



# **Restoring the Honouring Circle: Taking a Stand Against Youth Sexual Exploitation**

**An Information, Prevention, and Capacity Building Manual  
for Rural Communities in British Columbia**

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School of Community and Social Justice

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**RESTORING THE HONOURING CIRCLE: TAKING A STAND AGAINST YOUTH SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**  
An Information, Prevention, and Capacity Building Manual for Rural Aboriginal Communities in British Columbia



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, thank you to the youth who participated in interviews and focus groups for this project. We hope that this resource will make a contribution to enriching your lives and those of your friends and community members by tackling the issue of sexual exploitation.

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We would especially like to recognize the members of the project advisory committees, both at the provincial level and within the partnering communities. We deeply appreciate your dedication to seeing this project to completion.

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My name is Sarah Hunt. I am a member of the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation from *Tsax̓is* (Fort Rupert) on northern Vancouver Island, but I grew up primarily in Victoria. In my tradition, it is customary to introduce yourself and where you are from before speaking, and it is in this spirit that I would like to say welcome, or *gilakas'la!*

Growing up between rural and urban communities, both on- and off-reserve, I developed a passion for working to change the levels of violence faced by so many Aboriginal people. In particular, I saw that there were things we just didn't talk about. There were silences around women who had gone to the city and ended up on the street. There were untold stories of childhood abuse and exploitation. Like many other young Aboriginal people, I felt driven to bring these stories to light in order to try to reduce the level of suffering experienced by those around me.

When I was an undergraduate student at the University of Victoria (UVic), I did a number of projects on the overrepresentation of Aboriginal women in the sex trade in Vancouver. From there, I worked as a youth outreach worker in Vancouver, running girls' groups for 10- to 16-year-old Aboriginal youth. Then in 2001 I became involved with a research project on sexual exploitation with Natalie Clark at the Justice Institute of British Columbia, and have continued to work on this issue since that time. In 2006, Natalie and I, along with Melanie Mark, conducted community-based research in five communities across British Columbia to talk about violence and sexual exploitation, with a partial focus on rural areas. In the course of that research, participants asked for culturally relevant tools and information that would be viable within the context of the larger social, historical, and cultural factors that Aboriginal people in rural areas currently face.



For three years, I also worked with the McCreary Centre Society to support educational projects about youth sexual exploitation in Aboriginal communities. I worked with project coordinators as they tried to work with resources that did not speak to rural realities, only to end up creating their own resources or adapting the available material to better suit their needs.

My experience in working on issues of youth sexual exploitation in rural Aboriginal communities has been woven together with the learnings from this research project, in order to draw on the lessons I've learned over the past eight years. It has been a great honour to work with many passionate and experienced people in rural communities, and to collaborate with them on many different projects, including this one.

I would like to dedicate this project to all those Aboriginal youth whose voices have been silenced by the violence that continues in our communities, including suicide, sexual exploitation, and all forms of abuse. We hear your voices. We do this work in honour of you, and of the generations of youth yet to come.





## WHO IS THIS MANUAL FOR?

This manual was created for people working with Aboriginal youth in rural and isolated communities. In particular, it was designed for people who are already working with youth in some capacity but want more information on how to integrate education about sexual exploitation into their work. This includes youth workers, teachers, social workers, elders, outreach workers, school support workers, counsellors, youth group facilitators, peer educators (older youth working to educate younger youth), and natural helpers (people who are in unofficial support roles but who seem to be naturally called upon for support).

This manual may also be useful to other people in rural communities, including youth themselves. Police officers, members of Chief and Council, Indian Band staff, health care providers, and others will also find the information relevant to their work with youth and communities.

For the purposes of this manual, sexual exploitation is defined as the exchange of sexual acts with youth under age 18 for anything of consideration, including money, transportation, shelter, food, clothing, gifts, drugs, or alcohol. It also includes adults in positions of trust or authority (such as teachers or sports coaches) having sexual relationships with youth under age 18. Youth sexual exploitation is an issue that impacts both rural and urban communities across BC (JIBC, 2006; Saewyc et al., 2008; ADM Committee, 2000).

## WHAT WILL I FIND IN THIS MANUAL?

This manual includes information, activities, and resources that are intended to be adapted to a variety of rural community settings. Rather than prescribing specific steps to be taken across all communities, this manual provides tools, information, and ideas. Readers are invited to bring their own personal interpretation, community history, and experience to the ideas and activities provided. Although this manual is intended to address sexual exploitation, many of the activities and resources are useful for supporting general community wellness and increasing support for Aboriginal youth.

**Section A** contains information about sexual exploitation generally, as well as specifically in rural Aboriginal communities. Issues of violence, abuse, and trauma are



also outlined, drawing from the community-based research conducted for this project as well as from previous community-based research (JIBC, 2002, 2006). The cultural and social issues in rural Aboriginal communities that impact youth and their families are also explored.

**Section B** focuses on building community capacity to address sexual exploitation by increasing the knowledge and skills of service providers themselves.

**Section C** is intended to support healthy youth and family development, creating a positive environment for Aboriginal youth through activities that service providers can use with youth and families.

**Section D** focuses on preventing sexual exploitation through education and awareness among community members, providing tools that speak to the specific dynamics in rural Aboriginal communities.

Several **case studies** are included in this manual to illustrate the lessons and information through stories. These stories are not based on any one youth's experience, but on the lives of youth that the research team has worked with over the years, across various community settings.

Additionally, throughout this manual, a series of **reflective questions** and **journaling exercises** have been included in order to help service providers improve their own practice in this challenging work. This has been done out of a recognition that issues of violence and exploitation take a heavy toll on front-line workers, especially in rural communities, where there may be fewer resources for peer support. Burnout is common in both urban and rural areas, and we hope that these exercises will encourage some time for personal reflection and self-care.



This manual was created using community-based research (as outlined below), as well as drawing heavily from previous research on issues of youth sexual exploitation, Aboriginal communities, and rural perspectives. The manual grew out of two previous research projects—*Commercial Sexual Exploitation: Innovative Ideas for Working with Children and Youth* (JIBC, 2002) and *Violence in the Lives of Sexually Exploited Youth and Adult Sex Workers in BC* (JIBC, 2006)—in which the overrepresentation of Aboriginal youth in sexual exploitation was recognized, with practitioners in rural areas calling for culturally appropriate tools for addressing youth sexual exploitation. In many ways, this manual is an extension of the previous research, as it follows through with recommendations made by community participants.

From 2006 to 2009, Sarah worked with the McCreary Centre Society to support Aboriginal communities across BC in building community capacity to address sexual exploitation. Community agencies consistently identified a lack of resources that spoke specifically to rural realities or that had an Aboriginal framework. This manual is meant to respond to this identified gap, providing tools that speak to the needs of rural Aboriginal communities.

The first phase of this project involved forming a provincial advisory committee and hiring two community co-researchers in rural areas, who then established community advisory committees in their local areas. The next phase involved using community-based research (CBR) to get input from community stakeholders on what resources and information would be helpful in preventing youth sexual exploitation in rural areas. The third phase involved taking the information from research participants and translating it into the content of this manual. Because the range of issues that emerged in the interviews and focus groups were so broad, the project team prioritized and narrowed down key content areas. Thus, the outcome of the research is not a report of what the participants said but manifests the findings in the form of this resource. As outlined above, the manual was also informed by previous research (JIBC, 2002, 2006), which is quoted extensively throughout the following pages.



## ETHICS REVIEW PROCESS

This project was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Review Committee at the Justice Institute of BC. The JIBC's ethics policies adhere to the guidelines followed by most educational institutions in Canada: the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics, 1998). Through this review process, the project was deemed to uphold standard ethical guidelines for all aspects of the research, including obtaining consent, ensuring minimal risk to participants, and maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of participants.

In addition, the research team, community advisory committees, and provincial advisory committee were mindful of the ethical concerns particular to the issues explored in the project. Members of the community advisory committees were called upon to identify any local concerns or areas of sensitivity, which were then taken into account in carrying out the interviews and consultations for the project. These local community concerns were also considered during the writing of the manual.

*Historically, Aboriginal people have largely been left out of the process of research as collaborators or experts, and have instead been the objects of study for non-Aboriginal academics or professionals. As an Aboriginal researcher, I see CBR as a powerful tool for bringing a diversity of voices together to share in the process of creating new tools for our communities. It is especially useful when working on challenging issues like violence and youth sexual exploitation because it allows us, as Aboriginal people, to have a say over how our stories are told. CBR supports the self-determination of our communities by giving us the tools to create resources that we want to see, rather than having outside experts determine our needs for us. — Sarah*



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## COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH

Community-based research was used in developing this manual, to ensure that the content grew out of the diversity of needs and experiences in rural Aboriginal communities across BC. CBR provides a method of ensuring that resources such as this are not created by so-called experts but by a collaboration between diverse community stakeholders, youth, and professionals, creating knowledge that is relevant to the communities' needs and interests (Gibson et al., 2001). Community-based research recognizes local knowledge systems as valid on their own terms, and “views them as contributing to a larger understanding of the world and the place of humans in it” (Fletcher, 2003).

For this project, the community-based research involved several steps:

- Hiring and training co-researchers in two rural Aboriginal communities (their role is explained in more detail below).
- Forming local advisory committees, who then developed the research questions and other aspects of the research methods (outlined below).
- Gathering information through focus groups and interviews in two rural communities, as well as with key stakeholders across the province.
- Mapping and summarizing the themes emerging from the interviews and focus groups. Sarah, Toni, and Roberta created thematic summaries. Interviews and focus groups were not transcribed because the outcome was not intended to be a report of what was said but an integration of the recommendations, stories, and emerging themes into this manual.
- Prioritizing the content areas and creating an outline for the manual, including specific exercises that could be included. Sarah, Toni, and Roberta had a day of brainstorming, facilitated by Carrie Reid.
- Writing the manual. Sarah worked with Caroline White from the Justice Institute of BC to refine the initial draft.
- Editing and revisions, including feedback and input from the research team, community advisory committees, provincial advisory committee, and several key readers with specific content knowledge.



Community-based research often has some form of action as a project outcome, in order to link the research with community change. The input of this project's research participants was limited in the sense that the outcome of the project was already established from the start; the goal was to create a community resource. The creation of this manual is itself an action outcome, one that will have far-reaching impact through its use in rural communities across BC. An additional possible outcome extending beyond the scope of this project could be training, which several of the research participants identified as a community need.

### **Community partnerships**

Partnerships were developed with small groups of community stakeholders in two rural communities who were interested in addressing the issue of youth sexual exploitation. The communities were chosen because of their previous work on this issue as well as other youth-focused initiatives in the areas. They also stood out because of the willingness of the service providers and concerned individuals to sit on an advisory committee for this project. One of the community advisory groups chose not to be named because of concern over a possible backlash from community leaders if they knew that issues of abuse were being discussed at a provincial level. We respected this decision and allowed the partners to remain anonymous.

The advisory groups determined the questions for the interviews and focus groups, developed a list of potential interview participants, and provided feedback on a draft of the manual. The advisory groups included both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working and living in these areas. They included counsellors, youth group facilitators, educators, police officers, program coordinators, and representatives from local Band offices. In both communities, the co-researchers invited members of the local Chief and Council to either sit on the project advisory group or let us know if they had any concerns, but no concerns were brought forward.

A provincial advisory committee was also formed, primarily made up of representatives from the government ministries that are part of the Assistant Deputy Ministers' (ADM) Committee on Prostitution and the Sexual Exploitation of Youth, which funded this project. Representatives also came from other stakeholder groups, such as the Justice Institute of BC, provincial organizations working with victims of violent crime, and groups or individuals providing services to sexually exploited youth. The provincial advisory committee also provided input into the project goals, research methods, research questions, and content of the manual.



## Community co-researchers

Two community co-researchers were hired to support the research: Toni Williams and Roberta Mowatt. The co-researchers were responsible for forming the community advisory groups, and were involved in all aspects of the project, including drafting the content of this resource. Both Toni and Roberta are Aboriginal women who already had some experience working on youth issues, including initiatives to prevent youth sexual exploitation. For this project, they worked primarily within their own local community but also met several times to work collaboratively, once at the start of the project and again after the research was completed, to prioritize and draft the content of the manual.

## Research questions

The questions for the community-based research focused on the skills, information, and resources that would be helpful to people working to address sexual exploitation in rural communities. The community advisory groups provided input into the question guides, and although a few questions asked specifically about sexual exploitation, it was agreed that previous research (JIBC, 2006) provided a thorough understanding of exploitation in rural communities from which to draw.

The research questions included:

1. How can youth begin to safely talk about difficult issues such as violence or abuse?
2. What would need to happen to make healthy dialogue about difficult issues possible between youth and their peers?
3. What are some of the factors that increase/decrease the risk of youth becoming sexually exploited?
4. How can youth support their friends and family members to be safe?
5. What are some of the factors that affect risk-taking behaviour among youth?
6. What are the factors in your community that impact the community's ability to respond to sexual abuse and exploitation?
7. Can you think of a time when someone/a group of people took a stand against violence or abuse in your community? (they pressed charges, called the police, held a community meeting, formed a task force ...)
  - a. What was the result/what happened afterward?



## Research participants

A total of 60 people were interviewed for this project, including 10 key informants from across the province and 50 people from the two partner communities. The key informants included people working specifically on rural and Aboriginal youth issues, both within government and at the community level. Most of these participants worked and lived in rural communities and were Aboriginal.

The research participants were not intended to represent or to speak for people in all rural Aboriginal communities, but to provide a diversity of perspectives to inform the creation of this manual. One recognizable gap in this research was the lack of lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirit, transgender, and queer (LGBTSTQ) research participants. By supplementing the research interviews with information from other sources, however, the manual will address some of the concerns that might have been raised by these missing voices. It is recommended that specific research be done to address the support needs of LGBTSTQ youth in rural Aboriginal communities.

Two focus groups were held in each of the partner communities, one for youth and one for service providers. A list of potential participants was developed by the advisory committee members, and the focus groups were organized by the community co-researchers. Participants included Aboriginal youth, community members, service providers, elders, and Aboriginal professionals who work on rural needs and youth issues. Individual interviews were also conducted by Sarah Hunt to ensure that participants had the opportunity to participate confidentially outside of a focus group setting.





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## FOCUS ON YOUTH ISSUES

The focus of this project is on addressing specifically the sexual exploitation of youth. The very complex issues surrounding adult sex work, which are often talked about in relation to youth sexual exploitation in other reports or resources, are not addressed in this manual.

Although some exercises in this manual can be used with young people of various ages, the focus is primarily on youth (adolescents) rather than children. Issues of child abuse and child exploitation are closely related to youth sexual exploitation, and prevention efforts should take this into account. The project advisory groups have identified the need to focus specifically on youth, however, because of the unique developmental needs and risk factors they face. Having said this, no clear age limits are placed on the category of “youth”; it is up to individuals and communities to define this population.

The definition of “youth” may vary depending on whether a legal definition, the cut-off age for services at an organization, provincial child care legislation, or an individual youth’s identity is being referred to.

The Criminal Code of Canada includes a number of sexual offences against people under the age of 18 (explained further in Section A). In BC, the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) provides services for sexually exploited youth under the age of 19. The cut-off age for youth services at nongovernment agencies can range from 19 to 35.



## FOCUS ON LOCAL COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

Rather than prescribing one approach for all rural Aboriginal communities across BC, this manual focuses on helping communities take action at a local level with an approach that makes sense to them. By building local skills and strengths, and creating a vision for the community, relevant resources and activities can be sustained. Youth in each community in BC should be involved in deciding what their needs are and how they want to be involved in addressing sexual exploitation and related issues.

Many solutions have been created by government bodies, outside “experts,” or other professionals that simply do not work for First Nations people. Success and healing must not be measured by outside standards but by each community’s own definition of wellness, within the context of their own culture and history. One key component of building a stronger future for Aboriginal people is creating solutions that work at a local level, developing the self-determination of individuals and communities. Mohawk activist and scholar Patricia Monture-Angus writes in *Journeying Forward: Dreaming First Nations Independence*:

***Self-determination is principally, that is first and foremost, about our relationships. Communities cannot be self-governing until members of those communities are well and living in a responsible way. It is difficult for individuals to be self-determining until they are living as part of their community. (Monture-Angus, 1999, p. 8).***

*Over the past few years, I’ve had the opportunity to attend national conferences of people working to prevent youth sexual exploitation. At these gatherings, I saw that BC is quite unique in supporting community-level initiatives rather than putting all of the ADM Committee’s funding toward one central awareness or prevention campaign, as was the case in other provinces. In my experience (and I may be biased, since I work at the community level), this has allowed for more diversity in the types of programs, resources, and events being offered, as they speak to different community realities. Educational initiatives are more meaningful because they are shaped by the geography, history, pressing issues, cultural practices, and other diverse factors shaping the lives of youth across the province.*

— Sarah



This localized approach that focuses on strengthening relationships and community capacity is in line with upholding Aboriginal people’s right to self-determination, and will lead to stronger futures for the next generations of Aboriginal youth.

The tools in the sections that follow focus on developing awareness and education with individual service providers (the intended audience of this manual), who can then deliver educational activities with youth, families, and the broader community.

This manual does not cover the larger structural changes that must take place within Canadian legal systems and the criminal justice system, at the level of government and Canadian society in general. There are many attitudes, belief systems, and institutional inequities that also contribute to the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal youth. Although we cannot address those issues here, we know that others are taking up this important work.

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## CONTINUUM OF SERVICES: FOCUS ON EDUCATION

A continuum of services is needed to address the sexual exploitation of youth in communities across BC (ADM Committee, 2000). This continuum was described in the *Innovative Ideas* manual (JIBC, 2002) as having six key areas:

- **Global prevention strategies**, including policies to prevent the abuse of youth, education, housing, employment, public awareness, and healthy alternatives for at-risk youth
- **Targeted prevention**, including support for families, programs targeted towards high-risk youth, professional training, mentoring programs for at-risk youth, counselling for youth in need of support, and residential drug and alcohol treatment
- **Harm reduction**, including “bad date” databases, supportive police protection, HIV prevention, needle exchange, STD testing, street outreach, and emergency shelters
- **Crisis intervention**, including outreach to exploited and street-involved youth, mental health services for exploited youth, professional training for health care workers, and suicide prevention and intervention services



- **Programs to assist leaving**, including programs for commercially sexually exploited youth to support them as they leave, reconnect programs, education and training programs for exploited youth, and financial support for youth who are leaving exploitative relationships or situations
- **Programs to assist healing and reintegration**, including ongoing economic assistance, life skills training, and ongoing emotional and psychological support

This manual focuses on the first two elements of the continuum, global prevention strategies and targeted prevention. In order to support prevention work in rural communities, the focus is on building the knowledge, skills, and organizational structures used by service providers to prevent sexual exploitation.



