



# BUILDING THE FIELD OF TEEN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

2015-2018  
REPORT TO FIELD  
JANUARY 2019



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# TEEN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS PROGRAMMING AT THE CANADIAN WOMEN'S FOUNDATION

At the Canadian Women's Foundation, we want every teen to know how to recognize and prevent relationship violence. Since 1999, we have been funding and working with numerous violence prevention organizations towards that goal. Our research shows that the teen years are a critical time to teach healthy relationship skills to prevent relationships violence long-term. Moreover, a recent evaluation<sup>1</sup> of our programs revealed that sixty percent of students in a high school with a violence prevention program noticed a decrease in violence and bullying in their school and in the broader community. As such, teen healthy relationship programming is a proven means to reduce and prevent gender-based violence amongst youth.

We also know, from our work funding these programs across the country, that despite the promise and successes of these initiatives, there is a need for a more coordinated effort to bring about systemic, sustainable change. Ending gender-based violence requires a critical mass of organizations and individuals aligned in purpose and working effectively. In October 2015, with funding from the Department of Women and Gender Equality, the Canadian Women's Foundation launched a three-year project, *Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships*, to strengthen the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada. The project brings together stakeholders from across the field in order to address some of the challenges and barriers in this area of work, and to collaboratively build a shared set of priority action areas to enhance the excellent work already being done in the field. This report provides an overview of the work undertaken in collaboration with stakeholders in the field throughout the country.

1. The evaluation report can be found here:

<https://www.canadianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/THR-evaluation-report-full-report-2018-FINAL.pdf>

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the funding and support of the Department of Women and Gender Equality. We would like to thank the members of the Leadership Roundtable,<sup>2</sup> our partners throughout this project, for their guidance, knowledge, and commitment to the project. We would like to express our gratitude to all the members of the four working groups that formed the second half of the project and acknowledge the hard work and passion with which they approached the work. We would also like to thank all the individuals and organizations that dedicated their time and energy to completing the national survey, attended the two national forums, helped identify the key focus areas for the project as a whole, provided valuable feedback, and shaped the project for the past three years by prioritizing this work. A special thanks to Jarita Greyeyes from the Wii Chiwaakanak Learning Centre and Jennifer Rankin from the National Association of Friendship Centres for their generosity in hosting and organizing key aspects of the Second National Forum. We would like to thank the InsideOut evaluation team for helping to ensure the success of the project at numerous levels. Finally, we must thank our own team at the Canadian Women's Foundation for all their contributions towards the success of this project. We look forward to continuing to work with you towards strengthening and enhancing the field and ending gender-based violence in Canada.

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2 A complete list of the members of the Leadership Roundtable can be found on page 12 of this report.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## OVERVIEW

*Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships*, a project led by the Department of Women and Gender Equality, took place between October 2015 and September 2018. The project aimed to strengthen and enhance the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada. The overarching goal of the project was to collaboratively determine the strengths and challenges of the field, identify the most meaningful opportunities to support the field as a whole, and contribute to ending gender-based violence. While this report provides an overview of this three-year project, it is important to acknowledge the ongoing nature of this work. Indeed, this report ends with many recommendations and strategic next steps to help inform future work in the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada.

Over the course of the project, the Canadian Women's Foundation worked along with several partner organizations, including Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, the British Columbia Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, the National Association of Friendship Centres, Partners for Youth, PrevNet, and Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre. Representatives from each of these partner organizations, along with other key collaborators, co-created the many activities that made up the project. These included mapping the field's stakeholders, a national survey, two national forums, and four working groups that developed strategic efforts to strengthen the field.

## VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE FIELD

Over the course of the project, stakeholders from the field consolidated the key values and principles that guide the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada:

- **Centering youth voice**, which involves having youth representation at all the steps of the project. This could involve more focus groups with youth or consultations, hiring youth representatives to work in key roles in the national network, involving youth in program development, and engaging with youth in advisory committees or youth councils.
- **Intersectionality and inclusion**, which includes centering marginalized voices and perspectives within the field, as well as ensuring that programs are tailored to specific communities, such as 2SLGBTQI+ and First Nations, Métis and Inuit identified youth and those identified as Hard to Reach.
- **Developing a shared framework** that is anti-colonial, intersectional, feminist, and committed to amplifying the leadership of youth alongside adult stakeholders. This is also related to the need for developing a **shared vocabulary** across the field, with agreement on basic principles for the work of Teen Healthy Relationships programs.
- **Taking a wide and holistic lens towards healthy relationships**, which means maintaining a wide focus of programs to include personal/mental health, romantic and dating relationships, but also relationships with family, friends, community, and the environment.
- **Focusing both on prevention and intervention**, which means developing programs both to prevent unhealthy relationships, as well as programs that respond to violence within relationships by providing support and care.

## KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE STRENGTHENING THE FIELD

Stakeholders collaboratively identified the following eight areas as the most important priorities for strengthening the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships:

1. **Supporting the work of Teen Healthy Relationships Program Providers**, by identifying core skills, basic training and evaluations programs.
2. **Involving Parents, Caregivers & Other Support Systems** within Teen Healthy Relationships programming for a more holistic approach involving families and communities beyond school.
3. **Building a National Leadership and Network**, for engaging and advocating with government, building relationships with funding agencies, and sharing knowledge throughout the field.
4. **First Nations, Métis and Inuit Programming** from a strengths-based perspective to better address the needs, histories, and perspectives of First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth.
5. **Community Program Settings**, that reach youth populations in such as rural communities, especially through programs that are offered in out of school settings.
6. **Access & Engagement for Youth Not in School**, including youth who may be in treatment, in care, in custody, or being home-schooled.
7. **Online & Digital Programming**, which highlights the possibilities of using digital media and new media technologies to reach youth online.
8. **Youth Voice & Gender Diverse Youth** provide the overarching core principles for all action areas. Centering these voices will become a guiding principle of all the work in Teen Healthy Relationships programming.

## FOUR WORKING GROUPS

Representatives from the field formed four working groups, based on the eight priorities mentioned above. The aim of these working groups was to consolidate resources, conduct research, and develop actionable projects to strengthen their specific priority area:

1. **First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Programming:** This group focused on improving programming to take a strengths-based approach and better include the perspectives and needs of Indigenous communities in Canada
2. **Equipping and Engaging Adults:** This group aimed to both empower and strengthen program providers, as well as better engage parents and caregivers in order to improve the efficacy of healthy relationships programs.
3. **Community Program Settings and Hard to Reach Youth:** This group focused on programming in community settings, particularly programs that serve youth who are not in school, such as youth in custody, in care, homeless youth and youth who are homeschooled.
4. **National Leadership:** The primary goal of this working group was to create a national strategy, national network, and knowledge sharing hub for Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada.



## OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

The key recommendations that were collaboratively developed over the course of the project include:

- Break down silos within the field by developing a shared set of values and guiding principles for the field, as well as a shared vocabulary for the field
- Build a National Strategy, National Network and Knowledge Sharing Hub to act as a central resource and guide for the field as a whole
- Meaningfully engage youth stakeholders at every step of building the National Network and Knowledge Hub
- The National Network should enable regional, sectoral and issue-specific coordination and collaboration
- Design creative and respectful means of engaging with youth in program development, and take their input seriously

## NEXT STEPS

Stakeholders identified the following actions as the most crucial next steps for further strengthening the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada:

- Secure the requisite funding, partners, and other resources for the following two steps
- Develop the National Strategy for the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships
- Build the National Network and Knowledge Sharing Hub using an accessible digital platform

# INTRODUCTION

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

- Conducting research and mapping the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada, including the stakeholders who make up the field, and the strengths and challenges they face
- Convening two National Forums to bring together diverse stakeholders from across the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in order to enable network building
- Collectively identifying the most important priorities for strengthening the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada
- Collaboratively creating projects based on these priority areas, and testing these projects through a year-long process of working together on a national level
- Identifying the most important recommendations, strategies and next steps for strengthening the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships nationally



# BUILDING THE FIELD OF TEEN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

## Context

Teen Healthy Relationships (THR) programs are a key means of preventing gender-based violence. These programs engage young people on issues of healthy relationships and what they entail. This includes, for instance, recognizing warning signs of abuse, learning how to show mutual respect, healthy conflict resolution, learning how to set boundaries, consent, and deconstructing gender stereotypes. These skills are typically taught through a combination of discussions, role-play, and other activities. Trained facilitators – peers and adults – lead these programs in order to ensure that they are relevant and accessible to teens.

The Canadian Women's Foundation has been funding and supporting Teen Healthy Relationships programs in Canada for over 15 years, aiding grassroots organizations with capacity building and knowledge sharing. In 2012, we developed a National Learning Strategy<sup>3</sup> around Teen Healthy Relationship programming, funded by The Department of Women and Gender Equality. In our final report on this initiative we concluded: "The field [of teen healthy relationship] practice is hungry for more coordinated responses, long-term strategies, and policy / advocacy frameworks to help coordinate and strengthen the reach and impact of their collective work." We recognize our own limitations as a funding organization, and even though we support several well-designed, creative, and effective programs in the Teen Healthy Relationships sector, we realize that systemic change requires a greater coordination of efforts.

A strong field of practice for Teen Healthy Relationships – with common goals and integrated, complementary approaches – is key to achieving the vision of ending gender-based violence. There are barriers within the sector: organizations have insufficient resources come together as a collective; there are few opportunities to reflect on practice; to devote time to developing shared standards of practice; and to coordinate efforts and resources. Economic barriers heighten these challenges. These findings led to the development of *Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships*, a national collective impact project that hopes to strengthen the field. It aims to do so by creating alignments, enabling communication, enhancing knowledge sharing, and convening spaces for collective action towards ending gender-based violence in Canada.

3. The complete report for the National Learning Strategy can be found here:

[https://www.canadianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/National-Learning-Strategy\\_FINAL-March-21.pdf](https://www.canadianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/National-Learning-Strategy_FINAL-March-21.pdf)

## This Initiative: Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships

*Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships* is a three-year project (October 2015 - September 2018), supported by the Department of Women and Gender Equality, which aims to strengthen and enhance the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada. The Canadian Women's Foundation, our partners, and many other collaborators from diverse sectors across the Teen Healthy Relationships field co-created the project activities. The overarching goal of the project is to collaboratively determine the strengths and challenges of the field, identify the most meaningful opportunities to support the field as a whole, and contribute to ending gender-based violence.

Collaborative approaches to addressing complex social problems such as gender-based violence are more effective and longer lasting than isolated efforts. This is the approach that guides our project, in which we seek to bring together the diverse stakeholders who make up the field. They include: non-profit organizations, funders, government representatives (federal, provincial, and municipal), scholars and research institutes, youth groups, and more. Our project aims to strengthen the links and relationships between these different stakeholders in order to facilitate greater coordination, communication, and knowledge sharing. We follow the social-ecological model towards violence prevention, which accounts for the interconnected ways that individual, relationship, community, and societal factors contribute to perpetuating as well as preventing violence (figure 1). The model suggests that in order to effectively and sustainably end violence, interventions must simultaneously address all four levels. Therefore, the *Building the Field* project brings together organizations that address Teen Healthy Relationships from multiple different perspectives.

The *Building the Field* project is envisioned as being led by "the field" itself. The Canadian Women's Foundation's role is that of catalyst and convener. We offer support and facilitate knowledge creation and sharing within the field. This includes both conducting research with our partners, as well as organizing conversations in person and online, to make possible the kinds of relationship building and network formation that are vital to strengthening the field as a whole. The project is designed, however, to be owned and led by those individuals and organizations who constitute the field. This horizontal, relational approach ensures the efficacy and future sustainability of the project, and indeed, of the field as a whole.

