Working with Children and Youth in Challenging Contexts to Promote Youth Engagement

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Government of Canada.

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Executive Summary

I. *Background to the Knowledge Synthesis Reports*

Children and youth in challenging contexts, both in Canada and overseas, face common threats to their mental health that can be better addressed when researchers, service providers, practitioners and communities pool their knowledge, resources and lessons learned of what works best for improving young peoples' mental health. If these groups continue to work within their occupational and disciplinary boundaries, they will fail to mobilize the full potential of evidence documented by researchers, the practice-related knowledge of service providers and practitioners, and the local knowledge of communities. The CYCC Network was developed in response to this need and in the summer of 2013, released three thematic knowledge synthesis reports: violence, technology, and youth engagement.

Violence against children and youth, in particular, is a complex public health problem that affects communities worldwide, and can lead to potentially devastating consequences for young people and their families if left unaddressed. To tackle this problem, a coordinated effort to share and document best practices for addressing young peoples' mental health needs is urgently needed. Without opportunities to share this knowledge, there is a risk of delivering potentially ineffective interventions that are difficult for young people and their families to access or relate to. Additionally, poorly-researched or evaluated interventions often ignore the structural barriers (e.g. access to mental health practitioners, stigma, narrow focus on a single problem, and the coordination of mental health services offered by different service providers) that shape young peoples' mental health and wellbeing. In light of these challenges, the knowledge synthesis report on violence explores the effective strategies that help children and youth in challenging contexts who have been exposed to violence, in order to help them overcome trauma and feel safe in their families, schools, and communities.

Recent years have seen an explosion of new, innovative programs that focus on improving the lives of vulnerable young people through the use of **technology.** The internet has opened doors of opportunity to reach these children and youth in more effective ways with the information and support they need to lead healthy lives. Today, mobile phones are one of the most prolific mediums through which interventions can be delivered. While the rapid developments made in technology present many opportunities, the expansion of this field has not been mirrored in the development of research and evaluation of those innovations. There is a need for more evidence to support the use of technology as a means of intervention with children and youth in challenging contexts. In response to this gap, the knowledge synthesis report on technology reviews innovations in technology that are known to be effective in helping children and youth in the most challenging of contexts, to nurture resilience, prevent mental health problems, and build a special place for themselves in the collective life of their communities.

Finally, there has been an increasing recognition that **youth engagement** is central to any best practice or intervention that involves young people. Valuing youth engagement puts the focus on the positive contribution that youth make to programs and their effectiveness.

Programs and services that acknowledge the independence and agency of at-risk youth provide opportunity for young people to give feedback on the relevance and appropriateness of the programs that serve them. Additionally, youth engagement can promote a sense of empowerment on an individual level, and facilitate healthy connections between young people and their community. Despite these benefits, however, there remains a gap in our understanding of the implications of engaging vulnerable youth. In order to better understand and optimize youth engagement, different strategies need to be explored that identify their appropriateness for youth living in different challenging contexts, representing all genders and age categories. With these gaps in mind, the knowledge synthesis report on youth engagement explores strategies that have been shown to work in engaging children and youth in challenging contexts as full members of their communities and in ending feelings of disempowerment and abandonment.

Ultimately, the three knowledge synthesis reports are interconnected in ways that can help to form a comprehensive strategy for researchers, practitioners, service providers, and communities to address the needs of vulnerable children and youth in Canada and overseas. For example, lessons learned from the violence report can inform programs and interventions that use technology to address the mental health needs of young people in challenging contexts. Similarly, the many innovative examples and lessons learned highlighted in the technology report may be used to inform professionals working with children and youth exposed to violence, through the design and delivery of technology-based programming that is safe, accessible and effective for youth in different contexts. In turn, the youth engagement report showcases important work that can be used to inform both the violence and technology reports with best practices for engaging youth in the design and implementation of programs so that interventions are relevant, meaningful and effective to children and youth in challenging contexts.

II. The Goal of the Knowledge Synthesis Reports

In synthesizing evidence from researchers, practitioners, service providers, and communities in the key areas of violence exposure, technology and youth engagement, these knowledge synthesis reports bring together disciplinarily-specific approaches and lessons learned in working with vulnerable and at-risk children and youth. The goal of the Network is to create an integrated and sustainable community of researchers, practitioners, communities, policy makers, and young people working together to share and improve programs that support the wellbeing and positive mental health of children and youth in challenging contexts.

III. The Development of the Reports

These reports benefited from the valuable expertise, feedback, and insight of Network partners from Canada and around the world. An Advisory Committee, comprised of academics, practitioners, and service providers working in the areas of violence exposure, child and youth mental health, youth engagement, and technology, provided guidance and assistance throughout the research and writing process. Parts of the reports, particularly the

recommendations, were developed in collaboration with and peer-reviewed by partners of the CYCC Network through a series of consultations and workshops, as well as a knowledge mobilization simulation.

IV. Six Overarching Principles from the Reports

The following key principles reflect some of the overarching themes and lessons learned that emerged from the violence, technology, and youth engagement knowledge synthesis reports. These principles have been incorporated as actionable items in the recommendations from each report. The principles and recommendations are addressed to professionals who work with vulnerable children and youth; including researchers, service providers, practitioners, and policy makers.

1. **Engage youth**: Youth engagement is critical to the success of any program or intervention with vulnerable and at-risk young people. Practitioners and service providers must initiate youth participation as a step towards engaging young people in their program design and implementation.
2. **Evaluate innovative or promising practices:** More evaluations are needed to support promising programs/interventions to help develop better mental health outcomes for children and youth in challenging contexts. We recommend that these be embedded within each projects' structure.
3. **Consider culture & context:** Design and deliver research and programs with context and culture in mind. Not all methods will be appropriate for all children and youth.
4. **Adopt a strengths-based approach:** Continue building on the strengths and assets of children and youth, including those of their families and communities. These resources are key to supporting good mental health outcomes and resilience.
5. **Assess your practices for potential harm:** Take precautions to ensure that the work you are doing is ethical and does not cause more harm than good.
6. **Share knowledge with others:** Researchers, practitioners and service providers must collaborate to create sustainable structures to document, format, share, and access best practices related to treating young people after violence exposure, using technology to deliver mental health interventions, and engaging youth.

Section 1: Introduction

I. Engaging Vulnerable and At-risk Children and Youth in Canada

Youth engagement is not a particular practice or program but a process; an attitude and approach that by nature facilitates meaningful involvement and ownership on the part of the youth (S. McCart, personal communication, October 4, 2012). Full engagement consists of a cognitive component, an affective component, and a behavioral component. In other words, "heart, head, feet," and spirit (Centres of Excellence for Youth Engagement, 2009). Conceptualizing youth engagement in this way can strengthen a program's ability to sustain positive youth engagement.

Studies have shown that positive youth engagement is critical to the success of any youth program or intervention (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster 2003; Gurstein et al., 2003; Hart 1992). Valuing youth engagement puts the focus on the positive contribution that youth make to programs and their effectiveness; this moves programs from being done "for" youth to "with" youth. In order to better understand and truly engage these often hard-to-reach youth, different strategies must be explored that identify their appropriateness in different contexts, genders, and age categories (Dolan, 2012; Paterson & Panessa, 2008a). Programs and services that acknowledge the independence and agency of vulnerable youth empower them by providing them the opportunity to have feedback on the relevance and appropriateness of the program that serves them (Paterson & Panessa, 2008a).

II. The Knowledge Synthesis Report on Youth Engagement

The purpose of this knowledge synthesis report is to explore strategies that have been shown to work at engaging vulnerable and at-risk children and youth nurture resilience, prevent mental health problems, and build a special place for themselves in their communities. Research on the effectiveness of programs for children and youth in challenging contexts has increased significantly, though what we know is helpful remains largely seated within different professional disciplines (Chalmers, 2005; Shlonsky, Noonan, Littell, & Montgomery, 2011). This means that best practices and good programming around the world are not being shared across borders or disciplines. In failing to address this issue, the effectiveness of sharing evidence-informed practices documented by researchers, practice-based knowledge gained by service providers, and the local knowledge within communities is limited. Our purpose here is to show that vulnerable and at-risk children and youth face common threats to their mental health and safety that can be more effectively addressed when multiple formal and informal service providers and community supports become involved in interventions.

Effective strategies that are appropriate to the challenging contexts in which young people live can be identified and shared effectively when space is created for dialogue. This knowledge synthesis of best practices is one of three. Combined, their purpose is twofold:

1. To synthesize evidence, practice, and local-based knowledge in the area of programs and interventions with children and youth in challenging contexts. These reports will

contribute to this synthesis of knowledge by presenting best and promising practices for promoting young people's mental health and safety.

2. To develop peer-reviewed recommendations that will become the basis for a number of strategies by the CYCC Network to share the reports and get their results integrated into policy and practice.

III. Children and Youth in Challenging Contexts

Consultations were held with organizations and individuals involved with the CYCC Network to decide what populations of children and youth to include. The following groups are discussed in more detail in Section III:

- Children and youth affected by war
  - Child soldiers
  - Children and youth in military families
- Refugee children and youth
- Children and youth affected by natural disasters
- Immigrant children and youth
- Children and youth subject to maltreatment
- Children and youth in alternative care
  - Children and youth in institutions
  - Youth in juvenile detention
- Aboriginal children and youth
- Homeless children and youth
- Youth gangs
- Child labourers
  - Children and youth in the workplace
  - Children and youth who have been trafficked
- Children and youth living with health-related challenges
  - Children and youth living with chronic illness
  - Children and youth living with mental illness

IV. Organization of this Report

In **Section 2**, the methodology for this synthesis is outlined. The key terms used throughout this report are first defined. Then the core concepts of the different types of knowledge are discussed: evidence-based knowledge, practice-based evidence, and local knowledge. This is followed by a discussion of best practices and resilience. The methods are then presented, starting with the research question that guided this report, followed by an overview of the literature review, services scan, one-on-one meetings, and data analysis undertaken in this report. Finally, this section concludes with an outline of limitations of the report.

Section 3 will define youth engagement and present its key components. The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement (CEYE) has developed a framework for youth engagement which will be discussed here. Youth engagement is not a practice but a process which is descriptive of the approach for involving young people. Following this, the population groups

identified in the methodology will be presented and defined, establishing the contexts in which this research as focused. This section will conclude by presenting the relevance of this report and its findings for network partners.

Section 4 will present principles for youth engagement and how they relate to children and youth in challenging contexts. Each principle will be explored using practical examples of programs that are working to nurture resilience, prevent mental health problems and help young people build a place for themselves in the collective life of their community. Best practices will be identified as well as gaps in both research and practice.

Section 5 highlights the gaps in research and practice and point to future areas of collaboration and study. The problem is not a lack of exemplary initiatives nationally and internationally, but rather the disciplinary divides that have prevailed both within and across research and practice (Afifi, et al, 2011; Mitchell, Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009).

Finally, **Section 6** presents a comprehensive list of recommendations for implementing strategies which promote youth engagement among children and youth in challenging contexts. Next steps for moving ahead are identified.

Section 2: Methodology

In this section, the key terms used in the report are defined and core concepts presented including, how to understand the different types of knowledge, best practices, and resilience. The steps that were taken to prepare this report are outlined in more detail. These included a scoping review of the literature, services scan, and meetings with service providers, researchers, and health practitioners. The section concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the report.

I. Key Terms

Best practice: Interventions that incorporate evidence-informed practice, identify and employ the right combination of program elements to ensure targeted outcomes, and match these interventions to the local needs and assets of communities. *See page 11 for the core concept.*

Children and youth: *Children* are defined as persons 14 years of age and under, and *youth*[1] as persons who are between 15 and 24 years of age (UNESCO, 2012).

Evidence-informed practice: The integration of experience, judgement and expertise with the best available external evidence from systematic research (Chalmers, 2005, p. 229; Sackett, Rosenberg, Gray, Haynes, & Richardson, 1996, p. 71). *See page 8 for the core concept.*

Local knowledge: Understanding and wisdom that are used in everyday situations. Its main value lies in helping local people cope with day-to day-challenges, detecting early warning signals of change, and knowing how to respond to challenges. Local knowledge is seldom documented and is mostly tacit (Fabricius, Scholes, & Cundill, 2006, p. 168). *See page 9 for the core concept.*

Practice-based evidence: Knowledge that has emerged and evolved primarily on the basis of practical experience, rather than from empirical research (Mitchell, 2011, p. 208). *See page 9 for the core concept.*

Resilience: In the context of exposure to significant adversity, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being, and their capacity individually and collectively to negotiate for these resources to be provided and experienced in culturally meaningful ways (Ungar, 2008, p. 225). *See page 13 for the core concept.*

[1] Within the category of youth, however, it is important to keep in mind the need to differentiate between an adolescent (aged between 13-19 years) and *young adults* (aged between 20-24 years), "since the sociological, psychological and health problems they face may differ" (UNESCO, 2012).

Technology: Innovations in electronic media that have been used with children and youth in challenging contexts to help prevent violence and promote well-being.

Violence: The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002, p. 5).

Youth Engagement: The meaningful and sustained involvement of a young person in an activity focusing outside the self. Full engagement consists of a cognitive component, an affective component, and a behavioural component, also known as "Head, heart, and Feet" [and spirit] (CEYE, 2009).

II. Core Concepts

a. Evidence-informed Practice, Practice-based Evidence, and Local Knowledge

Different types of knowledge are challenging to synthesize, as they continue to be divided along disciplinary and geographic lines. Advocates of evidence-based practice, for instance, prioritize "the use of treatments for which there is sufficiently persuasive evidence to support their effectiveness in attaining the desired outcomes" (Roberts & Yeager, 2004, p. 5). Based on the assumption that empirical, research-based evidence is the most reliable for practice (Proctor & Rosen, 2006), this evidence is generally categorized hierarchically in accordance with the scientific strength of derived outcomes, with meta-analyses or replicated randomized controlled trials ranking among the most authoritative evidence and case studies, while descriptive reports and other unsystematic observations rank among the weakest (Roberts & Yeager, 2004, p. 6). Qualitative evidence in particular is typically given little weight among the advocates of evidence-based practice, who "tend to equate research with quantitative research" and prioritize the results of experimental designs as the "gold standard" (Oktay & Park-Lee, 2004, p. 706).

Traditional approaches to evidence-based practice, however, have been criticized for advancing a top-down approach to practice that excludes the expertise of practitioners and neglects the particular circumstances of service users (Chalmers, 2005; Shlonsky et al., 2011). They argue instead in favour of evidence-informed practice (EIP), due to the reality that "judgments will always be needed about how to use the evidence derived from evaluative research," thereby taking into account needs, resources, priorities, preferences, and other factors (Chalmers, 2003, p. 36). **Evidence-informed practice** "better conveys that decisions are guided or informed by evidence rather than based solely upon it" (Shlonsky et al., 2011, p. 363). EIP reflects the integration of best evidence, context, and the circumstances of service providers and users. This definition ranks and prioritizes the outcomes of interventions according to their scientific strength, yet acknowledges that the evidence derived from research will ultimately be subject to the judgment of practitioners (Chalmers, 2005, p. 230).

This inclusive definition also facilitates the integration of other forms of evidence and knowledge, most notably practice-based evidence and local knowledge. As opposed to "the hierarchy of knowledge which situates research evidence in a position superior to other forms of knowing" (Fox, 2003, p. 82), **practice-based evidence** incorporates the knowledge and experience gained by individual practitioners from various contexts and disciplines, the inputs of which are contributing to a growing toolbox of practice-based strategies (Roberts & Yeager, 2004, p. 12). In recognizing the role of the practitioner in generating knowledge, it acknowledges that "practitioners' perceptions of the utility of evidence will depend on [the evidence's] relevance to a particular setting and its validity for that setting" (Fox, 2003, p. 83). Practice-based evidence incorporates a greater focus on the context of interventions and the processes through which they unfold (Barkham & Mellor-Clark, 2003). Moreover, without the bindings of research, these practices often involve new and innovative approaches to high-risk populations, enabling them to keep pace with rapidly changing population needs. For this report, practice-based evidence is defined as, "knowledge that has emerged and evolved primarily on the basis of practical experience rather than from empirical research" (P. F. Mitchell, 2011, p. 208).

This definition enables a shift in focus beyond the outcome-driven perspective of evidence-informed practice, thereby giving voice to practitioners from a ground-up perspective and acknowledging the contingent conditions and characteristics that have facilitated program success.

Interest in **local knowledge** has also gained prominence in recent years (Agrawal, 1995, p. 413; Agrawal, 2002, p. 288). Early definitions of local or traditional knowledge highlighted the communal, relational, timeless, and contextual nature of this form of knowing, situating it in contrast to the individualist, objective, finite, and universal tenets of Western or knowledge (Agrawal, 1995, p. 418). This dichotomy, however, was later criticized for advancing a static concept of traditional knowledge that failed to acknowledge the innumerable cross-cultural linkages that have transpired over the centuries or the considerable heterogeneity encapsulated within this term, including significant differences among philosophies and knowledge commonly viewed as local (Agrawal, 1995, p. 421). Local knowledge is rarely static or untouched by other forms of knowledge, rather it is "undergo[ing] constant modifications as the needs of communities change" (Agrawal, 1995, p. 429; UNESCO, 2003). For the purposes of this report, it is defined as follows:

> Local knowledge is used in everyday situations. Its main value lies in helping local people cope with day-to day-challenges, detecting early warning signals of change, and knowing how to respond to challenges… Local knowledge is seldom documented and is mostly tacit (Fabricius et al., 2006, p. 168).

This definition of local knowledge highlights its dynamic and fluid nature, its connections to the physical and social environments of specific communities, and the social, political, and kinship structures that reinforce individual and collective well-being. A sub-set of local knowledge is traditional knowledge which, in this report, refers to the knowledge held by Aboriginal people. In the Canadian context, this refers to the First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Traditional knowledge "builds upon the historic experiences of a people and adapts to

social, economic, environmental, spiritual and political change" (Government of Canada, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2004). Traditional knowledge is a unique form of local knowledge which is needed to inform effective programs and interventions. Despite the growing evidence base underlying each of the above forms of knowledge, researchers and practitioners working with children and youth in challenging contexts have largely adhered to a single body of knowledge. These divides exist both within and across research, practice, and local knowledge. The "substantial deficits" of evidence-informed practice, in particular, have received considerable attention in the literature (Mitchell, 2011, p. 215). Most notably, despite the multiple and complex mental health needs facing many children and youth in real-world service settings, most clinical efficacy trials have instead concentrated on preventing or treating single disorders, to the point that research in this field has largely developed into several independent lines of work (Mitchell, 2011, p. 208). Therefore it is unclear whether the results from one study of children and youth may be generalized to another (Cohen, Berliner, & Mannarino, 2000, p. 31).

Evidence-informed practice further provides little analysis of the core elements, mechanisms, and contexts that underlie the implementation of successful interventions. Among randomized controlled trials, in particular, controlling for the characteristics, needs and contexts of the intervention and targeted population has left a considerable gap between the intervention assessed and the application of that intervention in other settings (Bower, 2003, p. 331; Shlonsky et al., 2011, p. 366). Consequently, although researchers may be able to point to the efficacy of cognitive behavioural therapy, for example, the specific components contingent to its success or its replication in another setting remain largely unknown (Nikulina et al., 2008, p. 1238). While necessary, the evidence derived from efficacy trials has been deemed insufficient to guide practice and policy in a clinical setting (Barkham & Mellor-Clark, 2003, p. 320; Bower, 2003, p. 332).