A:

# Sexual Exploitation: Information and Strategies





## A: SEXUAL EXPLOITATION: INFORMATION AND STRATEGIES

Information from a provincial study published in 2000 indicated that Aboriginal youth were disproportionately involved in sexual exploitation. Participants said that the underlying issues for Aboriginal youth differed in some significant ways from those relating to non-Aboriginal youth (ADM Committee, 2000). Key informants in the study said that youth from both rural and urban areas were being exploited, but that in smaller communities, sexual exploitation was less visible. In some cases, the exploitation was completely hidden from all but those directly involved and a small number of front-line workers. Although statistics on sexual exploitation are difficult to estimate, the study indicated that between 14 and 60 percent of sexually exploited youth in BC communities were Aboriginal, depending on the community.

Since that time, little additional research has been done to explore the nature of sexual exploitation in rural and isolated communities. No research has specifically looked at sexual exploitation on First Nations reserves in BC. As mentioned earlier, however, through the interviews for this project and previous community-based research projects, service providers and youth in rural communities across the province have reiterated that Aboriginal youth in rural areas continue to be at particular risk of sexual exploitation, both by local offenders and by predators from outside the community. The nature and types of exploitation in rural areas are often very different from those in urban centres, and will be explored in detail in the pages that follow.

Before we go on to present more specific information about this issue, it may be useful to review the range of sexual exploitation offences.



## CRIMINAL SEXUAL OFFENCES AGAINST YOUTH

In Canada, the age of consent to sexual activity is 16 (Section 150). The age of consent for anal sex is 18. It is a crime for an adult to engage in sexual activity with someone under the age of consent, unless both people are close in age and there is no relationship of trust or dependency.

The abuse of youth under age 18 involving one or more of the following situations is also a crime:

- Money, transportation, shelter, clothing, or other goods or services are exchanged for sexual acts (Section 212).
- Youth engage in sexual relationships with adults in positions of trust, authority, or dependency (Section 153).
- Youth are involved in the creation of pornography (Section 163).
- Youth are recruited on the Internet to engage in sexual relationships with adults, including posting nude photos of themselves (Sections 172.1 and 163.1).

This section contains a brief summary of information in the *Criminal Code of Canada* (CCC) on issues of sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and the age of consent. For more information, you can view the full *Criminal Code of Canada* online at the Department of Justice website: <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/C-46>

In all of these cases, the offences are against the law regardless of whether the young person appears willing to participate. In BC, anyone under 19 is considered a child by the provincial government, so services for sexually exploited youth are extended to those up to age 19.

Although the term “sexual exploitation” is commonly used to include all of the situations described above, it is officially used in the *Criminal Code* only in Section 153; other terms, such as “luring” and “prostitution,” are used for the other offences. It is important to know the scope of both legal and community definitions of sexual exploitation. Most cases of sexual exploitation go unnamed by youth, in part because they do not have the language to know that what is happening to them is exploitative





## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Sexual exploitation:** The exchange of sexual acts with youth under age 18 for anything of consideration, including money, transportation, shelter, food, clothing, gifts, drugs, or alcohol. It also includes adults in positions of trust or authority (such as teachers or sports coaches) having sexual relationships with youth under age 18.

**Luring:** Communicating online (via the Internet) with a young person believed to be under 18 years of age for the purpose of committing a sexual offence, including (but not limited to): sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual touching, and abduction.

**Prostitution:** The exchange of sexual acts for money or other agreed-upon goods or services, involving persons over the age of 18. Also known as “sex work.”

**Trafficking of children and youth:** The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of a child or youth for the purpose of exploitation, even if it does not involve coercion, deception, abuse of power, or other characteristics of adult human trafficking

and that the perpetrator is violating their rights. Recent research confirmed that “sexually exploited youth may not recognize that they are being exploited, or that it is a form of abuse. Youth [in the research] did not always think exchanging sex for things like transportation or shelter was the same as exchanging money or goods” (Saewyc et al., 2008).

Youth are sometimes sexually exploited by human traffickers. Human trafficking has been a crime in Canada since 2005 (Section 279 of the *Criminal Code*). To engage in human trafficking means to recruit, transport, transfer, receive, hold, or hide a person, or exercise control, direction, or influence over a person’s movements, for the purpose of exploiting them or helping to exploit them. In keeping with the Palermo Protocol, “there is no requirement for coercion, force, deception, abuse of power or a position of vulnerability in order for child trafficking to have occurred” (UNICEF, 2005, p. 35).

It is also a crime for someone to benefit from human trafficking, such as those who buy services from a trafficked person if they know that the person is being exploited (Section 279.02 of the *Criminal Code*). Withholding or destroying someone’s identity or travel documents is also a crime (Section 279.03). No one can consent to being trafficked.



The sexual exploitation of children and youth is an internationally recognized issue impacting communities across the globe. In recognition of the need to protect children and youth from this form of abuse, the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* includes the following statements about protecting children and youth from sexual exploitation. It calls on governments (State Parties) to:

- ... protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:
- (a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;
  - (b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;
  - (c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

In addition, the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography* recognizes that girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and that eliminating the occurrence of sexual exploitation requires a holistic approach that addresses the contributing factors for high-risk groups, including poverty and gender discrimination.

Countries that agree to the *Optional Protocol* (including Canada) are required to take all feasible measures to ensure that assistance is offered to victims of child sexual exploitation. Such assistance includes their full social reintegration and their full physical and psychological recovery.

The UN *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* (one of two protocols referred to jointly as the Palermo Protocols) includes the following statement about the exploitation of children and youth (under age 18) as it relates to trafficking:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article.



## EXPLOITATION OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH

In 1999, national consultations were held with more than 150 sexually exploited Aboriginal children and youth in 22 communities across Canada. Conducted by two experiential Indigenous women, this study resulted in the report *Sacred Lives: Canadian Aboriginal Children and Youth Speak Out about Sexual Exploitation* (Kingsley and Mark, 2000). The report stated that “the illicit nature of commercial sexual exploitation prevents ‘hard’ statistics, but there is a widespread consensus among community organizations, service providers, and front line agencies that Aboriginal youth participation in the sex trade is increasing.”

Through research such as this, as well as through community-level advocacy and education, the issue has been recognized at a national level through the Federal Committee against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth. Since 2007, the committee has focused specifically on addressing the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal children and youth. Chaired since 2005 by Senator Roméo Dallaire (previously chaired by Senator Landon Pearson), the committee works with politicians and community representatives to address this issue at a national level (Dallaire, 2009).

During recent interviews and focus groups across BC (JIBC, 2006), participants consistently reported that Aboriginal youth represent a large number of the individuals being sexually exploited. These findings were supported by a recent study of surveys conducted by the McCreary Centre Society with more than 1,800 street-involved youth (including more than 500 sexually exploited youth), which found that Aboriginal youth represented one-third to one-half of the sexually exploited youth (Saewyc et al., 2008). Additionally, reports from ECPAT International indicate that the age of Aboriginal children entering the commercial sex trade is falling, and that Aboriginal youth are disproportionately victimized through commercial sexual exploitation (ECPAT website).

Thought to be related to the exploitation of Aboriginal youth are the high numbers of Aboriginal girls and women who continue to go missing at an alarming rate, from rural and urban areas across BC and nationally (NWAC, 2007; Sethi, 2007). In Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, as well as in northern BC on Highway 16, the reality facing Aboriginal communities remains consistent: Aboriginal women and girls are being targeted for violence. Some community members have said that over a 30-year period, the number of missing and murdered girls and women along the isolated roads of Highway 16 exceeds 30 (*Highway of Tears Symposium Recommendations Report*, 2006).



Although incidents of missing girls and women are not always directly linked to sexual exploitation, this added layer of vulnerability puts Aboriginal girls at heightened risk of exploitation.

None of the participants in the research for this manual said that they had heard of youth from their communities being “trafficked,” but the issue of missing girls and women was a concern. There was a general sense that increased education about trafficking would help community members identify whether it has happened, or what it looks like in a rural context.

## EXPLOITATION IN RURAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

Residents in rural and isolated areas are more vulnerable to various forms of violence because limited availability of transportation, technology, and access to services that are largely concentrated in urban centres. Participants in a 1998 study of violence against women in rural BC communities suggested that violence against girls and women “was rooted in poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, geographic isolation, economic impact of living in a resource-based economy, sexism and patriarchal assumptions about the role of women, socialization of children, and women’s challenges to gender-ascribed roles” (Jiwani, 1998).

Statistics from the 2006 Census of Canada data show that 46 percent of Aboriginal people in Canada lived in rural areas (as opposed to only 19 percent of non-Aboriginals) (INAC, 2006). In BC in 2003, 37.1 percent of the on-reserve population lived in rural areas, 6.3 percent lived in remote areas, and 15.1 percent lived in special access zones (INAC, 2005). Youth living in reserve communities may face additional barriers, as many rural and remote reserves experience a lack of adequate housing, support services, and many other resources.

### GEOGRAPHIC ZONES

**Rural:** A zone where a First Nation is located between 50 km and 350 km from the nearest service centre having year-round road access.

**Remote:** A zone where a First Nation is located over 350 km from the nearest service centre having year-round road access.

**Special access:** A zone where a First Nation has no year-round road access to the nearest service centre and, as a result, experiences a higher cost of transportation. (INAC, 2005)



Although some support services are available for victims of violence in rural BC communities, including victim service programs and specialized counselling, recent research has found a lack of services available to Aboriginal victims in rural and isolated areas of the province (Harper, 2006; Pascoe, 2003).

Research has also shown that many of the Aboriginal youth who are sexually exploited in urban areas are originally from smaller rural and reserve communities (ADM Committee, 2000; Kingsley and Mark, 2000; JIBC, 2006).

*During the interviews for the previous research project on violence and sexual exploitation (JIBC, 2006), service providers and community members in rural areas said that one of the biggest barriers to addressing sexual exploitation was the denial that the problem existed in small communities. Because there is no visible street-level sex trade, the nature of sexual exploitation in rural areas is not as easy to identify. In the past few years, I have heard many stories from people working to shatter these myths by breaking the silence at all levels, including community leaders, parents, elders, and youth.*

— Sarah

In the community-based research we conducted for this and previous projects (JIBC, 2002, 2006), we spoke to Aboriginal youth and their adult allies about factors contributing to sexual exploitation in their lives and communities. Research participants talked about some of the ways in which youth are being exploited within the community. Typical situations include youth partying with adults who give them drugs or alcohol in exchange for sexual favours, as well as the use of “rape drugs” that have been slipped to the youth without their knowledge. In many cases, the youth feel ashamed because they do not remember what happened to them. The sexual assaults may not be reported or may be seen as normal (or normalized) because other youth and community members condone them. In these and most other situations, there is no formal exchange of a sexual act for money, so it is not easily identified as exploitation. In other situations, there may be a more explicit agreement, such as when a youth is hitchhiking to a neighbouring town and the person who picks the youth up demands a sexual favour in return.



Because of the nature of small communities, in which everyone knows each other and many people are related, sexual exploitation may occur within a complex web of relationships and intergenerational patterns of abuse. This additional layer of complexity makes it difficult for the exploitation to be named, and for the youth to seek support.

Research participants also talked about the risks youth take when travelling between small communities, or from rural areas to larger towns or cities. Despite a lack of formal transportation, rural youth are reported to be very mobile. When they get to a town or city, they may be stuck without a place to stay and may end up being targeted by someone who gives them a place to stay but then expects sexual favours in return. In fewer cases, youth may be targeted by a recruiter who gets them involved in the street-level sex trade. Many of the examples of exploitation described by community members were less organized and less recognizable as sexual exploitation, however, because no formal exchange took place. Examples included youth being given drugs or alcohol and waking up to find that they had been assaulted, or being brought to a party where they were pressured into engaging in sexual acts and were given drugs or alcohol in the process. Male and female youth who are travelling between communities are also at risk of other forms of victimization and violence that are not linked to sexual exploitation, including violence at the hands of other youth.

Although participants said that the people who sexually exploit youth are primarily adult males, it is possible for youth to exploit other youth, and also for women to exploit youth.



## OFFENDERS FROM WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Sexual exploitation does not occur only when youth leave their community; youth also suffer exploitation by members of their own community, family, and peer group. Participants in previous research (JIBC, 2006) and research for this project said that there is resistance to identifying exploiters from within the local community. Because exploitation is just one form of abuse experienced by local youth, and because the abuse is often intergenerational or involves trusted adults, it is often a taboo subject that is difficult to address. During the research for this manual, participants provided examples of the types of sexual exploitation that youth are subjected to by members of the local community, including:

*“There’s two levels ... The predators within and the level of understanding with that, and then there’s the outside element, that we have so little understanding. And the two work very differently.”*

— *Community research participant*

- Older men dating teenage girls** Older adult males dating young girls is sometimes seen as normal and accepted by the community. One example is a small community in which a number of men in their 40s had teenage girlfriends as young as 14. These relationships may be accepted by other adults, including some of the youths’ parents. The adults in these relationships are breaking the law, however, if the youth is below the age of consent (16).
- Intergenerational partying** Even when parents don’t drink or do drugs, youth may party with their older relatives on a regular basis. Sexual encounters, including sexual assaults, that occur as part of this partying (either with relatives or friends of extended family members) are generally kept quiet and are not openly talked about.



- Sex, drugs, and alcohol** Girls are often invited to parties on weekends, where they are given drugs or alcohol. These parties may be hosted by adults or by older youth. In the research cited above, many girls talked about waking up knowing that they had had sex with someone but not remembering what had happened. Because it happens often and their friends may be involved, it goes unnamed and is not talked about.
- Hitchhiking** Youth may hitchhike into town or to a neighbouring community. A local person or a stranger offers a ride in exchange for sexual favours.
- Offenders in positions of power** High-status offenders (those in positions of trust and authority in the community) are able to get away with exploiting youth because of their position. People are afraid to speak out about the exploitation. If they do speak out, the victim may be blamed or suffer further violence as a result. This culture of fear allows the cycles to continue.
- Recreation and violence** Sports and other recreational activities often go hand in hand with violence. Examples include soccer tournaments and powwows, either in town or in a neighbouring community. Even if youth are trying to get involved in a positive activity, partying and violence are expected. Exploitation can often be part of this, especially peer-to-peer exploitation.





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## OFFENDERS FROM OUTSIDE THE COMMUNITY

Research participants also identified ways in which Aboriginal youth in rural areas are being sexually exploited by offenders from outside the local community. Many of the issues identified are consistent with findings from other research initiatives.

**The Internet and new technologies** Recent research by Merlyn Horton (2007) with the Safe OnLine Outreach Society (SOLOS) indicates that the “rapid introduction of broadband access to rural and First Nations youth in British Columbia” has increased the risk of sexual exploitation by online predators. Horton also writes that “within the Province of BC the luring of youth from isolated communities has been facilitated by online technologies and constitutes another realm of exploitation. Previously isolated rural communities are now accessible to online recruiters who can take advantage of youth who may not have the skills to recognize sexual recruitment” (Horton et al., 2007).

*“The Internet has changed a lot of things. There’s a lot of kids ... going off to meet their new best friend ... Sometimes they come back and sometimes they don’t come back.”*

These findings are consistent with what participants in the research for this manual and in the 2006 study reported. Aboriginal youth of all genders are meeting new friends and romantic partners online. They may or may not know the real age and other details about their new online friends. During the focus groups and interviews, examples were given of youth being sent bus or plane tickets to go to the city to meet their “boyfriend,” only to be forced into the sex trade.

— Key informant, JIBC, 2006



**Targeted recruitment** Research participants said that recruiters have been seen targeting Aboriginal girls walking along rural roads near reserves. Men in cars have followed youth as they walked alone, telling them about a party they want to take them to, making promises of cool things and cool people. In most examples, the youth did not get into the car, so it is difficult to know what the outcome would have been.

**Increased development, increased risks** Transient workers are common in rural areas, especially where there is new development or industry. Research participants said that workers (mostly men) move through rural areas with lots of money to spend, often wanting to party. Youth may be sexually exploited by these workers, and may end up being trafficked as well being recruited into a circuit in which they are moved from city to city.

*“The silence is one side of it but the other part is fear. People do not know how to talk about exploitation.”*

— *Community research participant*

*“It’s all a family thing. You have to hold up your family name, so not many people do stand up that much. Like people saying stuff that actually personally happened to them that is about violence, it kind of brings down their family name, so a lot of stuff doesn’t get said. So it’s pretty rare when people do stand up.”*

— *Youth research participant*

*“Our family has [spoken out] in the past, and for a long time, we were put on everybody’s shit list. And people won’t talk to us ... It’s really hard to stand up in the community, that’s for sure.”*

— *Youth research participant*



It is not just Aboriginal youth in Canada who are particularly at risk of sexual exploitation. Indigenous youth from rural areas across the world face similar situations. As described in a report about exploitation of children and youth in the Americas, “child exploiters prey on [vulnerable] children, portraying themselves as protectors and oftentimes providing children with food and shelter. Particularly if they are from rural areas, children often move to larger towns and cities. There they can be forced into prostituting themselves in order to survive, may get caught by procurers who ‘sell’ them to brothels or bar owners and entrench them in a world of debt bondage” (Ives, 2001). This description is of youth from Guadalajara, but the situation is very similar to that faced by youth from rural Canadian areas, who are targeted by recruiters for exploitation in the commercial sex trade.



## CONTEXT OF COLONIALISM AND RELATED ISSUES

When research participants talked about sexual exploitation for this project, a whole network of other issues emerged. Exploitation is just one form of abuse that Aboriginal communities are contending with, along with other issues and concerns. Sexual exploitation cannot be discussed in isolation, but must be seen in relation to the complexity of other issues. Research participants also stressed that although Aboriginal youth are struggling with many complex issues, including high rates of victimization, the path to healing necessarily involves focusing on their strengths, cultural teachings, and resilience. These issues will be explored in more detail in Sections B and C.

The current rates of sexual exploitation of Aboriginal youth in rural areas can be understood within the context of the complex history of colonization, which has involved various types of traumatic abuse, including physical, sexual, spiritual, and emotional. Even as Aboriginal communities continue to heal from these historical abuses, they are dealing with the ongoing repercussions of these atrocities, which include the violation of children and youth.

Colonialism has involved attempts to replace Indigenous values, worldviews, and educational methods with those of the European settlers, in part through educational systems such as residential schools: “Christian missionaries and the federal government developed a policy of eradicating Indian cultures through their children’s schooling into the dominant society” (Barman et al., 1987, p. 1). Some Indigenous people have said that the residential school has played a central role in the colonization of Indigenous people internationally: “Colonization works the same way everywhere, its policies geared toward displacement and elimination of Indigenous culture: genocide. The residential school, wherever it has appeared, has been part of that policy” (Fred, 1988, p. 11).