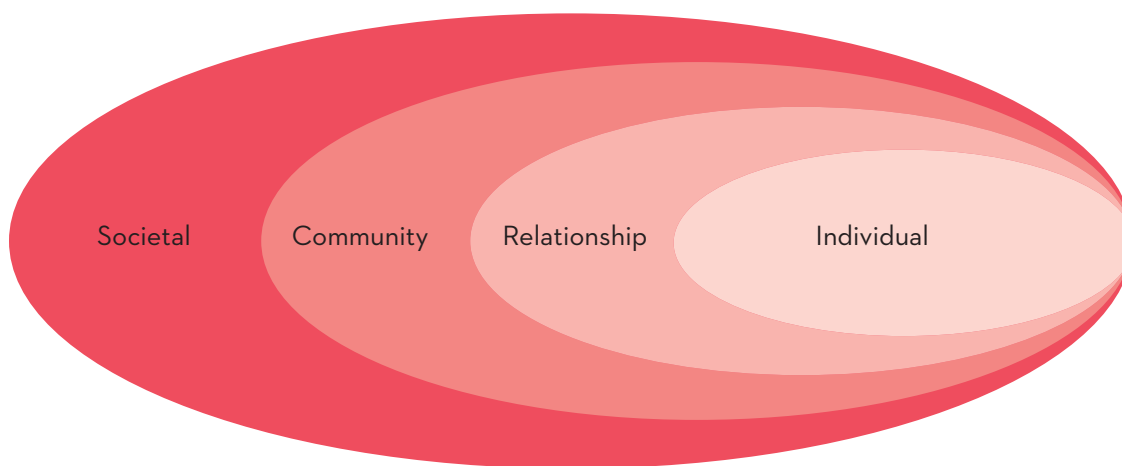


Figure 1: Social Ecological Model for Violence Prevention. Image courtesy: CDC.gov

## The project in a nutshell

The *Building the Field* project, initiated in October 2015, began by convening a group of leaders in the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships to create the Leadership Roundtable, a committee which guided the project and supported actions throughout the three-year period of the project. The project has comprised several activities, which fall within three broad areas:

- 1. Conducting Research:** In order to build the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships, it was necessary to first map the work currently underway in the sector. As a part of this project, we worked with our partners to develop a preliminary picture<sup>4</sup> of the people, organizations, programs, policies, and initiatives that are concerned with Teen Healthy Relationships throughout Canada. To this end, the Leadership Roundtable created a national database of organizations and individuals working in the Teen Healthy Relationships field and conducted a National Survey to map the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships. More details about these initiatives are provided in this report.
- 2. Convening National Meetings:** The project team and Leadership Roundtable recognize the value of face-to-face meetings and convened two National Forums to bring together diverse stakeholders from across the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships. These meetings facilitated relationship building and knowledge sharing amongst stakeholders and provided the opportunity to collaboratively identify action areas to strengthen the field. This report provides summaries of these meetings.
- 3. Implementing Action:** Collectively we identified key action points throughout the project. Members of the field formed working groups which created pilot projects to actualize these priority areas. The working groups met regularly to collaboratively pilot diverse initiatives for strengthening the field. Learnings and outcomes from these pilot projects are offered for implementation in organizations working in the field. They are also used to inform recommendations for future research and practice within the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships.

## Purpose of this report

This report provides an overview of the work undertaken within the *Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships* project. It describes the project's milestones in greater detail, providing information about the key activities and outcomes of the *Building the Field* project. Within this report, we provide an account of the many conversations, processes, and activities that have made up the project. It especially highlights the collaborative processes that make up this project and the collective, synergistic spirit that guides the work of the field as a whole. Specifically, the report accounts for the work that was undertaken for the past three years to map, define, and identify opportunities to strengthen and enhance the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada.

This report also provides a space for reflections and learnings from the project. It is important to state at the outset that the *Building the Field* project is a unique undertaking, both in terms of its ambitious scope, as well as the collaborative, iterative processes used to achieve its goals. Therefore, the lessons learned about the process of developing this project and the methods we used to enable nationwide collaboration are equally important lessons as the recommendations for strengthening the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships. In fact, these two aspects are inseparable from one another, as the very processes we use for developing such a project are deeply intertwined with the values of the field itself. Thus, this report aims to tell the story of the *Building the Field* project, focusing equally on the activities we undertook, as well as the lessons we learned about how to work together in a way that spans diverse geographies and brings together stakeholders from different sectors in order to come to a shared understanding of how to strengthen and build the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada.

<sup>4</sup> The executive summary for the survey to map the field of teen healthy relationships can be found here:

<https://www.canadianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/National-Survey-Report-Exec-Summary.pdf>

# LEADERSHIP ROUNDTABLE

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Role:

- Advisory and consultative body where ideas, issues, and challenges can be discussed
- Acts as a forum for sharing the efforts of each working group, to ensure overall alignment of the different project areas
- Decision making around logistics and overall direction of the project

### Activities:

- Developed a national database of stakeholders in the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships
- Developed and distributed a National Survey to gain an understanding of the Field as a whole
- Organized the two National Forums
- Provided support and direction to the working groups and project team

The *Building the Field* project began in October 2015, with the convening of the Leadership Roundtable, a national advisory committee that guided and collaborated on project activities. As mentioned above, the project was designed to be directed by those who make up the “field” of Teen Healthy Relationships. Therefore, the Leadership Roundtable was designed to represent different sectors that make up the field, as well as representatives of different contexts in which these programs take place.

## ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACTIVITIES

The Leadership Roundtable was responsible for guiding the *Building the Field* project as a whole, in addition to supporting individual project activities. The first half of the project comprised several activities conducted primarily by the Leadership Roundtable, along with InsideOut, our evaluation consultants. The activities included:

1. **Creating a national database of stakeholders across all four sectors:** non-profit service providers, researchers and academics, funders and philanthropists, and government policy makers. We envision that this database will grow over time as new, interested individuals and organizations are identified.
2. **Conducting exploratory consultations** with 15 stakeholders from each of the identified sectors to gather preliminary insights on the trends and challenges, influential actors, and opportunities for strengthening the field. The consultations overwhelmingly stressed the importance of inclusivity and diverse perspectives, particularly those of youth and culturally, racially, and gender diverse people and communities.
3. **Developing and distributing a national survey,** based on the exploratory consultations and distributed to the database of stakeholders. Through the survey, we wanted to better understand who makes up the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships, what the priorities, challenges, and gaps are, how the field currently interacts and collaborates, and what opportunities exist to strengthen and support the field as a whole.
4. **Organizing the First National Forum,** held April 4-5, 2017 in Toronto. This forum brought together multi-sectoral representatives to review and discuss the survey results and collectively identify 4-6 crucial action areas to pilot activities to strengthen the field.

In the second phase of the *Building the Field* project, following the First National Forum, the Leadership Roundtable was reconstituted to include members of the four working groups (described in greater detail below). In the second half of the project, the Leadership Roundtable played several key roles:

1. **Advisory and Consultative Functions:** The Leadership Roundtable continued some of the activities from the first phase of the *Building the Field* project, specifically in terms of providing guidance and ensuring the project achieved the collective goals that the field had identified.
2. **Knowledge Sharing and Support:** Roundtable meeting provided an opportunity for the working group representatives to provide updates, share knowledge, coordinate efforts, advice and discussions.
3. **Decision Making:** The Leadership Roundtable functioned as a collaborative project management effort, responsible for the overall direction of the project, as well as major decisions, including the allocation of funding and resources for working groups' activities, and travel bursaries.
4. **Organizing the Second National Forum,** held June 4-5, 2018 in Winnipeg. This forum again brought together multi-sectoral representatives to share and review the process of the pilot action plans and develop next steps for work.

## OUR PARTNERS

In addition to the Canadian Women's Foundation, six partner organizations participated in the project and helped guide it by means of their participation in the Leadership Roundtable. The Leadership Roundtable functioned as a non-hierarchical advisory group, in which all decision-making took place through consensus. The structure of the Leadership Roundtable included a rotating voluntary chairperson. This horizontal structure supported and enhances the collaborative spirit that guided the *Building the Field* project as a whole.

The Leadership Roundtable included the following individuals who represented the partner organizations:

1. Antigonish Women's Resource Centre:
  - Arwen Sweet, Provincial Program Coordinator for the Healthy Relationships for Youth Program
  - Lucille Harper, Executive Director
2. BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres;
  - Jeannette MacInnis, Manager of Health and Ending Violence Initiatives
3. Canadian Women's Foundation:
  - Anuradha Dugal, Director of Community Initiatives
  - Keetha Mercer, Program Manager of Community Initiatives
  - Peggy Moss, advisory committee member for the Teen Healthy Relationships granting program
  - Ayesha Vemuri, McGill student and contracted logistical and writing supports
4. National Association of Friendship Centres:
  - Jennifer Rankin, Research Officer, UAKN Secretariat
5. Partners for Youth:
  - John Sharpe, CEO
  - Suzanne Laver, Violence Prevention and Support Worker for youth with special needs
6. PREVNet:
  - Kelly Petrunka, Executive Director
  - Dr. Wendy Craig, Professor and Head of the Department of Psychology at Queen's University
7. Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre at the University of Winnipeg:
  - Jarita Greyeyes is Director of Community Learning and Engagement

# MAPPING THE FIELD: THE NATIONAL SURVEY

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Purpose:

- Understand the stakeholders, projects and initiatives that make up the Field
- Identify existing goals, strengths, challenges, and barriers within the Field
- Identify areas of improvement to strengthen the Field

### Key Findings:

- The Field is made up of diverse stakeholders across many sectors including government, funders, program providers, researchers, educators and youth
- The Field is diverse in terms of its approaches to healthy relationships programs, its offerings, its geographical distributions, the scale of the programs, etc
- The biggest challenges include: lack of funding, training, and other resources; the fragmentation and silos within the field; and the lack of knowledge sharing across the field
- Opportunities for strengthening the field include: centering youth needs, increasing funding and resources for program providers, and conducting more evidence-based research



The National Survey was created to better understand the current state of the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada. The objectives of the survey were to:

- Create an initial mapping of the current individuals, organizations, projects, and initiatives across different contexts, sectors and geographies;
- Gain a preliminary understanding of the goals and objectives across the field, as well as the kinds of challenges and barriers to achieving them;
- Identify areas for improvement and intervention in order to overcome challenges and strengthen the field.

The evaluation team, InsideOut, developed in collaboration with the Leadership Roundtable. It was sent to 501 potential stakeholders from the four identified sectors. We received a total of 132 completed surveys. Of these:

- 73% were from non-profit program providers;
- 12% were from university or community-based researchers;
- 11% were from people working in the government or public sector; and
- 4% were from people working in philanthropic organizations.

This suggests that the Field is comprised primarily of non-profit program providers, and that these organizations are most deeply invested in strengthening the field. However, it might also indicate the limitations of our own reach and network, showing that additional engagement is required with funders, philanthropists, the public sector, and government.

The responses from the survey confirmed existing knowledge of the field, as well as providing new insights into the Field's diverse goals, objectives, challenges, and thoughts on opportunities for strengthening the field.

