- Their perceptions of gender are in line with sexual/physical characteristics
- Did not recognize any other genders outside of the binary construct and were resistant to discuss this
- Believed gender was fixed and did not change
- Did recognize the power/dominance dynamic of gender, specifically masculine over feminine
- Discussed social nature of gender but the majority viewed gender as biologically derived
- Youth made distinctions between gender stereotypes of man-boy identified while in custody and “on the outs” (outside of custody)

An interesting side note: during this exercise the youth discussed what happens when one violates what is expected from their gender and terms such as “slut” and “pussy” were used.

The second meeting, held on December 10, 2013, focused on further exploring the issues identified in the first meeting. To be expected there was a change in the youth who attended the meeting but less change than expected. This change was anticipated as a result of youths’ sentences coming to an end and others being sent to remand/sentenced.

This meeting had more challenges than the initial one. Due to operational needs of the institution the meeting started quite late (30 mins) and immediately the mood in the room seemed to be quite heavy. The youth from certain units separated as soon as they entered the room and there appeared to be some tension. There seemed to be a potentially negative interaction occurring between two youth so project staff did go speak to one of them. Our senior facilitator pulled the youth to the back of the room to help with something and asked him if everything was ok. He indicated that there was an issue with another youth, but he would “try” not to fight with him during the meeting. While they were speaking at the back of the

room, words were exchanged in the circle and one of the correctional officers (C/O) escort one of the youth from the room. The youth had begun to be verbally abusive towards his girlfriend who was in the room. This set a very negative tone in the room; many of the youth were working hard to overcome this but it was definitely felt.

Once the incidents were taken care of and everyone had eaten, the activities include giant Pictionary and the Man Box discussion (which was a nice link to our previous meeting). The youth were very receptive. They then watched the Man Box video and really enjoyed it. Small groups led by the facilitators discussed and debriefed the video. This turned out to be a useful tool as the C/Os were present in the room but not in the individual groups so it allowed the youth to speak more freely.

Key Findings from the Miramichi Gender-Based Analysis Expanded Discussion

The intent of the groups was to focus on the expectations placed upon men/boy identified individuals but the youth eventually brought up the issue of gender violence in one of the groups. There was a spectrum of opinions of violence against women. One youth was quoted saying “we live in a world that is violent” and discussed his home community and the violence he sees. Many youth could relate to this. Approximately five of the youth talked about women being violent against men and how men were “supposed to take it.” We discussed why this was and they linked this to expectations of men having to be tough and also that it would seem “weak” to fight back against a “girl.” There were a few who said there was a limit and that “I give a girl three before she gets it” (talking about being punched). This thinking was challenged by another youth but the concept seemed to be very normalized. There was a recognition that violence against women is wrong but more from a legal aspect, where assaulting a woman would be a breach of probation. The youth did not discuss learning this behavior vertically (in the home) but instead it seemed to be a horizontal socialization (from peers, community).

Key Conclusion: What seemed to be a general consensus was that showing dominance and violence against others, regardless of the gender, was necessary in order to keep one’s self-image intact, thus keeping them safe on the outs.

Gender Dynamics in Closed-Custody Facilities

It was very obvious that the events at the beginning of the meeting had an effect throughout. The youth were engaged but somewhat guarded with offering opinions that differed from the consensus of the group. It is very difficult to deconstruct the ideal of “macho” and gender stereotypes/expectations when these youth are in an environment that almost require them to be “tough” for their personal safety. The facilitators were aware of this unspoken requirement and have been very sensitive in reframing and asking questions. The goal is that the youth understand gender based analysis and the issues of violence against women but the

environment requires being careful in how ideas are presented and discussed. Facilitators must create an environment that allows for the discussion to happen without taking away any social power from the individual youth. Being considered “weak” in closed custody can be dangerous and this needs to be considered in facilitating discussions on the topic. The facilitators believe if they had the same group of youth consistently for the entire year such institutional unspoken codes could be addressed, but with the transient nature of the population this will be difficult. However, the positive of this occurring very early on in the process, is that the team can now work on overcoming that challenge.