One consequence and tool of colonialism has been widespread violence and abuse in Aboriginal communities, particularly directed towards women, children, and youth. A national study in 2000 found that the mortality rate due to violence was three times higher for Aboriginal women than for non-Aboriginal women, a rate that rose to five times higher for Aboriginal women aged 25 to 44 (Health Canada, 2000). Recent research also indicated that Aboriginal women were five times more likely to experience violence than non-Aboriginal women (Dion Stout et al., 2001). Statistics from 2004 indicated that Aboriginal people were three times more likely than non-Aboriginal



people to be victims of violent crime, specifically sexual assault, robbery, and physical assault (Statistics Canada, 2004). In the same study, Aboriginal women were 3.5 times more likely to be victims of spousal violence than non-Aboriginal women, and alcohol was found to be involved in almost half of Aboriginal spousal violence, compared with one-third of non-Aboriginal cases.

Aboriginal youth are particularly vulnerable to violence and abuse. The 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) reported that risk of violent victimization was highest among young Aboriginal people aged 15 to 34, whose rate was about 2.5 times higher than the rate for those who were 35 years or older. Suicide rates among Aboriginal girls were found to be eight times the national average of non-Aboriginal adolescent girls (National Forum on Health, 1997). The sexual exploitation of young boys and girls must be seen within this larger context of violence and abuse, as it is just one form of abuse faced by Aboriginal youth today.

Aboriginal youth are also involved in the justice system at higher rates, as they are almost eight times more likely to be in custody compared with their non-Aboriginal counterparts (Latimer and Foss, 2004). This early involvement in the justice system creates a barrier to the reporting by youth of violence against them, as they do not see police and other justice officials as supportive or safe.



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## PRESSING ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The following pressing issues were identified by research participants:

**Violence as the norm** Normalized violence was a thread woven through many of the stories we heard during this research, as well as through the research for the earlier report (JIBC, 2006). Some youth said that violence was an expected part of everyday life, that it’s “just the way things are.” Research participants also said that most abuse goes unnamed and unseen. Abuse by family members or family friends was also talked about as a regular occurrence. These types of abuse are particularly difficult to address, because there are often serious repercussions for speaking out. Intergenerational abuse—the abuse of multiple generations of youth, their parents, and grandparents— as affected many Aboriginal people, and the cycles are very difficult to break.

Participants in this research told stories of fights breaking out at youth dances without anybody doing anything. The chaperones at the dances were part of the community, and rather than take a stand against the violence, they allowed it to continue at this supposedly “safe space.” We also heard examples of parents who perpetuated cycles of violence by bullying their children’s schoolmates, or other parents into keeping silent about their children’s actions.

**Reporting exploitation** Research participants said that if youth did speak out and report the violence, abuse, or exploitation against them, responses varied greatly and the victims were not always believed or supported. In one community, we heard that youth from “good families” may be sent away to protect the offender and to avoid bringing shame on the family.



In one positive story, a woman was inspired to talk about her childhood abuse after her own daughter disclosed that she was being exploited by a community member. Through this intergenerational “telling,” the two of them have gone to counselling together and have broken the cycles of abuse in their own family.

**Support for victims** Research participants said that it was important to have counselling from someone who had been there and who knew what you were talking about. This experiential perspective is, in many cases, more important than shared cultural background (i.e., they do not have to be Aboriginal but just need to empathize and understand what you’re going through). Youth are very good at detecting authenticity or “being real” in the people in their lives, and they value support people who can draw on personal experience rather than just “book knowledge.” While this personal experience is important, it also creates challenges for front-line workers, who must make sure they are not being triggered themselves when working with youth who have been victimized.

Adults who speak out about abuse they faced during childhood are often seen as support people for others who may want to talk about abuse. Although offering this informal support is important, it can be overwhelming for people who have neither training nor their own ongoing support. Participants said that being in this role can be quite isolating, especially in small communities.

**Transportation and mobility** Transportation is a huge issue in most rural and isolated communities in BC. Many communities simply do not have public transportation, forcing youth to take risks in order to get around. This lack of formal transportation does not stop them from leaving town, however. Youth participants talked about the need to travel to neighbouring towns for sports, to visit family, or just to hang out. Many youth have no choice but to leave their hometown to go to the doctor, young parents classes, or



counselling, or even to attend school. They are placed in a situation where they need to take risks with their safety in order to use necessary services. Cold and snowy weather often puts youth in desperate and vulnerable situations when they are trying to get from place to place.

**Differences in power and status**

Hierarchies of power and status, as well as the respect given to family names, impact youth in rural areas in ways that simply do not exist in larger cities. For example, members of one family might get hired in all of the local organizations, monopolizing jobs as well as having power over who can and cannot access resources. As one participant said, “My name means nothing here, but elsewhere it’s okay.” Only by leaving town are some people able to escape the stigma that is associated with their family name: “If you’re low on the scale, you have no voice.”

The status of offenders often plays a large part in how cases of abuse are handled. In some cases, there is simply not enough evidence to go forward with charges, but in other cases, it is perceived that the high-status offenders will never be brought to justice because of the power they hold. Regardless of whether this is the actual reason that cases do not move forward, it sends the message to victims in the community that it is okay for someone of high status to abuse people. It creates a general feeling that people in positions of power “watch out for each other” at the expense of those who are victims of violence and who do not have as much power in the community.

*“If you are part of the ruling clan, there is a chance you’ll get service. If you’re at the lower end of the spectrum, you’re not going to get services. The more isolated the reserve, the more ingrained the hierarchy.”*

*— Research participant, (VSCPD, 2007)*





**Substance use** It is no surprise that research participants reported that substance use was a huge factor in the lives of Aboriginal youth, regardless of their geographic location.

The use of drugs and alcohol is often linked to sexual exploitation. Youth become more vulnerable to abuse or exploitation because their defences are impaired. Addiction also makes people more desperate, and when they are high, youth will often make choices they would not otherwise make.

Substance use is also linked to dealing with trauma. Youth participants talked about drinking to “numb out.” When people are triggered, they often feel the need to use substances. In order to access support services or even recreational services, youth often need to be sober or clean, meaning that they may be excluded from activities and become isolated if they are using.

**Community competition** Participants talked about the reality that in some small communities, long-standing rivalries or competitions can get in the way of working together to support youth. Parents and other adults may play a role in maintaining and perpetuating bad feelings or animosity based on such rivalries. These complex relationships can lead to violence and can also prevent youth from accessing programs and services. One example involved youth from a small community where there are no recreational services or formal gathering places. The nearest youth centre is in a nearby town, but because of existing rivalries between the communities, the youth rarely access potentially available services.



**Confidentiality (or lack of it)** In small communities, counsellors and other support people encounter ethical issues that do not arise in urban centres and other larger communities. It is difficult for counsellors to maintain confidentiality for a number of reasons. Some support people are related to their clients, including both offenders and victims. It may also be difficult because of the location of the police station, counselling office, or other services, where other community members can see who goes in and out.

In the research, several ideas emerged about how to address these issues. One is to have a number of services located in the same building so that it is difficult to tell why someone is going into the office. It may also be possible to form support systems with professionals in neighbouring communities or other rural areas to ensure that community members can access confidential support if they request it. Service providers can also develop their own strategies for debriefing in a way that maintains confidentiality and also provides their clients with support.

**Hopelessness** It is well known that suicide rates are high for many rural First Nations communities. As mentioned earlier (page 33), suicide rates among Aboriginal girls are eight times the national average for non-Aboriginal girls (National Forum on Health, 1997). Youth may feel a sense of hopelessness, partly as a result of abuse, trauma, and isolation. A lack of opportunities and a perceived lack of ability to escape cycles of abuse contribute to the sense of hopelessness that youth may feel. To escape the pain, they may use alcohol and drugs, such as pot, cocaine, and methamphetamines. This general feeling of hopelessness was named by research participants as a central factor in making youth vulnerable to exploitation and other forms of abuse.



**Barriers to accessing services** Research participants talked about some of the barriers to accessing services in small communities. These include community dynamics in which agencies do not work well together or use preferential treatment for clients who are related to staff members. As well, if services are located in a neighbouring urban centre, there may be cultural or social deterrents to accessing services (such as racism or a lack of Aboriginal staff), as well as practical issues such as lack of transportation. Participants also called for increased youth outreach in rural areas, so that more youth receive services, not just those who go to central meeting places (youth centre, community centre, gym).

Increased training for local service providers was also called for, as small communities often lack these opportunities, which can strengthen accessibility for clients.

**Gender analysis** An expanded, more complex gender analysis is needed to address sexual exploitation of Aboriginal youth. Although it is true that most victims of sexual exploitation are female and most offenders are male, it is also true that many boys are victimized through sexual exploitation, physical violence, neglect, and other forms of abuse. Research participants said that some adult offenders have their own histories of trauma and childhood abuse, which need to be addressed in order for the cycles of abuse to stop. Although only a small number of victimized youth go on to become abusers themselves, the offenders that do have histories of abuse often need to heal their own wounds before they will stop abusing others.



Two-spirit and transgender youth (see glossary for definitions) often face heightened abuse in rural areas due to discrimination, including homophobia and transphobia. A 2007 report found that rural gay and bisexual male youth were more likely to report sexual abuse, and more likely to have attempted suicide in the past year (Saewyc et al., 2007). Services in rural areas often do not have the resources to provide adequate support for these youth.

Additionally, it is primarily women who are working on stopping exploitation and other forms of abuse in Aboriginal communities. Research participants called for men, both young and old, to take more responsibility for stopping violence and abuse at all levels.

*“There are many cases of homophobia on reservations, it’s taught by older generations to disapprove [of the] queer lifestyles, my parents are against queer people because it’s so uncommon and everyone is afraid of the difference.”*

*— Youth research participant (UNYA, 2004)*

This includes the creation of tools for young men to tell their stories and receive support. Resources and supports for girls are essential, but men and boys must be part of the solution too.

### **Systemic abuses**

Research participants linked the sexual exploitation, violence, and abuse of Aboriginal youth to systemic issues resulting from colonization. It is well known that widespread inequities exist, including systemic poverty, unacceptable living conditions, overrepresentation within the justice system, and power dynamics in First Nations reserve communities. These systemic issues must be taken up by government and community leaders in order to get at the larger factors impacting the rates of exploitation of Aboriginal youth.



**Shame and stigma** Research participants talked about a general sense of shame surrounding sex and sexuality, which contributes to a lack of open discussion. There is a particular shame and stigma surrounding abuse, which keeps people from talking about their experiences or asking questions. Boys who have been abused or exploited face additional barriers to receiving support. This is compounded by homophobia that boys may face if they have been abused by a man. Although it is desirable to eventually talk openly about sex and to get rid of this feeling of shame, it may be a long process. In the interim, one community worker talked about putting condoms in a bathroom or other private area so that youth can access them without everyone seeing, avoiding the shame or teasing that may result.

**Unhealthy adults** Adults play a large part in determining the health and safety of youth in a community. When adults are unhealthy, they often pass these patterns on to the children in their family and community. With sexual exploitation, violence, and abuse, adults must be held accountable, both as perpetrators of abuse and for setting a tone of unhealthy patterns.

*“The people they love are also the people who are hurting them.”*

*— Research participant (VSCPD, 2007)*

Youth who participated in the research clearly saw that unhealthy adults should be held responsible for partying with younger kids, supplying them with alcohol, and perpetuating the cycles of violence.

**Labelling** If a youth is labelled as “bad,” there’s no way out. “Bad” kids miss out on opportunities to go on trips, participate in recreational activities, or engage in other social activities; instead, the same kids may get picked again and again to go on trips or learn about new things. Youth called for opportunities to redeem themselves and to turn a negative experience into a learning opportunity, rather than getting labelled as a troublemaker.



**Appeal of outsiders**

Because of a lack of “things to do,” youth often want to get out of town. They may have an unrealistic or idealized view of life in the big city and want to get there at any cost. People from outside the community often have a lot of appeal for the youth, including seasonal workers or other transient populations. This makes youth vulnerable to exploitation, as they may take big risks with their safety in an effort to leave



B:

# Community Planning and Capacity Building







## B: COMMUNITY PLANNING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

*In my experience, it is important that service providers and other adults work on improving their own capacity to address sexual exploitation before going out to raise the awareness of local youth. Doing planning and skill building will help to put the supports in place for youth who start to talk about and name exploitation that is happening to them or their friends. I've worked with communities that were trying to deal with the impact of disclosures where the supports were not in place first, resulting in backlash against the victims and their families, as well as a lack of coordination among justice system representatives, service providers, and family members. Using a staged approach to education, beginning with yourself, your colleagues, and then the broader community, is recommended because it provides a stronger foundation in the long term.*

— Sarah

This section focuses on supporting the broad skills and planning structures that will provide service providers and other concerned adults with a foundation for addressing sexual exploitation. As with the rest of this manual, the topic areas were suggested by research participants from across BC. The information and activities are relevant to addressing general community capacity and planning for desired changes in the lives of future generations of Aboriginal youth.

Rural Aboriginal communities often have few services, resources, and formal organizations to address the needs of youth and families. Some communities have a population of 50 while others have 500, and they may simply not have many resources available locally. Within many communities and First Nations Bands, however, dedicated individuals are determined to make a difference. With little money or support, passionate youth, adults, and elders are working to create a better future for their communities. This section is designed to support the efforts of people working with youth in rural communities, regardless of the amount of formal resources available.

Individuals can make a huge difference, especially in small communities, but, as the saying goes, “it takes a village to raise a child.” Success in changing attitudes and unhealthy cycles cannot be realized without the support and involvement of a network of community members. A variety of tools have been included here that speak to this



need for community mobilization as well as the skills and knowledge that the research participants requested.

Creating this foundation will lead to greater safety and increased understanding as communities move ahead with more targeted efforts to address sexual exploitation.

***“Community silence — that’s the worst enemy we’ve got.”***

***— Community research participant***

Service providers are encouraged to think about how they will work together to address this issue, what skills are available locally, what each person’s role is, and how the community can begin to address the norms that allow sexual exploitation to happen. A unique approach will be required in each rural community, including a willingness to work in partnership with neighbouring communities and service providers in nearby towns and cities to develop a network of informed adults across a larger geographic region in areas where communities are spread out.

These tools are designed to foster an approach that includes community needs as well as individual needs. Although services may be available to meet the needs of individual youth, research participants suggested that an approach is needed that is rooted in the needs of entire communities. Each community has a unique history, and also a unique vision of where it is going in the future. The resources here are meant to be adapted to fit this unique vision, to meet the local reality and the degree to which a community is ready to address the issues addressed in this manual.



## DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Traditionally in Aboriginal cultures, everyone plays an important part in the health and wellness of the community. Each person has a significant role in maintaining the systems that are needed for the community to survive and thrive. Today, some Aboriginal people feel that they are without purpose, because they do not have a sense of their role in the future of their people. Research participants said that in order to strengthen Aboriginal youth's sense of belonging and connectedness to their community, we must instill in them a sense of responsibility. It isn't just youth who will benefit from this strengthened identity—every person, young and old, needs to know that they play a part in the circle of the community.

Some people may already feel that they have an important role and a responsibility to the community, through traditional song and dance, the creation of artwork or ceremonial regalia, storytelling ... or the modern roles of athletes, hip-hop performers, educators, or writers. Each person's role is vital, but we don't always tell one another so. And we also don't always feel important or connected on a daily basis.

Developing a culture of responsibility means recognizing that it is everyone's responsibility to take a stand against injustice. It means that rather than turning a blind eye to abuse or violence, people see that it is important to begin naming it and acknowledging that it is no longer acceptable.

### SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS: MENTORING

To create a more personal definition of what mentoring means to you, spend some time reflecting on these questions, or talk about them with other service providers.

- Who are the mentors in my community? In my life?
- What makes them role models for me?
- What qualities can I learn from them?
- How can I be a role model for youth in my community?
- How can I validate youth and make them feel valued?

#### Define "responsibility":

- What does it mean to be responsible?
- How do I see youth taking responsibilities in the community?
- As a mentor, how can I better support them in this?



It is not the role of children or youth to stop the abuse being perpetrated by adults. Adults must be role models in this regard. Adults can become leaders by talking to one another and to youth about important issues and refusing to remain silent when someone needs to speak out. They can also provide a positive example by working cooperatively with one another instead of competing for resources. As an adult who works to support youth in the community, you are a mentor to both the local youth and other adults in the community.

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## IDENTIFYING MENTORS

Mentors are people who others can look to for guidance in how they should conduct themselves in the community. They are people who model behaviours and perspectives that we can admire and aspire to. They are not perfect—they make mistakes just like everyone else. But they take responsibility for those mistakes and show us how to get through challenging times.

Mentoring relationships can also be more direct or formal, with individual youth matched with a particular mentor in the community. In these situations, a mentor acts as an experienced and trusted advisor or teacher, providing one-on-one advice and guidance to the youth.

Other ways of thinking about mentoring and responsibility include the following:

- Youth mentoring programs are a good way to teach youth leadership skills and responsibility. In schools, older youth can mentor younger youth, showing them the ropes at a new school or helping them with homework or other tasks.
- With elders and youth in the community, outline traditional roles and newer (modern) roles for community members. What have we lost over time? What have we gained?



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## SELF-REFLECTION: THE TEEN YEARS

These exercises are intended for service providers and others who are working with youth. The goal is to become more familiar with how your own experience may shape your view of adolescence, and how your perspective might impact your relationships with youth.

Think about your own experiences growing up, as you moved through childhood and adolescence. Your experiences are probably quite different from those that young people are dealing with today. Reflect on where you are coming from and how your past may shape the way you approach your work with youth. In developing a self-reflective practice, it is important to examine how your values, beliefs, and experiences impact your work with youth. It also helps to integrate new knowledge and to deepen your relationship with yourself and others in the community.

These are some questions to ask yourself as you examine your experiences as a teenager (adapted from Bell-Gadsby et al., 2006). You may wish to share them with your peers and then debrief afterward using the questions provided.

### **Self-reflection**

When you were a teenager...

- What music did you listen to?
- What was your favourite colour?
- What did you do for fun on weekends?
- Who were your best friends?
- How did you feel about school?
- What did you think you would do when you grew up?
- Who were the important adults in your life?
- What was the community like where you lived?
- What was a significant moment of loss in your childhood?
- What was one of the happiest moments of your childhood?