## LOCATING THE FIELD OF TEEN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

The survey painted an approximate and preliminary picture of the geographic scope of Teen Healthy Relationships work. While the validity of the results are limited as it represents only the 132 individuals who completed the survey, it is nonetheless useful to know what the field looks like in different regions throughout the country (see Table 1).

Table 1: Geographic scope of THR work in Canada (as represented by survey participants)

	THR work...			Number of...		
	Occurring in each Province overall	That is exclusively provincial in scope	That is exclusively regional in scope	Municipalities reached (estimate)	First Nations communities reached	School Districts reached
British Columbia	22	1	1	80	20	52
Alberta	13	3	-	30	-	383*
Northwest Territories	2	-	-	2	-	2
Saskatchewan	4	-	-	25	3	2
Manitoba	8	3	-	10	0	-
Ontario	32	2	7	105	113	19
Québec	6	1	3	5	-	-
Newfoundland and Labrador	5	2	2	1	-	1
New Brunswick	11	6	2	20	3	5
Nova Scotia	17	4	5	-	-	-
Prince Edward Island	5	4	1	-	-	-
National	9	-	-	-	-	-

## LEADERS IN THE FIELD OF TEEN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

The survey asked respondents to reflect on the individuals and organizations they consider most influential in the field, who they turn to for information and guidance. Understanding who are leaders in the Field helps identify the existing formal and informal networks that make up the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships. The top five most frequently named organizations are: Canadian Women's Foundation, Girls Action Foundation, YWCA, PREVNet, and Red Cross. It is important to note that the survey did not measure the application of the most effective practices in the Field, only who are identified as influential organizations. It's possible that, at least to some degree, the Canadian Women's Foundation's sponsorship of the survey is reflected in our position in the top five.

The organizations named cover a wide range of areas of focus, from promoting healthy dating relationships amongst teens specifically to addressing gender-based and sexual violence more broadly. They also focus on sexual and reproductive health, sexuality and gender identity, as well as mental health and youth engagement. At the broader end of the spectrum are organizations that work to strengthen families and create healthy communities. The range of different mandates indicates the crosscutting nature of Teen Healthy Relationships work and speaks to the importance of healthy relationships as fundamental to different aspects of wellbeing.

## WHAT DID THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS TELL US?

### The State of the Field

#### 1. Teen Healthy Relationships programming is a national undertaking with deep roots

Survey responses hailed from all provinces, and the Northwest Territories, showing that Teen Healthy Relationships work takes place in all regions. Most organizations operate primarily in a single province or territory, while a few work nationally. Most national projects involve either the philanthropic sector or the government. In addition, most organizations have been involved in this work an average of 30 years, indicating their long-term dedication to the work.

#### 2. Teen Healthy Relationships programming is delivered by many kinds of non-profit organizations

Programs are offered by many types of organizations, top responses came from women's organizations, sexual and domestic violence services, community health, and youth development. In addition, there was representation from program providers that Indigenous communities, immigrants, refugees and newcomers, family services, crime prevention and more. This indicates the wide reach and relevance of Teen Healthy Relationships programming. It is worth noting that, when organizations were asked about the relative importance of Teen Healthy Relationships programming to their work the majority responded that the work is either a significant focus of their organization, or not a focus but part of the work, but only two respondents wrote that Teen Healthy Relationships is the exclusive focus of their work.

### 3. Teen Healthy Relationships programs reach a range of youth in different settings

Programs are offered to youth in urban and rural settings, youth living on low-incomes, Indigenous youth, newcomers and immigrant youth, teens who have experienced, witnessed or perpetrated violence, those who identify as 2SLGBTQ+, and more (see Figure 1). Moreover, these programs are offered in co-ed settings, as well as girls-only or boys-only groups. Most of these programs (78%) take place in schools, but several are also offered in after school and community-based settings. Despite this strong connection with formal education, only one respondent reported receiving funding from a Ministry or Department of Education.

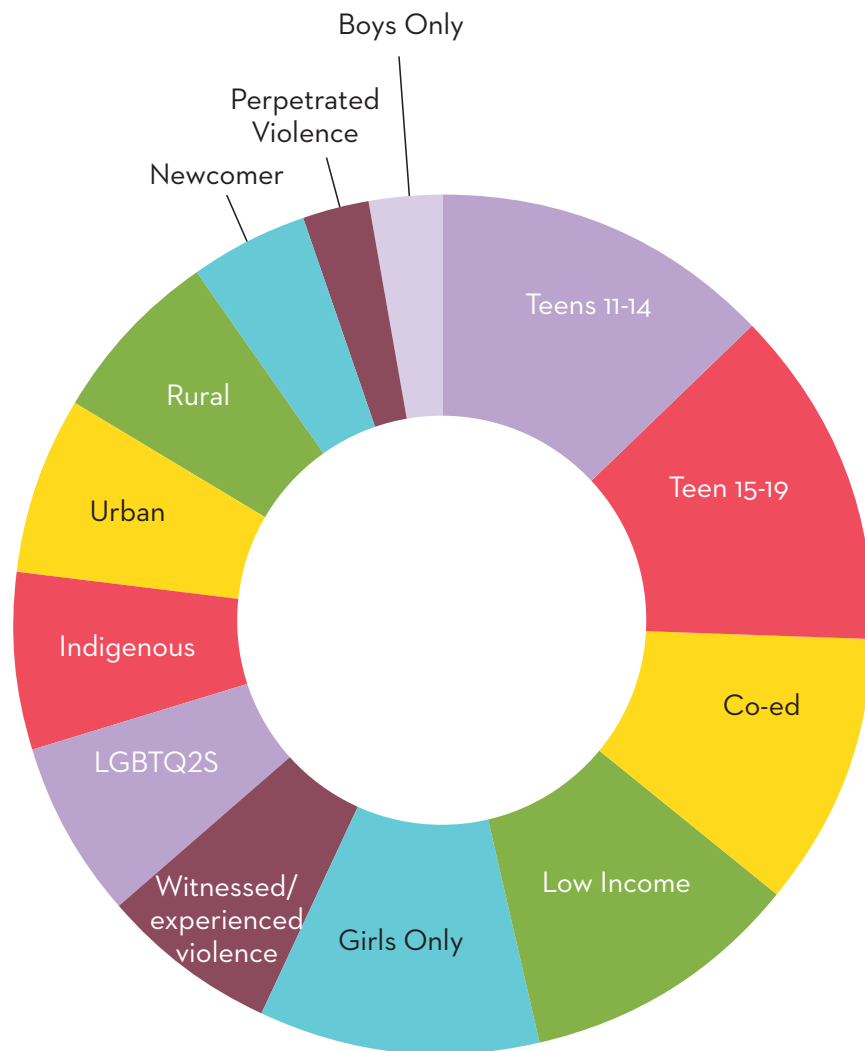


Figure 1: Teen Healthy Relationships programming reaches a wide range of youth

## The Potential Impact of the Teen Healthy Relationships Field

### 1. Teen Healthy Relationships programming can enable organizations to have an impact on many different levels

When organizations were asked about the impact they hoped to create, their answers fell into three broad categories: impact at the systemic level, at the community level, and at the individual level. System level impact refers to the hope of changing both policy and social norms towards achieving greater gender equality, preventing gender-based violence, promoting a culture of consent, and preventing discrimination against particular communities. At the community level, organizations hope to improve family relationships eliminate violence and bullying in schools, support healthy relationships between students and school staff, and create more inclusive and safer neighbourhoods. Finally, at the individual level, there are two main categories of desired outcome: increased knowledge and skills, and increased resilience (see figure 3). This aligns with the ecological model that we use to view the field.

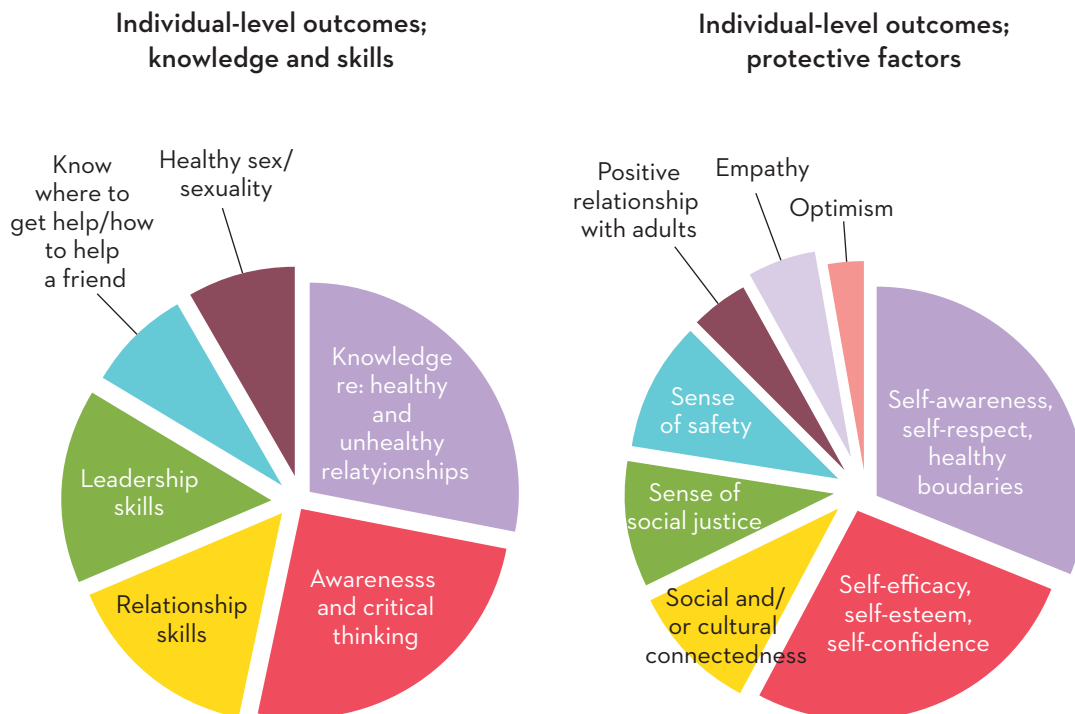


Figure 2: Individual-level outcomes

### 2. Researchers throughout Canada are working on issues that impact the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships

Researchers are working on multiple pertinent issues including teen dating violence, bullying, violence prevention, healthy social and emotional learning, and digital and media literacy. Within these, they engage with the underlying factors, the means of preventing violence and harmful behaviours, promoting consent and positive relationships, promoting online safety, and the impact of technology on youth cultures and relationships. Given the pertinence of this work to Teen Healthy Relationships programming, we feel that bringing researchers and academics in closer contact with program providers will help bridge the gaps between theory and practice, bringing greater depth to both sectors.

## Fragmentation and silos within the field

### 1. Funding for Teen Healthy Relationships programs is fragmented and piecemeal

Non-profit service delivery respondents (86) named over 70 distinct funders or sources of funding. In most cases, organizations receive funding from multiple sources. Philanthropic foundations and provincial/territorial governments were the most frequently mentioned groups of funders (33% and 27% respectively). The United Way/Centraide was the most frequently mentioned single funder of Teen Healthy Relationships work (15%). Overwhelmingly, the philanthropic foundations named are local or provincial, rather than national.

### 2. With so few respondents from the government and public sector, more work is needed to engage with policy makers

The survey received very few responses from government and public sector representatives, indicating insufficient engagement of these powerful influencers within the field. The small number of responses we did receive indicates that their priorities include preventing domestic and sexual violence, reducing risk factors and promoting teens' capacity for healthy relationships, reforming educational curricula, improving mental health services for youth, and improving data collection and decision making with respect to youth well-being.