Highlights from the facilitators

- First highlight would be the clip Man Box. The youth really enjoyed that and could relate to the speaker. Before watching it they were a bit tentative but afterwards they were ready to share
- In the groups there was very animated discussion. From our meeting tonight we have learned that breaking up into groups will be the best method of having discussions and we will utilize this in our future meetings.
- One highlight that felt fairly significant occurred when we were discussing the questions “what does a man look like?” So this question was posed to discuss stereotypes/expectations. We had markers and flip chart paper and one of the youth asked if he could draw his response. Of course that was supported and he went on to draw an anatomically correct male. The drawing appeared to have been done as a way to test boundaries (judging by the youth’s reaction) and the C/Os appeared bothered by it. But I moved on and just asked the youth to talk about the picture and what it meant to him. He did discuss the anatomically correct aspect of the picture but had an excellent explanation that linked to male sexuality and expectations related to sexuality and the perceived “need for sex”. The group had a great discussion about this and moved on without much attention given. A few minutes later we had moved on and without prompting the youth that drew the picture got up and I could see him standing in front of his picture. He proceeded to cover up the penis he had drawn. Later I asked him why he had done that and he explained that he thought it was funny but soon realized that it wasn’t and he was being disrespectful so he wanted to “make it right”. It was a standout moment not because of the picture or his actions fixing it, but because it was a moment when that youth became aware of the four pillars, most specifically RESPECT, and he made the effort to be within the boundaries of the pillars.
- Also positive was that there were fewer staff present (three C/Os) than the previous meeting. They also allowed the youth to have the space to participate without being omnipresent and when the youth turned to them they were really positive in their interactions. They even checked in and out!
- Dexterity check. At the last meeting there was a bit of talking while others were talking, so this meeting we taught them a dexterity check and they really took to it. One youth also suggested just saying “pillars” to remind people, which was also effective and youth led.

- Two youth asked if they could stay back after the group left to talk and to help us clean up the space (because we go into the institutional chapel for our meetings, it must be set up and then taken down immediately). This was a great time to check our perceptions with the youth. One of the youth has been on the leadership team for some time so he is familiar with these types of meetings. The other has been in the institution for quite a while but for the first time that night asked if he could be part of the leadership team, which was exciting. The youth want a part in the planning of the meetings, which will be integrated into future meeting planning. We will be meeting with these two youth (and potentially a few others that volunteer) to have a “planning meeting”. We are looking forward to having the youth become part of the process.
- Finally, the discussions during this meeting often came back to issues and needs in the community. There is definite need in their home communities about the issue of violence in young women’s lives . Working with this population, we definitely get to see where the key needs and we hope to continue relationships with them in their home communities because a lot of them are key peer influencers in their communities

Core Neighbourhood Youth Co-op- Saskatoon November 14-15

The Core Neighbourhood Youth Co-op (CNYC) is a skills building and alternative education program for youth in Saskatoon. Youth are able to earn academic credits and learn life and employment skills in a compassionate and supportive environment. CNYC works with youth between the ages of 15 and 21 with the majority of the youth in the program ages 15-19. CNYC's population is primarily Aboriginal and male-identified people. Top Left project staff were able to take CNYC youth on an overnight retreat outside of Saskatoon. A number of the CNYC youth had experienced violence firsthand. The group was a mix of boy-identified and girl-identified people all with lived experience. The process for these young people involved more opportunities for community building and cultural experiences. An elder came in to support the group in a ‘Sweat’ after some of the heavy discussions. This allowed the young people the opportunity to feel safe and share some of their personal experiences. As a result of this feeling of safety, discussions often focused on individual experiences with the group coming together as a healing circle.

1) What does Violence look like?