## VISUAL EXERCISE

Draw an image from the environment in which you grew up. If you grew up on the coast, you may want to draw the ocean. If you grew up near a river, you may want to draw a river with trees growing along the banks. Choose something that speaks to your memories of being an adolescent.

Next, write down a series of significant events from your childhood through adolescence that shaped who you are today.

### Debriefing questions

- How does your experience impact your work with youth today? Your work with parents?
- What are the strengths you bring to your work because of your experiences as an adolescent?
- What challenges do these experiences create?
- Remembering that our teenage experiences can trigger emotions in us, what are some of the ways that you could or do take care of yourself in your work?
- What strengths or positive qualities do others, such as friends or family, see in you?
- What are your blind spots or the gaps in your knowledge or experience?
  - What you know about yourself and others know about you
  - What you know that others don't
  - What you don't know but others do
  - What is not known to yourself or others

### SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS: SELF-CARE

- What self-care practices do you engage in?
- What areas of self-care could you strengthen or build upon?
- Who are the people in your life who you can depend on for support?
- Are there any issues in your personal life that may be impacted by your role as a healthy adult role model? How might you take preventative steps to support yourself in these areas?

When working with youth, it is essential to know your “blind spots”—yourself—as much as possible (for example, so that you don't get triggered and can be supportive).

**Note:** This exercise can also be used with parents to help them think about how their own experiences could shape the way they see their children.



## ROLE OF HEALTHY ADULTS

Healthy adults are key to increasing safety and wellness for youth. Even if a young person's parents or other family members are caught up in cycles of addiction or violence, the youth can be supported through creation of positive connections with a healthy adult in the community. Teachers, counsellors, aunts, and other adults play a significant role in providing stability and support.

When we talked to youth about the role of adults in their lives, they offered advice to adults:

- **Set boundaries:** “Don’t party with kids.”
- **Communicate:** “Ask your kids how their day was.”
- **Speak out** against abuse, violence, or injustice.
- **Stay connected.**
- **Support youth** instead of telling them what to do.
- **Advocate** for youth when they can’t do it for themselves.

To that list, previous research suggests that we should add the following:

- Be an ally.
- Take a stand against bullying.
- Name discrimination for what it is, including homophobic or racist beliefs.

Women often take a leadership role in speaking out against violence, but healthy men can play a particularly powerful role in changing attitudes. Men can talk to one another about how the expectations to be powerful or strong impact their lives. Exploring the norms and expectations placed on men helps to question the association between masculinity and aggression or violence. Men can also talk to one another and to youth about attitudes and actions towards women. This will show boys and young men that it’s okay to talk about these issues, and that violence and abuse is not acceptable.



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## EXPLORING SELF-CARE

Working on issues related to violence or sexual exploitation may have an impact on service providers, both personally and professionally. As you talk more about these issues, you may find that self-care becomes a necessary part of this work. Breaking the silence about unhealthy patterns is an important part of healing in Aboriginal communities, but it is also a difficult process, one that may evoke feelings that are unexpected. For Aboriginal people, it may be useful to explore a holistic view of wellness and health as they explore what it means to be a healthy adult role model in the community.

*“I still cannot have in my house any type of TV program that relates to any kind of sexual violence. It has to go off because my anxiety level starts to go up, which says to me, “You’ve been affected,” and the other part about that is once you’re affected, you can’t undo it.”*

*— Key informant (JIBC, 2006)*





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## HOLISTIC VIEW OF WELLNESS

- What is your definition of personal wellness?
- How does your personal well-being interact with your professional and community responsibilities?
- In a circle such as the one below, brainstorm the components of your own wellness plan. What do you do to take care of your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellness?
- What healthy people are part of your support system?



## PUBLIC SPEAKING AND FACILITATION SKILLS

Getting together to share information with others in your community is an important step in building the capacity to work towards common goals. You may want to host a meeting or workshop in your community—anyone can take the lead in such an initiative. Some research participants said that they did not feel confident about their public speaking or facilitation skills. Organizers and facilitators can make a strong team. If you do not feel comfortable facilitating a meeting, you could organize a meeting or workshop in partnership with someone who wants to facilitate. But if you want to build your public speaking and facilitation skills, here are a few resources and exercises to use as a starting point.

### PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Talking in front of a group can be scary for even the most experienced public speakers. If you are not comfortable with it, one of the main ways to build your confidence is to practise.

Ask a friend to be your audience, and prepare a practice session on something fun. Do a review of a movie you recently saw. Report on something you read in the newspaper. Pick something easy to start with, and ask your friend to listen. You may also want to have them ask you questions at the end. While you do this, stand up in front of them as you would be at a public event. You may feel silly doing this, but this is just to give you a feeling for standing up and talking out loud in front of someone.

Next, practise speaking on a topic that you might actually want to talk about in your community. Make notes on what you hope to cover in your presentation or meeting. Practise saying them out loud, first to yourself and then to friends or family members. Again, this may feel silly, but it will help you become comfortable with the material. Take a deep breath at the beginning of your presentation and remember that everyone feels nervous the first few times. Also prepare yourself for possible challenging questions and discussion topics, so that you won't be flustered or caught off guard. You could provide handouts with frequently asked questions (FAQ) or definitions, or bring in a guest speaker to address some challenging questions (such as a health service provider or RCMP officer, depending on the topic).



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## FACILITATION 101

If you are hosting a meeting, there are some general guidelines that you can follow:

- Come prepared with an agenda (see example below) or set of questions to guide the conversation.
- Acknowledge the territory of the First Nations in the area (it may be your home community or you may be originally from elsewhere) or follow other traditional protocols that are used in that area. Each community has its own protocols about public meetings. If you need more information, ask an elder about the appropriate way of opening and closing a meeting.
- If you think that it's appropriate, state your group guidelines at the beginning of the meeting. These might include respect, no cross-talking (talking quietly between two people when someone else is talking), and no interrupting. Depending on the type of discussion, you may also want to ask people to agree to confidentiality, to ensure that any sensitive details will not be shared outside the group.
- Ask the group to define their own guidelines or group rules for the meeting. This is especially beneficial when used as a tool of empowerment with youth or others who rarely get opportunities to create their own rules.
- Provide an outline for the meeting, or write a few main goals of the meeting on a flipchart or chalkboard. This will help keep the meeting focused on the main topics you hope to discuss.
- Welcome everyone and have people do a round of introductions.
- If you are facilitating the discussion, ask someone else to take notes for you. It is often distracting and challenging to try to do both at the same time!
- Don't be afraid to keep people focused on the topic at hand, or to guide the conversation back to the agenda. It is your role as the facilitator to guide the group through the discussion, and you can remind people of that as you ask them to move on to the next agenda item.
- If several people are talking most of the time, you may want to jump in at some point to ask whether anyone who hasn't spoken yet would like to contribute to the conversation.



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## SAMPLE AGENDA

1. **Welcome to the local territory or other protocol.** This could be done by a local elder or by the facilitator. If you need more information on what is appropriate in your community, ask a local elder.
2. **Round of introductions.** Ask each person to say a little bit about himself or herself. You might want to ask them to say something fun to introduce themselves if there are some people there who don't know each other. In a small community where everyone knows each other, you might want to start with a round of intentions, asking each person to say something they hope to bring to the meeting.
3. **Set group guidelines.** Ask the group to set some guidelines for the meeting based on the topic being discussed. Write the guidelines on a piece of flipchart paper or a chalkboard and ask the group to refer to them as needed during the meeting, particularly if difficult issues come up. You may want to make some suggestions, including no cross-talking (or talking on top of one another), keeping any personal stories confidential within the group, or using respectful language.
3. **Note taking.** If you want to keep a record of the issues that are covered at the meeting, ask someone to volunteer to take notes. It is often difficult for the facilitator to take notes while facilitating.
4. **Agenda items.** Go through the list of agenda items at the beginning of the meeting and ask whether the participants want to add any other items.
5. **Set the next meeting date.** Before the meeting ends, try to set the next meeting date. You may also want to ask whether anyone is missing from the group or whether additional people should be invited, depending on what the meeting is about.
6. **Closing circle.** As with the welcome, it may be appropriate for an elder to close the meeting. Otherwise, you may want to do a final round, asking each person to offer a closing thought before leaving. This can be a nice way of bringing the discussion to an end, especially if the meeting is about a difficult issue such as sexual exploitation.



## COMMUNITY PLANNING

Before moving ahead with awareness raising on sexual exploitation or other difficult issues, it is a good idea to do some groundwork first. This will prepare service providers and the community as a whole to deal with disclosures of abuse, questions from youth, potential backlash, or other issues that arise.

The dynamics of each community are unique. In some rural areas, there may be a number of programs and services for youth, and a willingness to talk about important or difficult issues. The local Chief and Band Council may be supportive of efforts to break unhealthy cycles. In other areas, however, there may be few or no services. Violence may be on the rise. Youth may have gone missing. And the local leaders may not see these issues as a priority. It is important to take the time to look closely at the local community situation to assess where the work is starting from.

The following activities will help to lay a foundation for more focused initiatives, and enable you to address sexual exploitation with some supports in place.



## ASSESSING LOCAL STRENGTHS AND RESOURCES

You may find it useful to map out the resources and strengths available in your community, as well as those in neighbouring communities. Essential services are often located in another town, and it is useful to keep your external partners engaged in discussions about community planning. Here is a list of possible services you will want to consider. Use this as a starting point, and expand it to fit your community.

Type of service	Who is responsible (name, contact info)	Location
Victim services (or other supports for victims of abuse)		
Counselling		
Police		
Safe housing/shelter		
Justice or court workers		
Information sharing		
Youth outreach		
Health care		
Transportation		



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## RESOURCES

### **Community readiness model**

This model, developed by Dr. Linda Stanley and Dr. Ruth Edwards in the United States, provides tools for assessing the level of readiness of a community to create change and implement prevention programming. Free copies of the community readiness handbook can be downloaded from the website.

[www.triethniccenter.colostate.edu/communityreadiness.shtml](http://www.triethniccenter.colostate.edu/communityreadiness.shtml)



## CREATING A COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP

Bringing people together around a common cause can lead to very powerful changes. When the collective strengths of a group of concerned individuals are pooled, efforts can move ahead with a common goal in mind. Sexual exploitation is a sensitive issue, and not everyone wants to talk about it. It may be useful to create a community action group to mobilize around the broader issue of youth safety and wellness, or to focus on violence prevention more broadly, or, if there is enough interest, to create a group specifically focused on sexual exploitation.

### TIPS FOR SETTING UP A COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP

The following information was adapted from *Taking Action: Setting Up a Community Action Network*, part of an online toolkit to address sexual exploitation ([www.jibc.ca/seytoolkit](http://www.jibc.ca/seytoolkit)). These are steps that the group might want to consider when setting up a community action group in the local community.

**Taking initiative** Communities across BC have used different leadership models in establishing community action groups to address sexual exploitation. Some have been led by local organizations coming together around the issue, such as front-line youth workers, concerned parents, and RCMP. Others have been initiated under the direction of the city council or at the request of local school officials or other youth-serving agencies. This is unlikely to be the case in small rural communities, so it may be more appropriate for the local Band Council to provide formal leadership for the action group.

To encourage your local Band Council to take the initiative in providing resources and administrative time for starting an action group, it is a good idea to make a presentation at an upcoming council meeting about the issue. You could also talk to a council member to see whether he or she is willing to raise the issue with other members.





**Who to invite** It is important to invite a broad range of interested individuals as much as possible, both locally and from neighbouring communities. This may include people in formal helping roles (victim service workers, police, counsellors), as well as concerned parents and youth. There are many benefits to being involved in a community action group, since networking and information-sharing opportunities arise on a regular basis. Encourage people to become involved by reminding them of these benefits, as they will probably be there on a voluntary basis, donating their time and energy to the group. In rural communities, you may have a small core group of people who attend regularly (even three or four people), with outside support people being involved in specific events or initiatives. If an organization is not able to send a representative, ask it to send some information and to commit to attending future meetings or to reviewing notes from the meeting. Try to include representatives from the following groups:

- Schools
- Police
- Local municipalities
- Nonprofits that deal with at-risk youth
- Local and neighbouring Band Councils
- Friendship Centres
- Other organizations working with Aboriginal youth
- Immigrant and refugee organizations, especially those working with women, youth, and children
- Drop-in centres or homeless shelters in nearby towns
- Victim service workers
- Health care providers
- Government ministries such as the Ministry of Children and Family Development, status of women, Aboriginal services
- Experiential and non-experiential youth, as appropriate (see below)



- Involvement of youth** It is important to discuss the involvement of youth within your group, including the ethical issues that may emerge when involving youth who have experienced exploitation as well as other youth in the community. For example, if youth have been exploited in the past, how will you ensure that their involvement does not retraumatize them? How will you ensure the emotional, physical, and spiritual safety of youth who speak out about this issue? Your group may choose to ask youth to participate in your event planning or general meetings, or you may choose to hold specific youth-focused events or projects. In any case, it is important to consider the dynamics in your community when deciding how and when to involve youth.
- Creating a mandate** Creating a mandate for your group will help determine the long-term and short-term goals and objectives, and the focus and limitations of your activities. Establishing a mandate may be a long process due to differences of opinion, experience, or belief systems between your members, and this is a good opportunity to seek a common ground upon which you will all work.
- Assessing knowledge base** It is a good idea to keep a list of your members, their organizational affiliations, and the particular skills and knowledge that they have. For example, identifying those with proposal-writing skills, knowledge of legal procedures, budget management, youth services, and media contacts will all be important during your project planning phase. These skills and knowledge may also help to determine the scope or focus of your projects.
- Splitting up the work** Talk with the other group members about their areas of interest or expertise. Rather than one or two people taking on all the work for an event or for awareness-raising activities, it can be helpful to outline how each group member will be involved. Duties may include:
- Fundraising
  - Legal issues
  - Event coordination
  - Media representation and outreach
  - Integrated services and housing
  - School outreach and liaison



**Funding** If your group wants to apply for funding, one or more people will need to take on the task of writing funding applications. These can be very labour-intensive and will need strong writing skills and patience. The group should support this person by offering to edit, give feedback, or write letters of support from their agencies to support the initiatives.

**Core funding:** Most community action groups run without any core funding. Most of the labour is voluntary, with some small grants being acquired to cover a stipend for the administrator of the group.

**Develop a community plan** See the attached worksheet for guidance on developing a community plan to create a solid framework for your group. It is important that everyone be involved in this process and that there be enough interest and energy to sustain the agreed-upon goals. For the first year or more, set small, realistic goals that your group can meet, given the amount of energy and time that you have. Allow yourself to succeed at the goals you set rather than trying to solve sexual exploitation altogether.

**Reassess on a yearly basis** As your network grows in numbers and experience, you will need to reassess the goals and community plan on a regular basis. Allow for the community plan to be a “work in progress” that is revised regularly. As your community’s level of awareness increases, the goals can move along the continuum from basic education to prevention and beyond.



## UNDERSTANDING INTERSECTING FACTORS

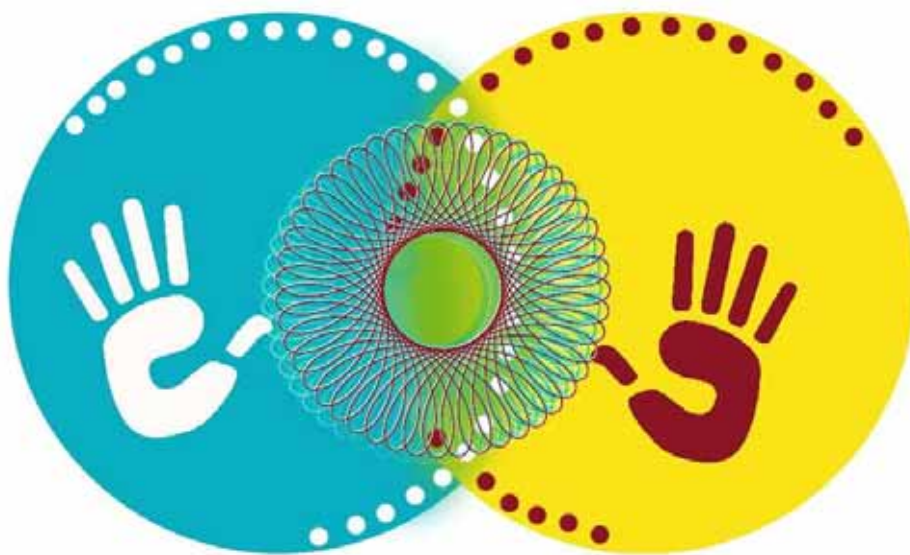
It is clear from the previous section on sexual exploitation (Section A) that there are many complex issues contributing to the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal youth in rural communities. Although the statistics indicate that Aboriginal youth and female youth are particularly at risk of exploitation, it is too simplistic to say that their vulnerability is a result of racial or cultural and gender discrimination. Instead of looking only at these two factors, it may be more useful to talk about how these and other factors intersect in the lives of youth to make them vulnerable to exploitation.

Issues of race, gender, geographic location, poverty, ability, and other factors all play a role in making individual youth vulnerable to exploitation. The use of an intersectional framework can illustrate how all of these factors must be considered in the creation of an approach to addressing the complex issues facing youth in rural communities.