Although practice-based evidence can help fill these gaps by providing valuable insights into the core elements underlying certain interventions, much of this knowledge "remains tacit and undocumented" (Mitchell, 2011, p. 208). Practice wisdom accumulated through the personal experiences of practitioners or knowledge disseminated through communities of practice are rarely articulated, such that the decisions underlying service provision remain largely unknown. Moreover, as indicated above, evaluations conducted by practitioners are subject to variable scientific rigour and may be susceptible to bias in their application (Bonnefoy, Morgan, Kelly, Butt, & Bergman, 2007, pp. 33–34). Nonetheless, practitioners have often denounced the "authoritarianism" of research, arguing that it is typically elevated above the expertise of service providers or the needs of their clients (Fox, 2003, p. 82; Shlonsky et al., 2011, p. 362).

Similar concerns exist regarding the conceptualization and use of local knowledge. The variation inherent across contexts, cultures, and different ways of knowing has made understanding how interventions are implemented and accepted at the local level complex (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006, p. 855). A further divide remains between Western measures of mental health that prioritize the absence of disease or disorder and the more holistic interpretations of mental health found in many non-Western cultures, which typically focus on the mental, physical, social, and spiritual measures of "wellness" (Durie, 2004, p. 1141). However, many researchers are reluctant to engage the "ethical space" needed to forge

cross-cultural conceptions of mental health or continue to locate forms of local knowing within traditional hierarchies of evidence and effectiveness (Cochran et al., 2008, p. 19; Durie, 2004, p. 1140; Naquin et al., 2008, p. 19). Considerable gaps continue to prevail between research, practice, and local knowledge and point to the need for more collaboration between academics, practitioners, and policy makers.

b. Best Practices

These reports use examples of evidence-informed practice, practice-based evidence, and local knowledge to provide a unique understanding of effective or ”best” practices in programs for children and youth in challenging contexts. Best practices, as described by the World Health Organization:

> …should be made on the basis of their fitness for purpose and their connectedness to research questions, not on the basis of a priori notions about the superiority of particular types of evidence or method or placement in an evidence hierarchy, e.g. that the randomized trial is the only basis for knowledge generation (Bonnefoy et al., 2007, p. 30).

In incorporating a wide range of methodologies, this integrative approach avoids the danger of underestimating the relevant evidence available by allowing for the insights and strengths offered through each form of knowledge, all of which can be usefully combined to contribute to the overall understanding of the efficacy and effectiveness of interventions (Booth, 2001; Oliver et al., 2005, p. 429). It also moves away from ranking or assessing evidence based on its research design, and instead matches different forms of evidence with their appropriate research questions (Bonnefoy et al., 2007, p. 99; Glasziou, Vandenbroucke, & Chalmers, 2004, p. 39).

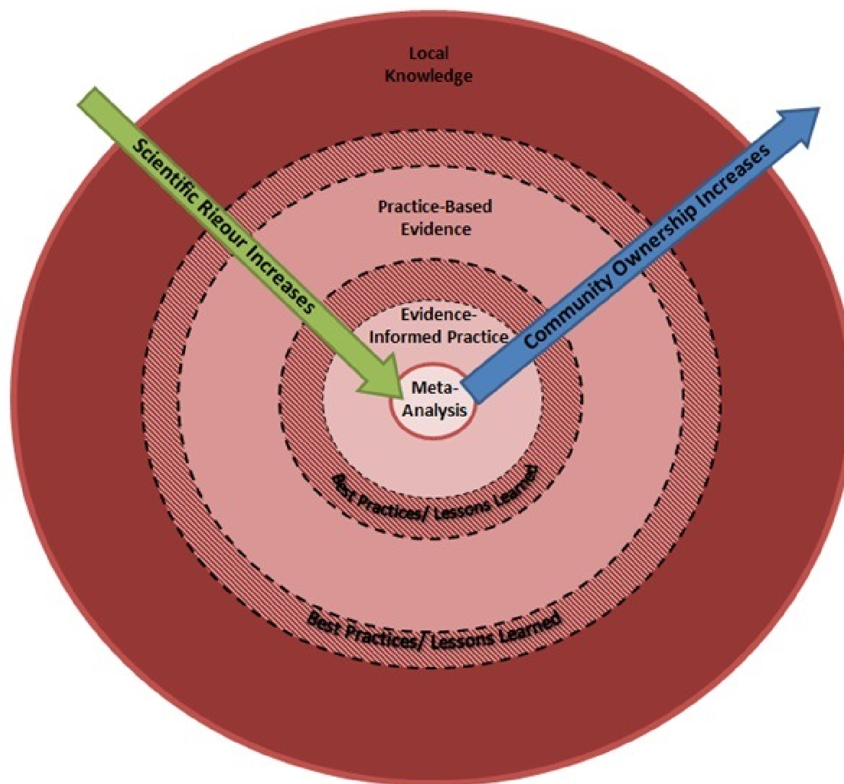
This approach promises to reconcile the tension dividing these forms of knowledge by positioning researchers, practitioners, and local communities as both knowledge generators and knowledge receptors. Evidence-informed practice, for instance, may be most usefully thought of as considering questions of “what is delivered” and ultimately “what works best,” thereby prioritizing the outcomes derived from empirical evidence. Practice-based evidence, in contrast, tends to focus more on questions of “how does this work,” and is based on the notion that successful interventions are comprised of several ”active ingredients” and program elements that can be identified and employed (Mitchell, 2011, p. 212; Walker, 2003, p. 152). Local knowledge adds further complexity to the latter, asking “what works for whom in what circumstances.” Each of these types of analysis provides specific answers that are dependent on the research question at hand (Glasziou et al., 2004, p. 39).

These types of knowledge may be usefully conceptualized as residing within a circle of evidence (see Figure 1). The purpose of the diagram is to demonstrate how much knowledge exists within each category. In other words, there is an incredible amount of local knowledge. Local knowledge is located in the outer ring, the widest part of the circle, representing the diffuse and varying forms of knowing intrinsic to the environments in which children and youth reside. Practice-based evidence is located in the middle ring of this diagram, addressing a wider variety of questions and variables exploring the elements that comprise successful

interventions. Evidence-informed practice is located in the centre of the circle, as the scope of these studies is typically narrowed to a population, intervention, and outcome. Scientific rigor increases towards the centre of the circle, culminating with meta-analyses and randomized controlled trials. As a result of their almost exclusive focus on the effects of specific interventions, these are found at the circle's centre.

In turn, community ownership increases towards the outer perimeter of the circle, as interventions are matched to the unique needs and customs of communities. However, our understanding of the fluidity among these forms of analysis and the resultant balance between scientific rigor and community ownership remains limited. In the diagram, the gaps between the types of knowledge represent the intersections of these forms of knowing that have not yet been fully explored.

Figure 1: Circle of Evidence



Best practices emerge within the synthesis of these different types of knowledge. So for the purposes of this report, the term is defined in the following way:

> Best practices are interventions that incorporate evidence-informed practice, identify, and employ the right combination of program elements to ensure targeted outcomes, and match these interventions to the local needs and assets of communities. They incorporate evidence-informed practice, identify and employ the right combination of program elements to ensure targeted outcomes, and match these interventions to the local needs and assets of communities.

This definition prioritizes the evidence garnered from researchers, practitioners, and local knowledge, depending on the question being asked. It will also be applied in relation to the interventions and programs that aim to support and nurture resilience among children and youth in various challenging contexts.

c. Resilience

Although resilience is generally recognized as the capacity of individuals to bounce back from adversity by adapting a sense of well-being (Turner, 2001, p. 441), the study of resilience over time has led to changes in how it is defined and conceptualized. Early research paid specific attention to the individual characteristics associated with positive outcomes of well-being, focusing specifically on the risk and protective factors associated with an individual's ability to cope in challenging circumstances. Risk factors are defined as "a measurable characteristic in a group of individuals or their situation that predicts negative outcome on a specific criteria," and are used to suggest which populations have an elevated probability of negative adaptation (Wright & Masten, 2005, pp. 19–20). As these factors "rarely occur in isolation," children and youth most highly at risk are those who have been subject to multiple adversities, the effects of which tend to accumulate over time (Wright & Masten, 2005, p. 20). Risk factors derive from the personal traits of the victim or perpetrator, his or her family or peers, the school or community, or the larger society. At the same time, various protective factors may enhance the capacity of children and youth to cope with their exposure to violence.

Defined as the "quality of a person or context or their interaction that predicts better outcomes, particularly in situations of risk or adversity," protective factors help shield individuals from the effects of adversity and promote positive adaptation (Wright & Masten, 2005, p. 19). Depending on where a variable resides on the spectrum of risk and protective factors, it may produce either poor or positive adaptation (Wright & Masten, 2005, p. 23).

The first wave of resilience, however, has been criticized for oversimplifying the often complex reality of children and youth in adversity (Boyden & Mann, 2005; Ungar, 2005). The second wave of resilience research expanded to address larger contextual concerns, focusing most notably on the individual's interaction with his or her environment and the developmental pathways and trajectories leading to resilience (Mafile'o & Api, 2009; Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011; Ungar et al., 2007, p. 287). Within this broader ecological perspective, resilience is seen to encompass the qualities of both the individual and the individual's environment, which provides the material and social resources necessary for their positive development (Boyden & Mann, 2005, p. 10; Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011). This approach further acknowledges a culturally embedded understanding of resilience that prioritizes the individual's capacity to overcome adversity in culturally relevant ways and highlights the diverse values, beliefs, and everyday practices that are associated with coping across populations (Boyden & Mann, 2005, p. 10; Ungar et al., 2007, p. 288). These culturally embedded conceptions of positive development challenge traditional Western definitions of resilience, coping, and healthy functioning by opening the door to the various pathways to successful adaptation that may be associated with non-Western populations and cultures.

Adopting this ecological and culturally sensitive perspective, this report defines resilience as follows:

> In the context of exposure to significant adversity, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being, and their capacity individually and collectively to negotiate for these resources to be provided and experienced in culturally meaningful ways (Ungar, 2008, p. 225).

Central to this definition are the interactions between an individual's personal assets and his or her environment, which together produce the processes needed to help overcome adversity (Liebenberg, Ungar, & Vijver, 2011, p. 219). Michael Ungar et al., identify seven tensions that resilient children and youth must typically navigate and resolve in accordance with the resources available to them individually and within their families, communities and cultures: access to material resources, relationships, identity, power and control, cultural adherence, social justice and cohesion (see Figure 2) (2007, p. 295).

Figure 2: Seven Tensions of Resilience

Tensions	Explanations
1. Access to material resources	Availability of financial, educational, medical and employment assistance/opportunities; access to food, clothing and shelter
2. Relationships	Relationships with significant others, peers and adults within one's family and community
3. Identity	Personal and collective sense of purpose, self-appraisal of strengths and weaknesses, aspirations, beliefs and values, including spiritual and religious identification
4. Power and control	Experiences of caring for one's self and others; the ability to affect change in social and physical environment in order to access health resources
5. Cultural adherence	Adherence to local and/or global cultural practices, values and beliefs
6. Social justice	Experiences related to finding a meaningful role in community and social equality
7. Cohesion	Balancing personal interests with a sense of responsibility to the greater good; feeling a part of something larger than one's self socially and spiritually

Importantly, this perspective suggests that "no one way of resolving these tensions is better than another," highlighting the uniqueness across individuals (Ungar et al., 2007, p. 294). It instead prioritizes the issue of resources and the ability of the child or youth to make the most out of what is available. It further suggests that in order to experience well-being, resilient children and youth also need families and communities willing and able to support resilience

(Ungar, 2008, p. 221). Resilience in this sense is context-dependent, requiring an understanding of the physical and social ecology in which the resources necessary to nurture resilience are found.

In adopting this framework, this report employs these components of resilience to assess the mental health and social outcomes of the interventions and programs addressed in the following chapters, with a goal of identifying the best practices that help generate:

> A state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community (World Health Organization, 2001).

In this sense, mental health is the basis for well-being and effective functioning in ways that are validated and appreciated by the communities in which children and youth reside (Hermann, Saxena, Moodie, & Walker, 2005, p. 2). The interactions between an individual's personal assets and his or her environment produce the processes needed to help overcome adversity (Liebenberg et al., 2011, p. 219). Best practices for achieving positive outcomes will support these interactions.

III. Methods

This section outlines the steps taken in preparing these reports. The first step was a scoping review of the literature. The second step involved a services scan conducted with partners of the CYCC Network. This scan provided details about different programs and interventions that the network partners are using. The third step was a series of meetings with partners and contacts, gathering more information about strategies and programs that work with children and youth in challenging contexts. The information gathered from these three steps has been synthesized and presented in the following sections. All of the methods used in this report were guided by the following question: What strategies have been shown to be successful in engaging children and youth in challenging contexts as full members of their communities and ending feelings of disempowerment and abandonment? In order to address this question, this report was guided by the following sub-questions:

- What interventions are currently being employed among children and youth in various challenging contexts and which have been shown to work?
- What lessons have been learned?
- Where are the overlaps in research and practice? Where are the gaps?
- Where are the opportunities for future collaboration in research and practice?

a. Scoping Review of the Literature

This report employs a new framework for knowledge synthesis in order to draw upon the findings of different types of research designs and knowledge that use quantitative and/or qualitative data. It begins with a comprehensive overview of the literature in order to assess the field in terms of volume, nature, and characteristics of the research done to date (Arksey & O'malley, 2005, p. 30). This framework corresponds with that of a scoping review, defined as:

> The rapid mapping of the key concepts underpinning a research area and the main sources and types of evidence available, which can be undertaken as stand-alone projects in their own right, especially where an area is complex or has not been reviewed comprehensively before (Mays, Roberts, & Popay, 2001, p. 194).

The purpose of scoping the field of literature was to be as comprehensive as possible in finding common understandings of what helps children and adolescents overcome violence, promote engagement, and use technology in ways that help them to cope with risk exposure and to promote and sustain their mental health. Although lacking depth, this exercise helped to identify and describe the major approaches and schools of thought to date, while assessing the wealth of evidence that currently exists regarding children and youth in challenging contexts. Some of the search terms used were: civic, politic*, social engagement, activism, and citizenship. The full list of search terms used for this report can be found in the Appendix.

The scoping review was limited to literature demonstrating evidence-informed practice, practice-based evidence, and/or local knowledge. This includes studies demonstrating meta-analytic or meta-ethnographic findings, randomized controlled trials, participatory action research, and community development. Findings from both peer-reviewed journals and *grey literature*[2] are included. The latter has been particularly useful in capturing new and innovative strategies and interventions that have not yet been addressed in peer-reviewed academic literature. All sources that pre-date 2000 were excluded from this report, with the exception of foundational reports and studies. The goal of the scoping process was to find models, programs, and services that have been shown to work with children and youth in order to identify lessons learned, current gaps, and future intersections among service providers. In keeping with the focus of the CYCC Network, interventions and strategies being used around the world are included, with particular focus given to work that is being done here in Canada.

The literature reviewed for this report was assessed relative to its validity, reliability, objectivity, and generalizability, in order to ensure that the highest quality information is found. After reviewing a relevant article or report, both the source and methodology were assessed in terms of their reliability and strength, and incorporated into the findings of the report.

Although utilizing a new framework of analysis, this synthesis coincides with many of the standards of systematic reviews, including: an explicit research question; a systematic search strategy with pre-defined eligibility criteria for identifying and selecting relevant studies; an analytical framework for extracting and charting the data; and a comparative method for collating, summarizing, and synthesizing the main findings (Higgins & Green, 2011, sec. 1.2.2). It differs in its use of quantitative and qualitative approaches to collection information on best practices and lessons learned.

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[2] Grey literature is defined as "information produced on all levels of government, academia, business and industry in electronic and print formats not controlled by commercial publishing" ("What is Grey Literature?," 2011). Although the web has greatly facilitated the production, distribution, and access of grey literature, these hard-to-find materials are often retrieved only through scans of relevant government or institutional websites.

b. *Scan of Network Partners' Services, Programs, and Connections*

Following this broad review of the literature, a services scan was conducted with CYCC Network partners to identify the practice-based evidence derived from their work with children and youth in challenging circumstances. The scan was sent to 57 service providers, clinicians, researchers, and municipal, provincial, and federal government officials. The services scan incorporated both open-ended and direct questions about the programs of our partners and included questions on program goals, implementation, lessons learned, and evaluation. A total of 27 scans were returned. The responses to this scan presented interventions that are currently being used, identified effective practices, and revealed both existing gaps in service provision and potential areas for collaboration.

The services scan added to the scoping review of the literature by providing greater insights into the views of service providers, practitioners, and policymakers. It also returned a number of evaluations and reports conducted by partners of the CYCC Network. Much of this grey literature is rarely published commercially or indexed by major databases and can only be found through e-mail requests and on websites. This process provided a window into the models, programs, and services that have been shown to work and helped to identify their core elements, mechanisms, and contexts.

In addition to the services scan, follow-up meetings and conversations with network partners were valuable additions to the content of this report. This report highlights some of the interventions and approaches which these professionals found to be effective in working with children and youth in challenging contexts.

c. *Meetings with Practitioners, Service Providers, and Researchers*

Varying according to the contexts and cultures in which communities reside, the diffuse nature of local knowledge ultimately limited our ability to capture and operationalize this form of evidence. To compensate for this deficit to some degree and in order to explore the unique views of what works at the individual and community levels, this report conducted a survey of participatory action research (PAR), community based participatory research (CBPR), and narrative inquiry projects implemented among children and youth. PAR served as a useful proxy in this regard, as the principles of reflection, data collection, and action shared between the researcher and the researched provided insights into community development and the empowerment of communities, families, and children and youth. By engaging community champions and young people, and allowing them to actively shape the direction of the research, the PAR studies explored in this report provided a useful window into the operationalization of local knowledge. Similarly, CBPR's emphasis on conducting partnership-oriented research that focuses on actively involving researchers, academics, practitioners and community members to address health inequities and improve a community's well-being was helpful in demonstrating how partners with varying levels of skills and knowledge can work together to identify and address complex health issues on a local level. An examination of studies that employed narrative inquiry methods such as storytelling also helped to bring attention to the significance of working with communities to capture data and exchange local knowledge in culturally meaningful ways.

Scholars seeking to incorporate, capture, and use Aboriginal knowledge to guide their research have been particularly active in attempting to bridge the gap between different ways

of knowing (Durie, 2004, p. 1140). Rather than assuming the superiority of one knowledge system over another, advocates have instead called for a model of *two-eyed seeing* that identifies and benefits from the strengths of each (Bartlett, Marshall, Marshall, & Iwama, forthcoming, p. 11). The key element of this model is recognizing and bridging the ethical space that is created when worldviews of differing histories, traditions, and values come together through cross-cultural engagement (Ermine, Sinclair, & Jeffery, 2004, p. 20). Based on consultation, community participation, and methods that acknowledge, respect, and incorporate traditional knowledge, the intersection of these different ways of knowing involves a readiness to be inclusive and to recognize the integrity and unique contributions of both. Research based on this model of two-eyed seeing requires a balance of methods that are both scientifically rigorous and culturally appropriate. The emphasis on community ownership, context, and culture inherent within this alternative form of knowing offers valuable insights into the knowledge contained within local communities.

d. Youth Workshops

As a way of reviewing the recommendations from this knowledge synthesis report, a youth workshop was held in collaboration with YouthNet (CHEO). Their objective is to help youth develop and maintain good mental health and healthy coping strategies for dealing with stress, while decreasing stigma around mental illness and its treatment ("Youth Net," n.d.).

This space was created so that youth could share their insights on the recommendations in the report, as well as make suggestions for improving them. The conversations generated in these workshops were a critical step in preparing these reports and bringing the youth perspective into the report helped to inform its key messages and recommendations. This was also a way to access local knowledge, by connecting with individuals in this community who are part of the collective social context.