- Can be multiple forms
- Language (swearing, foul language)
- Physical (hitting someone, pushing, hands on another person)
- Emotional (violence and bullying)
- Relationship violence
- Words can be used (harm someone really bad, talking someone down)
- What about sexual harassment

- “Words can kill someone too”
- Being disrespectful
- Stealing, taking people’s stuff without asking

Mental Health

- Constant put-downs
- Belittling someone all the time
- Spreading rumours, gossip
- Making people believe something that isn’t true
- Lowering people’s self-esteem

Spiritual

- Making fun of other people’s cultures
- Being racist against other people’s cultures

Own Thoughts Being Violent

- Feeling pushy, getting pressured by yourself by your own mind and thoughts
- Abuse with drugs and alcohol leads you to be unfocused, edgy, stress which can trigger memories that bring up anger
- Doing something that you’ll regret
- Pretend to be someone’s friend, then you’re taking their stuff without knowing
- Manipulating other people (getting someone else to do things for you-using them)

Sexual Abuse

- Pressuring a girl into doing things in a way that she doesn’t like
- Date rape
- Inappropriate touching
- Creepy eyes, staring them down “Eyes can be rank”

“The way you talk about something can be violent”

Media

- Music can be violent as well
- Pornography (exploiting yourself)
- Taking videos without other people knowing
- Stalking
- Violence of Action Movies→shows prostitution and violence as well
- Family abuse, child abuse etc.
- High Expectations of Culture (people kept teasing her and anorexic)
- Highly sexualized (women have to dress a certain way to be sexy)
- Strippers

What Makes People Want to Hurt Other People?

- Coming from a friend's house when you're in a violent situation and doing what happened to you back home with who you're living with
- Could be the way you were raised, you grow up, if your dad hit you or your mum, that's what you know
- If at school or in a high school, people who don't know you and call you down, bottling up all that anger
- The way you were born/raised by family
- Angry at someone and you want to hurt them because you've been bullied or you're tired
- Jealousy which stems from insecurities (don't have confidence) and acting out
- Raise their children tough, raise them to fight back ("hit them first")
- People being disrespectful of other people
- Not understanding other people's situation and being quick to judge

What triggers you to be violent?

- Greed
- Someone says something that offends you
- Memory reminds you of something that sets you off
- People saying things about me that are not true
- Getting up in my face, triggers my anger right away
- When people complain about their parents in front of people who don't have them
- Talk behind your back when people don't speak to you directly
- Girls look at you when they want to act tough, gang joining by girls, they join them because it's their new family and gangs will protect them
- "The World": Just mad at the world, my mum and dad left me in a shitbox: "I am Abandoned", but I'm making the most of my life
- Talk behind your back, have a plan and they change it on you
- When someone else is triggered, hurting someone you don't know is not right
- When a guy has a kid and he takes off. "I had this chick, and I had this chick" It's your responsibility to show up and be there for the girl when you get her pregnant.
- Triggered by the system, was in it all my life, everyone went after my mother, next thing you know "She's hung herself"
- I don't like it when women are called husky, or too fat, men's expectations are too high. Women are beautiful inside and out
- Discrimination, jealousy, people being judgmental
- Mainly people saying that their life is bad, never experienced any real pain, no one else having a bad life.

Solutions

How to end violence in your own life? How can you change it?

- 1) People that you hang around with, change the way you talk about yourself
- 2) Trying to find people who understand what you're going through and your stress
- 3) FIND YOURSELF FIRST: people look up to other people, stop yourself from being violent, people need to start grow up, maybe look at yourself and realize that you have to change, you can make that consequence smaller than it's going to be
- 4) People need to start talking about their stuff: I should stop blaming myself and that's where it will stop and the violence will end
- 5) Pulling the negative people out of your life (try ignoring it, let it slide, just gonna be grounded)
- 6) Avoid It: Hang around positive people
- 7) Push Out All the Negative Stuff in Your Life
- 8) Learn to Trust People, go into sweats, culture, be a positive role model
- 9) Give people an opportunity to be themselves

What do you want to do? What can this program be?

- Involvements: Helping those who ain't got much, like not having a home, helping those who need more hope to live forward help 'em get back on their feet
- Give examples of what has happened in people's lives
- I think something like this can help us! WEIRD!
- Have more groups like this. People need to hear other's opinions
- Try to get more teens involved
- I don't know

November 15, 2013

Links to Violence in Women's Lives

Why does violence against women happen?