### *What is intersectionality?*

*Intersectionality is a framework or analysis that “moves beyond single or typically favored categories of analysis (e.g., sex, gender, race and class) to consider simultaneous interactions between different aspects of social identity (e.g., race, ethnicity, indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, geography, age, ability, immigration status, religion) as well as the impact of systems and processes of oppression and domination (e.g., racism, classism, sexism, ableism, homophobia)” (Hankivsky and Cormier, 2009, p. 3).*

Here is a visual illustration to help us think about intersectionality:



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## MAPPING RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

With a group of community stakeholders (the community action group, if you have formed one), spend some time mapping out all of the pressing issues and factors contributing to the sexual exploitation of youth in your community. In one colour, map out your response to the following questions, which will help you identify factors that increase the risks faced by local youth:

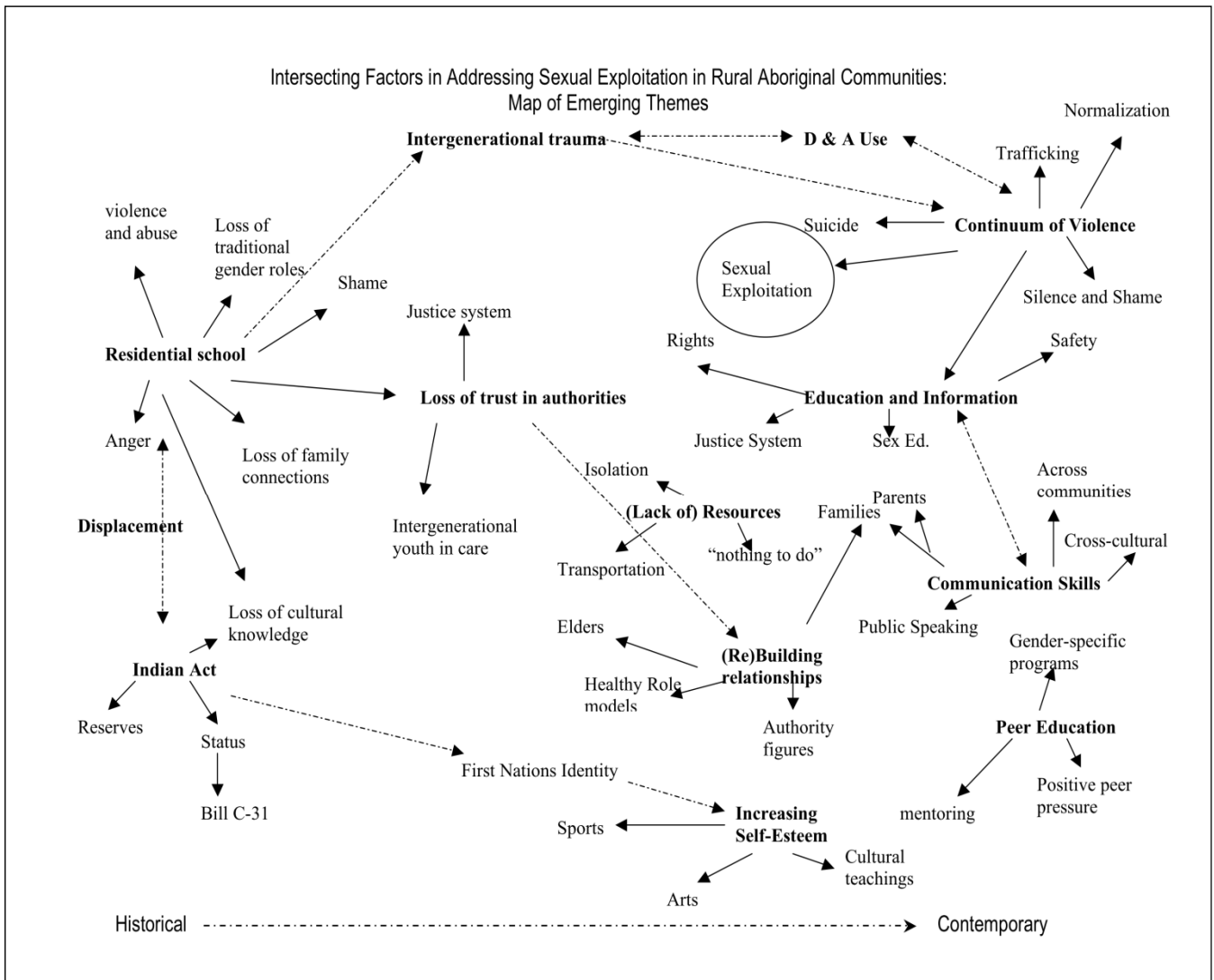
- What recent changes have made youth more vulnerable over the past few years?
- What are the community dynamics that prevent youth from getting help when they need it?
- Have there been any recent cases of violence or other forms of victimization that might be on everyone's mind (such as a recent death in the community)?
- What historical factors put youth at greater risk of exploitation?
- What other risk factors are present in the lives of local youth?

In another colour, map out your response to these questions, which will help you identify factors that might protect youth from exploitation:

- What cultural strengths and traditional teachings can local youth draw upon for support?
- What initiatives have youth taken leadership of over the past few years?
- What community events or activities have engaged the youth who don't usually participate? (For example, instead of having a sports event, organize a hip-hop workshop?)
- What recent developments have instilled pride in local youth?
- What resources do youth have in the community and in neighbouring communities for support when they need it?
- What is being done to keep youth safe in the community?
- What other factors contribute to the safety and protection of local youth?



## SAMPLE MAP OF INTERSECTING FACTORS SHAPING YOUTH SEXUAL EXPLOITATION



## COMMUNITY RESPONSE PROTOCOLS

As you raise awareness and encourage people to name exploitation or abuse that they have faced, it is important to first consider how the community will respond to disclosures. There have been many cases where this planning had not been done, and victims faced further violence when word got out that they had reported abuse against them (including sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse).

A community response protocol is a document that community stakeholders can develop to outline how disclosures of various types of offences against youth should be handled. The community may want to create a specific protocol for handling disclosures of sexual exploitation—what steps will be taken when youth go missing, and what measures should be taken to protect youth who speak out about exploitation by their own family members. Each situation will draw on similar resources from within the community and neighbouring communities, but will have a set of unique factors to consider.

It may be useful to bring together the service providers, police, representatives from Chief and Council, and representatives from local organizations (as well as those in neighbouring towns who serve your community) to draft an agreement on how disclosures can be handled safely and sensitively.

These are some questions to consider:

- Is there a safe house or other temporary safe shelter where victims can stay if they speak out about abuse? If there is no space in the community, is there a safe place nearby?
- What is the responsibility of each organization or individual service provider for dealing with disclosures? (Examples include representatives from the Ministry of Children and Family Development, police or RCMP, First Nations Band representatives, school counsellor, or probation officer.)
- How will confidentiality and safety be maintained?
- If the offenders are related to people in positions of power in the community, what steps will be taken to ensure that they do not receive preferential treatment?



- What is the community’s stance on sentencing circles and other traditional justice practices? What types of crime are they useful for, and what should they not be used for?
- Are there any existing tensions in the community that might get in the way of acting in the best interests of the youth? How will you work to put the needs of the youth first and work towards a common goal?
- Who are your allies and supports from outside the community? What is their role?

## DEVELOPING GUIDING PRINCIPLES

There are many ways to approach the issue of sexual exploitation, and each community’s approach should be guided by principles that make sense at a local level. Cultural and historical factors, including both strengths and challenges, should be taken in to account when addressing the issue in a sensitive and culturally appropriate way.

During focus groups with youth to develop a manual of innovative ideas for working with sexually exploited youth (JIBC, 2002), a number of key guiding principles were developed. These principles spoke primarily to the realities of urban, street-involved, and sexually exploited youth. Because these principles emerged from the needs of youth themselves, they have provided a solid foundation for designing and delivering services to meet the needs of sexually exploited and at-risk youth.

You may want to create your own guiding principles to create a foundation for the educational work on sexual exploitation in your community. It may not always be possible to meet the principles in every initiative, but they can serve as a good reminder of what the community is striving for.

### Examples of principles include:

- **Youth participation.** Youth should be involved in all aspects of decision making and program development and delivery that impact their lives. This can be accomplished by involving them on advisory committees and on boards of directors of local organizations. Training youth to develop and deliver peer education programs is another way to meet this principle.





- **Equity of access.** Youth should have equal access to all programs, regardless of their socio-economic status, geographic location, racial background, sexual orientation, ability, or any other factors in their lives.
- **Collective responsibility.** The community should develop a sense of collective responsibility to address the issue of sexual exploitation. It is up to everyone to exert effort to stop the abuse of youth, and there should be an opportunity for everyone to contribute, rather than leaving the job up to a small number of paid professionals.
- **Culturally specific programming.** Youth should have the option to access programs that meet their specific cultural backgrounds and needs, including gender-specific programs, programs for LGBTSTQ youth, and programs for youth from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.
- **Relational approach.** Youth should have the ability to develop lasting relationships with the people in their lives, including those in professional support roles (such as teachers, youth workers, and counsellors). Trusting relationships are often at the heart of supporting a youth through difficult times and experiences, including the disclosure of abuse or exploitation.





C:

# Supporting Healthy Youth Development





## C: SUPPORTING HEALTHY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

This section focuses on supporting all youth and families in developing confidence, self-esteem, skills, and knowledge. These efforts are aimed at preventing exploitation by building resilience and positive relational skills. There are many existing resources that focus on supporting the healthy development of Aboriginal youth. We have provided some here, along with specific examples that the research participants suggested.

By getting to know themselves and their peers better, youth can start to create their own sense of what “normal” should be, rather than just go with the legacy from previous generations. Youth must work at their own level and with their own individual worldviews, interests, and strengths. Some youth may face particular developmental challenges (because of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder [FASD], mental health issues, and post-traumatic stress disorder), and care must be taken to support their integration into the fabric of the community. Youth with developmental challenges are particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Participants in previous research suggested that age should not be the only factor in defining sexual exploitation, but that developmental age should also be considered (JIBC, 2006). The law does not take this into account, however.

Research participants said that recreational activities and employment opportunities are important for healthy youth development, but that both of these are limited in some rural areas due to lack of resources. Employment is an important way to make youth feel good about themselves. It teaches them about responsibility and gives them a chance to show leadership skills. Economic development is a large focus in some rural First Nations communities, and it is hoped that employment for youth in those areas will be made a priority.

Youth participants reported that often only the “good kids” get to participate in recreational or learning opportunities. In particular, they spoke about the reality that sometimes the same youth are chosen over and over to go on trips, play in sports tournaments, go to dances, or take part in other activities. Youth asked that the kids who are seen as “troubled” or “bad” be given chances to learn from their mistakes and redeem themselves so that they can also make use of opportunities that arise.



## STOPPING THE NORMALIZED CHAOS

Many Aboriginal communities across British Columbia are living with violence as the norm. How do communities begin to change the cultural norms that let violence be a part of everyday life? There is no easy answer to this question because violence and trauma emerge out of complex histories of colonization.

Youth are living with the consequences of these norms on a daily basis. Research participants from across BC have said that often youth are assaulted or abused but do not report it or talk about it, saying that “it wasn’t that bad.” Youth often say that violence and abuse are “just part of life,” and they may not even see that what is happening to them is abuse (JIBC, 2006).

Every community will have a unique path to stopping the ongoing cycles of trauma. A first step is naming things for what they are. Coming together with other people to reflect on the community’s attitudes towards violence and abuse can help to create a critical view. Start with those people who want to talk about the issues and who are open.

*“That’s why I think that a lot of the abuse that has occurred with me and my siblings and extended family was because there wasn’t that education piece. There wasn’t anyone creating awareness about it.”*

— *Community research participant*

*“The rate of violence and abuse and neglect is just ... just unbelievable. I live on a block where there are fifty-four kids and you just see it, you know what’s going on. And our kids talk.”*

— *Community research participant*



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## USING ARTS-BASED APPROACHES

The community advisory group members and research participants suggested that art can be a powerful tool for talking about challenging issues. Arts-based methods are very powerful ways of making programs and activities accessible to youth. If you are not very knowledgeable about artistic methods of engaging youth, that's okay! Service providers do not need to be experts in every aspect of youth engagement—instead, you can collaborate with people who do have skills in this area. Here are some ideas for using arts-based practices to shift the norms regarding abuse and violence.

### Theatre

Theatre of the Oppressed was developed in Brazil in the 1960s by Augusto Boal. Boal began inviting audience members on stage during theatre productions, allowing them to act out the part of any of the actors and to alter the outcome of the play. In doing so, he saw that “audience members became empowered not only to imagine change but to actually practice that change, reflect collectively on the suggestion and thereby become empowered to generate social action” (Paterson, 2005).

Use Theatre of the Oppressed to act out a situation of potential violence. This type of theatre enables the audience to interrupt the story, to play the part of a victim, oppressor, or other character, and to create a change in the outcome of the story. Invite a group of youth to think of a storyline in which oppression takes place through sexual exploitation. Have one group of youth act out the scene, and invite other youth (or community members) to interrupt the story by calling “stop” when they think someone is being oppressed. Have audience members step in and change the course of the action.

### The Healing Journey

A skit called *An Aboriginal Youth's Cry for Help* is available for download at this site. The skit is intended to be used by Aboriginal youth, to show how things could turn out differently if more people recognized abuse and could suggest ways to end it.

[www.thehealingjourney.ca](http://www.thehealingjourney.ca)



## **Street Spirits**

Street Spirits is a youth theatre group based in Prince George. You can purchase DVDs of the plays created by the youth participants by contacting them through their website.

[www.streetspirits.com](http://www.streetspirits.com)

## **Storytelling**

Have groups of youth, elders, and/or adults come together to brainstorm stories of the types of normalized chaos that occur in the community (be careful not to name names; think of historical examples instead). Ask the group what we can learn from the example. How could the victims in the stories have been better supported?

## **Video**

With the growth of online resources such as YouTube, many Aboriginal youth in small communities are making videos about important issues to share with the world. There are lots of youth-friendly editing programs available for creating short videos. Organizations such as ReelYouth are also available to come to your community to support youth in the creation of powerful and lasting media.

## **ReelYouth**

ReelYouth is an organization that has worked with Indigenous communities both nationally and internationally to help youth create videos about issues that matter to them. Watch some of the claymation videos made in Aboriginal communities in BC:

[www.reelyouth.ca](http://www.reelyouth.ca)

## **Sliammon First Nation (in partnership with YouthCo.)**

[www.reelyouth.ca/youthco.html](http://www.reelyouth.ca/youthco.html)





**Aboriginal Next Steps Project (with the McCreary Centre Society), in rural Aboriginal communities across BC**

[www.reelyouth.ca/mccreary.html](http://www.reelyouth.ca/mccreary.html)

**antidote: Multiracial Girls and Women’s Network**

The Victoria-based organization antidote has used video as a way of giving racialized and Indigenous girls an outlet for expressing their creativity and perspective. Their videos are available online at: [www.antidotetwork.org/category/video/](http://www.antidotetwork.org/category/video/)

[www.antidotetwork.org](http://www.antidotetwork.org)

**Music**

Ask youth to share some of the songs they like. Many songs that youth listen to have hidden (or sometimes quite blatant) messages about attitudes towards women, sex and sexuality, substance use, or related issues. Music videos also often feature images that glamorize the “pimp” image, or other images related to prostitution. Rather than being critical about this music, be curious. Ask youth what they think the songs are saying. Have them critique the songs, asking what they like and don’t like, and what lessons they get from them. Use both positive and problematic songs to explore the range of messages they’re getting through music. Have the youth listen to music by Aboriginal artists, including empowering messages, and have them reflect on how the songs compare with the music they normally listen to.

**Redwire Magazine**

This Aboriginal youth magazine has released two CDs of music by Aboriginal musicians and writers. The songs can be accessed online at:

[www.redwiremag.com/redwire-cds.html](http://www.redwiremag.com/redwire-cds.html)



## **Kinnie Starr**

Singer-songwriter with Mohawk heritage.

[www.myspace.com/kinniestarr](http://www.myspace.com/kinniestarr)

## **War Party**

Rap music by Aboriginal artists Rex and Cynthia Smallboy, originally from Alberta and Saskatchewan.

[www.warparty.ca](http://www.warparty.ca)



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## OTHER RESOURCES ON ENDING CYCLES OF VIOLENCE

### **Violence Prevention Toolkit (Native Women’s Association of Canada)**

This toolkit was designed to help prevent violence among Aboriginal youth and communities. Through the NWAC website, you can download all components of the toolkit or you can order a print and CD version. The toolkit includes a facilitator’s guide and workshop material on relationship violence, dating violence, sexual assault, emotional abuse, bullying, and community action. The website includes interactive teaching tools, including videos and PowerPoint presentations.

[www.nwac-hq.org/en/vpk.html](http://www.nwac-hq.org/en/vpk.html)

### **The Healing Journey**

A website with resources for people working on issues of family and relationship violence, aimed at Aboriginal communities, both on- and off-reserve.

[www.thehealingjourney.ca/main.asp](http://www.thehealingjourney.ca/main.asp)

### **Ending Violence Association of British Columbia (EVA BC)**

EVA BC is a resource for community-based services that support survivors of sexual assault, relationship violence, child abuse, and criminal harassment. It coordinates a network of programs across BC, including Community-Based Victim Assistance Programs, Stopping the Violence Counselling and Outreach, and Sexual Assault/Woman Assault Centres.

[www.endingviolence.org](http://www.endingviolence.org)



## UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Many youth participants said that they didn't know whether or not their grandparents went to residential school. Those who did hear stories about their grandparents' experiences at these schools said it helped them understand where their grandparents were coming from, as well as the impact on their parents and family dynamics. This kind of intergenerational sharing and storytelling may be difficult and often painful, but it provides a greater connection between the generations that may have been severed due to the disconnections caused by residential schools.

***“A lot of [the offenders] are men that had attended residential schools and they come back to their families and ... you know, it's just a vicious cycle.”***

***— Community research participant***

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### INTERGENERATIONAL SHARING

There are several powerful films about the legacy of residential schools in Canada, particularly in BC. Bringing youth and their grandparents or parents together to watch a film and then talk about it afterwards can be a good way to start an open conversation about their own experiences. This may be a good exercise to do with a family on a small scale, rather than having a large discussion. Trust your own judgment about what size of group would be appropriate for such a sensitive topic.

The discussion should be well contained, meaning that it is facilitated by a counsellor or other skilled practitioner and that the process is guided throughout. If you do not have these skills yourself, ask a local colleague or trusted counsellor from a neighbouring community to co-facilitate the discussion. Communities with a history of residential school trauma can also call upon counsellors from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (see contact information on page 137).



## Return to Kuper Island

This film by Métis filmmaker Christine Welsh records the experiences of men and women who went to one of the residential schools on BC's west coast. It follows some of the former students as they visit the school many years later, and talk about their experiences for the first time. Ask your local library to order a copy from the National Film Board of Canada.

[www3.nfb.ca/collection/films/fiche/?id=33548](http://www3.nfb.ca/collection/films/fiche/?id=33548)

## EXPLORING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

What is a healthy relationship? Each person will have a different response to this question, and some people may not know how to describe what we may consider a healthy relationship. Elders, adults, youth, and children can all be involved in exploring what healthy relationships mean within their family and community. Talking about, envisioning, and naming qualities of healthy relationships can help to distinguish them from unhealthy relationships.

In Aboriginal communities where there is a history of intergenerational abuse or trauma, it may be difficult to distinguish a healthy relationship from an unhealthy one. Many Aboriginal people have experienced abuse or violence at the hands of someone who loves them: a family member, a trusted adult, or someone else who should have protected them. It is important to acknowledge that each person has the ability to define “healthy relationships” on his or her own terms, within his or her own worldview. Most people have probably never sat down to think about what a healthy relationship might look like, so this in itself can be an important first step.

Research participants said that it is also important for youth to have opportunities to develop relationships with a range of adults, elders, and peers in the community. As much as possible, service providers should try to create opportunities for youth to come together with elders and healthy adults to form positive bonds with them. Sharing meals together, working on an event, playing sports, or taking part in other fun events all help to build relational skills among community members.