There were several key messages raised by the youth that were added to the report after the workshop. These included the following points:

- Organizations need to better prepare for having youth involved in order to avoid tokenism (a false appearance of inclusiveness).
- Youth want to be engaged but if adults are not prepared to be flexible in responding to young people's ideas, that engagement will not be effective or sustainable.

e. Knowledge Mobilization Simulation

The CYCC held a knowledge mobilization simulation that brought together service providers, academics, policymakers and youth with a vested interest in children and youth in challenging contexts. During this time, they engaged in reflexive simulations of different knowledge mobilization scenarios that explored how knowledge is shared across different groups, such as youth and government funders. The findings from this report, particularly the recommendations, provided the content for the scenarios and were the focus of discussions during the event. This also provided an opportunity for many Network partners to give their feedback on the reports.

For the youth engagement report, a key theme that emerged from the simulation was the importance of understanding youth engagement as a process not a practice. By involving youth in all parts of your program or organization, more meaningful engagement can be realize as

more opportunities are available for youth to be heard. This feedback from this event has been woven into the final report.

f. Analyzing the Information

This combination of a scoping review, services scan, and meetings with practitioners, researchers, and service providers presented a comprehensive depiction of the models, programs, and interventions currently being used with children and youth across a variety of challenging contexts.

Each type of evidence offers unique insights into the interventions currently being employed among children and youth in various challenging contexts. Evidence-informed practice offers an assessment of the outcomes and effects of interventions, ranked according to their scientific strength. Practice-based evidence provides a look into the core elements of programs and the processes through which they work. Local knowledge affords a greater understanding of the underlying cultures, traditions, and values that are necessary to ensure community ownership and program success. The overlaps and gaps within evidence-informed practice, practice-based evidence, and local knowledge are then discussed, followed by recommendations for developing best practices in working with children and youth in challenging contexts.

By capturing the complex linkages between outcomes, mechanisms, and contexts, this multi-layered approach is in agreement with the tenets of realist evaluation (Pawson, 2002a, 2002b). Emerging in response to the partial explanations of program success offered by quantitative and qualitative research respectively, this approach attempts to reconcile these limitations by bringing together the underlying logics of both. Recognizing that it is not programs themselves that generate change but rather their underlying causal mechanisms, this approach explores the conditions and resources that trigger success or failure and their relation to the unique subjects and settings of each intervention. This generative understanding of causation moves away from the traditional divides separating research, practice, and local knowledge and the tendency of each to ask what works in isolation from the others (Pawson, 2002b, p. 342). Instead it incorporates outcome, process, and context, with the ultimate goal of understanding what works, how does this work, and what works for whom in what circumstances? With an understanding of the opportunities for collaboration between these forms of knowing, the potential areas of collaboration between academics, practitioners, and communities across our population groups can be identified.

IV. Limitations

Moreover, as a result of the multiple forms of knowing captured within this report and the variable rigor of their respective methodologies, the CYCC Network avoided using strict criteria for best practices or evaluating the weight of certain forms of evidence relative to others. As opposed to ranking evidence according to conventional hierarchies of effectiveness, it considered each form of knowing in turn in order to explore and reveal the strengths and insights offered by each. As discussed above, best practices emerge from this collaboration of the best of evidence-informed practice, practice-based evidence, and local knowledge.

For this report, there was limited empirical research to be found to support the benefits of youth engagement at the individual, community, and organizational level. Much of the research on youth engagement is narrative, as the subject does not easily lend itself to quantitative-type analysis. As a result, this report relies heavily on the local and practice-based knowledge that was found through this synthesis.

Section 3: Youth Engagement: Overview

This section will define youth engagement and present its key components. The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement (CEYE) has developed a framework for youth engagement which will be discussed here. Following this, the population groups identified in the methodology will be presented and defined, establishing the contexts in which this research is focused. This section will conclude by presenting the relevance of this report and its findings for network partners.

I. *Youth Participation vs. Engagement*

The Forum for Youth Investment (2011) describes the mounting evidence of the positive impact that taking active roles in organizations and communities has on young people. When compared with their peers they exhibit fewer problems, are better skilled, and tend to be lifelong active citizens. As Dallago et al point out, the benefits of listening to and engaging young people in decision making can actually work to promote healthy behavioural and psychological development (Dallago, Cristini, Perkins, Nation, & Santinello, 2009). Engaging youth in the community has been proven to be positive for the both the youth and adults involved (Irby, Ferber, Pittman, Tolman, & Yohalem, 2001; Jones & Perkins, 2004). This engagement not only benefits the community at large, but the individual lives of the young people themselves. By increasing participants' exposure to supportive and empowering environments, opportunities are created for a range of skill-building and horizon-broadening experiences (Nissen, 2011).

It is important to distinguish between *participation* and *engagement*, as both terms are used in a variety of contexts, often as synonyms. This report places participation and engagement on a continuum of involvement; participation, by nature, is more passive and engagement is more active. The most widely referred to model of youth participation is the ladder concept by Roger Hart (1992) (see Figure 3). This model also presents youth participation in and engagement with programs on a continuum between adult-initiated (i.e., participation) to youth-initiated (i.e., engagement). Hart argues that the first three levels would be considered token participation with little meaningful benefit (Paterson & Panessa, 2008a, p. 25).

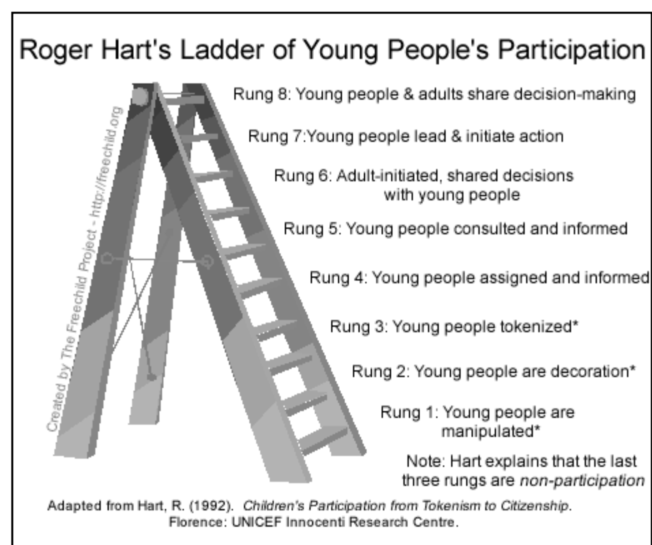


Figure 3: Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation

Alternative models have been developed which suggest that there is no one, optimal level of participation that needs to be achieved across all contexts (Rocha, 1997; Shier, 2001). It is possible that the turbulent and often unstable political, economic, and power realities with at-risk youth may make full engagement impractical (Paterson & Panessa, 2008). Stoney McCart, Director of the Centre for Excellence in Youth Engagement, describes youth engagement not as a practice but a process; an attitude and approach that by nature facilitates meaningful involvement and ownership on the part of the youth (S. McCart, personal communication, October 4, 2012).

Appropriate and meaningful youth engagement supports individual development and can serve as a vehicle for community contribution and change (Crooks, Chiodo, & Thomas, 2009). Promoting and facilitating youth engagement is actually an ethical mandate set out by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNHCR, 1990). As Prout (2000) argues, youth engagement is a form of "social investment" that improves the well-being of the young people involved (Dallago et al., 2009; Prout, 2000). Involvement in community life has been shown to improve psychological, social, and intellectual growth in children and youth (Lenzi et al., 2012).

> Through engagement, youth gain skills and a sense of empowerment as individuals, making healthy connections with others, which is associated with the reduction of risk behaviours and increased participation in positive activities that contribute to community. (CEYE)

Youth engagement is conceptualized in two main ways: engagement as a means, and as an end goal (Paterson & Panessa, 2008a). Viewing youth engagement as a means to achieving your project objectives entails young people sharing power with adults in the design, implementation, and assessment of the program (Howard, Newman, Harris, & Harcourt, 2002; Paterson & Panessa, 2008a). It is this collaboration that can allow for more relevant and effective interventions in meeting the needs of children and youth. This type of involvement can also impact a youth's health and development, as this process helps to foster a sense of agency and influence is encouraged (Gurstein et al., 2003).

Meaningful participation is critical to the success of any program or intervention with young people (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2003; Gurstein et al., 2003; Hart, 1992). Initiating youth participation is a step towards engaging them in the program's design and implementation. Valuing youth engagement puts the focus on the positive contribution that youth make to programs and their effectiveness. This idea of positive youth development programs was broadly defined by Mafile'o and Api (2009) as:

> Interventions [which] systematically seek to identify and utilize youth capacities and meet youth's needs. They actively seek to involve youth as decision makers and tap their creativity, energy, and drive; and they also acknowledge that youth are not superhuman – that they therefore have needs that require a marshalling of resources targeted at youth and at changing environmental circumstances (family and community).

Despite the benefits that youth engagement interventions can have, these approaches often face limited resources which can create barriers for researchers. Research methods which encourage youth's engagement often require a longer time frame, resulting in higher project costs. The qualitative nature of the research itself does not often present quantifiable statistics or outcomes that will be produced. This is often seen as a negative, both by funders and by organizations with which the research is being conducted (Paterson & Panessa, 2008b).

a. Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement: Youth Model

In developing the concept of youth engagement, this report will draw on the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement (CEYE) conceptual model. This model (see Figure 4) articulates the complexities of youth engagement and the factors necessary for its increase. The first layer addresses what factors are needed to first draw youth into an activity or program- referred to as initiators. The next layer looks at what influences a youth's decision to sustain their involvement over time. At each level the barriers to both initiating and sustaining engagement are critical for improving how youth engagement is understood. Taking these two concepts together, the outcomes of engagement come into view. Outcomes can vary from the levels of the individual, community, and the wider society.

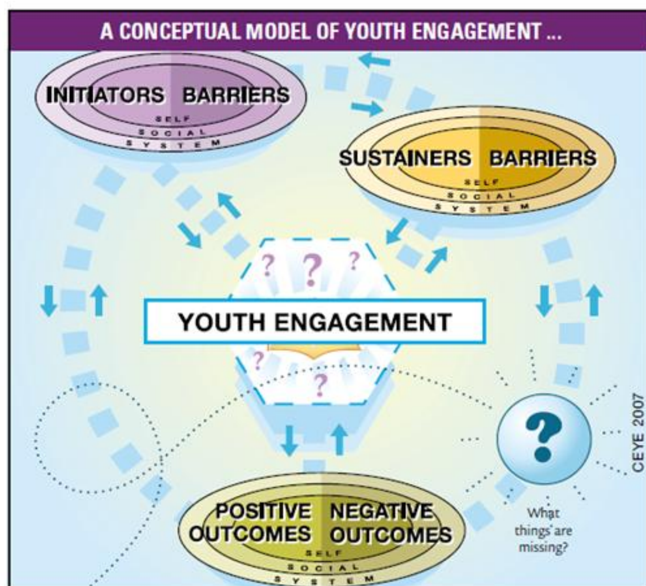


Figure 4: A Conceptual Model of Youth Engagement, from the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement

There are six main qualities of engagement (See Figure 5) that the CEYE identifies, which are divided into two categories: subjective and objective. The subjective pieces (feelings, thinking, and evaluation) and the objective pieces (behaviour, structure, and content) are all important aspects of youth engagement that have the potential to be optimized for more positive responses. The subjective pieces provide valuable insight for researchers and practitioners who are trying to encourage youth engagement, as the subjective qualities directly influence the objective qualities. If, for example, a youth is enjoying a given activity and feels valued in their participation, their behaviour will show this positive trend. It is important to understand engagement going deeper than something that can be tallied or measured. Conceptualizing youth engagement in this way allows for a more comprehensive look at what factors influence a youth's choice to both initiate and sustain their participation.

These two diagrams together present a comprehensive model of youth engagement and the various aspects that need to be considered. The CEYE acknowledges in their model, by using the question-mark bubble (see Figure 5), that there are always variables that cannot be foreseen, especially across different situations. Blindly transferring our understanding of what works and what does not across contextual lines will not result in effective engagement strategies for that setting. Moving away from a universal to a context-specific framework of the needs of young people that lays out the factors that initiate or sustain their engagement, as well as the barriers to it, will improve how youth engagement is both conceptualized and achieved in the community.

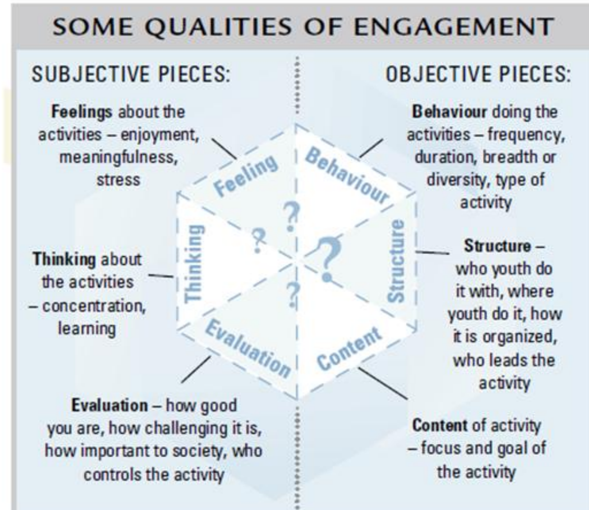


Figure 5: Qualities of Engagement, from the Centre of Excellence in Youth Engagement

There is a gap in the research regarding the source and identification of the implications of youth vulnerability for their engagement (Paterson & Panessa, 2008a; Poland et al., 2002). In order to better understand and optimize engagement from this population, different strategies need to be explored to identify their appropriateness for at-risk youth from various contexts, representing all genders and age categories (Dolan, 2012; Paterson & Panessa, 2008a). There have been some empirical studies (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Larson, Hansen, & Moneta, 2006; Serido, Borden, & Perkins, 2011) which have identified links between program factors and youth outcomes, however less the processes through which these factors promote positive development is still uncertain (Benson, 2003; Serido et al., 2011).

It is important to understand children and youth's participation and engagement as central to any best practice intervention. Interventions that acknowledge the independence and agency of at-risk youth provide opportunity for them to give feedback on the relevance and appropriateness of the programs that serve them (Paterson & Panessa, 2008a).

II. Population Groups

Children and youth around the world face significant risks that work to compromise their well-being and development. The 1990 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), was the first international convention to declare that children require special care and protection. The convention is made up of 54 articles and two Optional Protocols (UNHCR, 1990; UNICEF, n.d.). The standards and principles outlined by the UNCRC are the foundational elements to any work with young people. Vulnerable and at-risk young people often face both collective and individual discrimination, and are usually at a disadvantage for accessing standard services intended for young people.

Children and youth in challenging contexts are by no means a homogenous group. There are different experiences, contexts, and cultural factors influencing the situations in which they live. Nonetheless, children and youth in challenging contexts face common threats that derive

from constraints or challenges built into community or societal structures. It is not that certain populations are inherently more at risk than others; rather it is the context in which they reside that increases their exposure to various risk factors, heighten their vulnerability, and engender violence. Some cross-cutting themes run across all population groups, which can result in *intersecting vulnerabilities* (Jiwani, 2006) for children and youth in challenging contexts. The WHO ecological model provides a framework for understanding how these factors interact (World Health Organization, 2002, p. 9).

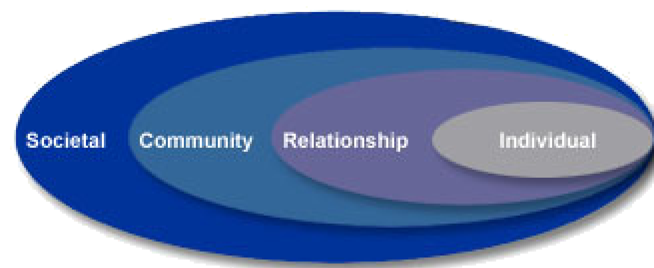


Figure 6: Ecological Model for Understanding Violence, World Health Organization 2002

Cross-Cutting Themes

Social inequality is a cross-cutting theme that captures the experiences of marginalized children and youth. Social inequality is "manifested in unequal access to goods, information, decision-making, and power" (Price & Feinman, 2010, p. 2). This unequal access to resources stems from discrimination drawn along the lines of race, age, disability, nationality, politics, religion, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Discrimination can occur on various levels such as exposure to prejudice on an individual level (e.g., through racial discrimination) or on an institutional level (e.g., political oppression of a population group through restrictive policies or unequal distribution of resources) and is inextricably linked to experiences of poverty and historical marginalization.

Similarly, historical marginalization and social exclusion are common threads that are woven throughout the challenging contexts described in this report. Historical trauma theory, a relatively new concept to public health research, has been used to explain why disease and inequities are more prevalent in some populations compared to others (Sotero, 2006). The basis of this idea is that populations who have been historically exposed to continuous levels of violence and discrimination typically display higher rates of disease and chronic illness (Sotero, 2006). The "intergenerational transmission of historic trauma" is a phenomenon that has been documented among several populations, including Cambodian, Aboriginal, and African American populations (Rosenheck & Fontana, 1998; Sack, Clarke, & Seeley, 1995; Sotero, 2006).

The influences of gender, moreover, are present across all contexts (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2004, p. 22). Girls and boys, for instance, are often at risk for different kinds of violence, with girls being the more frequent target of sexual violence in the home, schools, and communities, and boys the more likely victim of corporal punishment, violent assault, and homicide (Pinheiro, 2006, p. 7). Social norms, particularly those underpinning conceptions of masculinity and femininity, are at the root of many of these trends (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2004).

Dominant social and cultural expectations around gender and sex also compound the vulnerabilities faced by sexual minorities who are often targeted for their sexual orientation. It has been well documented for instance, that LBGTQ (lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgendered, queer) youth are at a particularly pronounced risk of physical violence, bullying, sexual violence, and discrimination. This social stigma leaves sexual minority youth with a disproportionately higher risk of negative health outcomes such as suicide, substance abuse, and emotional distress (Scheper-Hughes & Bourgois, 2004, p. 22).

Ethical Considerations

There are ethical issues in working with, and doing research with, children and youth—particularly those who are considered at-risk or vulnerable. These considerations include:

- Harm reduction (the benefits must outweigh the risks) Do no harm
- Respect for all actors
- Referral Systems: to ensure access to assistance if needed
- Informed consent
- Confidentiality
- Engagement of children/youth in planning, developing, and evaluating resources/programs
- Cultural & gender sensitivity (Golding, Dent, Nissim, & Stott, 2006; Paterson & Panessa, 2008b; UNICEF, 2012a)
- Competence in the design and content of programs

Attention to these issues is considered the backdrop of the programs and strategies that will be discussed in this report. Any program that is pointed to as a best practice must have an ethically sound methodology.

Paterson and Panessa (2008b) contend that there is an ethical imperative to engage young people in all levels of service and intervention planning (p. 26). However, the challenge for people who work with children and youth in challenging contexts is to develop strategies to reach the youth effectively with the services and support that they need (Paterson & Panessa, 2008b). In a study on foster care services by Golding et al (2006), they support this important point—that the recipients of a program should have a voice in the design and evaluation of the services provided to them.

A recent report from UNICEF (2012a) on the ethical principles of research with children identified a lack of clear standards when researchers who work with children and youth must balance conflicting ethical issues (p. 49). A key finding from the report was the need for guidelines to direct researchers as they respond to ethical considerations (UNICEF, 2012a, p. 61). These guidelines would help develop the link between ethical principles and good practice (UNICEF, 2012a, p. 63).