Gender Based Analysis Key Findings

- Wanting to feel in control, power
- Anger issues, when they're angry, tick them off and they blow up
- Media and TV portray women to be the weaker sex
- Men hit women because they don't think she will fight back
- "If you fight back they will hit you harder."-Young Woman
- "Mom was abused", many relationships she was in, one guy raped her with a gun to his head while I was there
- Some men may feel so lonely that they will do that
- Abused when they're little, they'll take it out their anger on someone else

Women and Talking About Abuse

- Feel ashamed, feel judged, might treat them differently, embarrassing to tell people what happened in your life
- Relationship-wise: “Nobody will care”, partner is degrading and belittling
- “Don’t tell anyone” because you’ll get hit more (sense of fear)
- They’re torn and broken, doesn’t want anyone to know
- If they tell someone, partner gets more abusive, a lot are abused all their lives for 10 years running, becomes a routine: “the sense of normalcy”
- Violence being normal (taught it’s not how it’s supposed to be)
- Really like that person, keep telling themselves that they will change
- Personal Experience: Mum was addicted to the pain and stress, she said she felt good about it
- Scared she doesn’t want to be judged
- Men say things like: “Where are you going to be without me?”
- The man makes the woman think she has to depend on him (ie. Place to live, money)
- Scared of him, Scared for the kids life
- Become negative, suicidal
- Men scare away women when they are abused
- Impact on the kids

Effect on Everybody When a Woman is Abused

- Police don’t always listen
- Young man disclosed that he thinks women are “weak” based on the experience of his mother
- Young woman disputed this notion and walked off, a group discussion ensued that focused on reaffirming to the Young Man that having him share this insight was powerful for the group and that his situation though isn’t reflective of everybody

Key Conclusions

- Young men-identified people’s perceptions of women in the group were based on their own experiences. Most of the young man-identified people in the group had observed or participated in violent experiences with women.
- These experiences either shaped them to be supportive of women, to make sure that it never happens in their lives or to view them as ‘weak’
- When given a space to share their experiences and perspectives on the issue, most man-identified young people stated it was the first time they were allowed to express themselves on the issue
- They agreed that more opportunities for discussions, healing circles or cultural experiences would be a powerful tool for other young man-identified people to heal themselves and then take action to stop violence against women

- When discussing the issue openly and sharing their perspectives (e.g. women are weak) in a non-judgmental space, young man-identified people when asked thoughtful questions (e.g. why do you think that? Where does that perspective come from?) saw that the issue wasn't about women being weak but more about a system and gendered expectations that weren't supportive of women
- After going through the healing circle, sweat and hearing from young women-identified people on their experiences with violence in their own lives, young men-identified people at the retreat committed to continuing to meet weekly to discuss and figure out ways to stop violence against women

Top Left Youth Conference- Toronto Regional Event (Dec. 4-8, 2013)

The Toronto Regional event: Top Left Youth Conference became a national event with the support of Exchanges Canada and the Tim Horton Children's Foundation. As a result, youth from the Toronto project site had the opportunity to connect with youth from the other project sites and with youth from across the country. Two groups of young people supported by Top Left project facilitators used the Young Decision Makers process to critically think about the issue of violence in women's lives using gender-based analysis. The four-day event allowed for more thorough discussion. Some youth who had attended regional events in Miramichi and Saskatoon were able to contribute their perspectives at the national conference. Participants from the two groups that addressed violence in women's lives presented their 'recommendations' to other conference participants with the intention that these recommendations would act as guidelines for the Top Left Project for each community. Below are the results of the gender-based analysis process at the conference and the key recommendations for the project summarized in a needs assessment.

What is gender?