## Challenges facing the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships

There was considerable consensus amongst the survey respondents about the kinds of challenges facing the field. These include:

1. Complex societal issues, such as cyberviolence and hypersexualization of girls
2. High expectations on program providers, and the lack of resources to support them
3. Policy makers insufficiently prioritize Teen Healthy Relationships work
4. Lack of training for program providers, such as teachers and facilitators
5. Lack of evidence about successful programs
6. The different sectors that make up the field are working in isolation from one another
7. Funders lack real understanding about the nature of the work

Respondents also raised other issues. The top three themes were:

**1. Systemic challenges**

These tended to focus on addressing the root causes of violence. They advocate applying an intersectional framework to address issues such as patriarchy, racism, classism and other oppressive systems. Other system-wide issues include the lack of shared definitions about healthy relationships, the fact that school-based programming is inconsistent, and that there is insufficient focus on primary prevention.

**2. Funding-related issues**

Consisting of the lack of sustainable funding overall, as well as for specific aspects of programming, including operational, travel, and program delivery costs. Several respondents noted that the available funding is not sustainable, and there is a lack of long-term commitment from funders. Some pointed to the fact that there is insufficient evidence of the effectiveness of programs, and that improved monitoring and evaluation is necessary for better funding.

**3. Unmet youth needs**

Issues such as the education sector's lack of prioritizing students' social health, including teen violence, consent, sex, 2SLGBTQI+ issues, and more. Respondents also mentioned the limited programs in rural areas, especially community-based settings outside schools. Respondents also commented on the lack of engagement with youth when developing and offering these programs, and argued for the need to engage young people as leaders, stakeholders and experts.

## Opportunities for Strengthening the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships

During the preliminary stakeholder consultations prior to the survey, the team identified five key opportunities for building the field. The team offered these five areas in the survey, as asked respondents to rank these in terms of highest and lowest priorities. Improve sustainability of funding and engage with teens on program and policy development emerged as the clear frontrunners. The overall ranking was:

**1. Improve sustainability of funding**

Respondents stressed the need for long-term funding to ensure the sustainability and efficacy of programs. Some suggested changing funding orientation towards the core mission of an organization rather than specific projects. Finally, they advocated for the need to build better funder relationships.

**2. Engage with teens to facilitate their input into program and policy development**

Respondents advocated engaging youth by increasing peer-led programming, in development and evaluation of programs, and in the context of participatory action research. They stressed the need to ensure that youth engagement is respectful and inclusive of diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

**3. Undertake more collaborative, cross-sectoral and cross-regional efforts**

Respondents suggested developing cross-sectoral collaborations. Stressing the need to bridge gaps between theory and practice, and for increased collaboration between researchers and program providers.



**4. Increase capacity for evidence-informed practice**

Respondents spoke of the need to better understand the impact of Teen Healthy Relationships programming. Evidence of best practices and long term impacts can benefit program development and delivery, as well as assist in the funding process.

**5. Enhance funder and service provider capacity for program evaluation**

Respondents stressed the need for both program providers and funders to increase their capacity for program monitoring and evaluation so that the impact and effectiveness of programming can be better understood and measured.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE NATIONAL SURVEY

The Leadership Roundtable recognize that the responses reflected in the survey may not be representative of all the nuances and diversity of the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships. In particular, the following challenges may have impacted the data we gathered:

**1. Data gathered primarily reflected program providers' perspectives**

Most responses to the survey were from the non-profit program providers' sector, with very few responses from researchers and academics, government representatives and policy-makers, and philanthropists and funders. This means that the full field's perspectives and priorities were not entirely represented in the survey results.

**2. Misrepresentation and misunderstandings**

During the review of the data, it became apparent that some respondents might have misidentified their sector, or misunderstood some of the questions.

**3. Scope**

Although the survey revealed several important insights, 132 responses are not representative of the field as a whole. Some perspectives were less represented, or entirely lacking. This includes the perspectives of representatives from Quebec, the Northern Territories, as well as representatives from the Education sector, such as teachers, school principals, and representatives from school boards. While we were unable to address all these gaps sufficiently over the course of the project, the team made significant efforts to gather the perspectives of these groups where possible. One of the most significant effort in this regard was to conduct a focus group with stakeholders in Quebec. An overview of the outcomes of this group discussion can be found in Appendix B.

# THE FIRST NATIONAL FORUM FOR BUILDING THE FIELD OF TEEN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Objectives:

- Build relationships amongst diverse stakeholders across the Field
- Begin to develop a shared understanding of the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships
- Collaboratively identify 4-6 priority areas for strengthening the Field

### Key Outcomes:

- Participants built formal and informal connections with one another and their organizations
- Participants collectively identified 8 priority areas for strengthening the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada
- Participants formed four working groups in order to conduct research, collect resources, and develop activities related to specific priority areas

## INTRODUCTION

The First National Forum for the *Building the Field* project was held in Toronto on the 4th and 5th of April, 2017. It brought together approximately 70 stakeholders from different sectors and regions to understand, discuss, and connect with others in the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships. Since the attendees were invited to the forum by means of participating in the national survey, everyone present was familiar with objectives of the project. The dedication of the participants, and their commitment to the project, was evident for the entire duration of the forum. It was made clear in their passionate discussion of research findings from the survey, the salient questions posed throughout the forum, and in the final creation of the working groups by the end of the two days.

## OBJECTIVES

Reflecting the collaborative spirit of the project, every aspect of the two-day forum was designed to increase communication and participation amongst the attendees. The overarching goal was to underscore the message that the participants at the forum *are representative of the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships*. In other words, the forum cemented the message that every participant at the meeting is integral to the field, and that it is only through their collective actions and consensus that the field as a whole can become stronger and more sustainable.

To this effect, the objectives of the forum were:

1. Build relationships between champions and key stakeholders operating in the Teen Healthy Relationships field.
2. Begin to develop a shared understanding of the current state of the Field by sharing the field mapping research findings.
3. Develop 4 – 6 preliminary action plans (supported by working groups) to address opportunities for building and strengthening the field.
4. Lay the foundation for a multi-sectoral steering committee to support the ongoing work of the initiative as a whole.

As the primary objective of this meeting was to collectively identify action areas for strengthening the field and form working groups to actualize them, this report will focus primarily on the collective activities and conversations that made up the majority of the forum. However, the forum also included significant knowledge sharing from our various research and academic partners, in an effort to bridge theory and practice.

- InsideOut gave a presentation on their preliminary evaluation of the Canadian Women's Foundation Teen Healthy Relationships national granting program.
- Dr. Wendy Craig of PREVNet presented her research on the development of the brain, and the ways in which trauma and healing can each have a lasting impact on the emotional and psychological wellbeing of youth.
- Dr. Kristin Blakey gave a keynote talk about the recent rise in anti-feminist, "men's rights" activism in Canada, and the incursion of these groups into gender equality spaces including the United Nations.

## SHARING RESEARCH AND LEARNINGS

Members of the Leadership Roundtable presented the most salient outcomes of the survey with a focus on engaging forum participants to *situate themselves* within the data, to reflect on it, and make it more tangible. The aspects of the survey explored in detail were related to what are organizations seeking to accomplish through healthy relationships work, the main issues, challenges, and opportunities, the settings within which Teen Healthy Relationships programs are offered, and the current state of funding and funders.

The survey findings provided a picture of the current state of the field, the forum enabled participants to contemplate the data and discuss whether or not it reflected their own experiences. For instance, the “silos” activity (figures 3 and 4) asked organizations to locate themselves within a particular sector or silo, or within the interstices of different silos. Another activity provided each table with the top seven issues and challenges within the field, and asked the groups to organize them collectively in a spectrum of the most important to the least (figures 5 and 6).



Figure 3: Participants discuss which “silo” they fall within

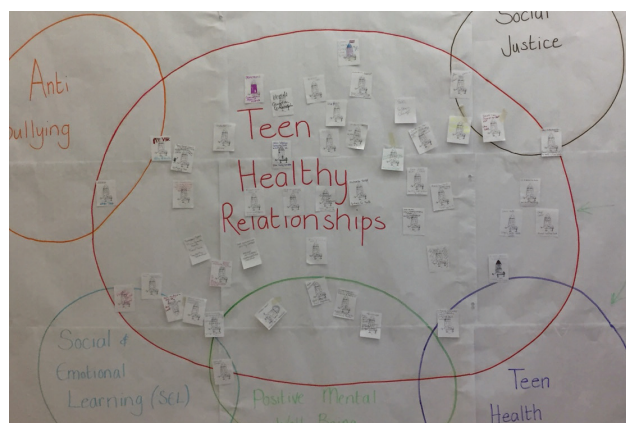


Figure 4: The silos activity



Figure 5: Participants debating the spectrum of challenges and opportunities



Figure 6: Spectrum Exercise - Opportunities for Strengthening the Field

Participants were asked to consider three interrelated questions:

- How do we create better connections within the field, between NGOs, funders and researchers?
- How do we break down silos?
- How do we create a systems approach within the field?

The discussion that ensued spoke of the value of cross-sectoral meetings to bring stakeholders together in-person, and how these conversations could be continued in online spaces. As one participant noted, “Telephone calls and webinars are great, but the in-person meetings are really important, because they bring us face to face”. Several participants noted the need for a central knowledge or network “hub” that brings together information about all the organizations, programs, and opportunities for funding. One person stated, “If we all have one objective, then we need one hub, which can then also be the central location that advocates with government and engages with funding agencies”. Several people noted that the Canadian Women’s Foundation occupies the role closest to such a central hub.

Another point that was stressed was that, in the effort to build consensus, the field must not lose its diversity. The different perspectives voiced in the room are all important to consider, as Teen Healthy Relationships work has to be tailored to different contexts and people. These differences are also one of the greatest strengths of the group as a whole, as they allow the field to learn and evolve.

## DEVELOPING A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE FIELD OF TEEN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

One of the primary goals was to develop a shared definition of the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships. Given the wide range of definitions received in the National Survey, the Leadership Roundtable proposed the social-ecological model was the most helpful way of viewing the field. This model helps us account for the diversity of different actors who make up the field, as well as the varied, interdisciplinary efforts that are currently underway within it. At the national forum a shared understanding of the Teen Healthy Relationships ecosystem was further discussed, however coming to a shared understanding and definitions proved to be too big of a task for an early forum and was tabled.

## IDENTIFYING THEMES AND PRIORITIES FOR THE FIELD OF TEEN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Conversations about the most meaningful ways to strengthen the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships enabled participants to increasingly narrow down the most significant issues and opportunities for building the field. Participants discussed the specific projects they are currently engaged in, and the kinds of issues and opportunities they see within it. Although the conversations, examples, issues and concerns are too wide-ranging to provide an account here, some clear priorities discussed that affected every aspect of program delivery, included:

- Funding, primarily how lack thereof drives services providers to compete rather than collaborate,
- Need to collect data about the field and analyze it through a gendered lens
- Gender-based violence and supporting young people in understanding the complexities and nuances of how violence works
- Challenge of simplifying complex, multifaceted approaches to ending violence for funders interested in straightforward programs with a single goal,
- Working regionally to identify funders, current programs and gaps in service provision
- Breaking down silos and encourage collaboration by building networks and hubs at municipal, provincial, regional and national levels. Hubs could function as a knowledge-sharing space and advocacy-focused body working on funding and policy-related issues

Various facilitated activities that encouraged productive discussions, disagreements and debates, and moved towards collective prioritization revealed the issues, challenges, opportunities and ideas for strengthening the field. At the end of the process, 8 major themes surfaced as the most significant for building the field. Of these, the need for diversity and inclusion, of youth voices, as well as communities that face significant barriers - such as 2SLGBTQI+ youth and Indigenous youth, were so significant that the Leadership Roundtable proposed to include youth voice and gender diverse youth, as overarching themes or guiding principles for the field as a whole. Additionally, the needs of Indigenous youth were considered in need of greater attention, thereby making working with First Nation, Métis and Inuit youth a priority area in itself.

