

# Aboriginal Youth Vision Committee

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Sponsored by: Native Child and Family Centre  
Sudbury Metis Youth Centre  
Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre  
Wahnapiatae First Nation  
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The Aboriginal Youth Vision Committee began in August 2000. Three agencies and one First Nation came together to plan a traditional camping experience for the youth of these agencies/organizations. The three agencies were Sudbury Metis Youth Centre, Native Child and Family Centre, Shkagamik-Kwe Health Centre and the First Nation was Wahnapiatae First Nations.

Through the partnership and networking of the four organizations and the great success of the camping trip it was apparent that there was a need for a youth group – a youth group within The Greater City of Sudbury that flowed from the Anishnaabe way of moving in the world. In the beginning there were seven organizations involved. The Sudbury Access Aids Committee withdrew as a partner; they preferred to only participate in the activities with their youth. N'Swakamok Friendship Centre's youth were busy with their own youth group and would have found it difficult to commit to both groups. Whitefish Lake first Nations were not always able to make meetings and activities due to transportation. However, we continue to support each other's program and activities.

Each of the four remaining organizations chose two interested youth, one male and one female to promote balance, and brought them together to form a committee of eight representatives. A committee dedicated to organizing activities for the Aboriginal youth of this community. The committee invited a speaker from Laurentian University to assist them with guiding principles and terms of reference. Eight positions were chosen and filled by each of the members a Chair, Co-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Traditional Resource, Health Coordinator, Social Co-ordinator and a Contact person. Each member holds their position for three months and than rotates to promote balance and give each youth a chance to become familiar with the responsibilities of their position.

The Aboriginal Youth Vision Committee worked on a vision statement that would reflect what the objective of the group would be:

"Different groups coming together within the strength of the circle, embracing strength in numbers. Stemming from co-operation, unity, harmony, trust, and friendship - to realize accomplishments as a family unit that utilizes friendship."

They came up with this vision statement by everyone to pick a word or phrase that they felt best described the group's dynamics. They also outlined the guidelines for each of the positions:

Chair - chairs the meetings, keep order in the meetings, follows the agenda, shows respect and takes the role of spokesperson when representing the group in the community.

Co-Chair - in the absence of the Chair, takes on his/her responsibilities, middle person of the group, the voice to other organizations.

Secretary - takes minutes, type and forward to the host agencies, keeps track of the minutes and files a copy in the book, bring letters to the committee.

Treasurer - handles money matters, keeps track of the accounts, keeps everyone up-to-date on the budget and fundraisers, keeps a journal.

Health Coordinator- keeps track of what is going on in the community in the health, brings those items to the committee to decide if participation is warranted.

Traditional Resource Person – identifies the traditional workshops, ceremonies, classes etc. that this committee should be informed about.

Social Coordinator - keeps track of the social activities happening in this community and let the committee know.

Contact Person - keeps an updated list of members and does the call around for meetings, workshops etc.

It was decided that the activities would stem from the four directions the physical, the mental, the spiritual, and the emotional. The physical activities include basketball, volleyball, dances, hiking, sleigh rides etc. The mental and emotional direction included activities such as HIV and Aids awareness workshops, teen pregnancy issues and Tobacco Coalition, Career Wellness Conference, resume and cover letter workshops, babysitting courses, and boat safety courses. The spiritual direction included hand drum socials, traditional teachings, Elder teachings, hand drum bag

making, beaded dreamcatcher workshop, medicine picking, traditional cooking, and ceremonies.

The youth committee planned out the activities at their monthly meetings. The agency co-ordinators would assist with the organization of the activities by making phone calls, transporting youth, renting equipment and halls etc. The activities were advertised through monthly calendars that were mailed by the Sudbury Metis Youth Centre to one hundred and fifty youth. This made it easy for signing up or registering for activities.

The Aboriginal Youth Vision Committee also did activities that gave back to their community. They organized activities for younger youth, role modeling, spoke to surrounding communities about tobacco cessation and cleaning up Mother Earth days. They participated in National Aboriginal Day and promoted their group so that other youth could ask questions and become involved.