- It doesn't matter in what sex you were born, ie. born as a boy but identify yourself as a girl
- Not only how others identify you - but how you identify yourself

Gender boxes

Societal Expectations and Stereotypes of Gender		
Boys	Violence when people do not live up to societal expectations of gender	Girls
Blue clothes Big Fit Short hair Hard worker	Exclusion Ignoring Bullying Intimidation Racism	Pink clothes Thin Long hair Breasts Stay at home

More intelligent Controlling Hide emotions Violent Anger Make first move Expected to pay Provider (\$) Not supposed to notice attractiveness of men Can compliment men on what they do Media sells products to men by showing that the products attract girls Less accepting of non-heterosexual sexualities	"Slut" "Fag", "Gay" "Lesbian" "Bitch" "Prude" "Cheap" (if a guy does not pay for a date)	Cook and do dishes Less intelligent Supposed to ask him about his day, but not talk about your own Emotional Media: pressures re beauty Virgin If I pay for a date, there are no expectations Compliment other girls based on how they look Sexuality is sold (media) Non-heterosexual sexualities are more accepted
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Community Assessment: Types of violence we see most frequently and want to address in our communities (quote cards):

- 1- I want to see the end of racism in my community.
- 2- Walking down the street, women being catcalled: "Hey, baby" no answer. "Bitch!" laughs expects me to nod.
- 3- Verbal abuse is the most common form of violence in my community. There have been several times that I have witnessed it. It is generally aimed at young women (13 yrs) who's sexuality activity has become someone else's business gossip. When it is about men it generally is about their sexual orientation based on their appearance and voice which is ridiculous.
- 4- I want to stop the views that some people have about girls and women. People think that women and girls are not strong enough to stand up for what they believe in, but they are wrong. Women and girls are strong very, very strong and have the power to do so much good for the world. I want the world to know that women are powerful and can achieve their dreams.
- 5- Guys at school who harass girls and think it's okay.
- 6- At my school, I see a lot of verbal violence but we take it as a joke. Which we really shouldn't because some people take it seriously and sometimes it hurts really bad and some people dies.

Top Left Project: Gender Based Analysis Report of First Phase Activities

- 7- Mental abuse: saying you're nothing without me you can't be anything with out me.
- 8- Don't judge a book by its cover!
- 9- I see a lot of verbal violence in my community, but a lot of it seems to be real even when it's supposed to be said as a joke.
- 10- The violence between gays! Mental abuse and physical at a public or private or on the internet place. Being called a fag, loser, etc....
- 11- Different stereotypes between the different genders.
- 12- Difference between the terms "tomboy" and "fag".
- 13- Sports = violence
- 14- Prostitutes being killed and being called sluts
- 15- If my community was like this, I'd never leave my community again.
(Safe/Four Pillars)
- 16- In a world full of hate we must dare to hope. Michael Jackson
- 17- I saw an ex-bf threaten to commit suicide if his ex-gf didn't go back to him
- 18- People shouldn't hide who they are. Just to be who you want to be. Be HAPPY!
- 19- We are all human.
- 20- You can't just walk away from love.
- 21- People being called "gay, queer, fag" because they love the same sex. It's seen as a negative thing.
- 22- In my community, I saw a man hitting his girlfriend. I was unable to help her because I was too scared.
- 23- You can never have enough love.
- 24- Love is eternal.
- 25- 'Judgement!' No one has no respect for people that are bisexual, gay, lesbian.

27- Bullying other people based on their genders like being gay or for how their appearance. not based on what they are.

28- Girls who play "boy" sports are "tomboys".

29- Never enough love.

30 -physical, emotional, spiritual (believes, culture, religion), homophobia, sexism, racism, sexual

Violence

- girls are accepting sexuality more
- guys are not as accepting
- guys get picked up for being gay
- stereotypes cause violence
- anger
- thought process and reaction are different in both men and women
- shocking when we hear about women doing the violent things

Key Moment Community Intervention: Putting intervention skills into practice at the Top Left Youth Conference

Someone reported and turned in a note with 'fag' written on it in his warm fuzzy envelope. As discussed in the gender boxes, this term is used as a way to constrain the options of what it means to be a boy/man, degrade non-heterosexual sexualities, and degrade femininity. This provided an excellent opportunity for participants to practice community and system-level interventions on the issue. Gender-based violence is based on power and control. In order to ensure that the person who was targeted felt in control and had agency in the intervention, a discussion ensued with him on options for how to deal with this situation. The participant was on-board with having the staff remind the large group about the 4 pillars when writing warm fuzzies. He also decided that he was comfortable letting his group know without revealing who received the message, and together as a team figure out how to intervene since we had been talking about intervening in gender-based violence for a couple of days.