The eight priorities that emerged are briefly presented below (a more detailed representation of the strengths, challenges and opportunities for each of these 8 areas can be found in Appendix A).

## EIGHT PRIORITIES FOR THE FIELD

1. **Supporting the work of Teen Healthy Relationships Program Providers**, by identifying core skills, basic training and evaluations programs.
2. **Involving Parents, Caregivers & Other Support Systems** within Teen Healthy Relationships programming for a more holistic approach involving families and communities beyond school.
3. **Building a National Leadership and Network**, for engaging and advocating with government, building relationships with funding agencies, and sharing knowledge throughout the field.
4. **First Nations, Métis and Inuit Programming** from a strengths-based perspective, rather than one that is based in the risks and dangers that Indigenous youth may face, to better address the needs, histories, and perspectives of First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth.
5. **Community Program Settings**, that reach youth populations in such as rural communities, especially through programs that are offered in out of school settings.
6. **Access & Engagement for Youth Not in School**, including youth who may be in treatment, in care, in custody, or being home-schooled. Highlighting the importance of considering challenges specific to certain populations when developing programming.
7. **Online & Digital Programming**, which highlights the possibilities of using digital media and new media technologies to reach youth online, in order to both reach a larger population of young people, as well as reach them through the media they are most invested in.
8. **Youth Voice & Gender Diverse Youth** provide the overarching core principles for all action areas. Centering these voices will become a guiding principle of all the work in Teen Healthy Relationships programming.



# WORKING GROUPS TO BUILD THE FIELD OF TEEN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Four working groups were created in April 2017 at the First National Forum and collaborated through regular meetings using digital platforms for a year
- Working group members identified specific resources, conducted research into existing initiatives, and developed specific activities or initiatives to strengthen the field
- Working group members either developed plans or tested specific activities that could serve as opportunities for strengthening the field
- Shared these initiatives at the Second National Forum for Teen Healthy Relationships
- Developed recommendations for next steps towards strengthening the field as a whole

## GOALS

- Collaboratively develop and pilot initiatives to strengthen the THR field in Canada
- Conduct research into existing resources, best practices and tools for the field
- Build and strengthen their own networks and relationships

## INTRODUCTION

From the First National Forum the collectively identified eight main areas for strengthening the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada were combined to create four working groups. Since one of the eight priorities - Youth Voice and Gender Diverse Youth - was considered a key principle of the field as a whole, it was included as an overarching theme for all four groups.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of each of these working groups was for the members to develop ways of strengthening the overall field of Teen Healthy Relationships. This was done by collectively identifying specific, critical areas for intervention, and then developing either pilot projects or other initiatives for change. The working groups then tested these initiatives, collected resources and tools, or collaboratively developed proposals that they hope can be used to gather the resources that will help strengthen the field going forward.

One of the many lessons learned in the first half of the Building the Field project was the reminder that, although there are an abundance of existing initiatives, programs, and tools for Teen Healthy Relationships, many people in the field are unaware of many of these programs and resources. All the working groups highlighted the need for a consolidated hub that collects these initiatives and resources in an easily accessible location. Therefore, one of the goals of each of the working groups was to collect resources for the field, which will be made available to the Field through an online platform.

A final equally important goal was for the members of the working groups to strengthen their own relationships and collaborative working practices. Over the year, working groups met on a monthly or bi-monthly basis to discuss and develop means of strengthening the field. These meetings, while facilitated by the Canadian Women's Foundation, were directed by the members of the working groups. The meetings took place via digital networking platforms that enabled participants to plan and work collectively, across provincial and sectoral silos, to strengthen their own networks, as well as strengthen their collaborative working practices.

## STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION

The working groups were organized on the lines of a hub and spoke model (figure 2). Each of the spokes represents a working group, while the hub at the center represents the Leadership Roundtable, coming together to exchange knowledge and collaboratively develop pilot initiatives. The central hub is made up of representatives from each of the working groups.

Each of the working groups and the Leadership Roundtable met once a month. This ensured that representatives from each working group could present their discussions and progress to date, request support, and receive feedback from other members. This also allowed for working groups to be aware of each other's projects, and to think about how these initiatives were aligned with one another.

There was no formal structure to the working groups. However, many of the groups decided to appoint a chairperson for the group, which in some cases was a rotating position. Other groups - particularly the smaller groups - did not have a specific chairperson, and instead engaged in open discussion with equal engagements and leadership from all participants. All the working groups were also supported by team members from the Canadian Women's Foundation,<sup>5</sup> who assisted in convening and moderating the meetings, and recording minutes and action items for the group. The Canadian Women's Foundation team also participated as a working group and Leadership Roundtable member, including coordinating some of the group work, assisting with some of the pilot projects, and providing writing and research support when required.



Figure 2: The Hub and Spoke model

5. Team members from the Canadian Women's Foundation were part of all the working groups. Including: Anuradha Dugal (Montreal), Keetha Mercer (Toronto), and Ayesha Vemuri (Montreal)

## KEY INITIATIVES

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Recommended the integration of the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action within the field
- Created resources for working with Indigenous youth, and for integrating Indigenous perspectives within Teen Healthy Relationships programs
- Developed recommendations for integrating youth voice in the creation of healthy relationships programs
- Created a focus group structure for engaging youth in program design and evaluation
- Created a Case for Support and a Logic Model for a National Network for Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada
- Collected resources

These working groups were created as a means of inviting representatives from the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships to conceptualize specific initiatives that could work towards strengthening the field as a whole. These initiatives were developed both, on the basis of those activities that are considered most critical, as well as on the basis of which initiatives are actionable and achievable, given the time constraints as well as participants' capacity to work on these issues. Each pilot project was allocated funding based on their requirements, primarily to purchase materials and compensate youth and facilitators. Detailed information about these initiatives is provided in the following sections. Reflections, lessons learned, and next steps for the project as a whole are shared in the final section of this report.

# FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT PROGRAMMING WORKING GROUP

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Recommendations:

- Integrate Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action within the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships, especially actions 10, 38 & 66
- Involve, engage, and mentor First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth within the field
- Create a national network for sharing knowledge, resources and support

### Resources:

- Programs and resources developed by and for First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities
- Key Indigenous-created and Indigenous-focused organizations, networks and programs

## MEMBERS OF THE WORKING GROUP

- Jarita Greyeyes, Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre/ University of Winnipeg (Working group co-chair), Winnipeg, Manitoba
- Jennifer Rankin, National Association of Friendship Centres (Working group co-chair), Ottawa, Ontario
- Mackenzie Anderson, Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre/ University of Winnipeg (Youth Representative), Winnipeg, Manitoba
- John Sharpe, Partners for Youth, Fredericton, New Brunswick
- Cindy Miles, Partners for Youth, Fredericton, New Brunswick
- Tin Yan Tsang von Baich, Cowichan Women Against Violence Society, Duncan, British Columbia

## OBJECTIVES

A clear recommendation to the Field is the need to understand deeply integrate the effects of historical and ongoing settler colonialism on First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth into our work. In particular, it is important to acknowledge how the Residential Schools, Sixties Scoop and ongoing separation of Indigenous youth from their families and cultures can have adverse impacts on their relationships and lives. This working group had three key objectives:

1. Strengthen teen healthy relationship programming within First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, both on and off reserve, and in rural as well as urban areas
2. Inform and integrate First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories and perspectives into all Teen Healthy Relationships programming
3. Mentor First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth

## KEY ACTIVITIES

- Identifying key actions from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action
- Developing a set of recommendations for the Field
- Conducting research and collecting resources
- Integrating and centering Indigenous perspectives within the Building the Field through several means, including:
  - Creating a newsletter to share knowledge between the working groups
  - Integrating Indigenous music, dance, and history within the project
  - Organizing the Blanket Exercise at the Second National Forum
  - Inviting student representatives from a Truth and Reconciliation class in Winnipeg to share their reflections and learnings

## KEY OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This working group has the overarching goal of centering First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories, and integrating Indigenous youth perspectives throughout the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships. This consists of two sub-goals:

1. Ensuring that Indigenous histories and perspectives are integrated within healthy relationships programs, and
2. Ensuring that programs and organizations that engage with Indigenous youth do so in ways that are respectful and beneficial to Indigenous communities.

**In order to work towards this large goal, the group has developed two recommendations:**

### 1. Integrate the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action in the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships

That all stakeholders in the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships should familiarize themselves with the 94 Calls to Action<sup>6</sup> developed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and identify those that may be applied to their work. These calls were developed in consultation with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities to repair the harm caused by residential schools and move forward with reconciliation. The working group recommends that all stakeholders in the Field adopt some of these recommendations and have identified specific Calls to Action that are relevant for the Field as a whole.

From the TRC Calls to Action Report:

#### Call to Action #10

We call on the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The new legislation would include a commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles:

1. Providing sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation.
2. Improving education attainment levels and success rates.
3. Developing culturally appropriate curricula.
4. Protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, including the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses.
5. Enabling parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability, similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems.
6. Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children. Respecting and honouring Treaty relationships.

#### Call to Action #38

We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to eliminating the overrepresentation of Aboriginal youth in custody over the next decade.

6. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action can be found here: [http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)  
Available in French here: [http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_French.pdf](http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_French.pdf)

## Call to Action #66

We call upon the federal government to establish multi-year funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation and establish a national network to share information and best practices.

This working group recommends that these Calls to Action should be integrated within the proposal for a national strategy for the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships, in order to work in concert with ongoing efforts to end gender-based violence for First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities in Canada.

## 2. Involve, Engage, and Mentor First Nations, Métis and Inuit Youth

That a key goal of the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships should be to integrate and centre First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth perspectives. They recommend that youth should be involved in working alongside all the stakeholders in the field, which will provide an opportunity to learn with the help of a mentor, have professional opportunities, and to contribute their own knowledge and recommendations for the field.

That youth engagement should be respectful, and therefore that youth should be compensated fairly for their involvement and contribution to the projects. Towards this end, the working group invited a young person to participate as a paid member of the working group, and developed terms of reference and participation that lays out the basic principles and goals of participation. This model of participation is offered as one means of engaging with and centering young Indigenous peoples participation in the project, as well as the field as a whole.

## RESOURCES FOR INTEGRATING FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT PERSPECTIVES IN TEEN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS PROGRAMS

A list of resources for Teen Healthy Relationships programs was developed to aid in centering the history, context and perspectives of First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth. Resources include:

- Toolkits, programs and other resources developed by Indigenous communities for *working with* First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth
- Research, recommendations and resources for integrating Indigenous history and awareness within all Teen Healthy Relationships programs. These resources have been developed primarily by First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, in particular by youth representatives and youth organizations within these communities.
- Key Indigenous organizations, networks, and advocacy groups that offer Teen Healthy Relationships programs and support services

This list of resources brings together existing knowledge from members of the working group, as well as initial research to gather resources. This is as a living resource, which will continue to grow and expand as we gather more information.



