Evaluation of the Promoting Life-skills in Aboriginal Youth (PLAY) Program: Stories of Positive Youth Development and Community Development

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Overview

- Introduction
  - Positive Youth Development
  - Right to Play, the Promoting Life-skills in Aboriginal Youth (PLAY) program
  - Purpose
- Methods
- Results
- Discussion
  - Recommendations

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Introduction – Positive youth development

- Positive Youth Development (PYD)
  - development of assets in youth to increase positive outcomes (enhanced functioning, well-being and success) (Benson, 1997; Lerner et al., 2006; Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray & Foster, 1998)

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Right to Play

- Right to Play
  - the Promoting Life-skills in Aboriginal Youth (PLAY) program
- Began operations in 2010
- The focus of this paper is on the Youth Leadership Program (YLP)
  - Program objective: to enhance youth leadership skills and sense of purpose in order to develop hope and planning for the future.

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PLAY
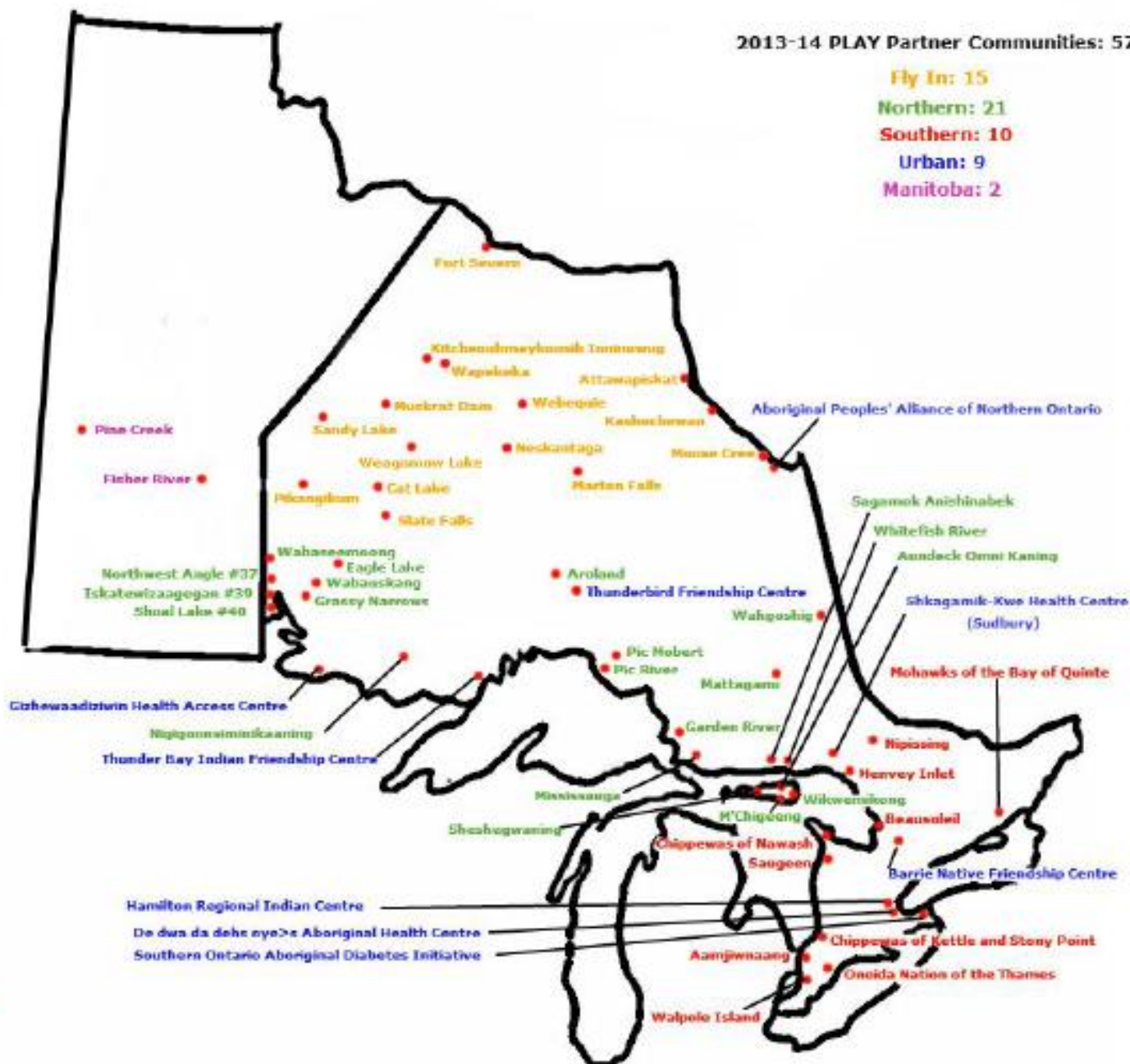## PROMOTING LIFE-SKILLS IN ABORIGINAL YOUTH