Individual/social level intervention:

Team F shared support and love for the person who was targeted

- ✓ Team F put the focus on the perpetration of violence and the consequential harms:
- ✓ We do not stand behind the person who did this
- ✓ It is unacceptable
- ✓ "We are family"
- ✓ "It's not an act of love - it's an act of hate"
- ✓ "Dark stain on this awesome conference"

Top Left Project: Gender Based Analysis Report of First Phase Activities

- ✓ Even if it is something as simple as putting "I'm sorry" in his envelope.
- ✓ What if others are receiving these violent messages, what if they get home and open them?
- ✓ Wish I could put "I LOVE YOU" in every envelope. WHY CAN'T WE?
- ✓ "If my community was like this, I would never want to leave"

After the conversation in Team F, the person who had received the message indicated that he felt that the harm had been repaired.

System level intervention

Team F decided to integrate a message to the entire conference about this situation into the team presentation. Team F also decided to write over 150 warm fuzzies to add to everyone's warm fuzzy envelopes, with special attention to envelopes that were less full.

National Needs Assessment Summary

- Issues like the man box, slut-shaming, victim blaming, and homophobia are prevalent in all of our communities
- Rape jokes occur consistently and de-normalize violence against women; support in having these stopped would help address the issue
- Young people from across the country stated that the impacts of these forms of violence have included losing friends and members of the community to suicide
- People in our communities are not taking the responsibility to intervene when they see gender-based violence (stereotypes, heteronormativity, sexism, racism, slut-shaming, victim blaming, man box...)
- People don't have the skills to intervene, the Top Left project could support young people in acquiring these skills
- The violence is seen as normal so people don't even see it as wrong
- More education about consent
- It's common for men in our community to take advantage of women who are drunk
 - Normalized
 - often results in slut-shaming/ victim blaming

Action ideas / recommendations

- Awareness campaigns outside schools
- Bystander intervention
 - Using participatory theatre to do skill building (creating opportunities in public spaces)
- Opportunities to develop empathy
 - Through campaigns and/or education
- More education about consent
- Holistic sexuality and relationship education starting way earlier

- Schools don't even teach about the emotional aspect of sex/sexuality
- Talk about the "man box" at a way earlier age
- Man identified role models talking with boys in elementary school
 - What do positive/respectful relationships look like?
- Teaching kids to understand and respect difference from a young age

Bystander Intervention (Possible Scenarios)

1) Overhearing men on the bus talking in derogatory ways about women and seeing women on the bus being uncomfortable:

- tell the bus driver
- victims could stand up for themselves
- the person could confront the ones who are being violent : "Do you know the effects of what you are saying? You are being very disrespectful about women."

2) Young women in school

- Woman 1 at school approaching her friend,
- Woman 2, in the hallway.
- Woman 2 accuses \ Woman 1 of cheating with her boyfriend and calling her 'putain' (slut).
- Woman 2's other friends join in and reinforce, saying that they saw her with the boyfriend, and that she dresses like a slut so she must be one.
- bystander intervenes saying that girls can be friends with boys, she can wear whatever she wants

Victoria Community Dialogue with self-identified boys and men (Nov. 15, 2013)

The intergenerational Community Dialogue was developed by a team of youth and adult allies in the Rhizome social action team of Project Respect. In a series of planning sessions, the team identified two key objectives:

- 1) Engage boys and men in the movement to end gender-based violence
 - a. Build connections with boys and men to be involved in the Feb/March event
 - b. Assess needs of boys/men: What's relevant to them? How do they connect to these issues?
- 2) Share and build capacity
 - a. Rhizome's framework for understanding gender-based violence (root causes)
 - b. Understand power, privilege and responsibility
 - c. Bystander intervention skills

The dialogue was intended to bring boys and young men together with adult men in their lives to support one another. We invited those who identified as boys/young men to attend and encouraged them to bring adult men who are influential in their lives (teachers, fathers, coaches, youth workers, etc.). Adult men were encouraged to bring boys/young men in their lives (sons, nephews, students, clients, etc.). The event brought together a very diverse group in terms of age, first language, ethnic background, geography and gender identity including 5 boys/young men (under 18) and 5 adult men (18+). One participant identified as a trans-man. Some of the participants were newcomers to Canada with English as a second language. One young man identified as Aboriginal. Two participants attended from Duncan, BC.