## SETTING BOUNDARIES WITH YOUTH

Setting boundaries is an important aspect of developing positive relationships, but many people do not even know what a boundary is. In small communities, boundaries can become nonexistent for those who hold multiple roles or responsibilities within their family, workplace, or community. Individuals, however, can try to set guidelines for what they need to do to keep themselves healthy in the context of their community. This might include setting some boundaries and figuring out how to enforce them (gently but firmly).

In addition, research participants talked about the reality that Aboriginal youth are often given the responsibilities of an adult at a young age. Youth who look after themselves and their younger siblings may be forced to take on the role of a parent rather than that of a child. Growing up in this family dynamic, a youth may not know how to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable demands that are made by loved ones.

The following activities provide a few examples of how service providers can engage youth and adults in exploring personal boundaries.

### What are boundaries?

Essentially, boundaries are the lines or limitations between you and the world around you.

In relationships, boundaries are the emotional, physical, and mental rules of respect that you set between yourself and someone else. Boundaries are guidelines that ensure your wellness, comfort, and safety with another person, your job, your community, or your family.

Boundaries may be flexible and change over time, as the relationships in your life develop and grow.



## BODYNAMICS (FOR ANYONE)

Have participants form two lines on opposite sides of the room, facing each other.

Each person will be paired up with the person who is standing directly opposite from them in the line on the other side of the room.

Before starting the exercise, ask the group to stand still for a few moments and take a few deep breaths. Ask them to become aware of how far away they are from the person they've been paired up with, then ask them to reflect on the level of safety they feel.

1. Have the participants in the line on one side of the room start walking towards their partners on the other side of the room. Tell those who are staying still to put their hand out in a “stop” gesture when their partner feels too close.
2. Repeat the exercise, this time with the participants from the opposite side of the room walking towards their partners.
3. Do the exercise again, this time with participants from both sides of the room running towards their partners.
4. Finally, have the participants sneak up on their partners, wandering around the room before they move towards them.
5. Each time, have the participants who are standing still put their hand out in a “stop” gesture when their partner is getting too close.
6. Afterwards, move the group in to a circle and ask them to talk about what they felt during the exercise. How did they know their partner was too close? What did it feel like to know that a boundary had been crossed?

[www.bodydynamic.ca/theory.htm](http://www.bodydynamic.ca/theory.htm)



## WHAT ANIMAL ARE YOU?

*(For children, or youth with lower developmental age)*

Working with children on developing boundaries, ask them to think about animals that they like (domestic animals or wild animals). You may also get them to draw a picture of the animal to start with.

Ask them:

- What kind of animal are you?
- What kind of home do you have? (A nest? A den?)
- How much space do you need? (How much space do wolves need? Cats? Bears?)
- Have the child draw a boundary around the picture of the animal, indicating their own personal space.

This can lead in to a discussion of how much personal space humans need.

- How much room does the child need?
- Where is his or her boundary?





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## WHAT ARE HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS?

In the book *Safe Teen: Powerful Alternatives to Violence* (Roberts, 2001), healthy relationships are seen as being integrally connected to personal boundaries. In addition, they are said to have the following qualities:

- **Respect.** Both partners respect each other's choices, they listen to each other, they honour each other's boundaries, and they take care of their own needs.
- **Acceptance.** Both partners recognize that they can't change or control each other. Rather, they support the other person in changing unhealthy behaviour, while accepting the differences between them.
- **Trust.** Trust grows based on shared experiences. Trust involves acknowledging and moving past jealousy, and being able to expect loyalty and mutual freedom.
- **Equality.** Equal power in a relationship involves ensuring that each person's needs are met without compromising the needs of the other.
- **Conflict.** Healthy relationships involve working through conflict in a respectful way, while expressing anger or frustration without hurting the other person or crossing their boundaries.
- **Safety.** Safety involves more than just the absence of abuse or violence. It includes feeling calm, with relaxed breath and the knowledge that both people feel cared for.

Working with youth, have them think about healthy relationships.

Ask:

- What do various kinds of healthy relationships look like? (Parent to parent, child to parent, boyfriend to girlfriend)
- What needs can you take care of yourself?
- What do you need from others?
- What happens if those needs are not met in a relationship?



## HEALTHY ATTITUDES ABOUT SEX AND SEXUALITY

Everyone has their own levels of comfort or discomfort in talking about sex and sexuality, depending on their family upbringing, religious or spiritual teachings, and personal experiences of sexuality. Indigenous cultures each have their own traditional beliefs and teachings about sex and sexuality. As a result of colonialism, however, many Aboriginal people have a sense of shame or discomfort talking about sexuality. Research participants said that in order to be able to open up conversations about preventing sexual exploitation or other forms of sexual abuse, people must be more comfortable talking about sex and sexuality.

### SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS: ATTITUDES ABOUT SEX AND SEXUALITY

- How comfortable do you feel when youth ask you questions about sex?
- How comfortable are you talking about same-sex relationships? How comfortable are you talking about heterosexual relationships?
- What is your level of knowledge about issues faced by transgender youth?
- How might your comfort levels impact your work with LGBTSTQ youth? With straight youth? With transgender youth?
- How easy is it for youth to get condoms anonymously in your community?
- How easy is it for youth to get other birth control anonymously in your community?

One further step is for youth to be able to talk openly and honestly about sex, including asking questions and negotiating their own sexual choices. If youth are able to comfortably name and talk about their bodies and “private parts,” they are less likely to feel shame and may have some additional tools for protecting themselves from abuse. Being able to discuss and reaffirm that they are knowledgeable about their own bodies and are in charge of their own body parts is an important protective factor. Youth are often having sex (and having babies) before they have even had a conversation about sex. It is important to normalize all the weird, uncertain, uncomfortable feelings that youth (and adults, sometimes!) experience when talking about sex.



Rural communities can be a difficult place for any lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirit, transgender, and queer (LGBTSTQ) youth, and Aboriginal communities are no exception. LGBTSTQ youth face particular barriers because of the culture of shame surrounding sexuality, as well as homophobia and transphobia in their communities.

Youth who have been abused may have many-layered issues concerning sex and sexuality, including LGBTSTQ Aboriginal youth. One important step the community can take to support LGBTSTQ youth is to separate sexual abuse from peer sexual activity. Participants in the research for this manual talked about the fact that boys who have been abused by men are often seen as gay, and male predators are also seen as gay. Homosexuality becomes stigmatized by being wrongly associated with sexual abuse. These issues can be addressed through education about sexuality and queer issues, and providing support for LGBTSTQ youth.

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## SEXUALITY COMFORT METER

### **Exercise with parents, service providers, or other groups of adults in the community**

When adults are comfortable talking about sex and sexuality with youth, it can help break down some of the stigma and shame that youth may face when they have to ask questions. It will also encourage them to seek help when they need it, including when issues of their gender identity or sexuality arise. Youth will also be more likely to seek help from a trusted adult if they experience sexual violence, especially if they already know an adult who is nonjudgmental when it comes to sexuality.

1. On the left side of a flipchart, draw a large thermometer.
  - At the bottom of the thermometer (the cool end), write: “Extremely comfortable/cool as a cucumber.”
  - In the middle of the thermometer, write: “Indifferent/room temperature.”
  - At the top of the thermometer (the hot end), write: “Extremely uncomfortable/burning up!”
2. Distribute small cards or pieces of paper with one question or issue involving sex and sexuality on each piece (a short list is provided below, but feel free to brainstorm your own list of relevant issues). Ask participants to place the piece of paper at their



level of comfort on the thermometer. Have them look at the topic and ask themselves, “How comfortable do I feel talking about this issue?”

- How to use a condom
  - Where to get the birth control pill
  - Anal sex
  - A youth is questioning his or her sexual identity
  - Where to get testing for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
  - At what age should kids start dating?
  - Can you catch HIV from kissing?
  - Online pornography keeps showing up in my inbox
  - Online dating
3. Have them write down any notes as they think about the answer. For example, their responses might be different, depending on the age of the youth, whether they are related to the youth, and so on.
4. Debrief. If most of the cards are at the bottom of the thermometer, you’ve got a pretty informed and supportive group of adults in the community. If most of the cards are at the top of the thermometer, youth in the community might encounter barriers when they are trying to find a supportive adult to talk with about sex and sexuality.
- What do the results tell you about the knowledge and skills that local adults could learn in order to be more supportive of youth?
  - What types of things are particular challenges among the group members, and why?
  - How can these barriers be overcome?

**Note:** You can adapt this exercise for use with youth or elders. You might be surprised to find which group is the most comfortable talking about sex and sexuality!



## RESOURCES

<p><b>Red Road HIV/AIDS Network</b></p> <p>This Vancouver-based Aboriginal organization includes 125 members from across BC. They provide information and training on issues related to HIV and AIDS, including material that is relevant to rural Aboriginal communities. They also publish <i>Bloodlines Magazine</i>, a useful awareness-raising tool.</p> <p><a href="http://www.red-road.org">www.red-road.org</a></p>	<p><b>YouthCO AIDS Society</b></p> <p>YouthCO is Canada's first youth-driven organization leading the HIV and hepatitis C movement through peer education, support, and shared leadership. They create dynamic youth education material. They are available to travel to communities across BC to provide theatre presentations, youth training, outreach, and other education.</p> <p><a href="http://www.youthco.org/cms">www.youthco.org/cms</a></p>
<p><b>Project Respect</b></p> <p>Project Respect is a group of youth and adults who work together to prevent sexualized violence. Information on the website is aimed at youth ages 14 and up, and includes tools on how to help a friend, what to do if you are assaulted, and how to get more information on preventing violence in your community.</p> <p><a href="http://www.yesmeansyes.com">www.yesmeansyes.com</a></p>	<p><b>Options for Sexual Health</b></p> <p>This website provides information on sexuality and gender identity resources available in BC.</p> <p><a href="http://www.optionsforsexualhealth.org">www.optionsforsexualhealth.org</a></p>



*“I think one major factor that should be at least acknowledged is [that]... our people, our culture, was not like this. It’s only through European contact and residential schools that ... attempted to totally destroy our culture ... but they haven’t succeeded. We’re terribly crippled and not just in body but in spirit right now but we still have our culture and I think it’s very important.”*

— Key informant (JIBC, 2006)

Cultural teachings and ceremonial practices are a vital part of giving Aboriginal youth a sense of identity. The process of learning about traditions and taking an active role in ceremony can help youth feel connected. It can also help build relationships between youth and elders, and bring youth together in a positive environment. Each First Nation has its own cultural teachings, so it is difficult to outline any specific ways to integrate cultural practices into community programming with youth. Some practices may have been lost through colonization, whereas others remain strong.

Cultural practices change and adapt over time, and modern versions of traditions may have emerged in your community. Dance groups, sweat lodges, and language classes are some examples of opportunities for youth to engage in cultural activities.

There may be a generational gap preventing youth from participating, if their parents are not interested in learning about cultural teachings. It is important to create opportunities for them to learn about their culture, language, and history independent of their families. They may end up teaching their parents about the traditions of the community.



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## BRINGING YOUTH AND ELDERS TOGETHER

Integrating the involvement of elders into regular youth programming is a good way to share cultural teachings. It also provides opportunities for youth to regularly engage with healthy elders and ask questions. Elders will likely have their own ideas for the skills and knowledge they would like to share. Some ideas to explore include:

- Cultural values
- Relationships to the land—plants, animals, environment
- Language
- Traditional art
- Sharing meals and traditional foods
- Traditional models of youth rites of passage
- Storytelling



## YOUTH HELPING YOUTH (YOUTH LEADERSHIP)

Much has been written about the power of youth leadership in building a sense of empowerment in young people. Youth have also said that they are far more likely to access services that involve youth-led initiatives. There are many ways to create opportunities for youth to play an active role in programs, including at school, in recreation centres, and in community governance.

Sports (especially basketball and soccer) are popular ways for youth to play a leadership role, but few opportunities exist outside these arenas. Research participants said that youth who don't play sports may be left out, and may lack opportunities to become leaders with their peers. For some, reading, drawing, and other solitary activities just aren't as cool as being a soccer or basketball star, or there aren't fun activities or events that are organized or supported by adults who know how to make it cool (e.g., cool youth who do hip-hop or spoken word poetry are probably "writers"! ). Think about ways to go beyond sports—how can youth play leadership roles in other venues? Ideas include:

- Creating a youth advisory council to assist an organization in choosing more "youth-friendly" workshops at a conference or in having a voice on the Band council
- Allowing youth to play leadership roles in all youth-related activities
- Inviting youth to sit on project advisory groups for initiatives that will impact them
- Creating a youth newsletter for the community





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## RESOURCES

### **McCreary Centre Society**

The McCreary Centre Society conducts research and education on issues related to youth health, including youth participation. Their website provides information on models of successful youth participation.

McCreary has also created a resource on how to start a Youth Advisory Council (YAC), which was made by youth for youth (including a YAC in Powell River and Tla’Amin). You can download the resource from [www.mcs.bc.ca/ya\\_yalink.htm](http://www.mcs.bc.ca/ya_yalink.htm)

[www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca)

### **Redwire Magazine**

*Redwire* is a magazine by and for Native youth. It was first published in 1997 and is the first-ever Native youth-run magazine in Canada. *Redwire*’s mandate is to provide Native youth with an uncensored forum for discussion, in order to help them find their voice. Youth are involved in all decision-making processes involved in the creation and production of the magazine. From its website, you can download entire issues of the magazine, as well as CDs and other art media. Youth can also get information on how to contribute to the magazine.

[www.redwiremag.com](http://www.redwiremag.com)

### **Empowering Aboriginal Youth in Governance and Leadership (EAYGL)**

EAYGL is a youth-led leadership capacity-building initiative of the Aboriginal Leadership Institute, based in Manitoba. This organization brings together Aboriginal youth from across Canada to work towards positive change in their communities through the development of positive skills.

[www.alii.ca/initiatives\\_EAYGL.html](http://www.alii.ca/initiatives_EAYGL.html)



## GENDER-BASED PROGRAMMING

*Gender-based programming, such as girls' groups, can be extremely effective in building youth resilience. Many rural Aboriginal communities across BC already have active girls' groups, providing a safe space for girls to explore important issues and develop positive relationships. Youth workers, health care providers, and counsellors in many communities have shared with me the positive impact of programs that bring girls and women together. Intergenerational models are particularly effective, because girls are able to learn from older role models, including elders and adult women. They can be run with very little or no money, and in some communities, provide the only recreational activities for girls aside from sports. More of these types of programs are needed, as are programs for boys to come together in a similar way. — Sarah*

Gender-based programming provides a space where youth can develop trusting relationships with healthy adults. They also create an environment that is not competitive, unlike a lot of aspects of youth culture, including sports and academics. Girls and boys are often taught to be competitive with one another, rather than mutually supportive, so gender-based programming is one opportunity for encouraging youth to cultivate new kinds of relationships with their peers and role models. All youth need a place where they can ask questions, be vulnerable, name racism and discrimination, and have fun too.

### SPACES FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN

A number of girls' group models have been developed across BC, but few have been written up or summarized in public documents. Existing models vary in age range, format, focus, facilitation style, and purpose. They may be targeted towards at-risk older youth, or towards younger pre-teen girls. In *It's a Girl Thang! A Manual on Creating Girls Groups*, girls' groups are situated within an understanding of adolescent female development, trauma theory, identity development, and relational/cultural models: "Ongoing supportive relationships have been found to be key for girls in exiting unhealthy, violent or exploitative relationships and positive outcomes for youth who have experienced trauma and violence" (Bell-Gadsby et al., p. 9). The manual provides



an open format for creating girls' groups within various community settings. In a program specifically created for Aboriginal girls ages 12 to 14 in the Lax'kwa'laam and Musqueam First Nations (in partnership with the Pacific Region Nursing Services), cultural frameworks are used to work through a series of sessions ranging from sexual education to goal setting (Lax'kwa'laam's First Nation Health Centre et al., 2009).

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## SPACES FOR BOYS AND MEN

Boys also need spaces where they can connect with male role models and one another, to develop positive relationships with one another. These spaces provide an opportunity to explore dominant norms regarding masculinity and to look at alternative visions of healthy roles for men and boys. Increasingly, Aboriginal leaders are calling for men to teach male youth that violence is not acceptable, and that male youth need to learn to respect the women in their lives as well as one another. Coming together with other boys to purposefully break down prescribed male roles can be a positive step towards challenging cycles of violence.

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## TWO-SPIRIT AND TRANSGENDER YOUTH

Two-spirit and transgender youth (or youth who do not identify as either, but are questioning their sexuality or gender identity) often face discomfort in boys' or girls' groups. This is particularly true in rural communities, where it may not be safe to talk about their sexual or gender identity. When facilitating and planning group activities, it is important to think about how the programming might account for two-spirit and trans youth whose gender or sexuality might not fit with the way you are approaching various issues (for example, sexual education). Although it may not be viable to have two-spirit groups in rural areas, you can create a level of comfort and respect within the groups by role-modelling respectful nondiscriminatory attitudes among the youth.



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## RESOURCES

### ***It's a Girl Thang! A Manual on Creating Girls Groups***

Written by Cheryl Bell-Gadsby, Natalie Clark, and Sarah Hunt (2006). Print copies are available from the McCreary Centre Society. For more information, email [mccreary@mcs.bc.ca](mailto:mccreary@mcs.bc.ca) or call 604-291-1996.

### **Girls Action Foundation**

This national organization provides programming, research, and resources for communities interested in supporting programming for girls' active participation in society. Online resources include toolkits, videos, zines, and publications.

[www.girlsactionfoundation.ca](http://www.girlsactionfoundation.ca)

### **Antidote**

Located in Victoria, BC, this organization brings Indigenous and multiracial girls together to explore issues of race, identity, and culture. It provides opportunities for girls to express themselves through participatory research projects involving art-based methods.

[www.antidotetwork.org](http://www.antidotetwork.org)

### **Manual: *Young Women's Lives: Building Self-Awareness for Life***

Written by M. Nell Myhand and Paul Kivel. "A Multi-Session Curriculum and Facilitator's Guide" for building self-confidence and personal strength with girls ages 14-19. Paul Kivel's website has other resources for working with girls and boys, as well as for addressing racism and other forms of discrimination, that can be downloaded free of charge.

[www.paulkivel.com](http://www.paulkivel.com)

### **Book: *SafeTeen: Powerful Alternatives to Violence***

Written by Anita Roberts (Vancouver: Polestar, 2001), this book on preventing violence and building inner strength in youth includes great information on facilitating groups for both girls and boys. Also see the SafeTeen website for information on violence prevention and life skills workshops and other services provided by this organization.