## REFLECTIONS

The First Nations, Métis and Inuit Programming working group felt that their **strengths** include (i) the inclusion of a paid youth representative within the working group; the commitment to sharing information across the project; expertise and knowledge of how to advocate for Indigenous peoples; and a broad understanding, from years of collective experience, of the complexities of the context of the work.

The group's **contributions** to the *Building the Field* project lie within two main areas, which are supported by the group's research activities:

**Policy:** The group demonstrated how an Indigenous lens can be applied to shape policy; and support the Field to better understand how the TRC Calls to Action could be applied to their own organizational practices and programs.

**Practice:** The group consolidated information and resources to share with other practitioners in the field. As well, by increasing practitioners' understanding of the TRC Calls to Action in order to promote the needs of Indigenous people; and supporting innovation and inclusivity in the field more broadly.

## VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE

In addition to noting the need to expand their membership by engaging more First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth and service providers who work with Indigenous youth (and vulnerable persons), this group articulated an ambitious vision that addresses broad, national level issues and seeks transformational social change. Specific details include:

- Development of a national strategy and a national level repository of resources and information;
- Increasing awareness among social service agency workers – federally and provincially – of the importance of healthy relationships for all youth, and especially for the most vulnerable; and
- Enhancement of Child Care Standards for Indigenous children and youth, including a stronger commitment to Jordan's Principle.

# EQUIPPING AND ENGAGING ADULTS WORKING GROUP

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Recommendations:

- Create a community of practice where knowledge, experiences, and resources can be shared and easily accessed
- Develop means to equip and engage supportive adults to better promote healthy relationships
- Improve the capacities of existing program facilitators by learning from youth experiences of program curricula, program settings, and more
- Centre youth voice in this process through consultations, and through involvement in program creation and dissemination processes

### Resources:

- Toolkits, guides, and research relating to how to best equip and engage adults in healthy relationships work
- Focus group structure tailored to different age groups

## MEMBERS OF THE WORKING GROUP

- Anita Harder, Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter (Working Group Chair), Calgary, Alberta
- Catherine Moreau, Université du Québec à Montréal, Montreal, Quebec
- Diana Chang, Boost Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (Leadership Roundtable member), Toronto, Ontario
- Helen Whalen, CBDC Trinity Conception, Carbonear, Newfoundland and Labrador
- Kate MacLaggan, YWCA Cambridge, Cambridge, Ontario
- Maggie Blake, Boost Child and Youth Advocacy Centre, Toronto, Ontario
- Maggie Snow, The Splash Centre, Harbour Grace, Newfoundland and Labrador
- Michaela Toner, Partners for Youth, Fredericton, New Brunswick
- Pauline Paterson, YWCA Toronto, Toronto, Ontario
- Stacy Harris, Communities Against Violence, Harbour Grace, Newfoundland and Labrador

## OBJECTIVES

To better engage and equip adults to support youth in developing and maintaining healthy relationships. Importantly, this group recognizes that youth are themselves the experts in this question, and therefore sought out youth perspectives in identifying how and to what degree adults should be engaged in these programs, as well as what kinds of information and skills are useful for those facilitating healthy relationships programs. The main focus areas for the group are:

- Identifying core competencies and best practices amongst existing practices in the field
- Learning from existing best practices and developing strategies to centre youth voice
- Create a community of practice where knowledge, experiences, and resources can be shared and easily accessed by stakeholders across the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships

## KEY ACTIVITIES

- Conducting research and collecting resources such as toolkits, methods and guides, for engaging adults in healthy relationships work
- Creating a structure for a focus group with young people to collect perspectives about how best to engage and equip adults to better support and promote healthy relationships. Tailored the structure for different age groups
- Pilot testing the focus group model by conducting five focus groups with youth in different age groups and geographical contexts throughout Canada
- Evaluating the outcomes of these focus groups in order to create a set of recommendations for how the Field can better equip and engage adults

## KEY OUTCOMES

This working group has the overarching goal of developing ways to better equip adults to support youth in learning about and developing healthy relationships. It is based on the recognition that youth sometimes receive conflicting messages about relationships from the adults in their lives, and that adults, including parents, family members, teachers and coaches, may have significant knowledge gaps. This working group hoped to develop effective means of engaging adults so that they in turn can support youth more effectively. The focus groups asked youth for their perspectives about *what knowledge* is most important for adults to have, and *in what contexts* adults should be engaged.

### Focus Group to Gather Youth Perspectives

In order to provide one possibility for youth engagement, this group created and pilot tested, a focus group model to gather youth perspectives. The focus group questions developed are geared to two main groups of adults:

- Workshop facilitators who offer Teen Healthy Relationships programs, and
- Supportive adults, which include parents, guardians, family members, teachers, coaches and any other influential and supportive adults.

The structure of the focus group is divided into a few key themes, which questions related to:

- The knowledge base, skill set, and attributes that for facilitators of healthy relationships programs
- What young people would like to learn in healthy relationships programs
- How involved they would like adults in their lives to be in such programming
- Whether or not they would like to be involved in leadership roles in healthy relationships programming

Some of the topics of consideration in relation to structure and process were:

1. **Involvement across the country** – Many of the participants of this working group had direct access to youth through their various programs. This gave them a unique opportunity to garner feedback from a variety of contexts and locations.
2. **Age range** – Recognizing that “youth” is a wide category with many differing perspectives amongst different age groups, therefore a lot of consideration was given to age appropriate structure and logistics (ie: how schools and programs split the ages). In order to ensure that the focus group questions would be developmentally appropriate, the working group tailored the questions to three general age ranges: 9-13, 14-17, and 18-24-year olds.
3. **Consent issues** – The working group also had a number of conversations about informed consent for the youth in the focus groups, particularly in age ranges where parental consent is required. As requirements are different in different settings, depending on organizational policy and/or ethical codes of particular professions, negotiating these posed a barrier for some of the planned focus groups and limited some activities.

6. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action can be found here: [http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_English2.pdf](http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)  
Available in French here: [http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls\\_to\\_Action\\_French.pdf](http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_French.pdf)

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A total of five focus groups were conducted in March and April 2018. All participants, either directly or by parental consent, provided signed consent to participate in the focus groups. While a more detailed report of the focus group outcomes can be found in the resource folder online, these are the most notable findings from across all five focus groups

### 1. Terminology

Overall, most participants did not seem to identify with the term “youth,” and felt that it is used by adults to refer to young people but would not be used by young people to refer to themselves. Instead they preferred terms such as “teen” (9 to 13-year olds in particular), or “young adult” (all age groups), as they maintained that it conveys greater sense of value and credibility to their opinions.

### 2. Types of relationships they would like to learn about

Participants in all the groups felt that healthy relationships workshops should cover all kinds of relationships, and not be limited to romantic relationships. Some of the relationships they wanted to include in healthy relationships curricula included: relationships with parents and other family members, friendships, and relationships with teachers, coaches, bosses, and other authority figures.

### 3. Where they go for information about healthy relationships

Most participants did not have a definitive source for information about healthy relationships. They named a variety of different ways they may access this depending on the context and type of information they were looking for. Some of these included parents or another adult (especially for 9 to 13-year olds), friends, peer-support centres, and school counselors. Interestingly, participants across all the groups mentioned that while the internet provides plenty of accessible information, it can also be unreliable, and therefore they were more likely to trust advice from someone they know than the information available online.

### 4. Facilitator and workshop qualities

The qualities that participants identified as being important for facilitators, as well as the kinds of information that they are looking for, indicate that young people themselves are defining “healthy relationships” as broadly as the field.

#### **Skills and knowledge of a good facilitator**

Across all the groups, participants felt that the qualities of a good facilitator include being open-minded, non-judgmental, a good listener, and respecting and listening to young people’s experiences. A good facilitator should have the skills to encourage discussion and communication and create an inviting and safe space for discussion. They noted that a good facilitator should have training on mental health support, how to deal with bullying, and how to deal with loss, pain etc., in addition to knowledge about healthy and unhealthy relationships, how to define and maintain boundaries, and how to support one another.

**Facilitator's age and experience**

Most participants agreed that qualities of the facilitator are much more important than their age. That said, several participants felt that a facilitator closer in age might be more understanding of their problems and experiences. They felt that someone who was a little older, but not much older, would be most suitable as a facilitator, as they would understand youth perspectives but also be able to offer wisdom and advice. Participants overwhelmingly agreed that it is important for facilitators to speak from their own experience, as it is more relatable, and also gives them hope that their own problems can be overcome.

**Workshop qualities**

All participants agreed that the workshops should be interesting, energetic, and integrate activities and movement. Workshops should be safe spaces, which means that they should be respectful and non-judgmental.

## 5. Engaging Adults

All participants agreed that the adults in their lives should be more knowledgeable and skillful in the area of healthy relationships. However, many were of the opinion that adults should be trained separately, and not included in the same workshops. A few suggested that there could be two steps: first, there are separate workshops, and second, the young people and adults can come together in a combined discussion.

In addition to the focus group finding and recommendations from young people, the working group recommends:

## 6. Creating a Community of Practice

That developing a community of practice specifically around the question of how best to engage adults, to easily share and access knowledge, experiences, and resources that would support the Field. That this model be shared and ideally help inform a national knowledge hub. Some of the resources collected and developed could be used towards building this knowledge hub. In addition, reflections from all the working groups on the process of collaborative knowledge creation could also provide valuable lessons for the national knowledge network, an idea that will be explored further in the Reflections and Recommendations sections of this report.

## RESOURCES

1. **A collaboratively developed focus group structure**, which can be used as a model for gathering youth perspectives about healthy relationships programs and the kinds of competencies and knowledge they hope to see in facilitators and other adults. The lessons already learned from the pilot focus groups can be useful to understand some of the basic considerations for program design and facilitation, and how to engage adults more meaningfully. The structure can also be used as a model for other focus groups with youth.
2. **Toolkits, guides, and research** relating to how to best equip and engage adults in healthy relationships work. This is a collective research project, in many ways, and all stakeholders in the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships will be able to access this set of resources, as well as contribute to the collection.

## REFLECTIONS

The Equipping and Engaging Adults working group felt that their **strengths** include a passion for the work of ending violence against girls and women, a wealth of front-line experience and direct connection with youth; and the excellent support from the Canadian Women's Foundation.

Their contributions to the *Building the Field* project include **practices** such as the creation of strategies to elicit youth voice; and developing recommendations for enhancing connections between professional service providers. In addition, the potential to contribute to **research** through these recommendations, and to create a central online site for sharing and accessing research. Finally, the preliminary youth focus group model has the potential to enhance research with youth and could be further explored/refined.

## VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE

- Identify future directions, including how information generated to date can be incorporated into program development and facilitator training locally and nationally;
- Prioritize youth voice, including how to enhance the inclusion of youth voice in program development and facilitator training; and
- Find resources, so that the work is not “off the side of the desk”, to ensure the long-term sustainability of the work.