During a mingle game, people got to know each other's role models. Some of the participants talked about mothers and fathers as their role models while others identified pop culture icons. One young man identified Eminem as his role model, explaining that he looked up to Eminem because he had gone through a lot of difficult things in his life, but still became successful and expresses himself creatively, which gives him hope.

In discussing gender expectations, the group explored aspects of control, aggression, and having learned the use of violence as the only option to deal with violence targeting them. One young man described this as the 'malpractice' of being a man. The group talked about these things as sometimes benefiting the individual but not the community, and that this was something they wanted to unlearn. When discussing what they like about being boys/men, they talked about the privilege associated with masculinity of being taken seriously, and being seen as strong, while women are not.

Victoria Community Recommendations'

The group also suggested some recommendations, questions, actions and/or needs in their communities:

- Identify actions and steps to change and challenge gender assumptions, and build confidence in taking action
- More bystander intervention practice opportunities
- Address men's violence against women in the social sphere (not necessarily only in romantic relationships)
- What are the strengths rooted in masculinity that can undermine gender-based violence?
- What does it mean to be a 'man' who is a role model?
- As a trans-man, how to act appropriately (without taking up problematic masculinities)
- Set up a statement against violence, talk about it with other groups
- More workshops like this to bring up the issue of gender-based violence, which is often disregarded because of the stereotype of men to be a "man"
- Asking friends and family to accompany to events like this

- Hate speech or threats of violence

Overall Conclusions from the Four Communities

Perceptions about Violence Against Women

- Across the sites, many young people suggested that violence against women was related to control and power, and to a perception that women are weaker than men and/or not strong enough to stand up for themselves. This perception was related to media and to young people's relationships in their communities and homes.
- Young people across the sites also suggested that there is a fear of being judged and feeling ashamed, a fear of recurrence of violence, and a normalization of violence.
- Young people across the sites, indicated challenges at stepping out of the 'norm' of the gender binary expectations and began to make connections between gender norms and violence (e.g. men can't share their feelings so it becomes bottled up, you can't tolerate being insulted as a man- you have to stand up for yourself etc.)

Recommendations

- Provide opportunities for young people to discuss their own lived experiences in a safe, supportive environment, allowing them to begin to heal and to move forward and take action on the topic of violence against women.
 - Provide these opportunities for both men- and boy-identified young people and woman- and girl-identified young people to share their experiences and perspectives with each other. This way they can hear from other youth of the same gender-identification as well as of different gender-identification.
 - It is important to have a safe, supportive environment, such as the one created within the 4 Pillars.
 - Many man- and boy-identified youth across the sites said that these discussions were the first time they had been allowed or felt comfortable to express themselves on the issue
- Provide opportunities for young people to develop positive relationships with other young people and with adult allies in a safe environment.
 - Young people across the sites suggested that it is very important to have positive relationships in your life and relationships where you can express yourself on these issues.
 - This can include positive relationships with other young people who can relate and share their experiences.
 - In addition, young people suggested that it makes a difference whether you have positive man-identified or woman-identified role models in terms of having respectful/non-violent relationships.

- Some young people expressed that many of their adult role models may have led to a perception of men being violent towards women or women being weaker than men. This suggests that having the opportunity to develop positive relationships with adult allies may change young people's perceptions of violence against women.
- There were also many suggestions from young people across the sites of having more education and awareness about violence in women's lives at a systemic and community level.
 - This relates to media and cultural perceptions, victim-blaming and slut-shaming, homophobia, etc.