2013-14 PLAY Partner Communities: 57

Fly In: 15
Northern: 21
Southern: 10
Urban: 9
Manitoba: 2

Fort Severn

Kitcheaahmeykoanik Inninuwug
Wapekeka
Attawapiskat

Muskrat Dam
Webequie
Kashechewan

Aboriginal Peoples' Alliance of Northern Ontario

Pine Creek

Sandy Lake

Neskantaga
Moose Cree

Weagamow Lake

Fisher River

Marten Falls

Cat Lake
Pikangikum
Slate Falls

Sagamok Anishinabek

Whitefish River

Wahnapitae

Aundeck Omni Kaning

Eagle Lake

Araland

Northwest Angle #37
Iskatewizaagegan #39
Shoal Lake #40

Wabauskang
Grassy Narrows

Thunderbird Friendship Centre

Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre
(Sudbury)

Wahposhig

Pic Mobert
Pic River

Mattagami

Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte

Gizhewaadiziwin Health Access Centre

Garden River

Nipissing

Nipigoonsiminikaaning

Henvey Inlet

Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre

Wikwemikong

M'Chigeeng

Mississauga

Beausoleil

Sheshegwaning

Chippewas of Nawash

Saugeen

Barrie Native Friendship Centre

Hamilton Regional Indian Centre

De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre

Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point

Southern Ontario Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative

Aamjiwnaang

Oneida Nation of the Thames

Walpole Island

RIGHT TO PLAY

The Youth Leadership Program – Core Components

A safe and inclusive space

On-going Assessment

An experienced and supportive leader

Youth voice is heard

3 Inter-generational Events

Regular and reliable programming

3-5 events that youth plan and lead
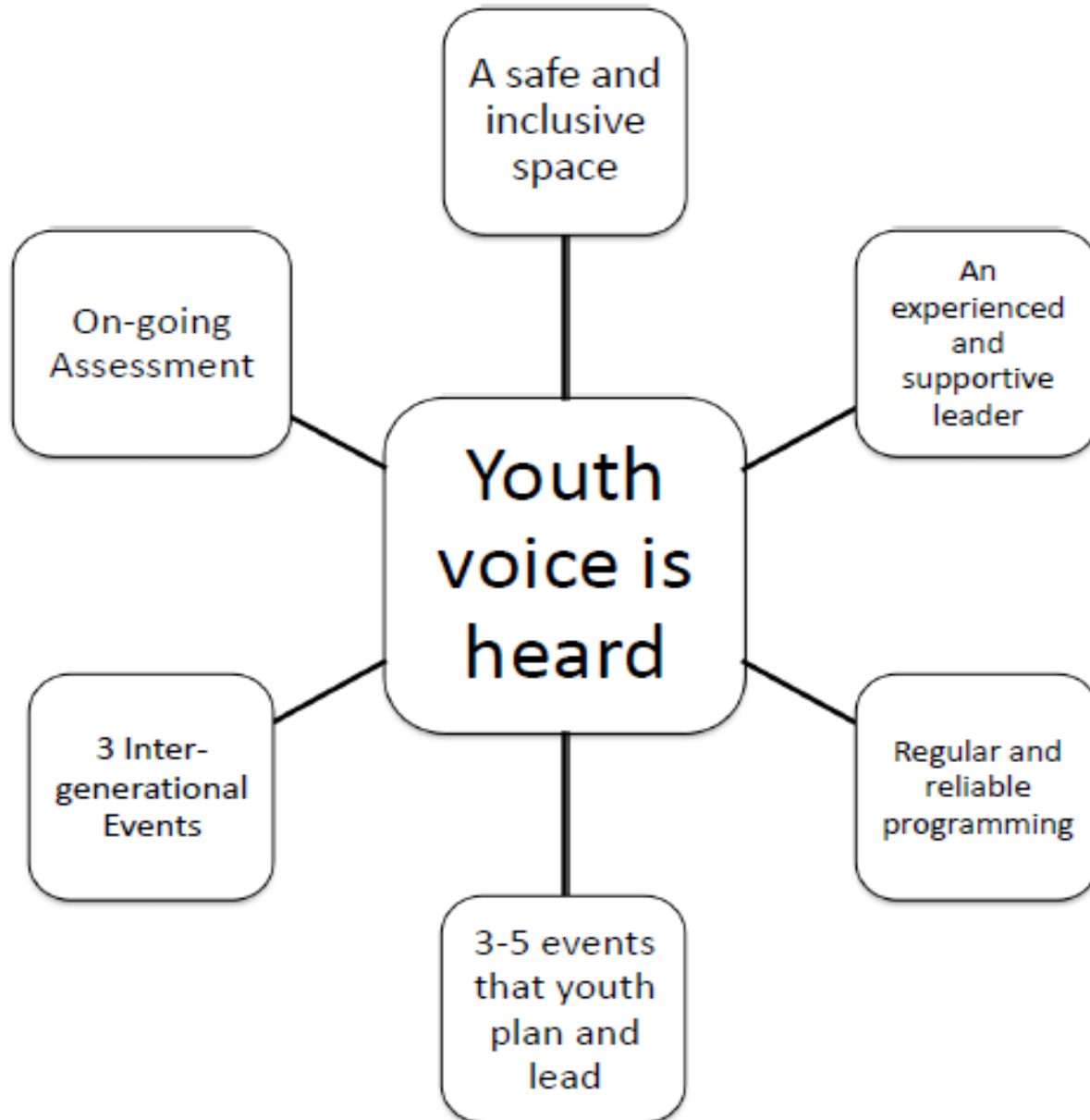
ROGRAM