Introductory Note: Population Groups

The challenge for people who work with children and youth in challenging contexts is to develop strategies to reach the youth effectively with the services and support that they need (Paterson & Panessa, 2008b). These population groups described here were identified through

our network partners as children and youth who are particularly at-risk and marginalized. These distinctions were reinforced by the literature found on these groups and the need for informed interventions that address their specific needs. It is important to explain the parameters employed by this report in terms of what groups were included and who may be identified within that group.

a. Children & Youth Affected by War

Violent conflicts and war have dramatically changed in nature over the past decades. What used to be predominantly characterized as violent conflict between two or more countries has now shifted, with most conflicts today occurring within national borders (Machel, 2009). Young people are particularly affected by these armed conflicts as they are both the targets and, more frequently, the instruments of violence ("Issues - Children and Armed Conflict," n.d.). This report will look at interventions with this population group, which includes children living in war-torn places, demobilized child soldiers, refugees and displaced children and youth, and young people in military families.

i. Demobilized Child Soldiers

It is estimated that there are approximately 250,000 child soldiers around the world today. The Paris Principles, signed in 2007, defines child soldiers as:

> A child soldier is any person under age 18 who is part if any kind of regular or irregular armed force or group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and those accompanying such groups, other than purely as family members. This definition includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and for forced marriage. It does not, therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms (The Paris Principles, 2007, p. 7).

In addition to this group are millions of young people who are living in a conflict or post-conflict zone. The disintegration of social support structures—including both family and community supports—is a reality of war-torn communities (Denov, 2010). At the heart of this social structure are the women and children. The impact of violence on women and children is multi-faceted and will be felt long after the fighting stops. Research has shown that even after the violence has ended, children often continue to exhibit signs of depression and anxiety, which indicates that witnessing such atrocities can have negative consequences on mental health and development (Denov, 2010; Halcón et al., 2004). The World Health Organization estimates that, globally, 20% of adolescents will experience a mental health problem, with the risk of this increasing in situations of violence, displacement, and poverty ("WHO | Young people," n.d.).

ii. Children & Youth in Military Families

Another group to consider here are children and youth from military families. In Canada, there were approximately 1.2 million young people with either one or both care-givers deployed in active-duty (De Pedro et al., 2011). In the United States, 40% of the 2 million

military personnel deployed since Sept 11, 2001 have children (Wilson, Wilkum, Chernichky, MacDermid Wadsworth, & Broniarczyk, 2011).

It has been found that distress levels of at-home family members of military personnel increases as duration of separation increases (Lester et al., 2011). Even after the return of the deployed care giver, their struggles with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can impact parent-child relations, prolonging the impact of deployment beyond the actual separation. While there has been research looking at the overall well-being of these young people, very little has been written about the link between stress and the social, familial, and academic challenges and behavioural/ emotional problems (Chandra, Burns, Tanielian, & Jaycox, 2011).

b. Refugee Children & Youth

Displacement is a frequent characteristic of war and disasters. Often that displacement forces people to leave homes and communities for safe havens within their nation's borders. In many cases, people have been forced to flee their country entirely. As a result of violent conflict and disasters around the world, there are now refugees on every continent (Berman et al., 2009a, p. 419). A subset of refugee children and youth are those who are unaccompanied and have no adult support in their lives. These young people are particularly vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and abuse.

In 2011, there were 15,600 refugees admitted into Canada, which was approximately 40% of all applications received (Immigration and Refugee Board, IRB, 2011). According to UNHCR, the number of refugees has increased from 1.5 million in 1951 (at the time of its creation) to 32 million refugees and displaced persons (Berman et al., 2009a; UNHCR, 2008).

Immigrant and refugee children are among the most vulnerable populations, as their precarious situations can impact their physical, emotional, and mental well-being (Khanlou, 2008). In research and practice with immigrants and refugees there is a tendency to lump the two into one group. As a result, the specific needs of these children go unattended. It is important to recognize that the contexts and situations from which refugees come from vary, resulting in differing needs and values within this population group. In this report, refugees will be discussed within the population affected by war or by natural disaster, but it is important to recognize that many national programs and strategies target refugees and immigrants as one uniform group of newcomers. In this discussion of interventions with refugee children and youth, the complexities of this group will present particular challenges for effectively reaching and engaging these young people.

c. Children & Youth Affected by Disasters

Children and youth are the most vulnerable victims of disasters (Happy Hearts Fund, n.d.; UNICEF, 2006). This report identifies disasters as "a rapid, instantaneous or profound impact of the natural environment upon the socio-economic system" (Alexander, 1993). Specific disasters can include hurricanes, droughts, floods, tornadoes and earthquakes (Lazarus, Jimerson, & Brock, 2003). Such events can result in the separation of children from both families and communities. A report issued by the Canadian Red Cross points to underlying social determinants as factors which expose disaster-affected populations to violence (e.g., gender discrimination, income inequality, abuse of power) (Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare, 2012). This is an important issue as the number of natural disasters occurring each year has

increased from 78 in 1907 to 348 in 2008 ("Rebuilding Children's Lives after Natural Disasters," n.d.).

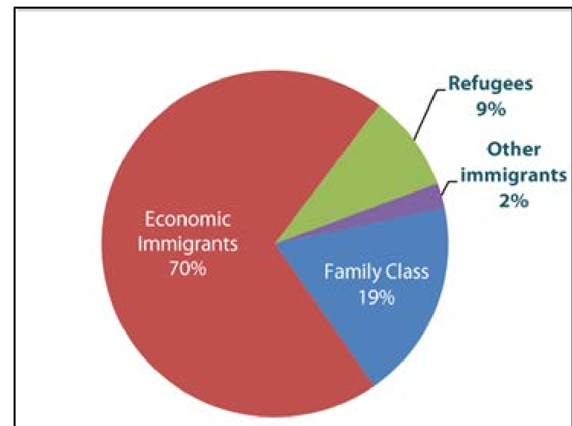
For example, the tsunami in Indonesia in 2004 left thousands of children without families or care givers. An estimated 225,000 lives were lost, of which approximately one third were children (UNICEF, 2006). According to UNICEF and the Government of India, the southern state of Tamil Nadu was most affected by the tsunami as 289 children were left as double orphans (Exenberger & Juen, 2010). Homes, farms, livelihoods and industries were destroyed, completely changing the community support structure (UNICEF, 2006). A common feature of disasters is displacement, which can last from a very short to an extended period of time, depending on the damage (Lazarus et al., 2003). The trauma experienced by children in these types of situations is significant. This report will draw specific attention to children affected by disasters and how youth engagement programs could be used effectively with this group.

d. Immigrant Children & Youth

In Canada, there are about 250,000 immigrants admitted into the country each year, with a high percentage of these newcomers being children and youth. Nearly 24% of immigrants are under the age of 16 and approximately one in ten girls admitted is under 15 years of age (Berman et al., 2009b). In fact, of all children in Canada under the age of 15, one in five was either born abroad or born into an immigrant household (NCCYS, n.d.; Statistics Canada, 2006).

The adjustments needed to settle into life in a different country and culture can have a significant impact on young people. Struggling to adapt to different norms and community values can adversely impact a child's ability to achieve positive cultural identity (Ngo & Schleifer, 2005). One protective factor for immigrant children and youth is that of family support and community. Being able to communicate with their family in their native language has been shown to be a positive influence on children's adjustment into a new culture (Theron et al., 2011). Even so, the emotional and psychological strain can influence a young person's well-being, both in their immediate and future development.

Figure 7: Immigrants to Nova Scotia by Category,



In addition to the psychosocial stressors into which immigration can feed, there is also the socio-economic situation of immigrant communities. Beiser and Stewart (2005, p. S4) argue that:

> Despite Canada's generally high standard of living and despite a system that promises universal access to high quality care, disparities in health remain a pressing national concern.

It is important to recognize that the contexts and situations from which immigrants come vary, resulting in differing needs and values within this population group. In this discussion of

interventions with immigrant children and youth, the complexities of this group—not to mention the cultural differences within them—will present particular challenges for developing programs that effectively reach these young people.

e. Children & Youth Subject to Maltreatment

Maltreatment of young people is a serious and far-reaching problem, making it difficult to accurately capture the scope of the problem. According to the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (2010), there were approximately 235,842 child maltreatment investigations conducted in 2008 in Canada (Jack, Munn, Cheng, & MacMillan, 2006). In the United States, there are approximately 3 million reports of child maltreatment a year, with about five deaths of children a day as a result of abuse or neglect. Approximately 80% of these deaths happen to children under the age of four (CDC, 2012). The *World Report on Violence against Children* (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002) states that emotional, physical, and sexual violence is rampant. At any one time, an estimated 1.8 million children are being sexually exploited for profit across the world (Save the Children UK, 2007). Each week, more than 20,000 images of sexual torture of children are posted on the internet (Loader, 2005; Singh & Fairholm, 2012).

While the occurrence of maltreatment is slightly higher with girls than boys, the major difference is found across ethnic lines, with disadvantaged communities showing higher rates of child abuse (CDC, 2010). Forms of maltreatment have been divided into 4 categories, which are physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect (CDC, 2012).

1. **Physical Abuse** involves deliberately using force against a child in such a way that the child is either injured or is at risk of being injured. Physical abuse includes beating, hitting, shaking, pushing, choking, biting, burning, kicking or assaulting a child with a weapon. This may consist of one incident or it may happen repeatedly (Government of Canada, Department of Justice, 2006). It is also important to note that the most vulnerable age group to physical abuse is one year and under (DeVooght, McCoy-Roth, & Freundlich, 2011).
2. **Sexual abuse** and exploitation of children and youth occurs when an older child, adolescent or adult takes advantage of a younger child or youth for sexual purposes, including for participation in prostitution, pornographic performances and in the production of pornography (Government of Canada, Department of Justice, 2006). This can happen both in person and at a distance, often through the misuse of technology (Chisholm, 2006). Many communications technologies can increase a young person’s vulnerability, where abuse online can turn into real life encounters that put young people at risk (Because I am a Girl, 2010).
3. **Emotional abuse** involves harming a child's sense of self. It includes acts (or omissions) that result in, or place a child at risk of, serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional or mental health problems. For example, emotional abuse may include verbal threats, social isolation, intimidation, exploitation or routinely making unreasonable demands (Government of Canada, Department of Justice, 2006).
4. **Neglect** involves failing to provide what a child needs for his or her physical, psychological or emotional development and well-being. For example, neglect

> includes failing to provide a child with food, clothing, shelter, cleanliness, medical care or protection from harm (Dept. of Justice. Government of Canada, 2006a).

There is no one single cause or predictive factor for situations of child abuse. Research has shown, however, that children who have experienced abuse are more likely to not only abuse their children, but are more likely to participate in criminal activity (Fang, Brown, Florence, & Mercy, 2012). One study, for instance, suggests that certain victims of bullying tend to come from neglectful or abusive homes, contributing to anxious or aggressive behaviour that results in their bullying of others and their own victimization by peers (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005, p. 105). Despite the studies done to uncover the extent of this issue, it is not possible to know exactly how many victims of maltreatment there are (Dept. of Justice, Government of Canada, 2006b). Whether it's a fear of exposure, fear of reporting, or the reluctance to define a situation as abusive, the reality is that there are no numbers or statistics to definitively capture its impact.

It is important to consider the long-term effect of maltreatment on children. Violence against young children has been shown to leave a genetic imprint, reducing the ability of the child as they grow into adulthood to cope with stress in a positive way (McGowan et al., 2009; Singh & Fairholm, 2012). Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)—a condition caused by alcohol consumption during pregnancy—can impact a child's life in physical, mental, and emotional ways (Health Canada, 1997; Singh & Fairholm, 2012). The Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal, developed through the Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare, has been active in pooling academic literature on child abuse and neglect (Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare, 2012). In many cases, these reviews point to the potential of certain treatments in addressing the effects of child maltreatment, yet have cautioned that the evidence base is tenuous at best and in need of further research.

The ramifications of child maltreatment on society are immense, and countries are only now coming into a more holistic definition of abuse, which encompasses treatment that would threaten and compromise a child's health and well-being. Interventions with this population group must address the specific challenges and interests at work in a young person's world where there has been abuse of some kind. This report will explore what has worked and where programs can improve their effectiveness.

f. Children & Youth in Alternative Care

Children and youth who find themselves in institutions are often at greater risk for violence and exploitation (Pinheiro, 2006). Issues such as inadequate staffing, lack of monitoring, and low priority contribute to the vulnerability of young people in these settings (Pinheiro, 2006). For this report, *alternative care* is defined as:

> Care for orphans and other vulnerable children who are not under the custody of their biological parents. It includes adoption, foster families, guardianship, kinship care, residential care and other community-based arrangements to care for children in need of special protection, particularly children without primary caregivers (UNICEF, 2006, p. 15).

There are millions of children and youth around the world who are in, or are at risk of soon entering, alternative care settings; either as a result of the loss of their guardian(s) or abandonment. According to SOS Children's Villages International, there are approximately 45,000 orphans in Canada (SOS Children's Villages Canada, n.d.). Statistics Canada has no information on orphans or orphanages in Canada. According to Elizabeth Wiebe, founder of The Elizabeth Wiebe Society for Orphaned Children in Canada, there are approximately 88,000 young people living in foster care across the country (Wiebe, 2007). Aboriginal youth make up a disproportionate amount (30-40%) of all young people in alternative care nationally (Farris-Manning & Zandstra, 2003).

UNICEF estimates that in 2010 there were approximately 50 million children in Sub-Saharan Africa who would lose at least one parent and 10 million who would lose both. SOS Children's Villages International estimate that there are approximately 1.5 million children across Europe and Central Asia living in public care settings (SOS Children's Villages International, n.d.-a).

Young people around the world can find themselves under the care or guardianship of an institution. This type of alternative care can include various places from foster care (formal and informal) and orphanages to juvenile detention centres. Emily Delap (2012) from Family for Every Child presented these key definitions of the types of alternative care that exist:

- Kinship Care: "…family-based care within a child's extended family or with close friends of the family known to the child, whether formal or informal in nature."
- Foster care: "Situations where children are placed by a competent authority for the purpose of alternative care in the domestic environment of a family other than the child's own family."
- Residential Care: "Care provided in any non-family-based setting, such as places of safety for emergency care, transit centres … and all other short and long term residential care facilities including group homes."

Whatever they may be called, these alternative forms of care are responsible for the day-to-day life of the young people in their care.

i. Children & Youth in Institutions

Many national systems favour orphanages and large group homes as the default locations for dealing with children who lack family support. These settings, however, are not ideal. There is much research to show that children and youth need individualized care that is best provided by a guardian or family member (Pinheiro, 2006). The main concern is that without standards for quality of care, children and youth are not getting the support they need (Macdonald & Turner, 2008; SOS Children's Villages International, n.d.; Turner & Macdonald, 2011). In 2009, Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children were presented to the UN as an enhancement to the UNCRC ("UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children - ISS SSI," 2009). Implementation of such guidelines is critical for the improvement of alternative care within these institutions.

Without individualized support, these vulnerable youth often leave these institutions without the necessary preparation for life on their own (SOS Children's Villages International,

n.d.-a). This report will look at interventions that engage these young people in a positive, sustainable way.

ii. Juvenile Detention

In Canada, there were 40,300 youth admissions to youth correctional services between 2008-2009 (Calverley, Cotter, & Halla, n.d.), which amounts to 0.52% of all youth in Canada under the age of 19 (Public Safety Canada, n.d.). This is an improvement from previous years. When the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) was implemented in 2003, Canada had some of the highest rates of juvenile detention in the developed world (CCRC, 2011). Since then, the rate of young people in custody has fallen by 27% across the country (CCRC, 2011, p. 1). In the United States in 2009, 1.16 million people under the age of 18 were arrested by law enforcement ("Juvenile Justice Reform," n.d.; US Dept. of Justice, 2009). This is also a decline from previous years, though not as large as Canada's (4% decline) (US Dept. of Justice, 2009). However, trends have been identified both in Canada and the United States of disproportionate detention rates among racial groups (NAACP, n.d.).

There are three global instruments that have been created to address the treatment of young detainees in conflict with the law (Goldson & Muncie, 2012):

1. United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules) (1985);
2. United Nations Guidelines on the Prevention of Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines) (1990a); and
3. United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (the JDL Rules or the Havana Rules) (1990b). These resolutions all articulate standards for the treatment of young people in detention.

When it is necessary to detain a young person in correctional services, it is required that a safe environment with adequate staffing, protective systems, and programing be provided (Pinheiro, 2006). This is a highly contested issue, as many argue that juvenile detention does not solve the underlying issues that lead to the committing of offenses and, in fact, keeps youth in a place of vulnerability to both interpersonal and institutional violence (Goldson & Muncie, 2012).

g. Aboriginal Children & Youth

Aboriginal people comprise approximately 4% of the population of Canada, (1.325 million people) and this number is growing faster than any other population group (S. D. C. Government of Canada, 2006). The term "Aboriginal" in Canada refers to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. A large proportion of aboriginal people live in northern Canada, as well as the Prairie Provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta). Nearly one-half of Aboriginal people today live in urban centres (S. D. C. Government of Canada, 2006). Internationally, many indigenous peoples are often politically and socially marginalized. According to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, there are more than 370 million indigenous peoples living in 70 different countries around the world (UN, n.d.). This report will focus on the indigenous people of Canada.

The average age within Aboriginal communities is actually younger than other communities in Canada. According to Statistics Canada, the median age of Aboriginal population is 27 which is 13 years lower than the median age of non-Aboriginals. There is not a lot known about the intersecting influences of emotional well-being and poverty, violence, and racism that aboriginal youth face (Berman et al., 2009a). Intergenerational historical issues have resulted in present-day disadvantages for Aboriginal young people (Hay, 2004). Within this group, there are high levels of alcohol and drug addiction, eating disorders, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted infections (Beauvais, Wayman, Jumper-Thurman, Plested, & Helm, 2002; Craib et al., 2003; Croll, Neumark-Sztainer, Story, & Ireland, 2002).

Suicide rates in Aboriginal Communities are five times higher than in non-aboriginal communities (Health Canada, 2005). Aboriginal girls are seven times more likely than non-Aboriginal girls in Canada to commit suicide, just as they are more likely to witness and experience violence in their homes (Berman et al., 2009a, p. 421). It is important to note that among the few studies that have been conducted with Aboriginal youth, only a small proportion of them address the specific needs and experiences of Aboriginal girls (Berman et al., 2009b; Downe, 2006).

Canadian data indicates that less than half of Aboriginal students finish high school, compared to an 88% graduation rate among non-Aboriginal students (Pirbhai-Illich, 2010). However, it would be a mistake to view these numbers and statistics independent of the cultural and historical context. Many First Nations communities have started putting a focus on developing awareness and understanding of their cultural heritage. By fostering pride in their identity and history, these communities are working to restore what was lost in the assimilation policies of the government. As argued by Crooks, Chiodo, & Thomas (2009):

> By placing the high rates of violence, substance abuse, and poverty experienced by Aboriginal families into the context of colonization and assimilation, this perspective shifts the perceived deficits away from the individual and allows us to focus instead on the resilience many of these youth have demonstrated.

A disproportionate number of Aboriginal children and youth are the subject of child maltreatment investigations, most concerning allegations of neglect,[3] while up to 40% of the 76,000 children and youth in out-of-home care in Canada are from Aboriginal families (Blackstock, Trocmé, & Bennett, 2004, pp. 901–902). Some estimates suggest that there are currently three times more Aboriginal children and youth in the Canadian child welfare system than at the height of the residential school system in the 1940s (Blackstock, 2007, p. 74). This overrepresentation is reflective of the multiple disadvantages that Aboriginal families continue to face today (Trocmé, Knoke, & Blackstock, 2004, p. 595), and is arguably the product of Canada's former assimilationist policies and lingering racial bias (Lavergne, Dufour, Trocmé, &

[3] In a 1998 sample of the Canadian Incidence Study, Aboriginal children and youth accounted for 16% of child maltreatment investigations, despite representing only 5% of the Canadian population (Blackstock, Trocmé, & Bennett, 2004, p. 912). Similar results have been reported from the 2003 sample (Lavergne, Dufour, Trocmé, & Larrivée, 2008, p. 71).