The Aboriginal Youth Vision Committee received funding from Focus Sudbury to perform a theatre production regarding alcohol, drugs, and related injuries, targeting the youth of this community. The committee wrote, directed, acted, and presented a play entitled "*Thoughts on Getting Hammered*". The play was a monologue that gave a powerful message about alcohol and drug abstinence. The youth actors and directors had been working on the play every Wednesday night for the past five months.

A Gala night was organized as a fundraiser to launch the play and to assist with the cost of going to Toronto to perform the play at the Transformative Learning Conference. For the cost of six dollars for adults and four dollars for children and students (Elders were free), the community was able to have a spaghetti dinner, Caesar salad, bannock, dessert and beverages with the theatre performance. Through the tickets sales it was estimated that they would perform the play for approximately one hundred and twenty people. The play was performed for one hundred and seventy people and it was a great success and had a huge impact on the whole community.

Following the Gala night the youth were invited to perform the play at the Metis Annual General Assembly in Sault Ste. Marie this was good experience, and the exposure was excellent for the group. The performance was very successful. Laurentian University's Native Awareness Week co-ordinators have also invited the youth to perform at the University in November. The committee has also been approached to perform the play again in Sudbury for the Public Health Unit's Drug and Alcohol Awareness Week.

The Aboriginal Youth Vision Committee attended an information night in Nipissing First Nation to "meet Ryan Black", a Native actor who has appeared in "Dance Me Outside", and played a part on "The Rez", a series that ran on television. The following night, Ryan Black traveled to

Sudbury and helped the youth prepare for their play. He also helped to raise funds for the committee at National Aboriginal Day. This kind of exposure has been much appreciated. Currently, we are in the process of securing a date for our performance for The Aboriginal People's Television Network, who would like to know more about The Aboriginal Youth Vision Committee and about the play.

The Aboriginal Youth Vision Committee's accomplishments and the success of the partnership and networking with the host agencies has created an awareness within The Greater City of Sudbury. Other youth groups from various agencies have expressed an interest in sharing the concept of agencies working together for a common vision by partnering and networking. We believe that we must share our knowledge for the youth. They are the pathways to the future. The youth of this committee have come a long way.

In keeping with the amount of activities that are regularly planned we have always been respectful, so as not to overburden the youth in order that they remain balanced within their personal life, school, and other community activities. We ask all the youth to respect the group and if they cannot participate for whatever reason, that they let the youth leaders know. This does not mean that they cannot come back for other activities, it only means that they have the wisdom to know when too much is too much.

The only drawback that the committee has encountered, is having to limit the number of participants for activities, not being able to participate in excursions themselves, or being limited in the kinds of activities that they can organize due to budget constraints. Although the host agencies are able to assist from time to time, it is not feasible to continuously rely on the host agencies and fund raising in order to organize activities that can be all inclusive.

Currently, we are in the process of bringing youth together, to organize a Native model search. The concept is to bring youth together to create designs in various categories, such as jewelry design, clothing design, and hair. Designs will be original and will have a Native flair. The model search will look at promoting a positive self-image through youth guided design and imagery. At the same time we will be looking to gather youth who would like to share their gifts in categories such as music, drama, poetry, arts, crafts, photography, and personal achievements. The youth will co-operate to bring all the pieces together to share with their community. They will showcase their accomplishments during a two-day conference/workshop.

Another area that the youth would like to dedicate their time to is a "buddy program". The concept behind this is for youth to reconnect with the Elders of their community. The envision the vitality of the youth reconnecting with the wisdom of our Elders, interchanging energy and

rekindling the link of past, present, and future. This may be achieved by the Elder and youth playing cards, sending letters, drumming, story-telling and sending a card for a special occasion.

At this time, the Aboriginal Youth Vision Committee is applying for funding, in order that this very important initiative continues. There are many youth within The Greater City of Sudbury and surrounding First Nation communities who have benefited from the activities of this committee. It is our hope that we will be able to continue to reach out and present a positive perspective for the sake of our youth who are often left with few opportunities and activities that help to shape their way to a successful future.

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