Community Mentor role

- Individual hired from the community
  - Supported by Program Officer (Right to Play) and the Community Supervisor
  - Background in youth programming (youth worker, teacher, recreation)
- Responsible for delivering programming, building partnerships, monitoring

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Purpose

- To present an evaluation of the PLAY program that examines perceived outcomes

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Participants

- 11 Community Mentors (6 males/5 females) (6 new/5 returning)
  - Represented 14 different communities (Southern – 4, Northern – 6, Fly-in – 3, Unknown – 1)

- 2 Right to Play staff (one mid-level (M), one leadership (F))

- 1 Elder (M)

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Procedure

- Research partnership

- Ethics - University of Ottawa REB & Research Advisory Committee

- Attended 5 Community Mentor trainings and one Youth Symposium

- Three visits to two communities

- Research update and knowledge exchange activity with the Community Mentors

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Procedure cont…

- Method
    - Semi-structured interviews with community mentors, RTP staff, elder
    - Two focus groups with community mentors

- Data Analysis
    - Content analysis (Patton, 2002)
    - Coding using QSR NVivo

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Results

- Multiple positive impacts on the youth
- Enhanced Growth of Community Mentors
- Increased Community Participation

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Results – Youth impacts

- Engagement
- Decreases in negative/risk behaviors
- Relationships
- Confidence
- Life skill development

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Decrease in negative behavior

"I have this one young lad, he is really hard core. He's been involved in gangs, and bullying, and beating people up, you know, a really tough, tough guy, and he's only in grade 8, ok? …it took me about 6 months to get this kid into the program right? Now he never ever misses it…To me that's a really positive thing. He's still got a little ways to go, but at least he's trying and there all the time. And I think that's a huge success in itself."

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Results – Specific life skill development in youth

- Public speaking
- Responsibility
- Goal setting (fundraising)
- Advocacy
- Event planning/supervision
- Daily living skills

Daily living skills

"I had one who dropped out of school… she wanted to handle the money. She got right into it, and she just wanted to do that every time. And she was slowly working to get her grade 12 through correspondence … And she said, "You know what? After five weeks of counting cash once a week, I feel that my math is a lot better I can add and subtract, and deal with money"…She said it made it easier, because she had that bit of experience. And that's like, a hands-on learning approach that she never had in school before."

Results – Enhanced Growth of Community Mentors

- Satisfaction
- Skill-building
- Relationships

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Skill-building

"We started off doing practicals, learning how to facilitate and critiquing each other, and stuff like that. And that's what we started off doing… when it comes to this, we've graduated and we're at a point where we get to design our own program. Because, in a sense, we've mastered that module-type situation… so now we get to design it ourselves."

Results – Increased Community Participation

- Greater partnership among community members
- Increased sense of community
- Creation of numerous community events that engaged members
  - Fundraising
  - Traditional events (e.g., Pow-wow, Hunting trip, Fishing derby)
  - Volunteering
  - Seasonal events
  - Trips
  - Sports tournaments

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Increased sense of community

"It has a sense of community. We can all come together and no one's really uncomfortable with coming and sitting at a table with whoever shows up beside them... Everyone's always looking for a reason to get together and go out and do something. So when we do events, it's nice to see them come out and just be relaxed and having a reason to come out. So the more events we can create, the more people can get out to be with each other, rather than just being in their family. Because it brings all the community members together, all the families together really."

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Discussion

- It was perceived that youth developed a number of leadership-related skills and outcomes, such as increased confidence, acceptance of responsibility and advocacy
  - Consistent with findings from past research on the positive impact leadership programs can have on youth development (Bruce, Nicole & Menke, 2006, Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak & Hawkins, 2004; Hellison, Martinek & Walsh, 2008).

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Discussion

- Comprehensive and varied impacts at different levels – individual youth, community mentors and the greater community
  - Past research has shown that youth leadership programs can enhance community engagement (Blum, 2003; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003)

- Important to recognize that programs such as the YLP can also have a positive impact on the program leaders
  - Future research is needed explore this further

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Limitations

- Disproportionate representation from returning Community Mentors

- Focused on perceived outcomes therefore future research should incorporate quantitative measures of youth outcomes

Recommendations

- Youth leadership programming that incorporates youth voice is an effective approach that fosters development and can be applied within FNMI communities

- Involve local community members as program leaders and incorporate community engagement strategies to help foster community development

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Thank you!

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Questions

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