Larrivée, 2008, p. 72, 74). The situation of many Aboriginal young people makes them particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation (CRC, 2008). Often coming from desperate situations, young people engage in the sex trade without understanding the implications. According to Save the Children, Aboriginal women account for up to 70% of visible street-based sex work in Canada (Kingsley & Mark, 2000).

In light of the prevalent cultural and socio-economic disadvantages faced by Aboriginal young people, this report will discuss interventions with this group and how technology can be utilized to promote well-being and safety. In turn, engagement with Aboriginal children and youth should recognize the strengths that have prevailed throughout this history of subjugation and marginalization, as well as the individual, community, and cultural coping mechanisms that have emerged as a result.

h. Homeless Children & Youth

There is no one definition for homeless or street youth as context plays directly into how these youth conceptualized as a population group. In Canada, the Homeless Hub has proposed this definition:

> Homelessness describes the situation of an individual or family without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/ household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, stressful and distressing ("Canadian Definition of Homelessness," 2012).

There are estimated to be 150,000 homeless youth in Canada today (PHAC, 2006); 64% of this number are male under the age of 25 (Covenant House Toronto, 2010). In the United States, it is suggested that more than one in 45 children will experience homelessness annually ("Campaign to End Child Homelessness," 2010). While in both Canada and the United States causes of homelessness vary, an abusive situation or event (physical, sexual, or emotional) has been a common reason youth have left home (Covenant House Toronto, 2010). Youth homelessness is a global issue with estimates of the number of children living on the street reaching as high as 100 million worldwide, but this is an approximate number as definitions of who exactly street children are hotly contested (Consortium for Street Children, 2009).

In spite of the lack of a definition, the main characteristics of homeless youth are their living conditions and the inherent risks that come along with their situations (Murphy, 2011). Such conditions include physical, emotional, and psychological vulnerability, which often leads to risky behaviour that can compromise their health and well-being (Berman et al., 2009b; PHAC, 2006). In Canada, for example, 82% of homeless youth reported having a crime committed against them, with the majority of those crimes being physical or sexual abuse (Berman et al., 2009b; Consortium for Street Children, 2009).

The term homeless youth encompasses young people whose families have become homeless as well as unaccompanied homeless (Barry, Ensign, & Lippek, 2002; Murphy, 2011).

The latter group can be broken down yet again. Murphy (2011) presents a framework which describes unaccompanied homeless youth into three main divisions:

- Runaway homeless: youth who leave home for more than 24 hours without permission, and whose whereabouts are unknown.
- Throwaway homeless: youth who have been told to leave home and are prevented from returning.
- System homeless: youth whose social service placements are unsuccessful, resulting in their homelessness (Murphy, 2011, p. 41).

As mentioned above, the varying contexts and complexities of homeless youth prevent a universal intervention or approach from being possible. Also, gender differences present a unique set of needs specific to different genders that are often overlooked when addressing homeless youth as one uniform group (Berman 2009; p. 420).

As this report looks at interventions being used with this population group, it is the goal that network partners will be able to learn from and inform each others' varied programs and strategies for the purpose of improving the services available to homeless children and youth.

i. Youth in Gangs

According to Public Safety Canada (2011), youth gangs typically consist of young people "who self-identify as a group (i.e., have a group name), are generally perceived by others as a distinct group, and are involved in a significant number of delinquent incidents." Youth gang members do not come from one exclusive group. In fact, they represent many different ethnicities and backgrounds (P. S. C. Government of Canada, 2011). However, youth at risk of joining gangs or already involved in gangs tend to be from groups that suffer from the greatest levels of inequality and social disadvantage. In fact, approximately 22% of all gang members in Canada are Aboriginal (Totten, 2009).

This report's scan for literature on children and youth in gangs and organized armed violence found two systematic reviews on discouraging gang involvement, one focusing on opportunities provision (Fisher, Gardner, & Montgomery, 2009) and the other on cognitive-behavioural therapy (Fisher, Montgomery, & Gardner, 2009). Neither, however, could find any studies that met their inclusion criteria. These studies focused primarily on primary prevention initiatives aimed at the deterrence of gang violence and juvenile delinquency in the first place, which appears to be representative of most literature on youth gangs (Limbos et al., 2007, p. 68).

According to Fisher, Gardner, & Montgomery (2009), gang members are more likely to be involved in crime—including drugs, the sex-trade, and violent offences—compared to non-gang youth. Reasons for joining gangs vary, with some seeking the belonging and protection that they felt was lacking at home; while others are looking to make money and establish themselves and their reputations (Government of Canada, Public Safety Canada, 2011). A result of this violent lifestyle is an increased risk towards psychosocial well-being (Fisher, Gardner, & Montgomery, 2009).

The reality is that youth gangs span a number of the population groups highlighted in this report (Aboriginal youth, homeless youth, children affected by war). The challenging contexts in

which these children live increase their vulnerability and the likelihood of adopting a lifestyle of high-risk behaviours, which are negative both for the community and their own health and well-being. Public Safety Canada (2011) has argued that the nature of this situation calls for integrated, targeted, and evidence-based community solutions. In order to stop the cycle and system of violence and crime with youth, it is necessary to ensure that our interventions are informed, relevant, and affective in reaching this population group.

j. Child Labourers

i. Children & Youth in the Workplace

Canada has a 47% employment rate for young people aged 15-24 (Statistics Canada, 2012a). In Canada, each province sets its standards for when a child can start working and under what conditions (CBC, 2006). According to international law, the minimum age at which children and youth can engage in general labour is 15 years, and 18 for hazardous work. Nonetheless, in 2010 there were an estimated 215 million child labourers reported worldwide. Of these, 115 million were engaged in hazardous work, often considered a proxy for measuring the worst forms of child labour (International Labour Organization, 2010, p. 5).

More than half of the aforementioned 215 million child labourers are in the Asia-Pacific region (ILO, 2010). Of these, 60% are in the agricultural sector, with a significant number being involved in the industry and services sectors ("What is child labour," n.d.). While on the whole this number has decreased since 2004, specific groups have seen an increase. For example, child labour within the age group of 15-17 years saw a 20% increase since 2004 (ILO, 2010).

Children and youth in the workplace has not been a new phenomenon; in fact, most countries and contexts have seen child workers as a common feature of their communities. Research has shown that not all forms of work for children and youth is negative, as long as they are not in danger, receive fair wages, and are able to attend and complete their schooling. When these safeguards are not in place, a young person can experience negative impacts on their health and well-being ("What is child labour," n.d.).

In terms of the socio-economic impact, it has been shown that the younger children begin work, the less wages they will earn throughout their lifetime, compared to someone who started later in life (Emerson & Souza, 2003). Also, children who are child labourers are more likely to have their children become child labourers, perpetuating this cycle (Emerson & Souza, 2003).

There is general agreement that child labour is undesirable, in that it exposes young people to exploitation, but there is wide disagreement on how to tackle this problem (Emerson & Souza, 2003; Ray, 2000). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), determining whether or not particular forms of work can be called child labour depends on the child's age, the type and hours of work performed, the conditions under which it is performed, and the objectives pursued by individual countries ("What is child labour," n.d.). Simply removing children and youth from violent workplaces, however, will fail to address the economic, social, and cultural drivers underlying their involvement in these contexts. Criminalizing these activities further punishes children and youth for factors beyond their control, while ignoring their sincere efforts to help improve the economic state of their family (Pinheiro, 2006, pp. 233–234). Though exploitative, child labour is in many cases born of economic need and

desperation, thereby necessitating interventions that address the reality of poverty and unequal life chances.

Not much is known about the specific impact of child labour on mental health (Catani et al., 2009), which calls for more research to be done on this topic. In general, the overall health status of child workers is lower than schooled children (Joshi, Shrestha, Shrestha, & Vaidya, 2012). Like youth gangs, these children and youth are not a separate group from the other children and youth in challenging contexts discussed in this report. The cross-over between this and other groups is considerable, which presents a further level of complexity to developing interventions and strategies that will meet their needs.

ii. Children & Youth Who Have Been Trafficked

Other forms of child labour, however, derive from the threat of violence and coercion. Slavery, the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage, and the forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, are considered to be "the worst forms of child labour" (International Labour Conference, 1999, article 3). Nonetheless, roughly 1.2 million children and youth are believed to be trafficked each year for the purposes of prostitution, forced labour, or other forms of exploitation (International Labour Organization, 2002, p. 25; "UN.GIFT: Human Trafficking- The Facts," n.d.; United Nations Crime and Justice Information Network, 2000, p. 2). Due to a lack of reliable data and the paucity of more recent assessments, this estimate most likely underestimates the magnitude of the problem (Public Safety Canada, n.d.; UNICEF, 2011, p. 34).

Due to the illicit nature of this activity, there are no specific numbers for how many young people are trafficked into Canada, though traffickers are estimated to make millions of dollars in profits (Public Safety Canada, n.d.). Benjamin Perrin at The University of British Columbia has lead the way in bringing to light the issue of human trafficking right here in Canada (Perrin, 2010). Child trafficking is defined as "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation" (United Nations Criminal Justice Information Network, 2000).

While the definition of trafficking in relation to adults centres around choice, consent, and agency, such issues are not even considered in the agreed understanding of the definition of child trafficking (O'Connell Davidson, 2011), meaning that all children used for the purpose of exploitation, as outlined above, are considered to be trafficked persons. Exploitation of trafficking victims includes involvement in hazardous labour, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, street begging, to criminal activities (Redmond, 2008).

Conceptual frameworks such as the *3Ps paradigm*—prevention, protection, and prosecution—have sought to address the complexities of interventions with this population group. Such frameworks are supported by international human rights law, which states that slavery and forced labour is illegal (Obokata, 2010). Human trafficking became a global issue with the emergence of globalization. As international transportation has become faster and easier, human trafficking has established itself as the third most profitable criminal activity in the world (behind only drugs and small arms) (UNODC, 2000), and is expected to continue to grow.

Child trafficking is not only a problem for source countries or nations where children are typically taken from. Children are trafficked within and across borders in almost all countries

(UNICEF, 2009). At any one time an estimated 1.8 million children are being sexually exploited for profit across the world (International Labour Organization, 2002). Recruiting children as soldiers is another form of trafficking (Singh & Fairholm, 2012). An issue faced by many countries is the lack of legislation protecting trafficked persons—often they are treated as detainees, as there are no specific laws to determine how their situation should be handled (CCR, n.d.).

For children who have been rescued from trafficking rings, there are a unique set of concerns and risks to their well-being. Barnardo's Safe Accommodation Project at the University of Bedfordshire in the UK (2012) has found that of the children who have currently been rescued, 18% had gone missing from alternative care settings. Their recommendations are to improve the quality and security of care services they receive (Shuker, 2012). Often children most at-risk of being trafficked are those in situations of poverty (Cameron & Newman, 2008). Those who are without a family or guardian are more susceptible to being abducted or recruited. This report will include interventions used with this group for the purpose of contributing to more informed interventions which can effectively reach this group and address this global problem.

k. Children & Youth Living with Health-Related Challenges

Despite a growing awareness of the increased risk of violence faced by the estimated 93 million children and youth worldwide with a moderate or severe disability (World Health Organization, 2012), little is known about the forms or effects of this violence. In Canada, approximately 4% of youth under 25 years have some form of disability (HRSDC, 2006). A recent systematic review released through the World Health Organization's Department of Violence and Injury Prevention and Disability estimates that children and youth with disabilities are three to four times more likely than peers without disabilities to be victims of violence. Up to a quarter of these young people will experience violence at some point in their lives (CMHA, n.d.-a, p. 8). Some suggested reasons for this increase include "stigma, shame or lack of support of caregivers, negative traditional beliefs and ignorance, or heightened vulnerability due to the need for increased care" (Jones et al., 2012, p. 1). Robust evidence in this regard, however, remains scarce as a result of a lack of well-designed research studies, poor measurement of disability and violence, and limited research in middle- and low-income countries (CMHA, n.d.-a, p. 8). This report will present two of the most common forms of disability: chronic illness and mental illness.

i. Children & Youth Living with Chronic Illness

Chronic illness has risen to be the leading cause of death globally (63% of all deaths). Heart disease, stroke, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes are the most common types of chronic illness that exist today ("WHO | Chronic diseases," n.d.).

> The word "chronic" is typically used for conditions, illnesses, and diseases lasting three months or more. Often, chronic conditions are characterized by lasting symptoms and/or pain that persists, sometimes even despite treatment ("What Is Chronic Illness?, n.d.").

In Canada, nearly half-a-million children and youth suffer from chronic illness, including asthma and disabilities (Health Canada, n.d.). Thanks to advances in medicine, illnesses and diseases which would have once been fatal have now been classified as chronic. Survival rates (particularly of childhood cancer) have increased from 59% in 1975 to 80% in 2002 (Irwin & Elam, 2011; Martinez & Ercikan, 2009). Yet the ability to receive proper care is pivotal to survival, a situation which is elusive for many young people. Children in rural and/or impoverished areas do not have the same degree of access to quality care, which can adversely impact their well-being. This report will include interventions done with children with chronic illness, with specific attention paid to how service delivery can better reach this population as a whole.

It is with this population group that children and youth affected by HIV/AIDS are discussed. According to UNICEF, of the 34 million people living with HIV, 16.7 million are children under the age of 15 (UNICEF, 2012b). As there is no cure, young people are faced with challenge of managing their health over the long-term, similar to those with chronic illness. Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is an infection which damages a person's body by attacking the CD4+T cells in the blood (CDC, 2006). This virus can lead to acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), which significantly weakens the body's immune system. It has been found that antiretroviral treatment (ART) can slow this progression ("WHO | HIV/AIDS," 2012). In 2009, approximately 40% of all new HIV cases occur in people between the ages of 15 and 24. HIV can be transmitted through "unprotected sex, transfusion of contaminated blood, sharing of contaminated needles, and between a mother and her infant during pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding" ("WHO | HIV/AIDS," 2012).

The socioeconomic conditions in which young people live can increase their risk of contracting HIV. Vulnerability can be intensified through poverty, lack of education or awareness, and exposure to dangerous circumstances ("WHO | Young people," n.d.). While prevention is a key component in improving well-being, the population of young people who are HIV positive need specific attention and interventions in order to safeguard their well-being. This report will discuss lessons learned with this population group and how researchers and practitioners can better service their needs.

ii. Children & Youth Living with Mental Illness

> Mental illnesses are characterized by alterations in thinking, mood or behaviour (or some combination thereof) associated with significant distress and impaired functioning over an extended period of time (Government of Canada, 2002).

It is estimated that 50% of mental disorders begin before the age of 14 (Catania, Hetrick, Newman, & Purcell, 2011). Approximately 20% of children and adolescents around the world are estimated to have mental disorders or problems, regardless of cultures or backgrounds. In Canada, approximately 1.5 million children suffer from a diagnosable psychiatric disorder, yet only one in five actually receive the treatment (CMHA, n.d.-a). In developing or underdeveloped countries, where the highest proportion of the population is under 19, they typically have the poorest mental health services (Catania et al., 2011; "WHO | 10 facts on mental health," n.d.). There are significant gender differences both in experiencing and reporting mental health concerns. According to a report by the Girls Action Foundation in Canada (2008), adolescent

girls present higher rates of depression than their male counterparts (p. 6). It was found that "girls and young women are more likely to internalize mental health issues and mental illnesses, while boys and young men are more likely to externalize mental health issues" (Depauw & Glass, 2008, p. 7).

If mental health problems in young people go unaddressed, the potential for lifelong struggles is increased. These struggles not only adversely impact the individual, but their family, their community, and the health system (WHO, 2003). Most mental illnesses are not life-threatening, though they can often negatively impact an individual's well-being. Suicide is an example of this (Boden, Fergusson, & John Horwood, 2007; CMHA, n.d.-a; Evans, Hawton, & Rodham, 2005).

Globally, suicide is the leading cause of death from violence (Krug et al., 2002). Across Canada, suicide is the leading cause of death for males between the ages of 10 and 49 and the fourth leading cause for women (CMHA, n.d.-a). In 2009, 3,890 suicide cases were reported in Canada; of these, 504 were under the age of 25 (Statistics Canada, 2012b). However, rates are higher among Aboriginal people. In fact, Aboriginal people in Canada have the highest suicide rates of any other culturally-identifiable group in the world (Chandler & Lalonde, 2004). In the United States, there are approximately 34,000 people who commit suicide annually (Kretschmar & Flannery, 2011). There are also estimated to be 25 suicide attempts for every single suicide case (Kretschmar & Flannery, 2011).

In many cases, depression is a key influencer in deciding to take one's own life (CMHA, n.d.-a). One of the most common forms of mental illness is depression. Depression is defined as "A long period when a person feels very sad to the point of feeling worthless, hopeless and helpless" (CMHA, n.d.-b).

This can usually play out in a child's behaviour, attitude, and school performance. The change can be due to a life or situational stressor (e.g., family dysfunction, poverty, personal loss). However, depression can exist independent of any triggers (CMHA, n.d.-b). In a recent study by the Canadian Mental Health Association (2009), socio-economic status was found to be inversely related to hospitalization for depression (p. 6). This means that people living in lower socio-economic situations were much more likely to be hospitalized for depression than those in a higher socio-economic status. It is important to acknowledge this correlation, as many at-risk youth are living in situations of poverty or low income, which have been shown to influence their mental health. Outside of depression, behavioural disorders are common among young people, often resulting in their alienation from programing and participation.

It has been found that homeless youth display higher rates of mental illness than non-homeless youth. Yet homeless youth are far less likely to seek mental health services (Dixon, Funston, Ryan, & Wilhelm, 2011). This is a pivotal fact which mental health interventions need to explore further. Catering programs and strategies to this group can have a significant impact on improving their mental health.

III. Relevance to CYCC Network Partners

In returning to the purpose of the CYCC Network, it is important to clearly state how this discussion is relevant to the network partners. The purpose of the CYCC Network is to synthesize the knowledge that exists around best practice for working with young people in

challenging contexts, and then to mobilize that knowledge in innovative and effective ways. As technology has emerged as a potentially effective means of intervention with young people, it is important that this report captures the current concepts and practices in this field. This report will discuss what interventions and strategies exist with regard to using technology as a means of intervention and identifying what programs/projects have shown positive outcomes. The lack of evaluation and evidence prevents conclusions around effectiveness, but this discussion is a valuable step in developing the practice-based evidence which can then inform evidence-based practice. The opportunities for network partners to expand their scope of influence to include technology could be an effective development for their program goals and objectives. In the changing landscape of communication and interaction with young people, it would be remiss to not develop our understanding of technology's abilities and limitations.

This report will, therefore, discuss what programs and strategies exist with regard to promoting youth engagement among children and youth who live in challenging contexts, and identify which programs and projects have shown positive outcomes. The next section of this report will discuss best practices for promoting both youth engagement with children and youth in challenging contexts, and promoting resilience and positive mental health among these young people.

Section 4: Best Practices

This section will present principles for youth engagement and how they relate to children and youth in challenging contexts. Each principle will be explored using practical examples of programs that are working to nurture resilience, prevent mental health problems, and help young people build a place for themselves in the collective life of the community. Best practices will be identified as will gaps in both research and practice.

I. Principle: Youth Voice

Youth engagement has often been conceptualized in the literature as *youth voice*, which "means that youth are respected for their ideas and opinions and feel free to state them within an organization or program" (Serido et al., 2011).