[www.safeteen.ca](http://www.safeteen.ca)



## MAKING POSITIVE CHOICES

Youth are often told what choices they *should* be making. Adults may think they know what is best for a young person and will set down rules (which often go ignored). Research participants suggested that a more helpful approach may be to support youth in developing decision-making skills so that they can make their own healthy choices. This involves creating strategies and thinking about scenarios where they will have to make hard choices in their lives.

The decisions that each person makes has consequences that may be short-term or long-lasting. Talk to youth about the choices they are facing, or potential choices they may have to make in the future. What will the short-term and long-term consequences of those choices be?

Talk to youth about the choices they are facing. Ask them:

- What are healthy choices? Define them.
- Who decides what is healthy (the youth or an adult)?
- How can adults listen to what youth define is healthy for them?
- In any given moment, consider: “What is the right choice for me right now?”
- What are unhealthy choices you see people making? Why are they unhealthy?
- How might they make a healthier choice?
- What do I envision as the ultimate state of health? What does that feel like? How will I know if I’m there?



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## PEER PRESSURE

Peer pressure is powerful among people of all ages. Sometimes healthy choices get in the way of people's feeling like they belong. Youth know that if they choose not to "fit in," their friends may reject them. This is powerful in small communities, and even more so within families. If they choose to make a healthy choice (such as not to drink), they may be rejected by their family members, who are also their safety net. These complex decisions require strategizing and support.

It can be useful for youth to set some personal boundaries in order to make better decisions for their health and safety. Have them practise what they will say or do the next time they're faced with an uncomfortable situation. For example, a youth who is trying not to drink as much might hold the same beer all night and sip it slowly so that people don't keep offering drinks. Or have them practise saying that they're quitting drinking because of all the trouble they've gotten into while drunk.

### Case Study

Stephanie was a 12-year-old who hung out at her mom's house every day after school. Her auntie came over every day at 6 p.m. with booze, and they drank together. The youth wanted to connect with her mom but was missing school and getting drunk all the time as a result. In talking to a youth worker about her desire to stay in school, Stephanie realized that she could set her own boundaries and leave her mom's place at 5 p.m., before her auntie arrived with the booze. This helped to ensure that she nurtured her connection with her mom but also managed to stay in school.

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## VALUES CLARIFICATION

We often make decisions out of pressure or habit, rather than acting from our beliefs. This is true of everyone, regardless of their social or geographic location. This exercise is designed to help youth clarify the values underlying their personal identity.



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## ART ACTIVITY FOR CLARIFYING VALUES

*(For use with older youth)*

Begin by talking to youth about values and beliefs. Values help us define for ourselves who we are and how we want to carry ourselves in the world. Values are the beliefs we hold that define what really matters to us. We may hold some values that we struggle with, that are more difficult to live by because of social norms or the influence of people around us. Sometimes our families or friends may also act in ways that don't fit with our values or beliefs. As we grow and change through life, it is important to reassess our values and to ask ourselves what principles we want to live by at a particular point in our lives.

The purpose of this exercise is to draw a visual representation of the beliefs that youth can use to support the development of their identity. Although identity is something that shifts and changes over time, youth may find this exercise helpful in finding some values to inform how they see themselves in the world. The symbol you use should represent safety and protection—in essence, the youth are creating a strong sense of identity in order to protect themselves.

Give each person a large piece of paper and some markers or paint. Ask them to draw a symbol of protection. Some Indigenous cultures may have specific images of strength—such as drums, medicine wheels, or totem poles—that could be used; if not, you could use a shield. Divide the protection symbol into six sections. Ask the youth to draw each of the following (one per section):

1. Draw how you see yourself.
2. Draw how others see you.
3. Draw what makes you happy or what others can do to make you happy.
4. Draw what can you do to make yourself happy.
5. Draw the response to, “If I guaranteed you would be 100% successful, what would you do?”
6. Write three positive words to describe yourself.

Debrief with the youth. Ask them to identify the strengths in their shield. What values or beliefs are behind some of the images they have drawn and the words they have written?



## rites of passage

Traditionally, rites of passage helped youth in the transition to adulthood. Many First Nations had (and some still have) their own cultural ceremonies that recognize that a youth has become an adult. These include naming ceremonies, spiritual journeys, and being mentored by elders. These rites of passage help youth develop a sense of identity as an adult. It also makes them aware that the elders and other adults in the community have a place for the youth in the adult world.

Today, we have lost many of these traditions. Youth often grow up before their time, making adult decisions at a young age, including drinking, having sex, caring for younger siblings, and fending for themselves. This is not unique to Aboriginal youth but is prevalent across much of BC and North America.

Exploring rites of passage is a powerful asset in the lives of youth. It can help them (and the adults in their lives) know what age-appropriate decisions and responsibilities are. The Rediscovery Camp program is one model being used in BC and across Canada to create rites of passage groups for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth. These programs bring youth together with elders in wilderness settings, using experiential approaches to learning based upon traditional cultural teachings (Lertzman, 2002).

When thinking about rites of passage for youth in your community, it can help to consider the following questions:

- How do you know when you become a man or woman?
- Gender roles
- Age-appropriate roles: what are they?
- How will I know that I'm beautiful?
- Do traditional rites of passage fit today's values?





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## WHAT IS AGE-APPROPRIATE?

Consider the following activities. At what age do you think it is appropriate to start doing these things? Afterwards, debrief with your group. What do your answers say about the expectations placed on youth in your community?

- Cook dinner for your family
- Make your bed
- Travel alone to school
- Drink beer
- Smoke a joint
- Drink 10 beers
- Stay at home alone for the weekend
- Look after younger siblings or cousins overnight



## RETHINKING RISK

Risk-taking behaviour in the lives of youth is often seen in a negative light. We talk about “high-risk” youth, “risky behaviour,” and other potentially harmful actions that youth do in their lives. The youth we talked to for this research said, however, that adults need to rethink the way they see risk in the lives of youth in their community. This includes both supporting youth in taking positive risks and being able to talk to youth about negative behaviour more openly.

What is healthy risk taking? Aboriginal youth told us that this includes trying something new, trying out dangerous sports, going to college, leaving town to go to a new school, acting in plays, singing or performing, doing wilderness camps, and many other activities. They said that adults don’t realize the risks that youth are taking on an ongoing basis, as they try new things and put themselves on the line.

*“There’s good risks and there’s bad risks. There’s good things to take a risk on, like playing basketball and stuff. There’s that kind of risk. Then there’s drugs and alcohol, that kind of stuff. Going to school, that’s a big risk ... You can keep moving up ... Good things will happen when you take risks.”*

— Youth research participant

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### HOW CAN THE ADULTS IN YOUR COMMUNITY SUPPORT LOCAL YOUTH IN TAKING HEALTHY RISKS?

Youth also said that often when they are trying to do something positive for themselves, they are also aware that they may be taking the risk of facing violence. For example, when sports teams travel out of town for tournaments, fights or assaults often take place afterwards. Rather than punishing the youth involved, adults can talk to youth about the potential risk of violence before the trips take place, and ask how they can provide support to the youth.

Of course, youth said that they take negative risks too, including everything from riding a motorcycle with no helmet, to selling drugs, to drinking and driving.

Rather than seeing risk in a purely negative light, it is useful to encourage positive risk-taking and to emphasize the ways in which youth can succeed in these endeavours.



## QUALITIES OF RESILIENCE

Most of us can name the factors that put youth at risk of exploitation. Words that come to mind may include “isolated,” “low self-esteem,” and “history of abuse.” As one of the research participants asked, however, “What qualities do youth have that make them nonexploitable?” What can we foster in children and youth to enhance their strengths and make them resilient against recruiters and predators?

Research with vulnerable youth in BC has identified a number of protective factors that help build resilience and connections in youth (Saewyc et al., 2006). The most potent protective factors for vulnerable youth include developing positive relationships:

- Feeling cared about by their family
- Feeling connected to school
- Having caring adults to turn to with problems
- Having supportive friends with positive social values

Since the provincial research was not conducted in rural Aboriginal communities, it is likely that other key relationships are missing from this list. Thinking about the important connections in the lives of youth in your community, consider some other relationships that could contribute to their sense of resilience. These might include:

- Feeling connected to the land
- Feeling connected to local elders
- Feeling a sense of pride in the history of the community and a connection to ancestors through this connection

### SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS: QUALITIES OF RESILIENCE

- As a mentor in the community and an ally to youth, what contributes to your own resilience?
- What key relationships do you have in your life?
- Is there a special place in your community where you can go to feel connected to the land?
- Do you have any ancestors who you look up to and admire?
- What qualities do you hope the youth in your life can learn from you to keep them strong and safe?



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## IDENTIFYING PERSONAL STRENGTHS

*(An activity for use with youth)*

1. Have youth think about strong people in their lives, individuals who they can't imagine being exploited or taken advantage of. These can even be mythical figures, TV characters, or people in books they like.
  - Who do they see as strong, and why?
  - What do these people look like? Sound like?
  - What body language do they use to tell others to back off?
  - Who are their allies?
2. Next, have youth think about their personal strengths and protective factors in their lives. What keeps them safe? What do they like about themselves? Here is an example, created by the research team during a brainstorming session facilitated by Carrie Reid:

I ... belong, have someone who believes in me, value being different, have external strength to draw upon (mom, grandma, friends), have a connection with healthy adults, believe (have faith in the creator), have a sense of hope, am sincere, am responsible to my community and family, believe in fairness, have cultural ties, am connected to the past (our history), know where to go for help when bad things happen, know I don't have to be alone, see the future, am not boring, stand out, can be playful, am confident, can make myself feel happy by being silly, have power and control over myself and no one can take it from me.



## COMMUNICATION BETWEEN YOUTH AND ADULTS

One key element in creating healthy relationships between adults and youth is communication. Research participants said that parents often don't know how to connect with their children, or don't know how to start asking questions without sounding invasive. The key here is to encourage parents and other adults to start building trusting relationships by being curious about how the youth in their lives are doing. So often youth are told what to do by the adults in their lives, rather than the adults trying to understand where they're coming from.

In many small communities, youth have a large number of adults around them, not just their parents. They may be raised by their aunts or grandparents, or stay with other family members or at friends' houses on a regular basis. This provides many opportunities for adults in the community to develop good communication skills with the youth in their care. Because of differences between the cultural attitudes or norms of youth and those of adults, there may be a feeling of judgment rather than curiosity on both sides.

There are several key messages that youth want to hear from parents and other caregivers (National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 2008). Encourage parents and other adults in the community to think about how they might communicate these messages with the youth in their lives:

- “You belong”
- “You are trustworthy”
- “You are responsible”
- “You are capable”



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## BEING CURIOUS

*(For use with parents and other caregivers)*

In developing better communication with your children, start with the easy questions. Make it your habit to ask the youth in your lives (your children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews) about their day. Also encourage them to be curious about your life and your perspective. Once you get in the habit of being curious about one another's feelings and experiences, it will become easier to develop a habit of talking to one another.

As you eat dinner together or before watching TV at night, ask one another:

- What did you do today?
- What did you learn today?
- Did you have any difficulties at school?
- Did you make any new friends this week?

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## RESOURCE

### **Centre for Nonviolent Communication**

Nonviolent communication is an approach to communication that aims to have people act out of compassion rather than guilt or other negative feelings. The Centre for Nonviolent Communication is an international organization that helps people connect compassionately with themselves and one another using the approach of nonviolent communication. The website includes information about using the language of *feelings* and *needs* as the basis for forming effective communication strategies. It is used around the world in conflict zones and with people who have traditionally faced barriers to communication.

[www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org)



D:  
Education and  
Prevention Activities







## D: EDUCATION AND PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

Preventing sexual exploitation requires targeted education and prevention efforts. Although it is often easier to avoid naming exploitation, it is essential to begin building the awareness of youth so that they can identify it if it takes place. By laying the foundation of community planning and capacity building, as well as thinking about general youth development and health, communities can begin acquiring the supports necessary to address sexual exploitation.

Sections A to C have provided a foundation for preparing service providers and community members to address and prevent the sexual exploitation of youth. When initiating targeted education and prevention efforts, it is important to gauge how ready the community is to name the issue. Levels of fear or trust will change over time, depending on new incidents of trauma, loss, and many other factors. Individuals who speak out about youth sexual exploitation from within a small community can sometimes be labelled as troublemakers and may face backlash. Identifying allies both within and outside the community is an important foundation for sustaining this work.

In this section, information about prevention of sexual exploitation is provided, along with activities to raise awareness within the community. The topics covered here were identified through the community-based research for this project, and are geared towards rural realities. Most educational work in rural areas is initiated by individuals already working with youth (in schools, Band offices, youth groups), and the activities were created with this in mind.



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## A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

During the research for this manual, community members and youth were asked what language should be used to talk about sexual exploitation in rural areas. They were asked whether or not softer or easier language should be used, so as not to scare children, youth, and community members away from conversations about the topic. Participants, both youth and adults, overwhelmingly said that this issue should continue to be named as sexual exploitation, even if it is uncomfortable or may lead to community unrest. Undoubtedly some community members will resist naming sexual exploitation for what it is, because change is a scary process. We hope, however, that service providers and community members will persevere in giving children and youth the language to talk about exploitation, the tools to recognize it when it's happening to them or their peers, and the strength to get support.

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## CAUTION ABOUT LABELLING AND STIGMA

Creating a shared language to talk about exploitation can have negative impacts, particularly on youth who have been exploited. This can lead to the labelling of youth who have suffered this type of abuse, which can lead to further traumatization or stigma. This is important to consider in small communities (as well as in larger urban centres), because youth deserve to have a chance to heal from their experiences and move on with their futures without carrying the label of “exploited youth.” At the same time, youth who have had these experiences may feel compelled to tell their stories in order to educate other youth at that time. Be supportive of where they are at, and encourage them to think about the consequences of sharing their past with the community. Also encourage them to think about where they would like to go in the future if they feel they don't want to share their stories of exploitation any more.



Several years ago, I was working on an educational program in a small rural community in BC.

The community had one restaurant and one store, and pretty much everyone knew each other. In fact, as a visitor to the community, I was asked by the server at the local restaurant whether I was with the church (I wasn't!). I knew that a teenage girl had recently come home from Vancouver, where she had been living on the street and had been sexually exploited, involved in the street-level sex trade. Since this was a small community, I'm sure everyone knew who this youth was and had suspicions of what had happened to her in Vancouver. During an educational workshop on sexual exploitation, youth participants were told to be careful of youth who came back from the city because they might be trying to recruit other youth into the sex trade. I wondered whether all of the youth at that workshop instantly thought of the girl who had just returned home, and labelled her as a "recruiter." More sensitivity is needed to these types of small community dynamics so that youth are not labeled and stigmatized if they have been sexually exploited.

— Sarah

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## SUPPORT FOR BOYS AND LGBTSTQ YOUTH

Young men and transgender youth who have been exploited or abused often face additional stigma, which can be isolating and traumatizing. Adult allies should be prepared to provide the supports that exploited boys and trans people need in their healing journey. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirit, transgender, and queer (LGBTSTQ) youth also need increased support through the availability of adult allies, and peer support from informed youth.



## SAFETY PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Youth can be supported in minimizing the risk of violence against them by doing some safety planning in advance. They can work with one another and their adult supports to create a personal safety plan for different scenarios they may find themselves in. It might be appropriate to have discussions about safety planning with youth and parents before a trip (for a sporting event, for example) or before summer or winter holidays begin, when youth are becoming more mobile.

The following points can be used with youth as they create safety plans for themselves:

- How to stay safe when you're partying
  - Emergency numbers
  - What to do if you drink too much
  - Buddy system
  - How are you going to get home?
  - Map of safe places in the community
- How to stay safe when you're going out of town on a trip
  - Emergency numbers in that town
  - Location of safe house
  - How are you going to get there and back?
  - Do you have enough money?

**Risks that girls face when they leave their home community to hang out in a nearby town:**

*"It's a lot to do with experimentation because nobody knows you. So you don't have to face any consequences, you know, from relatives shaming you and that sort of thing."*

*"Nasty stuff happens... I don't know exactly what. Like gang bangs and stuff ..."*

— Youth research participants



- Staying safe at home: when you are drinking or threatened
  - Safe place to go (for example, weekend friends)
  - Nearest trusted neighbour
  - Create a code word and set up a buddy system with a trusted adult who will come and pick you up if you're in trouble
  
- On the Internet
  - How is your information protected online?
  - What level of personal information is it okay to share?
  - How will you deal with strangers who try to contact you?
  - What do the different acronyms used online mean?
  -

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### SAFETY PLANNING: THE ROLE OF ADULT ALLIES

Adult supports are also a key part of youth safety plans, as they may be called upon when youth are facing a crisis. These questions can be asked of the adults in the lives of youth, including their parents or other family members.

- If a youth calls me when they are in trouble in a neighbouring town, what will I do?
  - Who can I call for help (either in the neighbouring town or locally)?
- If a youth calls me when they are partying and need to be picked up, what will I do?
  - How will I react in a supportive way?



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## GROUP DISCUSSION WITH YOUTH

Have youth think up various scenarios they may face, and talk to one another about how they will handle them:

- In the city, if you had \$50 what would you spend it on?
- If you run out of money and can't take the bus home, what will you do?
- What is safety? What does it feel like?
- How can youth help one another to stay safe?

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## RESOURCES

For more examples of safety plans, see the website called The Healing Journey,

[www.thehealingjourney.ca/inside.asp?219](http://www.thehealingjourney.ca/inside.asp?219).



As has already been discussed, Aboriginal children and youth are highly overrepresented in sexual exploitation. It is clear that Aboriginal youth and communities in BC face multiple risk factors that contribute to these high numbers. Poverty, racism, violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and other symptoms of colonization all contribute to the vulnerability of Aboriginal children and youth.

### SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS: RAISING AWARENESS

- What supports will I need in order to facilitate a discussion on sexual exploitation with local youth?
- What past experiences in my life might be triggered by this work?
- If I need to debrief with someone after the workshop, who can I call upon for support?

Raising general awareness among children, youth, and community members is an important part of prevention efforts. There are organizations in many parts of BC that focus on education initiatives regarding sexual exploitation, but most of these are in urban centres. You can find information online about sexual exploitation and adapt it to fit your community. Videos, posters, and other resources are also available through the provincial government (contact the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Victim Services and Crime Prevention Division).

Commercial sexual exploitation (involvement of youth in the sex trade) is generally understood as the most prevalent form of sexual exploitation, but this is rarely the case in rural communities. Although youth from rural areas may be lured to the city for the purposes of involvement in the street-level sex trade, sexual exploitation in rural areas takes many other forms, as explored in the previous sections.