# NATIONAL LEADERSHIP WORKING GROUP

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Recommendations:

- Develop a National Strategy for Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada
- Develop a framework for a national network that will lead advocacy, research, and fundraising efforts for the field
- Develop a framework for a knowledge-sharing hub at the national level

### Resources:

- Research on existing networks, best practices, and evidence of the benefits of healthy relationships programs
- Case for Support for a National Strategy and Network for Healthy Relationships
- Logic Model for a National Action Plan on Healthy Relations



## MEMBERS OF THE WORKING GROUP

- Arwen Sweet, Antigonish Women's Resource Centre & Sexual Assault Services Association, Antigonish, Nova Scotia
- Brian Smockum, Canadian Red Cross, Toronto, Ontario
- Caitlin MacDonald, Women's Sexual Assault Centre of Renfrew County, Pembroke, Ontario
- Carly Neill, Royal LePage Shelter Foundation, Toronto, Ontario
- Kelly Petrunka, PREVNet, Kingston, Ontario
- Kevin Vowles, White Ribbon, Toronto, Ontario
- Kiran Dhingra, SWOVA Community Development and Research Society, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia
- Lana Wells, University of Calgary, Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence, Calgary, Alberta
- Marcia Wetherup, Peace Network for Social Harmony, Montreal, Quebec
- Patti Fritz, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario
- Roselle Paulsen, SERC MB & Clinic CHC, Winnipeg, Manitoba
- Sondos Parker, Sexual Assault & Violence Intervention Services (SAVIS) of Halton, Oakville, Ontario
- Tania Smutylo, Public Health Agency of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario
- Tara Wilkie, Peace Network for Social Harmony, Montreal, Quebec
- Teresa Emmanuel, Abrigo Centre, Toronto, Ontario
- Wendy Craig, Queen's University and PREVNet, Kingston, Ontario (Working Group Chair)

## OBJECTIVES

The primary goal is to create a National Strategy on Teen Healthy Relationships. Towards this, the focus areas are:

- Identify existing provincial and regional strategies for Teen Healthy Relationships
- Map the existing stakeholders nationally within the field
- Identify and develop an overarching theoretical framework for the field
- Begin to define the role and responsibilities of a national leadership hub

## KEY ACTIVITIES

- Creating a Case for Support for a National Strategy for Teen Healthy Relationships
- Creating a Logic Model for a National Action Plan for Teen Healthy Relationships

In order to create these documents, members of the working group:

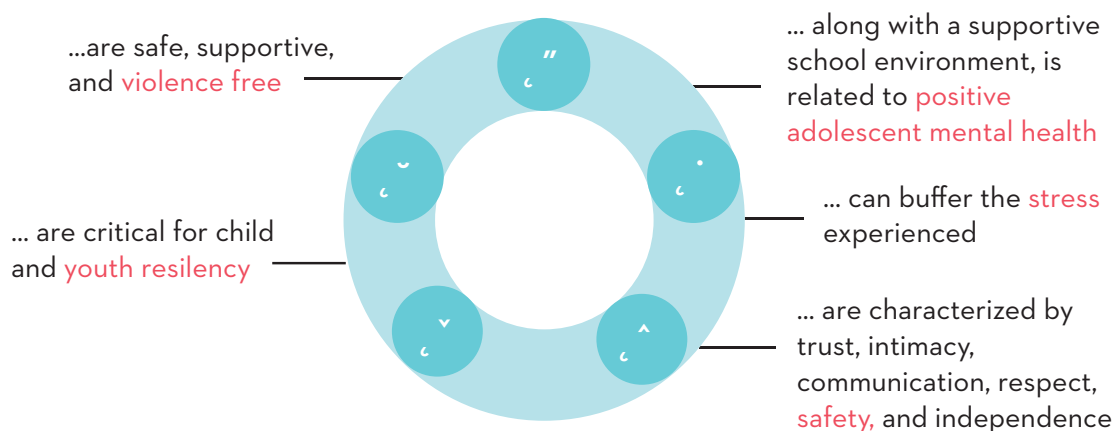
- Conducted research into existing regional and national strategies around Teen Healthy Relationships, as well as interrelated field such as prevention of violence against women
- Reviewed the mapping exercises and national survey results from the first half of the project
- Considered all the feedback, recommendations and discussed that emerged during the First National Forum for Teen Healthy Relationships
- Worked collaboratively to consolidate this knowledge and develop a case for support and an action plan for a national work, through an iterative process of discussion, review, and rewriting

## KEY OUTCOMES

The National Leadership working group developed two interdependent documents that articulate a vision, mission, and set of activities to enable better coordination and collaboration in the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships nationally. A framework needed to create the organizational capacity to do policy advocacy, fundraising, knowledge sharing, and capacity building.

### 1. Case for support

#### THE ~MPORTANT~ OF HEALTHY ~RELATIONSHIPS~



The Case for Support outlines the need for a National Strategy for Teen Healthy Relationships. As well as, the vision and mission of a centralized strategy and what it can accomplish in terms of strengthening the field as whole.

Elements of the case for support include:

- **Rationale for a National Strategy:** Why do we need a national strategy for Teen Healthy Relationships? What will it accomplish?
  - **Process of creating the strategy:** Four main phases: research, capacity and network building, drafting a plan, and implementation of the strategy.
  - **Principles of the strategy:** Breaking down silos within the field, coordinating multi-sectoral efforts, emphasizing the importance of prevention, and more.
- **Rationale for Focusing on Teen Healthy Relationships:** Presence of healthy and supportive relationships, as well as the presence of a supportive school environment, are both theoretically and empirically related to positive adolescent mental health. While healthy relationships are an important focus for preventing dating violence (i.e., the “what”), policy and practice efforts also need to consider where and how to target prevention and intervention.
- **Goal and Function of the Strategy:**
  - To develop a National Strategy on Teen Healthy Relationships that is designed to provide a sound theoretical and evidence base to support future government, community and corporate sector activity to promote healthy relationships and prevent violence.
  - To create connections among those in the field to share evidence-informed knowledge, identify and advocate for filling in the gaps, and identify promising practices.
- **Vision and Mission of the National Strategy:** All young people in Canada are supported to build healthy safe relationships and maintain connections throughout their lives.

## 2. Logic Model for a National Action Plan for Healthy Relationships

The logic model provides details about the specific activities, outputs, outcomes and impact of the different phases of building a National Strategy for Teen Healthy Relationships.

### PHASES TO IMPLEMENTATION



1. **Building the network**, which includes conducting a formalized national environmental scan of organizations, funders, researchers and funders to invite and engage in the network. This must be done with a cross-sectoral, inclusive and intersectional approach.
2. **Conduct research** into other countries that have built networks similar to this, as well as other networks in related fields, to learn from their methods, processes and best practices. At the same time, collect other valuable and relevant information about existing programs, resources and tools that can inform the Teen Healthy Relationships field.
3. **Implement a national strategy**, which will require ongoing work to continue to build and enhance the network. It will also involve building tools and resources that are evidence-based and freely available, providing stakeholders with tools for education and training; assessment and evaluation; key principles for prevention and intervention; and policy and advocacy.

The Logic Model outlines the constitutive elements of each phase, providing concrete activities, outputs, shorter- and longer-term outcomes, and the impact of each phase.

## REFLECTIONS

The National Leadership working group shared that their collective **strengths** include the ability to refine the work and make it feasible; an understanding of each members' strengths, time commitments and energies; the diversity, inclusiveness and wide representation from a large number of sectors and groups; and consistent attendance and participation.

In terms of their contributions, this group noted that all four sectors are addressed within the framework for a National Network. That contributing to **policy** is central to the vision of the National Network as well as a fundamental desired outcome, and that a goal of the National Network would be to influence **funding**.

## VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE

To conduct consultations with stakeholders to ensure that the Case for Support would serve the needs of the Field. These consultations will also help them collaboratively determine how to actualize this network at a national level. Given that one of the strengths of the group has been their collaborative working style, which brought together expertise from many different sectors, this group would like to build upon this model. In order to do this, they require:

- Access to policymakers,
- Funding for National-level work, and for building the National Network and Knowledge Hub

The vision articulated by this group encompasses and expands upon the areas identified for immediate action. Specific elements of the vision include:

- Accessing policy makers and influencing policies;
- Undertaking research;
- Engaging youth as a key partner;
- Engaging media to ensure public visibility and support;
- Mobilizing the Field into action towards actualizing the creation of the National Network.

# COMMUNITY PROGRAMS SETTINGS AND HARD TO REACH YOUTH WORKING GROUP

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Recommendations:

- Strengthen and increase programs serving hard to reach youth
- Strengthen community-based Teen Healthy Relationships programs

### Resources:

- Research on existing community-based Teen Healthy Relationships programs
- Research on existing programs, resources and networks for hard to reach youth

## MEMBERS OF THE WORKING GROUP

- Cheryl Kauffeldt-Supersad, Community Resource Centre Killaloe Inc., Killaloe, Ontario
- Cheryl Dobinson, Planned Parenthood Toronto, Toronto, Ontario
- Desire White, Rainbow Youth Centre, Regina, Saskatchewan
- Katherine Wincentak, York University, Toronto, Ontario
- Laura Shiels, Calgary Sexual Health Centre, Calgary, Alberta
- Robyn Lippett, Partners for Youth, Fredericton, New Brunswick
- Suzanne Laver, Partners for Youth, Fredericton, New Brunswick (Working Group Chair)
- Wendy Morin, Comox Valley Transition Society, Courtenay, British Columbia

## OBJECTIVES

Focus on improving programming that takes place in community settings, as well as programs that serves youth who are not in the school system, such as youth in custody, in care, homeless youth and youth who are homeschooled.

- Identify current programs in community settings, and programs for youth in custody, in care, and youth not being served by schools
- Identify the successes, challenges and gaps within these programs
- Identify existing online engagement tools that can have a wider reach

## KEY ACTIVITIES

- Mapping healthy relationships programs in community-based settings
- Mapping programs that cater to youth in care, or in custody
- Mapping programs for at-risk, underserved youth, especially youth not in schools

## KEY OUTCOMES

The main focus was to improve and increase programming that reaches youth who are in custody, in care, are home-schooled, and otherwise outside of the school system. This group was especially interested in identifying current programs, successes and gaps, and online engagement tools to reach these youth.

### Mapping Community Programs for Hard to Reach Youth

Mapping existing programs in community settings, especially those focused on hard to reach youth, such as youth in care, homeless youth, youth not in school, and youth struggling with substance abuse. Several members of the working group are involved in delivering these programs, and work with different vulnerable youth populations in various settings. The planned activities were to:

- Initiate a mapping process to create a list of existing programs.
- Outreach to collect information about more programs
- Distribute a survey to understand the challenges, barriers, and successes of existing programs that working with hard to reach youth
- Create a set of recommendations, or a strategy, for better engaging and supporting hard to reach youth through community programs

This working group, despite a strong goal and methodology, unfortunately had to suspend its efforts because of the difficulties of coordinating and attending meetings from across different geographical contexts.

## RESOURCES

Initial mapping revealed several existing networks in place to serve youth in care. However, there are not many resources or programs available for other groups of youth who are not in school.

## LESSONS LEARNED

One of the most significant lessons learned for this group was the challenge of collaboration. While this group was extremely passionate about the work, and was committed to achieving their goals, it was difficult add the work of this group to their already high workloads. Two main factors proved to be a barrier to collaboration here:

- **Members are frontline workers:** The group was entirely comprised of frontline workers and program providers who work with marginalized and hard to reach youth. Due to the hands-on nature of their work, and especially the demographics of the youth they work with, they often work on flexible or changeable schedules.
- **Understaffed and Under-resourced:** Related to the above point, these members' work is not only challenging but is also often under-funded and understaffed. Therefore their capacity for collaborative work outside their direct program is limited.