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that the views of children should be heard and given "due weight" in matters relating to them (UNHCR, 1990). Research has shown that there is value in listening to what youth have to say. By addressing the psychological and social dimensions of children's daily lives, interventions have been used to promote children's resilience by building on their strengths as well as developing the resources and supports available to them (Fountain, 1999; L. M. Ward & Eyber, 2009; Zinck, 2010).

In a report from the Institute of Development Studies, Polack (2005) argued for the importance of youth voice in addressing a child's rights within communities affected by climate change. The report shows that youth participation is important in any resource management initiative. Past programs which had not included the voice of children in the community were cited as examples of failed attempts at natural conservation as the needs of young people were overlooked (references are made to Kenya and Cambodia). Polack argues that ensuring that the voice of young people is cycled back into a program's evaluation and implementation is important not only for personal development, but for the effectiveness of the program itself (Tedeschi & Kilmer, 2005).

This same argument is supported by a qualitative study conducted at the University of Arizona in 2009 with members of a nearby youth engagement centre. The purpose of the study was to see how experience in community programs can impact engagement among disadvantaged youth. The circumstances that surround vulnerable and at-risk young people were identified as preventing their ideas, their concerns, and their needs from being heard and validated. Through a series of focus group discussions, it was shown that when youth felt that their voice was having an impact in program decision making, they were more likely to be actively involved in their community (Serido et al., 2011).

This community involvement has been shown to foster the development of social skills, leadership abilities, and self-efficacy, as demonstrated by research done by Dallago et al (2009) and Greenwald et al (2006). Both studies focused on how youth voice was being incorporated in programing, notably for civic participation and for smoking cessation. Both show the value of including youth voices in meaningful discussion.

a. Practice: Incorporating Youth Voice

The literature affirms that incorporating youth voice in a meaningful way requires their active involvement in planning, implementing, and problem solving; allowing youth voice to be both expressed and heard. It is essential that this participation be based on equality, including full participation at all levels of decision-making (Matthew, 2009). As Krueger argues, it is when a program promotes this authentic involvement that “youth have opportunities for connection with others, for self-discovery, and for empowerment” (2005, p. 26), which then lead to more positive youth outcomes (Serido et al., 2011). These positive outcomes are linked to the supportive surroundings of the young person, where youth-adult relationships foster communication and encourage young people in their aspirations (Serido et al., 2011). Creating this safe space is key, particularly with at-risk youth.

To illustrate, a recent study was done by the Engaging Youth Serving Communities (EYSC) program in the United States, with 748 youth participants. This research examined the role of adult-youth relationships for positive program outcomes. Specifically, Serido et al (2011) looked at how these relationships contribute to strengthening youth voice, and how this impacts youth’s perception of the benefits of their participation in the program. Their findings suggest that opportunities to interact with adults benefit youth in multiple ways: “first, by directly contributing to the perceived value of program participation and second, indirectly, by promoting youth voice” (Serido et al., 2011, p. 55). By promoting supportive, adult-youth relationships, as well as providing space for youth to act in ways meaningful to them, programs are fostering an environment where meaningful youth voice can be optimized.

Example: Leaders of Today Network

An example of an organization adopting this principle of youth voice into practice is Leaders of Today (LOT). Begun in 2006, LOT is an emerging youth network supported by the NS Child & Youth Strategy and administered by HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development in Halifax, Nova Scotia (“LOT - Leaders of Today,” 2012). One of the main activities of LOT is an annual summit which brings together youth from diverse backgrounds with government officials and organizations from across Nova Scotia. This summit lasts for one weekend, with different activities, discussions, and presentations covering a range of issues identified by the youth themselves. There are opportunities for conversations and networking, facilitating connections between the youth and the adults who attend the summit.

One of the strengths of this program is its focus on amplifying youth voice through communication channels (such as government strategizing and organizational planning) which would otherwise have been void of direct youth involvement. Through the efforts of LOT, not only are youth voices heard but they are being brought into key discussions with various provincial initiatives geared for young people.

II. Principle: Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is conceptualized in this report as "broader than political engagement, in that it includes service to the community through involvement in health, in education and in charitable organizations" (Menard, 2010). As Dudley and Gitelson discuss in their article on youth civic development (2003), this type of engagement goes beyond voter turn-out but rather encapsulates a wide range of indicators. The central component of civic engagement is the different contributions that young people are able to make within their communities. Pat Dolan, Director of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, argues for "social civic engagement" that engages youth in acts of service, which holds potential for developing resilience in young people (Dolan, 2010). Civic engagement, he states, provides a positive vehicle for children and youth to contribute to community development. And while civic involvement is not a panacea guaranteeing resilience in all young people (Dolan, 2012), it does hold potential. Seeing youth as active agents instead of passive victims of their situation has become increasingly defended in the literature. Recognizing youth as social participants in their communities acknowledges their agency, and moves away from the tendency to view young people as solely victims of their situation (Boyden, de Berry, & McEvoy-Levy, 2004; Harris & Morrison, 2003; Hettler & Johnston, 2009; Ward & Eyber, 2009).

As Laura Lee from the Liu Institute at UBC argues, youth in challenging contexts often see themselves as the problem or the victim (personal communication, June 6, 2012). Changing this mindset—as well as that of the rest of the community—through education and facilitating communication allows space for youth to recognize the positive influence that they can have in their communities. Civic engagement has the potential to facilitate this shift. Promoting social awareness and empathy is important not only for behaviour change among young people, but also for promoting their well-being. For this reason, civic engagement has been identified as a best practice in this report. The dynamics of political, economic, and social engagement on the part of young people will be discussed, and examples given of how civic engagement has been promoted effectively among vulnerable and at-risk youth.

a. Practice: Political Participation & Citizenship

Countless studies have been conducted on the changing scope of young people's participation in politics in developed countries. Traditional modes of political engagement in developed countries have seen a decrease in participation over recent decades, particularly from the younger demographic (Sloam, 2011). In Claes et al.'s study (2009) of youth political participation in Canada, democratic participation presented the most apparent area of disengagement, with fewer and fewer young people choosing to vote. While this is not a universal phenomenon, this trend is seen in much of the developed world. It is also occurring in parts of the developing world, according to Resnick and Casale's study of youth political engagement in Africa (2011). While many researchers have argued that political involvement as a whole is on the decline (Matthews, Hempel, & Howell, 2010), there are contradicting reports calling for a re-alignment of how we understand and define political engagement and citizenship. They argue that engagement has not declined, but changed in nature (Matthews et al., 2010; Youniss et al., 2002); and that this shift in participation does not necessarily signal a

political crisis (Sirianni, 2005; Sloam, 2011; Urdal, 2006). As Sloam (2011) points out, social, economic, and technological drivers have played a central role in changing political culture. These drivers, he argues, have led to changes in political culture by reshaping communities through the emergence of communication and social network technologies, making traditional forms of political participation less manageable and often less appealing (Sloam, 2011).

In a study done by Pasek et al., on American youth and engagement, it was found that use of media was found to favourably impact the levels of engagement from young people (Pasek, Kenski, Romer, & Jamieson, 2006). As presented in Gina Bishop's research on the civic engagement of new and Aboriginal young Canadians, the focus of programs promoting engagement in politics among vulnerable and at-risk youth should not be on how to counteract high levels of apathy and cynicism, but rather to build bridges of communication that would connect and engage these young people from a variety of challenging contexts with traditional institutions (Bishop, 2005). Opportunities for engagement and participation need to be seen as valuable and relevant by young people for meeting their needs, and creating space for their voices to be heard and respected (Tedeschi & Kilmer, 2005).

This emerging form of political participation is not universal, however, with marginalized youth not being equally represented in this area. Race and socio-economic situation have been shown to be indicators of civic involvement in young people (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Immigrant youth, for example, have received little attention in research with regard to their political engagement. In the United States, however, Latino/as make up 22% of the national youth population, the majority of which have been born in the United States to immigrant families (Seif, 2009). According to Statistics Canada, 9% of the 10 million youth living in Canada were born elsewhere (2008). This has significant implications for initiatives which strive to engage young people in politics; their differing values and needs have a direct impact on civic engagement. This is a marked gap in the research, which needs to be explored further so as to better service this demographic (Bishop, 2005).

The nature of political engagement from young people varies considerably, both within and between countries, as this demographic is by no means a homogenous group (Sloam, 2011). Political involvement is not always seen as a positive avenue for youth, particularly in war-affected regions. Jo Boyden, Director of Young Lives at Oxford University, suggests that there is a general fear of youth involvement in politics, particularly in unstable contexts, where youth are seen to be largely uncontrollable and volatile (personal communication, June 19, 2012). Viewing young people as a problem will serve to alienate this demographic further, particularly with children and youth who live in challenging contexts.

Despite the popular discussions around youth's participation in political and civic movements, there are still many critical issues concerning the "precise nature, politics and ethical status of participation" which seem to go unasked and unanswered (Hinton, Tisdall, Gallagher, & Elsley, 2008). This is a challenge which brings the power relations between young people and adults to the fore (Pinkerton, 2004). There is often confusion on the part of youth as to how or where they can exercise their rights as citizens (Matthews et al., 2010). To what degree do young people have a real influence over the policies which directly affect their lives? This introduces another level of complexity when involving vulnerable young people. Strategy is needed to encourage their engagement in such a way that they are both able and comfortable to participate.

While traditional political engagement may be limited by age restrictions, there are still places for young people to be involved in the life of their community. In a report prepared for the Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE) in 2008, it was stated that fostering the "civic context" can allow for the development of civic-minded adults who are socially aware and active in their communities (Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997; Zaff, Malanchuk, & Eccles, 2008).

Example: Apathy is Boring

The organization Apathy is Boring is an example of an intervention that uses technology to educate Canadian youth about democracy as well as engage them in the civic life of their communities. Created in 2004 in Canada, their mission is to ("Apathy is Boring," n.d.):

- Increase youth voting rates.
- Increase youth engagement in their communities.
- Build a sustainable dialogue between youth and elected officials.

Apathy is Boring aims to reach unengaged youth in the political process. A strength of this program is its use of technology to create space for youth to communicate with each other and decision-makers. Through their youth-friendly programs and electronic campaigns, they provide information and support for young people to learn more about the principles of democracy and how they can participate in their own communities ("Apathy is Boring," n.d.). These online resources are for youth, but are also designed by youth themselves. This connects back to the importance of providing space for youth voice which will positively contribute to a program's effectiveness.

b. Practice: Online Engagement

More effort has been made to use the internet as a means of reaching young people with messages and opportunities to engage with politics (Ward, 2005). What traditionally took place in a physical space can now be initiated in a virtual one. This new structure provides opportunity for both virtual (e.g., online social networking) and physical involvement (e.g., distributing political materials, attending political meetings) (Ward, 2005). With young people's increased use and familiarity with the internet as a means of communicating, political initiatives online can significantly impact attitudes and motivations (Delli Carpini, 2000) for involvement in traditional political spheres.

The use of social media as a tool for engaging young people has come into the spotlight—especially following the Arab Spring uprisings and the role youth played in mobilizing themselves and their communities to stand against various corrupt governments (Martin, 2012). Youth internet use has moved away from web surfing to social networks (Rice, Monro, Barman-Adhikari, & Young, 2010). Organizations and government agencies have begun to optimize this mode of communication to reach young people with information and messages to promote their well-being and protection (Wenzel, 2012). It is important to recognize that such space is not free of power struggle. There is still a need to understand which voices are heard in these online forums, and how we define interactivity for the purpose of ensuring a truly democratic space for political discourse to take place (Burwell, 2012). What is important to note as well is that using communication networks in which they are comfortable to engage

youth in a positive way with politics has potential for promoting general civic engagement and social responsibility.

Example: Tread Lightly

Tread Lightly is a free climate change education and engagement program offered by TakingITGlobal (TIG). Tread Lightly features innovative online educational tools and resources which are designed to empower youth to reduce their ecological footprints and take action on climate change (Taking IT Global, n.d.). Figure 5 presents the framework used by TIG for guiding youth engagement:

Figure 8: TakingITGlobal - Climate Change: Youth Guide to Action

Tread Lightly provides online resources to inspire and empower young people to get involved in environmental issues. By presenting the facts and providing youth with information about the issues, the goal is for youth to decide what particular issues inspire them to take action. Being an online movement allows for wider reach of their program's message, overcoming many barriers to access. This provides more opportunity for young people, who might otherwise have not been able to learn and get involved.

c. Practice: Social Enterprise Intervention. Promoting Economic Participation

There has been a shift towards employing social development strategies—particularly among marginalized populations. According to Ferguson's work with street-involved youth in Los Angeles, social development is a response to ineffectual conventional approaches to services provision (Ferguson, 2007). Social development aims to bring together social and economic processes for marginalized populations in order to promote their well-being, a philosophy trumpeted by both WHO and ILO (Ferguson, 2007).

> Social development strategies seek to enhance the learning and earning capacities of individuals through strengthening human capital, building interpersonal skills, facilitating access to financial capital, and enhancing social networks. (Ferguson, 2007, p. 105)

One type of social development strategy is social enterprise interventions (SEIs). SEI seeks to engage at-risk youth in "vocational training and mental health services in an effort to enhance their mental health status, pro-social behaviours, social support, and service utilization" (Ferguson & Xie, 2008, p. 5). Ferguson and Islam's qualitative study with homeless youth in 2008 produced a model of SEI outcomes (see Figure 6) which identifies the impact that promoting social enterprise can have on the lives of these young people. Beyond employment and service-related outcomes, mental health, behavioural, and social outcomes were shown to be linked to participation in the SEI (Ferguson & Islam, 2008, p. 223).

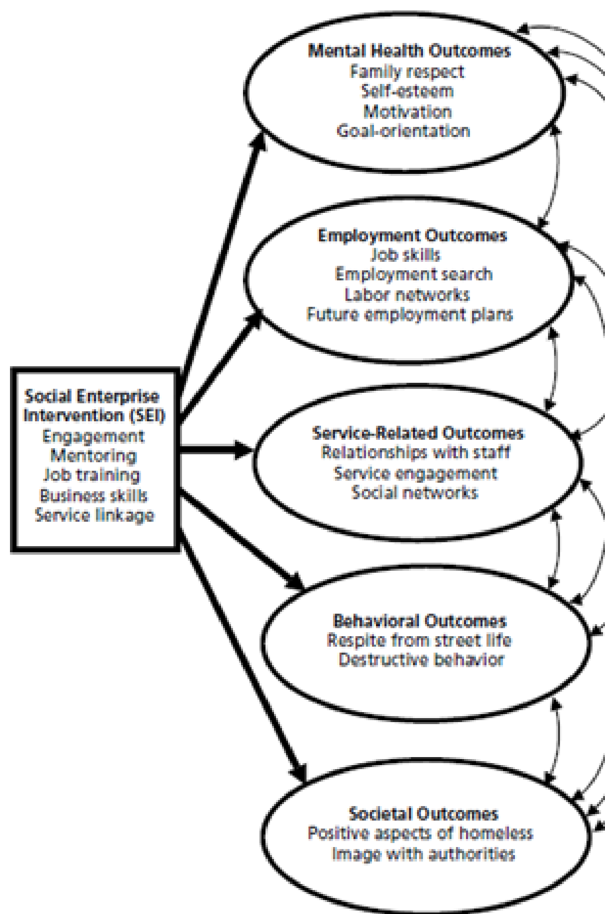


Figure 9: A Model of Social Enterprise Intervention (SEI) Outcomes (Ferguson, 2007).

A similar program run in Pakistan, YES (youth social enterprise) Network Pakistan, provides disadvantaged young people with the chance to develop their skills and to become self-reliant and contributing members of society (YES Network Pakistan, n.d.). They have identified these opportunities as sustaining factors for youth engagement in this context. Providing positive employment opportunities for young people can offer them a sense of structure and social

identity (Ferguson, 2007). The positive uptake of SEI suggests that providing vocational support with the goal of allowing youth to exit the streets and into society has potential for promoting positive engagement by homeless youth with their community.

By incorporating these marginalized young people into the formal economy, it is argued that their participation will positively impact their physical and mental health (Harnois & Gabriel, 2000; ILO, 2012). The participation of youth in the formal economy also has positive implications for the socio-economic climate in general. It is important to create a space for youth employment where their rights are protected, particularly from exploitation (Boockmann, 2010; ILO, 2010).

Example: SPARK Youth Engagement Program

SPARK is an organization that facilitates and fosters the creation of networks to promote small businesses and entrepreneurs around the world. Through the Youth Engagement Programme (YEP), which began in January 2012 (in partnership with The Hague Academy for Local Governance), this 4-year program in Burundi, the Palestinian Administered Areas, and the Republic of South Sudan will aim to reduce instability in these three fragile state environments by improving the socio-economic position of young women and men ("SPARK - Youth Engagement Programme," n.d.). YEP's main strategy is to promote partnerships between organizations and interest groups to advocate for these young people. By providing training and education, opportunities can be created for young people living in these post-conflict areas to positively contribute to their community's development," n.d.). YEP acknowledges youth as economic and social actors with the potential to support weak economies and help bring stability back into faltering circumstances.

d. Practice: Promoting Community Participation

As discussed above, youth civic engagement is bigger than simply political participation. Social civic engagement, as Pat Dolan argues, includes the positive contributions young people can make within their communities (Dolan, 2012). A recent study done by ETS (Educational Testing Service) in the United States, shows that a lower level of civic knowledge is actually linked to lower degrees of volunteerism. The study showed that young people with less education are also less likely to volunteer in their communities (Ewing, 2012). Often this stems from both a lack of awareness and opportunities to get involved.

In a recent study by Lenzi et al., (2012) on youth civic engagement, it was argued that involvement in community life can improve the psychological, social, and intellectual growth in children and youth. This argument is supported in the literature (Erikson, 1993; Flanagan & Levine, 2010), as engagement in the community is also important for individual growth and identity. According to the National League of Cities' (NLC) youth engagement strategy in the United States, a correlation has been found between civic engagement and an increase in the secondary education graduation rate, positive attitudes about young people's role in their community, and the avoidance of risky behaviours (NLC.org, 2010). By increasing participants' exposure to supportive and empowering environments, opportunities are created for a range of skill-building and horizon-broadening experiences (Nissen, 2011).

Youth advisory councils (YACs) have grown in popularity as a way of effectively including youth in the life of their communities (Carlson, 2006). Many municipalities here in Canada have

established YACs for the purpose of advising and making suggestions for issues related to youth in the city (Secrétariat à la jeunesse, 2009). The YAC in Regina, Saskatchewan, for example, launched its first forum in May 2012, named *Extreme Youth on the Move*, which brought 120 young people together from across the city in an effort to better represent the youth voice to the city (YAC, 2012). It is important to note that often the young people who are chosen for youth councils typically come from more affluent and privileged backgrounds. There is a need for organizations to make efforts to include the voice of children and youth in more challenging contexts. The ultimate purpose of this amplified youth voice has been to facilitate better informed programs and projects that promote youth engagement.

Example: Youth of Choice

Youth of Choice is an organization based in South Africa whose mission is to "inspire young people to take action on social challenges they see in their communities through community service" (Youth of Choice, n.d.). Their main strategy is to have campaigns through which young people can engage with their communities. These campaigns are chosen based on the interests of the youth involved, and provide them with opportunities to get become engaged in the issues facing their community. Action 4 Hunger and Dance to Inspire are just a couple of the campaigns run by the youth involved.

Example: River of Unity

Another example of a youth council is the River of Unity project, started by the Nenan Organization in British Columbia in response to problems facing the First Nation's community. This project presents an opportunity for First Nation's youth to engage in a collaborative council, where their voice is heard along with other community members, including elders. River of Unity places all community voices as critically important for the redesign of services to their community (Nenan, n.d.). These inclusive and respectful practices have positive effects on both the community and the youth themselves.

e. Practice: Sports

The United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP) defines sport as:

> All forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction, such as play, recreation, organized or competitive sport, and indigenous sports and games (UNOSDP, n.d.-a).