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## MARCH AWARENESS WEEK

Each year in March, events are held across the province to raise awareness about sexual exploitation. This is a good opportunity to hold an event in your area. Here are some ideas:

- Put up an information table at the local health centre or at a sports event or tournament.
- Hold a workshop for parents or teens.
- Show a video about exploitation or another related issue, followed by a community discussion.
- Go on the local radio station and tell people what they can do to stay safe from exploitation.
- Get local youth to design a poster campaign to challenge the media images equating beauty and popularity with sexiness (especially hip-hop and other music videos). Put the posters up around the school or community centre to raise awareness and get the youth talking about the issue.

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## DESIGN A POSTER CAMPAIGN

*(For youth)*

The media constantly give us messages about how we should act, what we should wear, what is “cool,” and what language to use. Through movies, television shows, billboards, and magazine ads, we learn about the society we live in. What messages do the movies, music videos, and TV shows you watch tell you about what is attractive, cool, or sexy?

In a small group, you are going to design an ad campaign that sends a different message about sexual exploitation and the sex trade. You are going to challenge the messages fed to us through hip-hop culture, Hollywood, and TV.





**You will need:**

A **slogan**: What message do you want to send, and how are you going to say it?

An **image**: What pictures can you use to get your message across?

A **target group**: Who needs to see your ads? Parents? Youth? Teachers?



## IDENTIFYING PEER EXPLOITATION

Youth can contribute to the exploitation of their peers (or themselves) without knowing it. For example, youth who post nude photos of themselves online are technically distributing child pornography and could be held accountable. Youth often don't realize the long-lasting impacts of posting photos of themselves or their friends online. Anyone can access these images, and they last forever. Also, these actions may make the youth or their peers vulnerable to other uncomfortable or harmful situations.

### TRUE OR FALSE: ACTIVITY TO IDENTIFY PEER EXPLOITATION

A number of potentially exploitative situations are described below, along with discussion questions about other harmful situations that may stem from the exploitation. Go through these scenarios with youth by asking them whether or not they see the situations as exploitative, then use the discussion questions to talk about other potential outcomes.

1. Your boyfriend/girlfriend emails you a sexy photo of himself/herself partly nude. It's kind of a joke ... but kind of fun! You think they look hot and you post the photo on your Facebook page so everyone can see it. **Is this exploitation?**

#### **Answer/Discussion**

Yes. Posting nude photos of someone under the age of 16 is distributing child pornography.

*Besides being sexual exploitation, what other problems might this scenario lead to?*

- Your boyfriend/girlfriend gets angry at you for posting the photo because he/she is embarrassed.
2. You are engaging in a flirtatious conversation with your new crush on MSN, and things are going well when your crush dares you to send a sexy photo. Feeling playful and daring, you decide to send it. **Is this exploitation?**



### **Answer/Discussion**

Yes. This could be considered transmission of child pornography.

*Besides being sexual exploitation, what other problems might this scenario lead to?*

- Your new crush asks you to do something that you don't want to do and says that if you don't do it, he/she will send the photo to your parents, friends, teacher, or other adults.
  - You have an argument or end the relationship, and sometime later the person posts the photo on the Internet for everyone to see.
3. You are at a party with friends and you notice that two people have snuck off to make out in one of the bedrooms. You decide that it would be funny to catch them in the act so you bust in on them. One of your friends takes photographs of the guilty couple and sends the photos off to friends via cell phone as a joke. **Is this exploitation?**

### **Answer/Discussion**

Yes. Further, if you were to forward the photos on to others, you would be guilty of transmission of pornography.

*Besides being sexual exploitation, what other problems might this scenario lead to?*

- Humiliation of the two individuals can cause emotional upset.
  - The individuals involved could press charges.
  - This type of prank begins to catch on at your school and it ends up eventually happening to you.
4. You and your friends had a great day hanging out by the pool and have a bunch of photographs to prove it. Although you are all in your bathing suits, you decide to post these pictures on Facebook. **Is this exploitation?**

### **Answer/Discussion**

No. If the pictures are not sexually suggestive—through posing or behaviour—or involve nudity, then it is not classified as pornographic or exploitative.



### *What other problems might this scenario lead to?*

- Since you didn't get permission from your friends to post the photos on Facebook, one of your friends gets upset that a bathing suit shot is online for everyone to see.
- Someone you don't know very well (remember that on Facebook you don't always know who your audience is) sees the photo and makes an inappropriate remark to you that causes you to feel uncomfortable.

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## RESOURCES

### **StopX**

An online resource hosted by an organization in the United States for young people who want to contribute to efforts to prevent the sexual exploitation of children and youth. Includes videos, resources, and information for youth.

[www.stopx.org](http://www.stopx.org)

### **ECPAT International (End Child Prostitution Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes)**

ECPAT is a global network of organizations and individuals working together to eliminate child sexual exploitation, child pornography, and the trafficking of children for sexual purposes. ECPAT has Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).

[www.ecpat.net](http://www.ecpat.net)



## MISSING GIRLS AND WOMEN

Aboriginal girls and women are going missing from across BC and Canada at an alarming rate. The Native Women's Association of Canada has compiled a database of 487 names of Aboriginal girls and women who have gone missing across Canada (NWAC, 2007). Despite community efforts over a period of many years to prevent further tragedies, the disappearances continue.

Girls and women can arm themselves with information in order to increase their safety, especially when travelling from one community to another. Many of the missing women have disappeared while hitchhiking or walking alone on a rural road. Most importantly, community members must talk openly about this reality, and come together to think of ways to keep one another safe.

Research participants said that communication among community members is the most important aspect of coordinating an effort to find youths who go missing. Despite awareness-raising efforts in recent years, some people said that they are still finding out about missing youth after they have been missing for weeks, even when the missing youth are relatives of theirs.

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### WHAT TO DO IF A YOUTH GOES MISSING

Many rural communities, especially those in northern areas, have developed community plans for when a young person goes missing. If your community has not developed a plan, you may want to get together with a group of service providers or concerned parents to develop one. Here are a few ideas to keep in mind:

- What immediate steps should be taken to inform community members when a youth goes missing?
- What local resources (both formal and informal) can you call upon in a crisis?
- What resources exist outside the community (police, ambulance, etc.)? How long does it take them to get to your community?
- What times of year are youth most mobile? When are they most likely to go missing?



- Are there people in the community who drive the local roads on a regular basis (to commute to work, for example)? Are they willing to be called upon for immediate help if a youth is missing, to keep an eye out for the youth on the road?
- Is there a local organization (Band office, school, etc.) that can be used as a meeting place if the community needs to mobilize to find a missing youth?
- List the contact information for all of the people listed above and circulate it to every family in the community.

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### *FINDING DAWN: VIDEO EXERCISE WITH YOUTH*

*Finding Dawn* is a film created by Métis filmmaker Christine Welsh. It follows the stories of three families, whose loved ones have gone missing, including one from northern BC. The video provides an opportunity to hear the voices of victims and to consider the disturbing reality facing our communities. Through the journey of the filmmaker, the viewer is taken from rural to urban communities where the murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women go unsolved. Through this journey, the hope and determination of Aboriginal families and communities shine through. First Nations women activists share their insights and teachings about the history of violence against their communities.

*(Activity with youth and/or adults)*

Watch the film with a group of youth or adults in your community. It is emotional and moving, but there are many lessons to be learned along the way.

Afterwards, talk about the film. Ask:

- What struck you about the voices you heard in the film?
- What changes do you think are needed to improve the safety of Aboriginal women and girls?
- What did you learn about attitudes towards Aboriginal women and girls?
- What could the police do to act in solidarity with Aboriginal communities in the struggle to address violence against women and youth?
- Who is responsible for stopping this violence? How are you going to help?



You may be able to borrow *Finding Dawn* from the library or from a nearby college. For information on ordering a copy, check the National Film Board of Canada website, [www.nfb.ca](http://www.nfb.ca).

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## RESOURCES

### **Sisters in Spirit**

The Native Women’s Association of Canada has been undertaking the Sisters in Spirit Campaign to raise awareness about the issue of missing Aboriginal youth in rural and urban areas of Canada. Through community-based research, NWAC will be gathering stories of families whose loved ones have gone missing. Visit their website for updated information about this initiative and about the educational tools they have developed.

[www.nwac-hq.org](http://www.nwac-hq.org)



## FOCUS ON OFFENDERS

Education, prevention, and intervention with youth can go only so far to stop sexual exploitation. Communities must begin to hold offenders accountable, creating a meaningful process for their sentencing so that they don't reoffend. This can include dealing with their own histories of abuse and trauma and with current addictions or other issues.

It is well known that Aboriginal people continue to be overrepresented in the justice system, including people who have committed crimes against their families and community members. In small communities, these cycles of violence can be devastating, and change must begin with the way that offenders are handled.

As discussed in the previous section (Section C) abuse and violence must be named for what they are, and men, who comprise the majority of offenders, must take responsibility and call their peers to take action. Elders and community leaders must also challenge the culture of silence.

***What is your community doing to confront the offenders who come from within?***





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## RESOURCES

### **Warriors Against Violence Society**

The Warriors Against Violence Society was started in 1998, initially as a program for assaultive Aboriginal men. Today WAVS provides services for men, women, families, and youth in Vancouver. They also offer educational activities and violence-prevention programs.

[www.wavbc.com](http://www.wavbc.com)

### **Video: *Men Speak Up: Ending Violence Together***

While not focused specifically on youth sexual exploitation, this film is a good example of how men can begin to speak out against violence. The film combines news footage from recent cases of domestic violence in BC with short interviews about the importance of men speaking out to one another to challenge societal attitudes about violence against women.

[www.endingviolence.org/node/664](http://www.endingviolence.org/node/664)



The amount of exposure that youth have to the Internet varies from community to community. In some areas, computers are not readily available and Internet exploitation is not much of a concern. In other areas, however, youth are accessing the Internet at school or at home without supervision, and are getting together with boyfriends and other persons who they have only met online. Recent research has found that “within the Province of BC the luring of youth from isolated communities has been facilitated by online technologies and constitutes another realm of exploitation. Previously isolated rural communities are now accessible to online recruiters who can take advantage of youth who may not have the skills to recognize sexual recruitment” (Horton et al., 2007, p. 14).

Although youth may be told not to talk to strangers online, predators have ways of getting around these safety measures. For example, a pre-teen boy got a message on MSN from someone saying he was “just a computer” so it was okay for the boy to accept his friend request. The boy had been told not to become friends with people he didn’t know, and recognized that it was not okay to talk to strangers online, but he thought that a computer was safe. He didn’t understand how computers work, and made the “computer” his friend so they could chat. When the discussion turned personal and made him uncomfortable, he asked a youth worker for help.

Often youth know more than the adults in their lives about online messaging, chatting, and social networking sites. It is a good idea for adults to get training and information in order to be aware of the situations youth are facing online. Although youth may know more than adults about computers and online environments, they may not have the life experiences or emotional maturity needed to make healthy choices about how to engage in relationships with people online, especially people they have never met in real life. Adults who familiarize themselves with online environments can help youth deal with issues such as online bullying, sexual exploitation, peer pressure, and other social issues. The Internet is another place where youth hang out, and safety should be a concern.



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## HOW SAFE IS YOUR INFORMATION?

### *(Activity with youth)*

One of the people who participated in the research for this manual suggested the following activity for educating youth on online safety.

1. Have the adult (facilitator, parent, etc.) Google the name of a young person to see what information comes up.
2. Youth are often horrified if their parents or other adults can see the photos or other personal information that they've placed online. Talk to the youth about the fact that if *you* can find all of this information about them, anyone can (including predators).
3. Go through each of their online pages with them, or give them the tools to make their Web pages safe. This includes changing the privacy settings on all of their accounts (Facebook, Nexopia, Bebo, etc.).



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## RESOURCES

### **SOLOS (Safe OnLine Outreach Society)**

SOLOS provides education to youth and adults on staying safe on the Internet. Their website includes a youth section where youth can ask questions and look at youth-friendly resources. They also post up-to-date research, media releases, and other relevant information on online safety. Under “SOLOS Materials,” there is an Organizational Assessment Tool: “Non-profit organizations, like many sectors of our world are dealing with new situations around technology, confidentiality and policy. This tool will assist organizations to begin the dialogue required to respond to these changes.”

[www.safeonlineoutreach.com](http://www.safeonlineoutreach.com)

### **Be Web Aware**

A national bilingual public education program on Internet safety. Includes information and tools to help parents and caregivers effectively manage Internet use in the home, with suggestions for children and youth of various ages.

[www.bewebaware.ca](http://www.bewebaware.ca)

### **Cybertip**

National tipline for reporting online sexual exploitation.

[www.cybertip.ca](http://www.cybertip.ca)



E:

## Additional Resources





## E: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### **Aboriginal Healing Foundation**

An organization aimed at supporting individuals and communities in healing from the legacy of trauma left by residential schools in Canada.

[www.ahf.ca](http://www.ahf.ca)

### **BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs**

A resource for community-based services that support survivors of sexual assault, relationship violence, child abuse, and criminal harassment.

[www.endingviolence.org](http://www.endingviolence.org)

### **Children of the Street Society**

A Vancouver-based organization that provides resources and support to parents or caregivers where children and youth are at risk of sexual exploitation or are being sexually exploited, works with families to develop an action plan or directs them to local resources, and provides prevention education.

[www.childrenofthestreet.com](http://www.childrenofthestreet.com)

### **Honouring Life Network**

A web resource offering culturally relevant information and resources on suicide prevention for Aboriginal communities.

[www.honouringlife.ca](http://www.honouringlife.ca)

### **National Aboriginal Circle against Family Violence**

An organization aimed at reducing family violence in Aboriginal communities. Includes resources and publications, and links to related international organizations.

[www.nacafv.ca](http://www.nacafv.ca)



### **Native Women’s Association of Canada**

National organization with various initiatives related to the social and political status of Indigenous women and youth. Includes a violence prevention toolkit created by and for Indigenous youth.

[www.nwac-hq.org](http://www.nwac-hq.org)

### **Native Youth Sexual Health Network**

The Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN) is a North-America wide organization working on issues of healthy sexuality, cultural competency, youth empowerment, reproductive justice, and sex positivity by and for Native youth.

[www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com](http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com)

### **Pauktuutit: Inuit Women of Canada**

Pauktuutit undertakes initiatives to address the needs of Inuit women, advocates for equity and social improvements, and encourages Inuit women’s participation in the community, regional, and national life of Canada.

[www.pauktuutit.ca](http://www.pauktuutit.ca)

### **Reclaiming Youth International**

Featuring the work of renowned Indigenous scholar and educator Dr. Martin Brokenleg, including the Circle of Courage model.

[www.reclaiming.com](http://www.reclaiming.com)

### **Sexual Exploitation Online Toolkit**

An online toolkit with information for individuals and groups that want to address the issue of sexual exploitation in their community.

[www.jibc.ca/seytoolkit](http://www.jibc.ca/seytoolkit)

### **Youth against Violence Line**

A service that young people or adults can call to seek help, report incidents of youth violence or crime, and obtain information on services in their area (or the nearest town). Toll-free in BC: 1-800-680-4264.





### **Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons (OCTIP)**

The provincial government office responsible for developing and coordinating BC's response to human trafficking, including delivering information and services to communities across the province. OCTIP offers a 24-hour hotline devoted to cases of human trafficking in British Columbia: 1-888-712-7974.

[www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/octip](http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/octip)

### **Victim Services and Crime Prevention Division (VSCPD)**

Responsible for supporting victims of crime in BC, including community-based and police-based victim service programs, other supports and information for victims of crime, and a toll-free VictimLINK BC phone line: 1-800-563-0808.

[www.victimlinkbc.ca](http://www.victimlinkbc.ca)

### **Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)**

Responsible for providing programs and services to ensure the safety and well-being of children and youth in BC, governed by the *Child, Family and Community Services Act*. MCFD provides targeted services for youth who have been sexually exploited, including: safe houses in Victoria, Prince George, and Kelowna; youth outreach and support workers throughout BC; and Youth Agreements, which can provide housing, education, money, or other supports to youth ages 16-18 who are sexually exploited or face a range of other difficulties.

[www.mcf.gov.bc.ca](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca)

### **Provincial Integrated Child Exploitation (ICE) Unit**

Provides operational support and assistance to 131 RCMP detachments and 11 municipal police agencies in BC. The Unit educates police and RCMP officers on the use of the Internet in child exploitation offences.

**Email:** [ICE\\_BC@rcmp-grc.gc.ca](mailto:ICE_BC@rcmp-grc.gc.ca) **Phone:** 604-598-4569 (general line)



## TERMS YOU SHOULD KNOW

These definitions are meant to serve as an easy reference, not provide extensive information on the terms. If you require a deeper understanding of the terms, we encourage you to look up more information on your own.

**Aboriginal.** Includes First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people, including individuals with Indian status, without status, on-reserve, off-reserve, and those who do not have a specific Band membership but who have Aboriginal ancestry.

**Adult ally.** An adult who is in a support or advocacy role in the life of a youth, and who sees himself or herself acting in alliance with the youth rather than having power over the youth.

**Homophobia.** Discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer people, often stemming from societal attitudes and irrational fears about nonheterosexual people.

**Sexual exploitation.** The exchange of sexual acts with youth under age 18 for anything of consideration, including money, transportation, shelter, food, clothing, gifts, drugs, or alcohol. It also includes adults in positions of trust or authority (such as teachers or sports coaches) having sexual relationships with youth under age 18.

**Trafficking in persons.** The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of a person for the purpose of exploitation, through the use of threat, force, coercion, abuse of power, or the giving of payment or benefits.

**Transgender.** A term used by people who have a gender identity that does not fit into the categories of “man” and “woman.” Transgender (or “trans”) people have a range of gender identities, including genderqueer, third gender, transsexual, and transvestite. Two-spirit people may also identify themselves as transgender.

**Transphobia.** Discrimination against transgender people, often stemming from societal attitudes about, and misunderstanding of, trans people.



**Two-spirit.** This term was first used by Aboriginal lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender groups in 1990 at an intertribal First Nations gay and lesbian conference, to reclaim traditional mixed-gender roles from within Indigenous traditions. The term itself is adapted from an Ojibwe word. Within some Aboriginal traditions, two-spirit identities are given by an elder, and have specific spiritual and community roles. For others, it is a term that people choose to use to identify both their Indigenous heritage and lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirit, transgender, and queer (LGBTSTQ) sexual and/or gender orientation.

**Youth.** For the purposes of this project, youth are defined as adolescents under age 18. Communities may have their own definitions of youth, however, extending to age 29, 35, or beyond.



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We extend a big thank you to all of the advisory members in the two partnering communities. Due to a request from one of the communities that they be listed anonymously, the community partners will not be named here. We thank each one of you for your commitment to this project.





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