In 1978, UNESCO described sport and physical education as a "fundamental right for all," though this right is frequently ignored in many contexts (UNOSDP, n.d.-b). The UNOSDP has been a huge proponent for the use of sport to reach young people in challenging contexts. By optimizing the participatory nature of sport, they argue that there is huge potential to attract, mobilize, and inspire young people to lead positive lives (UNOSDP, n.d.-a). This view is shared by many organizations and researchers working with young people (Boyden & Mann, 2005; Henley, 2005; Henley, Schweizer, De Gara, & Vetter, 2007; Keim, 2006).

In a report done by the International Psychosocial Evaluation Committee and Save the Children Federation (2004), it was suggested that sport can provide a safe, predictable

environment for people to come together, particularly in a post conflict setting. Emphasizing teamwork and cooperation can work to repair relationships, re-open lines of communication, and hopefully revive or instil a sense of unity. Through encouraging interaction between different people and communities, it is hoped that sport will create a space where healing can occur (Duncan et al., 2004). The UNOSDP presents the connection between sport and peace as based in its core values relating to fair play, cooperation, sharing, and respect (UNOSDP, n.d.-b). Through play, children not only become aware of other children's needs, but they also learn more about themselves and how to handle situations which may not always go their way (Henley, 2005).

While sport can embody some of the best human traits, it can also bring out the worst, such as violence, cheating, discrimination, and unhealthy competitiveness (UNOSDP, n.d.-b). As Kvalsund argues in the Toolkit for Sport for Development (2007), using sport to achieve peaceful coexistence requires conscious and planned implementation, increased research, concept development, and understanding and increased training of field implementers (Guest, 2005; Stidder & Sugden, 2003).

Example: Viva Rio

The Black Pearl Academy of Soccer, a partnership between Viva Rio and the Haitian Soccer Federation, is a program which uses soccer as a means of promoting citizenship among young people in Brazil and Haiti (Viva Rio, n.d.-a). By using the popularity of soccer, Viva Rio has been able to attract the involvement of young people from various backgrounds, particularly street-involved youth. As coordinator Bob Montinard says, providing a safe place for youth to have fun and connect with supportive adults and peers has great potential for helping them through their struggles (personal communication, May 16, 2012).

The Swinging for Peace program, also run by Viva Rio in both Haiti and Brazil, uses capoeira (a traditional style of Portuguese dance that has its roots in martial arts) to engage young people in poor urban neighbourhoods and to foster a culture of peace (Viva Rio, n.d.-b). The youth who participate- —mostly orphaned and/or living on the street—have the opportunity to not only learn this dance, but also have access to lessons on various life skills including conflict management, computer skills, and Portuguese. By using a fun, expressive activity which youth enjoy, Viva Rio is able to sustain young people's engagement in their programs with the purpose of promoting their well-being and development.

III. Principle: Culture & Context-specific

In Yasmin Jiwani's book (2006) on the interactions between race, gender, and violence, she argues that across all population groups run common themes which can result in "intersecting vulnerabilities." This is particularly true in this discussion of vulnerable and at-risk youth, as in varying contexts and settings there are cross-cutting themes, such as gender, location, and culture that impact their livelihoods. While there may be similarities in theory and approach, it is increasingly agreed upon that there is no universal remedy or strategy for promoting and sustaining youth engagement across cultures and contexts. While there may be similarities and lessons to learn between settings, successful programs require time to explore what the specific needs are of the participants. Compounded with the need for context-specific planning

is the necessity for time-specific planning. In many settings, what programs or strategies that work at one time do not often transfer to other times. An example of this was raised by Shelly Whitman, Director of the Child Soldiers Initiative. Dr. Whitman has spoken of the unique and rapidly changing context in which these young people in conflict or post-conflict settings are facing (personal communication, August 31, 2012). Moving away from the cookie cutter approach to working with young people is the first step toward creating meaningful and relevant interventions (Berg & Lune, 2004; Crotty, 1998).

In Dawn Chatty's research with refugee youth in the Middle East, she argues that a common misconception in working with young people is that their needs and concerns are universal (2007). This comes from inherent attitudes and beliefs we have about childhood and what it should look like. She argues that while there are basic rights that need to be protected, it does not follow that the lifestyle of a child in East Africa, for example, will at all match that of a child in North America. In Laura Lee's (nee Ward) work with child-headed households in Rwanda, this argument is reinforced. Assuming that all children need to play, for example, is not necessarily wrong. But she suggests that such assumptions can blind us to the struggles these child-headed households deal with and the particular needs of these young people (Ward & Eyber, 2009). This again enforces the need for context specific programing. In light of this research, it is time to challenge the standard for what childhood looks like and allow the culture and context to influence how we conceptualize it (Ward & Eyber, 2009).

a. Practice: Strengths-based Approach

While there are similarities in the issues faced by Aboriginal youth across Canada, Crooks et al. (2009) argues that ignoring the community-specific and region-specific histories and struggles could negate any success a program might otherwise have.

In an article by Brownlee et al., (2010) about strengths-based approaches with Aboriginal youth in Ontario, they argue that such an approach to interventions prioritizes and utilizes "a full spectrum of strengths for each individual" drawn from both their capacity to overcome past adversities and their everyday functioning (pp. 106–107). This is instead of pathologizing these populations by focusing on their disorders, weaknesses, and deficits (Tedeschi & Kilmer, 2005). This approach is particularly important with Aboriginal youth, as it places the struggles facing these communities in the context of the history of colonization, assimilation and abuse (Crooks, Chiodo, Thomas, & Hughes, 2010). By understanding the historical context, it takes the focus off the struggles of an individual young person to the resilience that First Nations youth have demonstrated. In a literature review on the links between a history of colonialism and the mental health of Aboriginal people in Canada, Kirmayer et al., (2003) identified the value of cultural connection, suggesting that programs which strive to engage Aboriginal youth with their cultural heritage would help to negate mental health issues and to promote well-being.

These strengths-based interventions have been generally shown to be effective, particularly with Aboriginal youth (Brownlee et al., 2010; Tedeschi & Kilmer, 2005). They have been used to prevent suicidal ideation (Wortzman, 2009), substance abuse (Dell et al., 2011; Dell & Hopkins, 2011), and other harmful behaviours. The success of these programs derives from their capacity to recognize the strengths and talents that these marginalized young people have. In spite of these positive impacts, strengths-based

interventions have received comparatively little empirical attention in the literature (Tedeschi & Kilmer, 2005).

Using a strengths-based approach is not solely applicable to Aboriginal youth. In fact, this concept of protective factors—as opposed to risk factors—has gained significant attention and support (Aspy et al., 2004; CCSA, 2011; Wadham, 2010). The Centre for Excellence in Youth Engagement cites a strengths-based approach as a key strategy for meaningful youth engagement (CEYE, 2009). This research affirms that a strengths-based approach is necessary for promoting the protective and resilient characteristics that young people have in their environment. It shifts the focus from the risks facing vulnerable and at-risk youth (Macpherson, 2008) and instead emphasizes and works to build on the positive aspects (Crooks et al., 2010; Linley, Bhaduri, Sharma, & Govindji, 2011).

Example: My Word

An example of using a strengths-based approach to promoting youth engagement is the digital story telling project in Rigolet, Labrador named My Word. This project was initiated by a research project funded by Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB). The purpose of the project was to "further develop individual and collective capacities in Rigolet to understand, identify, adapt to and manage health issues experienced in the community due to changes in climate using digital storytelling methodologies" ("Digital Storytelling: Rigolet, Labrador," 2012). The project was a community led initiative where young people were given five days of training on the technology, and then asked to create videos of themselves telling their stories. They were able to be as creative as they liked, using pictures, music, and other ways of representing their experiences.

As a result of its success, the Rigolet Inuit Community Government has provided funding for a My Word, providing an ongoing opportunity for community-based participatory media. The purpose of this project is to preserve and promote oral storytelling, which is intrinsic in the Inuit community. Ashlee Cunsolo Willox, one of the primary investigators on the research project, argues that the reason My Word was so well received in the community was that there was a sense of community ownership of the project (personal communication, May 22, 2012). It was their stories told in their way and they were a part of prepared the digital footage. This suggests that there is real value in truly participatory research in affecting sustainable benefits to a community.

IV. Principle: Positive Relationships

a. Practice: Mentorship

Mentoring young people has been a widely acknowledged strategy for promoting positive attitudes and relationships between youth and adults (Serido et al., 2011). In an article by Jekielek et al. (2002) at Child Trends in Washington DC, they argue that facilitating positive, supportive relationships for young people directly impacts their well-being and prevents harmful behaviours (Zand et al., 2009). In Brady and Dolan's research with the Irish Big Brothers Big Sisters organization, they found that positive mentoring relationships not only have a positive impact on the at–risk youth in the program, but on the wider community as well (Brady & Dolan, 2009). By connecting youth with a role model, there is opportunity for a positive

influence to take root in that young person's life; providing a source of support and advice as well as someone there during difficult times (Crooks et al., 2010; Dolan & Brady, 2011).

There is evidence to show that interventions which target families facing adversity as a whole, promoting healthy and supportive relationships within their family unit, have consistently shown positive outcomes in young people over time (Kelly, 2004; Lester et al., 2012). Family care-givers act as protective agents, according to a working paper from CIRCLE (The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement), providing the support and resources for healthy development (Kelly, 2004; Zeldin, Larson, Camino, & O'Connor, 2005). Therefore, where it is possible to strengthen positive parental and familial relationships, an effort should be made to involve community members as well as families (Andersson & Ledogar, 2008).

Example: SOS Children's Villages International

The SOS Families program at SOS Children's Villages International is a great example of a program providing "stable and consistent care to children who cannot remain in their family of origin, and for whom family-based care is considered the best option" (SOS Children's Villages International, n.d.-b). With children's villages all over the world, these spaces allow for positive relationships and support networks to be developed, both between the young people as well as young people and adults who act as substitute care-givers and mentors in children's lives.

Example: Big Brothers Big Sisters

One of the most well-known organizations that promotes mentorship with youth—particularly with at-risk youth, is Big Brothers Big Sisters. In Canada, they have launched the group mentoring programs Game On! for boys and Go Girl! for girls, which are directly focused on developing positive relationships between mentors and young people. These group mentoring programs create space for the youth to learn about physical activity, healthy lifestyles, self-esteem, and communication skills ("Game On! Group Mentoring," n.d., "Go Girls! Group Mentoring," n.d.).

Example: Adult-Youth Partnerships

"A youth-adult partnership results when youth and adults work together as a team to make decisions that affect their lives" (Centre for Excellence in Youth Engagement, 2007). This differs from mentorship in that a partnership is not one helping another but a mutual exchange of support. As mentorship can go both ways in a partnership, a power sharing between the adult and the young person is better facilitated. The Centre for Excellence in Youth Engagement presents these principles for adult-to-youth partnerships in their report entitled "Adult Allies" (2007).

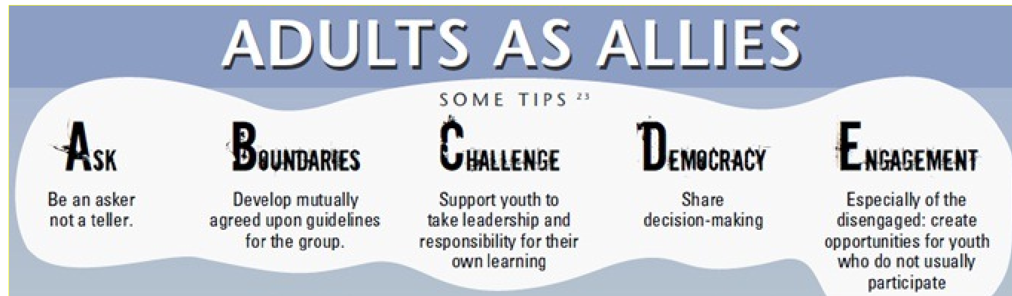


Figure 10: Adults as Allies: Some Tips (Source: Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, 2007).

The Centre for Excellence in Youth Engagement suggests that "adult supports and adult-youth relationships are crucial ingredients of youth engagement" (2007, p. 3). Some examples of this in practice could be when adults and youth are using technology as part of a project. In such a scenario, both sides have something to contribute to the collaboration, keeping the power dynamics more equalized. While mentorship has been shown to have many positive effects, it is important to note that adult-youth partnerships can be significant bridges across barriers, changing the power dynamics of these types of relationships. In mentorship, youth are often the recipients or beneficiary, and not equal participants.

b. Practice: Peer-to-Peer Mentoring

Another dimension of fostering positive relationships is promoting social development among peer relationships. According to Adamchak (2009) a *peer* is "a person who belongs to the same social group as another person or group (the social group may be based on age, sex, sexual orientation, occupation, socio-economic or health status, and other factors)" (p. 13). Peer mentoring is a way of empowering youth, as they become involved in activities that affect both themselves and their peers (Adamchak, 2009; UNODC, 2003). As Jimmy Ung, a youth representative from the Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Council, argues, fostering the development of positive relationships among vulnerable and at-risk youth is important for developing positive communities with a sense of camaraderie and mutual support (personal communication, August 21, 2012). Steve Gordon from HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development affirmed this idea that promoting youth not just as individuals but as a community can give strength to the culture of positive youth engagement (personal communication, August 1, 2012).

Example: Passport toward Success

Passport toward Success (PTS) is a program developed by the Military Family Research Institute in the United States, supports military families who have been separated due to deployment. With this program, children of military families get to travel to other military bases to meet other young people dealing with similar issues and learn together about positive coping skills and problem solving (Wilson et al., 2011). PTS uses community volunteers to support the program and the young people who participate, providing opportunity for positive relationships to be developed (MFRI, 2012).

Example: Canadian Roots Exchange Program

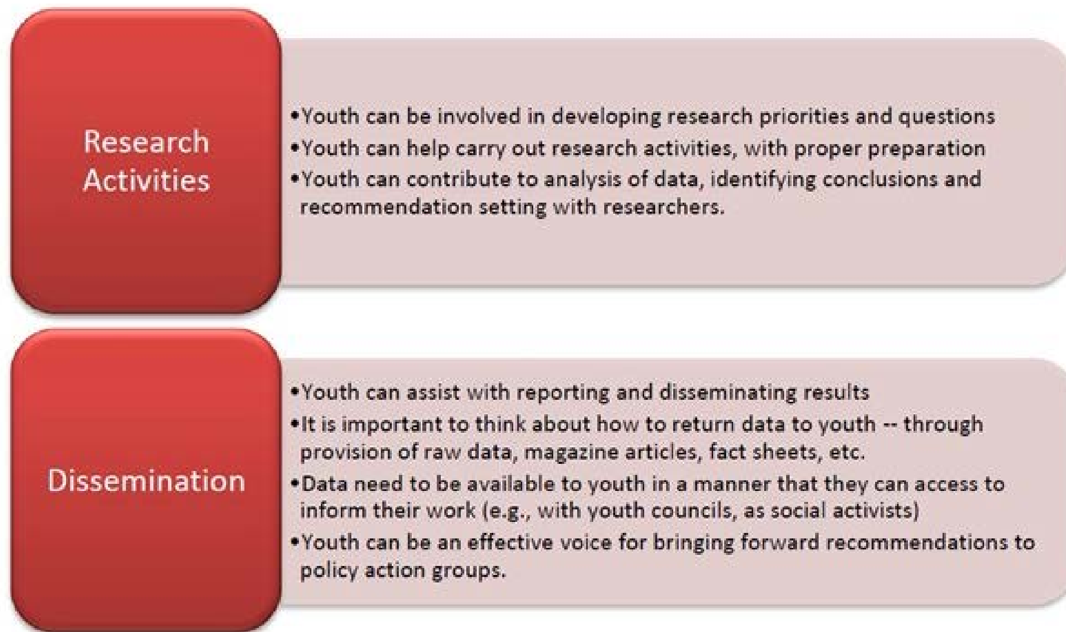
The Canadian Roots Exchange (CRE) Program is an educational non-profit organization that allows First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and non-Indigenous Canadians to experience and learn from Indigenous people and communities across Canada. Participants in the program engage in the teachings, triumphs, and daily realities of Aboriginal communities in an effort to break down stereotypes, open a dialogue, and build honest relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people living on this land. Over the past three years, the CRE program has led 15 diverse trips to communities across the country (from the CRE Information Pack, 2012). Every trip is led by two intercultural leaders and one or two Indigenous cultural guides.

Effective team building is a key element of the CRE program. By spending time with young people from Aboriginal communities across the country, participants are exposed to different perspectives and ideas that offer a unique viewpoint of this nation's history. Sharing circles help foster safe, respectful places where participants have a chance to speak from their heart about what they are learning and experiencing during the trip. The conversations among trip participants often expose stereotypes and misconceptions that many young people carry about Aboriginal people in Canada. Being open to different points of view was critical to the success of this shift in understanding.

V. Principle: Participatory Research

The final best practice to be identified is Participatory Research, often referred to as Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) or Participatory Action Research (PAR). Jacquez et al., conceptualize CBPR as an "orientation to research that values the role of community members and academics as equitable partners, each contributing unique strengths to the research process and its value for research with young people in challenging contexts" (Jacquez, Vaughn, & Wagner, 2012, p. 1). Instead of researchers coming into a setting with a pre-set hypothesis, the roles of researcher and researched become less polarized. In Nelems and Currie's (2012) work with refugee youth in Jordan, they argue that meaningful participatory research with children and youth who live in challenging contexts has to be guided by the issues as raised by the young people involved. Thus research participants play a central role in the development and design of the research, and sometimes also the data analysis and evaluation (Boyden et al., 2004; Jacquez et al., 2012; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2011; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008). This changing of roles has the ability of shifting power dynamics, narrowing the gap between the adults and young people involved (Stein & Verweijien-Slamnescu, 2012). While the specifics of participatory research vary, the general principles of community engagement and shared decision-making distinguishes this approach (Jacquez et al., 2012). Psychosocial structured activities or PAR activities have often proven to be enjoyable for the youth and in some cases have actually contributed themselves to improving well-being and healing (Ager et al., 2011).

Figure 11: Considerations for Involving Youth in Research



In 2011, a study done by Ager et al. at Columbia University employed psychosocial structured activities with children affected by war in Uganda as a way for the young people to express themselves and speak about their experiences. Using set measures, results showed that the research program itself served to increase scores on well-being.

It is in this space of participatory research that protections need to be in place to guard young people's safety. In 2012, SOS Children's Villages International released a report on the use of participatory research (referred to as peer research) and how it can benefit the project and its goals as well as the young people involved (Stein and Verweijien-Slamnescu). A key recommendation from this report is the importance of having an ethical framework protecting the young person from further vulnerability and risk.

a. *Practice: Participatory Action Research*

Community-based Participatory Action Research (PAR) is defined as:

> …the bringing together of cultural insiders with expert outsiders to develop all phases of the research. Common elements include jointly identifying research priorities within the community; promoting social change; guiding partnerships across sites; generating instrumental and practical knowledge; increasing focus on process rather than tangible outputs; and power sharing between researchers and communities (McKay & Banya, 2010, p. v).

The main premise of PAR is its collaborative nature (Wimpenny, 2010), where a group of individuals can bring their experiences and ideas together for the purpose of identifying a problem and finding a solution. PAR designs can be particularly useful in prioritizing the partnership between the researcher and the researched, thereby ensuring that local needs and assets are being matched within program delivery. As Wimpenny (2010) writes, PAR is both

research and an action plan; this plan being developed in this collaborative space. Langout and Thomas' (2010) research with children talks about the different stages in which participants are engaged in PAR which are "helping to formulate the problem definition, assessing the problem, determining an intervention, implementing the intervention, and assessing the intervention." (Langhout & Thomas, p. 61)

This qualitative methodology is particularly applicable to young people as PAR legitimizes their voices in this process. Incorporating the perspectives of children and youth, therefore, helps to inform interventions which are responsive to their concerns and problems, while providing this population with the resources and support needed to negotiate their own positive adaptation (Luthar et al., 2000; McKay & Banya, 2010). This approach facilitates better understanding of children's experiences, and creates opportunities for them to contribute to discussions and interventions that affect their lives. While PAR has proven to be of value in working with young people, there is still misunderstanding of its value in research and to policy and practice (Langhout & Thomas, 2010).

Example: HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development

An example of participatory research is Community Asset Mapping (Kretzmann, McKnight, & Network, 1993). HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development, located in Halifax, NS, works with youth to help develop their skills and confidence as community leaders. As presented by the Heartwood Centre for Community Youth Development here in Halifax (Heartwood, n.d.), Community Asset Mapping is a "process of identifying existing assets (people and material resources, networks of relationships) in the community" for the purpose of bringing resources together, creating connections, and discovering what is needed. This project was done with young people in an effort to improve the support available to them for increasing their involvement in the community.

Example: Unity Circle

The Unity Circle is a specific example of how PAR can be used with vulnerable and at-risk youth. The Unity Circle (a collaboration between the International Institute for Child Rights and Development and Jordan Save the Children) was a PAR evaluation done with Iraqi boys and girls living as refugees in Amman, Jordan, looking at the challenges faced and the coping strategies employed by these young people (Nelems & Currie, 2012). This project allowed the young people to express their ideas and thoughts in their own words and images (Nelems & Currie, 2012). An important part of the PAR process is the prioritization of the concerns and issues identified by the children themselves (Nelems & Currie, 2012). The struggle, however, is to transfer those concerns from theory to practice, particularly when dealing with donors and policy makers where young people's voices are not always given value.

Section 5: Discussion and Conclusion

This report places participation and engagement on a continuum of involvement where participation is typically more passive and engagement more active. Meaningful participation is critical to the success of any program or intervention with young people (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2003; Gurstein et al., 2003; Hart, 1992). Initiating youth participation is a step towards engaging young people in program design, implementation, and evaluation. Valuing youth engagement puts the focus on the positive contribution that youth make to programs and their effectiveness. As was mentioned in previous sections, youth engagement is not a practice but a process which is descriptive of the approach for involving young people.

A common theme across all the practices outlined in this report is the importance of youth voice in all stages of programing. Conceptualizing youth engagement in terms of youth voice creates space for young people to be heard and listened to. As Krueger (2005) argues, it is when a program promotes this authentic involvement that, “youth have opportunities for connection with others, for self-discovery, and for empowerment” (p. 26), which then leads to more positive youth outcomes (Serido et al., 2011).

For organizations and researchers looking to promote youth engagement in the development, design, and implementation of their programs, it is important to consider:

- What evidence exists regarding youth engagement strategies with my target population?
- Who are the young people that are impacted by my program or intervention?
- What place would young people take in my program or intervention?
- If I have already initiated youth engagement, how do young people see their involvement in the program so far?
- Why is youth engagement important to me?
- What resources am I able to mobilize in order to promote youth engagement?
- What training would I need to provide to those overseeing/facilitating the involvement of young people?
- How can I facilitate meaningful youth engagement in my program or intervention?
- What else could we be doing to promote youth engagement in the program and the wider community?

Answering these preliminary questions will help program developers begin to consider how to best approach engaging at-risk youth as program designers, researchers, and participants.

Understanding civic engagement in a broad, holistic way can help to conceptualize and plan interventions that link the young person with other positive aspects of their personal and community life (Dallago et al., 2009). As discussed in this report, civic engagement not only consists of political participation but also social engagement in community life. The principles of civic engagement are valuable for developing characteristics for “active and engaged citizens”

(Checkoway, Allison, & Montoya, 2005, p. 1160). As Checkoway et al., argue that promoting civic engagement helps young people develop well-being

> By strengthening their knowledge, practical skills, social values, civic competencies. They can prepare youth for their roles as citizens and engage them in the renewal of civil society, which is especially important at a time when some measures of civic participation are decreasing (2005, p. 1150).

The Centre for Excellence in Youth Engagement has developed a framework for measuring meaningful engagement of young people (CEYE, 2009). Having a means of evaluating not only the success of intervention, but also the benefits of the process in the eyes of the young people involved, can help inform future work and strategies for engaging them more. One way that the CEYE presents the criteria for engagement is evident in the following figure:

Figure 12: Youth are engaged if… (Source: Centre for Excellence in Youth Engagement)

Improving communication between different organizations and researchers working with children and youth in challenging contexts can also help to improve how youth engagement is done. The problem is not a lack of exemplary initiatives nationally and internationally, but rather the disciplinary divides that have prevailed both within and across research and practice (Afifi, Makhoul, Hajj, & Nakkash, 2011; Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). In Graca Machel's report for UNICEF, she argued for the value of partnerships in strengthening the implementation of a program, as well as its outcomes. Partnerships between organizations and academics are beneficial for running effective evaluations and informing research, thus helping to bridge the policy/practice divide (2009). These proposed partnerships would not only be with other organizations and researchers, but also with community members, local businesses, schools, parents, and young people.

Conclusion

By synthesizing and presenting evidence from researchers, practitioners, and communities, these reports have endeavoured to break down the barriers dividing these approaches. In doing

so, we hope to create an integrated and sustainable community of practice that reflects the importance of youth engagement and how it can be promoted with children and youth who live in challenging contexts.

This report has taken an important first step in synthesizing the knowledge available from the literature and CYCC Network partners regarding effective strategies for promoting youth engagement among young people in challenging contexts for the purpose of improving their well-being and safety. The next step is to mobilize this knowledge in both formal health and social service settings as well as in community non-governmental organizations, locally and internationally.

Section 6: Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Promote Youth Engagement to Make Services More Effective

Initiating youth participation is a step towards engaging young people in program design and implementation.

Include youth in developing care plans

- Youth, especially children and youth in challenging contexts, are better served when they are given opportunities to influence their care plans.

Make youth co-researchers

- Research results are more relevant to children and youth in challenging contexts when youth are included as co-researchers in the design of studies and analysis of findings,

Access level of youth participation

- Organizations should self-evaluate the level of youth participation in decision making. Organizations that involve young people in decision making in meaningful ways are likely to provide better services for youth as well as increase the effectiveness of those services.

Recommendation 2: Include Youth in Decision Making Processes

Include youth at every level of program development, planning, implementation and evaluation (see Sect. 4, Part I).

Include youth in governance structure

- Make structural and policy provisions for the inclusion of young people (i.e. create opportunities for youth to speak during planning meetings).

Prepare youth to participation in organizational governance

- Provide youth with sufficient time and mentorship to prepare themselves to participate in these meetings
- Establish a youth advisory council.

Learn with young people about how they can be involved

- Show young people practical examples of how they can be involved in decision making processes by sharing stories of other youth who have successfully participated.

Put in place safety policies

- Organizations that engage children and youth in challenging contexts must put in place safety policies to ensure vulnerable young people are not re-traumatized through their participation in co-planning, research or program design, and are kept physically and emotionally safe from harm.

Recommendation 3: Make Civic Engagement Holistic

Provide youth with opportunities to make a real contribution to their community through volunteer activities, promoting social altruism and fostering political participation in a socially acceptable way (see Sect. 4, Part II).

Recommendation 4: Pay Attention to Culture and Context

Make sure a youth engagement strategy is relevant to children and youth in challenging contexts cultures and contexts. Age and gender must also be taken into account. Not all methods will be appropriate for all youth. It is important that programs and services be adapted to suite the specific context and culture.

Provide translators

- Ensure youth from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds can understand resources (spoken or written) by providing translators, who are also trusted by the young people.

Engage families

- When culturally appropriate, engage young people's families rather than young people individually.

Recommendation 5: Create Mentorship and Partnership Opportunities

Whether within an organization or in the wider community, it is important to develop an environment of partnership and equality between youth and adults in working towards a common goal.

Create opportunities for mentorship

- Effective youth engagement strategies facilitate the development of positive mentoring relationships. Effective strategies can include peer-to-peer mentoring and adult-to-youth mentoring (see Sect. 4, Part IV).

Recommendation 6: Participatory Research is Needed to Document the Benefits of Youth Engagement

More participatory research is needed to examine the relationship between youth engagement and the well-being of children and youth in challenging contexts. The more that young people are included in research the more valid and contextually relevant the results will be (see Sect. 4, Part V).

Ensure research is ethically sound

- Standardized guidelines are needed for ethically sound research that engages children and youth who live in challenging contexts as co-researchers.

Recommendation 7: Better Methods Need to be Developed to Evaluate Youth Engagement Strategies

Researchers and practitioners need to develop easy to use methods that can evaluate the effectiveness of youth engagement. Attention is needed with regard to what is assessed (are these the factors most important to children and youth in challenging contexts?) and how best to engage children and youth in evaluations.

Recommendation 8: Develop a Community of Practice to Share Effective Youth Engagement Strategies

Create sustainable structures to document, format, share, and access best practices related to youth engagement.

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Appendix A: Glossary

Aboriginal	The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. The Canadian Constitution of 1982 recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people: Indians, Métis, and Inuit. These are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs. However, all share the common history of colonialism and attempted assimilation.
Adolescence	Adolescence begins with the onset of physiologically normal puberty, and ends when an adult identity and behaviour are accepted. This period of development corresponds roughly to the period between the ages of 10 and 19 years (World Health Organization, n.d).
Alternative Care	Alternative care is defined as care for orphans and other vulnerable children who are not under the custody of their biological parents. It includes adoption, foster families, guardianship, kinship care, residential care and other community-based arrangements to care for children in need of special protection, particularly children without primary caregivers (UNICEF, 2006, p. 15).
Best Practice	Interventions that incorporate evidence-informed practice, identify and employ the right combination of program elements to ensure targeted outcomes, and match these interventions to the local needs and assets of communities. They incorporate evidence-informed practice, identify and employ the right combination of program elements to ensure targeted outcomes, and match these interventions to the local needs and assets of communities.
Bullying	A form of aggression (physical, verbal, or psychological attack or intimidation) by one or more children that is intended to cause fear, distress, or harm to another child who is perceived as being unable to defend himself or herself. A power imbalance typically exists between the bully and the victim, with the bully being either physically or psychologically more powerful, resulting in repeated incidents between the same children over a prolonged period (Farrington et al., 2010, p. 9; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005b, p. 101).
Child/Children	Every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier (United Nations General Assembly, 1989, art. 1).
Child Maltreatment	There are five classifications of maltreatment: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional maltreatment, and exposure to intimate partner violence (PHAC-CIS 2008).

Children and Youth in Organized Armed Violence	Children and youth employed or otherwise participating in Organised Armed Violence where there are elements of a command structure and power over territory, local population or resources (Dowdney, 2006, p. 13).
Child Soldier	A child soldier is any person under age 18 who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or group in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and those accompanying such groups, other than purely as family members. This definition includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and for forced marriage. It does not, therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms (UNICEF, 1997).
Child Trafficking	The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in [the definition of Trafficking in persons: 'the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs'] (United Nations, 2004).
Community of Practice	The translation of best practices and the mastery of knowledge and skill through participation in the sociocultural practices and relations of a community (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29). A community of practice defines itself along three dimensions: • What it is about: its *joint enterprise* as understood and continually renegotiated by its members, • how it functions with respect to mutual engagement that bind members together into a social entity, and • what capability it has produced, that is, the *shared repertoire* of communal resources (routines, sensibilities, artifacts, vocabulary, styles, etc.) that members have developed over time (Wenger, 1998).
Chronic Illness/ Disease	The word '*chronic'* is typically used for conditions, illnesses, and diseases lasting three months or more. Often, chronic conditions are characterized by lasting symptoms and/or pain that persists, sometimes even despite treatment (What Is Chronic Illness?, n.d.).
Civic Engagement	Individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. Civic engagement can take many forms, from individual

	voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation. It can include efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem or interact with the institutions of representative democracy (American Psychological Association, 2012).
Community Youth Development	Community Youth Development is an approach that espouses the principle that when youth are enlisted as active agents of community building, it contributes positively to both youth development and community development. Community Youth Development assumes the involvement of young people in their own development and that of the community in partnership with adults to make use of their talents and increase their investment in the community (Heartwood Centre for Community Youth Development, n.d.).
Engagement	The meaningful and sustained involvement of a young person in an activity focusing outside the self. Full engagement consists of a cognitive component, an affective component, and a behavioural component- Head, Heart, Feet (Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, 2009).
Evidence-based Practice (EBP)	Interventions based on empirical, research-based support which are used to inform the judgements of practitioners in accordance with the particular priorities, needs, contexts and other factors of both service users and service providers (i.e., what research shows is effective).
Evidence-informed Practice (EIP)	The integration of experience, judgement, and expertise with the best available external evidence from systematic research (Chalmers, 2005, p. 229; Sackett et al., 1996, p. 71).
External Validity/ Generalizability	The extent to which the claims/arguments are generalizable to, or applicable in, contexts different from the specific context in which they were generated (i.e., transferability).
Family	The fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community (United Nations General Assembly, 1989).
Grey Literature	Information produced on all levels of government, academia, business and industry in electronic and print formats not controlled by commercial publishing. In other words, where publishing is not the primary activity of the producing body (What is Grey Literature? 2011).
High Quality Information	Authoritative, high quality information is any peer-reviewed source that is reliable, objective, and internally and externally valid.
Homeless Youth	Definitions of the term [‘homeless’ or] ‘street youth’ are numerous and varied, as are the social realities of different countries. However, one constant found among all street youth is their precarious living conditions,

	which include poverty, residential instability and emotional and psychological vulnerability. These conditions may lead to behaviour that" exposes street youth to physical, mental, emotional and psychological risks (Street Youth in Canada, 2006).
Internal Validity	The extent to which the evidence put forward actually relates to the claims/arguments being put forward.
Intervention	In this report, an intervention refers to the program, project, strategy, etc., employed by a government agency or organization that aims to introduce new ideas, activities and information intended to improve their target audience's quality of life.
Knowledge Mobilization	In our context- it is mobilizing knowledge about best practices for non-governmental organizations.
Local Knowledge	Local knowledge is used in everyday situations. Its main value lies in helping local people cope with day-to day-challenges, detecting early warning signals of change, and knowing how to respond to challenges. Local knowledge is seldom documented and is mostly tacit (Fabricius et al., 2006, p. 168). *See page 6 for the core concept.*
Maltreatment	Physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional maltreatment, neglect, and exposure to intimate partner violence, all of which pose significant *risk of harm* to a child's physical or emotional development. Accordingly, situations classified as maltreatment may range from those in which a caregiver intentionally inflicts severe physical or emotional harm on a child, to situations in which a child is placed at risk of harm as a result of a caregiver's clear failure to supervise or care for a child, to situations in which living conditions would make it extremely difficult for any caregiver to ensure a child's safety (Trocme et al., 2008, p. ix).
Neglect	The failure of parents or carers to meet a child's physical and emotional needs when they have the means, knowledge and access to services to do so; or failure to protect her or him from exposure to danger. In many settings the line between what is caused deliberately and what is caused by ignorance or lack of care possibilities may be difficult to draw (Pinheiro, 2006, p. 54).
Objectivity	Neutrality or the extent to which evidence is unbiased.
Peer-reviewed Information	Books, journals, and conference proceedings published by scholarly publishers or professional organizations, and thus subject to independent review by experts. The credibility and authority of the information is determined by *extrinsic* criteria (i.e., based on the reputation of the author, publisher, etc.).
Physical Violence	The intentional use of physical force against a child that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in harm to the child's health, survival,

	development or dignity. In extreme cases, this violence can result in a child's death, in disability, or in severe physical injury. In all instances, however, physical violence has a negative impact on a child's psychological health and development. Includes homicide, sexual violence, corporal punishment beating, kicking, biting, choking, burning, scalding, or forced ingestion (Pinheiro, 2006, pp. 51–52).
Positive Youth Development	Youth development views youth both as partners and central figures in interventions. These interventions systematically seek to identify and utilize youth capacities and meet youth's needs. They actively seek to involve youth as decision makers and tap their creativity, energy, and drive; and they also acknowledge that youth are not superhuman—that they therefore have needs that require a marshalling of resources targeted at youth and at changing environmental circumstances (family and community)" (Mafile'o & Api, 2009).
Practice-based Evidence (PBE)	The practice employed by practitioners that has proven to be effective, arising from the contingent conditions and characteristics that facilitate program success (Barkham & Mellor-Clark, 2003; Fox, 2003).
Refugee	Any person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his[/her] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself[/herself] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his[/her] former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (United Nations, 1951).
Reliability	The extent to which the evidence is stable—i.e., would be the same if measured at different times and/or by different observers. The consistency of analysis.
Resilience	In the context of exposure to significant adversity, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being, and their capacity individually and collectively to negotiate for these resources to be provided and experienced in culturally meaningful ways (Ungar, 2008, p. 225).
Service User	For the purpose of this report, we will use the term service user to refer to any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives (Freeman 1984; 46). Synonyms include stakeholder, beneficiary, consumer, and participant.
Sexual Violence	Includes sexual touching, abuse or rape, forced sex within forced and early marriage, spousal abuse (physical and psychological), honour killings and intimidation within the family, or harmful traditional practices (e.g., female

	genital mutilation/cutting, uvulectomy). The shame, secrecy and denial associated with sexual violence against children foster a pervasive culture of silence, where children cannot speak about sexual abuse they have suffered, adults do not speak about the risk of sexual violence or do not know what to do or say if they suspect someone they know is sexually abusing a child (Pinheiro, 2006, pp. 54–55).
Technology	Innovations in technology that have been used with children and youth in challenging contexts to help prevent violence and promote well-being.
Traditional Knowledge	Traditional knowledge builds upon the historic experiences of a people and adapts to social, economic, environmental, spiritual and political change (Government of Canada, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, 2004). Traditional knowledge is a unique form of local knowledge which is needed to inform effective programs and interventions.
Unaccompanied Refugee Children	Unaccompanied children are those who are separated from both parents and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible to do so (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1994, p. 121).
Violence	The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, and deprivation (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002, p. 5).
Young People	This is a broad term used to refer to children, adolescents, and youth as one, general group.
Youth	Youth are defined as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years (UNESCO, 2012).
Youth Community	A youth community can be defined as a population of youth who share backgrounds, situations, or lifestyles with common concerns, i.e. ethnic background, socioeconomic background, geographical area (rural, for example), lesbian or gay youth, etc. (Halifax Regional Municipality, n.d.).

Appendix B: Search Terms

Engag*, Participat*, Involve*
Review or synthes* or meta-analy* or "cross-cultural"
Youth or "young adult" or teen* or adolescen* or child*
Aboriginal
Alternative care, orphan
At-risk, vulnerable, marginaliz*, poverty
Gang, homeless, street-involved
Intervention, program, project
Maltreat*, abuse, neglect, child welfare, domestic violence
Mental illness, Chronic illness, Health promotion
Military families
Refugee, immigrant, displace*
Resilience
Trafficked, Labour, exploit*, workplace
Urban/ Rural, slum
War, war affected, child soldiers, conflict, trauma, unrest
Art, music, dance, sport
Civic, politic*, social engagement, activism, citizenship
Community participation, engagement
Educat*
Empower*, agency, youth led/ ownership
Health, health promotion