It is important to note that the group's challenges are not indicative of a lack of interest, but rather a lack of capacity. Indeed, at the Second National Forum, participants reinforced that working with Community Programs and Hard to Reach Youth is a priority for the field, particularly in communities that criminalized, marginalized, underserved and otherwise experiencing barriers.

# THE SECOND NATIONAL FORUM FOR BUILDING THE FIELD OF TEEN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



## INTRODUCTION

The Second National Forum for *Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships* took place on June 4-5, 2018 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. It brought together about 70 participants, with representation from program providers, government, research and academic organizations, and funders. Interestingly, there was not a huge overlap in the participants from the previous national forum, which resulted in new and different ideas in the room. Also notable is the greater representation of participants from the Western provinces, as well as Northern territories, compared to the First National Forum.

Importantly, this national forum also sought to integrate and centre First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories, perspectives, and education. This is largely due to the efforts of Jarita Greyeyes and Jennifer Rankin, members of the Leadership Roundtable and the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Programs Working Group, who were instrumental in both advocating for and organizing several key means of integrating Indigenous history, culture, and education throughout the two days of the forum.

## OBJECTIVES

As with the previous national forum, this two-day forum was designed to increase communication and participation amongst the attendees. In addition, this forum was also an opportunity to reflect on the *Building the Field* project as a whole, to evaluate and learn from all that the project has accomplished so far, and to develop recommendations for how to continue to strengthen and build the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada. Therefore, the forum provided a space for ongoing participants to reflect and share their efforts, for new participants learn and offer feedback, and for all participants to create and strengthen their networks and relationships.

The objectives of the forum were to:

1. Build relationships for further collaboration across sectors and regions
2. Share learnings on identified priority action areas for strengthening the field by the working group activity results
3. Understand the Truth and Reconciliation calls to action for the field
4. Develop further recommendations to build and enhance the field nationally, including next steps for the field building work

## INDIGENOUS LEARNING

### Opening ceremony

The Second National Forum for the Building the Field project was located on Treaty One land, home to Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and in the heart of the Métis Nation. The opening ceremony for the national forum featured a hoop dance performance by a young performer who participates in Sacred Seven, a strength building healthy relationships program offered at the Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre, that focuses on empowering young women and girls physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally through the practices of pow wow hoop dancing.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> Source: <https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/wiichii/programming/sacred-seven.html>

## Kairos Blanket Exercise

Participants took part in a Blanket Exercise workshop, developed by KAIROS Canada. This is, “an interactive learning experience that teaches the Indigenous rights history that is rarely taught. The Blanket Exercise covers over 500 years of history in a one-and-a-half-hour participatory workshop. Blanket Exercise participants take on the roles of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Standing on blankets that represent the land, they walk through pre-contact, treaty-making, colonization and resistance. They are directed by facilitators representing a narrator (or narrators) and the European colonizers. Participants are drawn into the experience by reading scrolls and carrying cards which ultimately determine their outcomes. By engaging on an emotional and intellectual level, the Blanket Exercise effectively educates and increases empathy. The exercise is followed by a debriefing session in which participants have the opportunity to discuss the experience as a group. This often takes the form of a talking circle.”<sup>8</sup>



8 Source: <https://www.kairosblanketexercise.org/about/>

## CENTERING YOUTH VOICE

### Presentation from The Collegiate's Truth and Reconciliation Course

One of the major recommendations for Field is to integrate the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action within educational initiatives. One excellent example of a program that seeks to do so is a required course offered by the University of Winnipeg's Collegiate program,<sup>9</sup> entitled the "Truth and Reconciliation Course." Derek Eidse, one of the course creators and instructors, presented an overview of course along with reflections from some of his students. The course is divided into four key areas: education and awareness; justice and fairness; health and well-being; and culture and contribution. Each area is taught by a different teacher, with a lot of focus on inviting guest speakers from the community, as well as activities and outings to festivals and ceremonies. As the instructor explained, "The TRC course is about relationships - it is not a native studies or Indigenous studies course - it is not about putting Indigenous people under the microscope." Rather, it is about introducing students to Indigenous cultures and peoples and encouraging them to develop their own relationships and understanding by actually participating in activities and engaging in conversation.

The positive impact of the course was evident in the short reflections offered by the students.

*"The whole course changed my view of my culture. It's been tough, but also very educational."*  
- Chandler

*"Before this, I went to a school with mostly White students, and I learned about Canadian history through a European perspective. It helped me understand Indigenous history through our own perspective. In the course, we not only understood the histories and problems, but also talked about actions. It feels empowering."* - Ryleigh

A key component of course, said Eidse, was turning the lens back on the self, in order to better understand the context of our relationships, and to learn about each other's journey to get where they are in the present. The course teaches empathy and understanding.

*"The course shed light on Canada's racist systems and encourages us to treat Indigenous people with respect and equality."* - Farah

As several participants at the forum noted, this course provides a powerful example of how a more empathetic, relationship-centric approach to education can have transformative culture effects.

<sup>9</sup> The Collegiate at The University of Winnipeg is committed to offering Grade 9, 10, 11, and 12 students high school programs that provide a transition to post-secondary education. It functions as a high school within a university. More information is available here: <https://collegiate.uwinnipeg.ca/about/index.html>

## Presentation by the Aboriginal Youth Council, National Association of Friendship Centres

The National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC)<sup>10</sup> developed a youth-led Teen Healthy Relationships workshop called New Journeys. One of the youth members from this project, Natasha Hiltz-Commanda, presented an overview of the workshop that they developed.

*"We've made our healthy teen relationships work culturally sensitive by incorporating the medicine wheel teaching and the teachings of the seven grandfathers and the seven stages of life. While working with indigenous youth, we have to learn to be sensitive to the different cultures, because this is also a way for our youth to know about the origins of these teachings, and to connect with our cultures" –Natasha*



*"The medicine wheel allows us to look where we are in our life cycle, and our relationship with the things around us." –Natasha*

Natasha shared an exercise for participants to reflect on characteristics to cultivate and improve, where we need help, and our relationships with others.

A key part of the New Journeys workshop is to develop healthy youth leadership and healthy youth equity. Activities are designed to help youth regain power within themselves, and to overcome, or deal with, the effects of intergenerational trauma. The project website, [www.newjourneys.ca](http://www.newjourneys.ca), has online resources for youth, as well as for Indigenous cultures more broadly. It also has resources for learning Indigenous languages. Moreover, the New Journeys team has developed two PSAs, which can be used by other organizations.

<sup>10</sup> The National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) is a network of 125 Friendship Centres and Provincial and Territorial Associations from coast-to-coast-to-coast. Friendship Centres are Canada's most significant off-reserve Indigenous service delivery infrastructure and are the primary providers of culturally enhanced programs and services to urban Indigenous residents. The Aboriginal Youth Council was established in 1994 to bring Aboriginal youth views, concerns and issues to the national level. The AYC brings a unified youth voice that helps guide the Friendship Centre Movement in a number of youth priority issues as well as provides a youth presence in the decision-making process of the Friendship Centre Movement.



# THEMATIC REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Break down silos within the field by developing a shared set of values and guiding principles for the field, as well as a shared vocabulary for the field
- The Field of Teen Healthy Relationships should be intersectional, inclusive, youth-informed and trauma-informed at its core
- Build a National Strategy, National Network and Knowledge Sharing Hub to act as a central resource and guide for the field as a whole
- Meaningfully engage youth stakeholders at every step
- Support regional, sectoral and issue-specific coordination and collaboration

At the Second National Forum were participants were invited to reflect on their contributions to the field, as well as on the working group activities to date. It was a key moment for the working group members to consolidate and present their work, and to engage the wider network. It was also an important moment to collectively plan next steps, beyond the end of the *Building the Field* project. This section will share overall reflections and recommendations for specific sectors in the Field, reflections and feedback for the working groups, and reflections and recommendations for the Field as a whole.



## SECTOR-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS

### HIGHLIGHTS

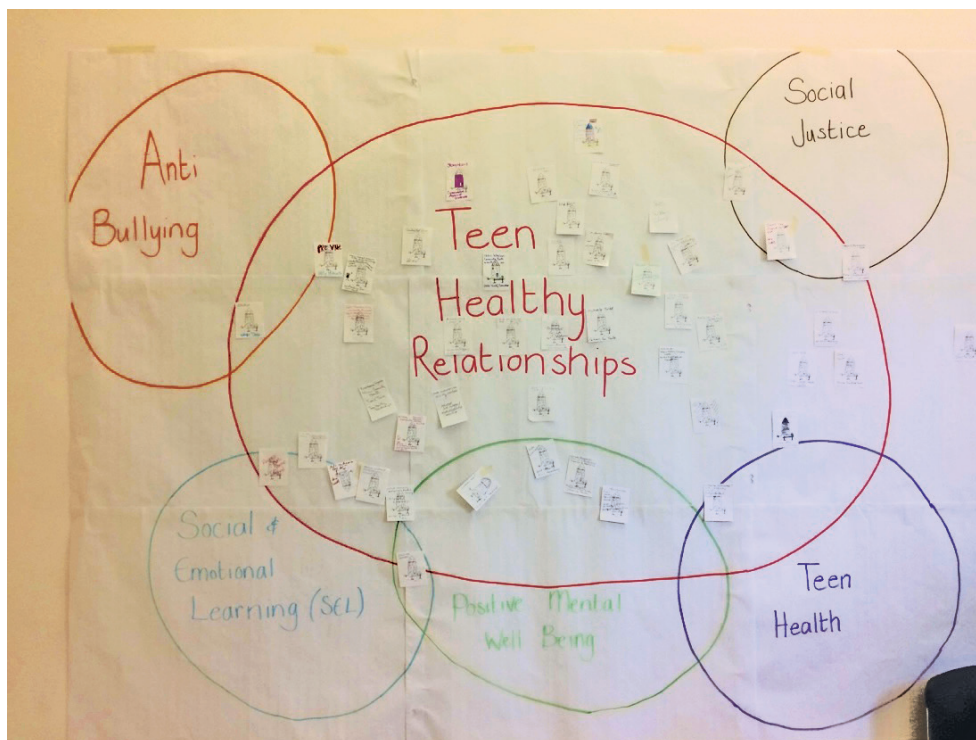
- Break down silos within the field as a whole, as well as within each sector through better communication
- Develop means of sharing knowledge and best practices amongst program providers
- Develop key advocacy efforts in collaboration between Policymakers/government and programs
- Develop evaluation and assessment tools in collaboration between academia and programs
- Create a shared set of goals, values, language, and set of definitions for the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships

Throughout the *Building the Field* project, participants have sought to highlight the interconnected, multi-sectoral nature of the field. This requires the breaking down of silos within the field and necessitates collective thinking about how each sector contributes to the overarching goals of the field as a whole.

## Program Providers and Community Based Organizations Reflections

Program providers not only constitute the largest sector within the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships, but also work most directly with youth. Organizations that work within this sector are **diverse**, with different program areas that include healthy relationships, sexual and mental health, violence prevention, as well as capacity building, livelihoods training and skills building, among others. These organizations also may offer gender specific-programs or programs inclusive of all genders. They work with a diverse range of age groups, and with youth with different needs, including but not limited to: 2SLGBTQI+ youth, migrant youth, youth in care, and Indigenous youth. This diversity is a huge strength of the field, as it offers creative and plural approaches to healthy relationships programs, including both informal and formal ways of collaborating and working together across organizations

*“One of the sector’s strengths is the diversity of different approaches and interventions - they have the same agenda and there’s a repetition of the message - that collective sharing of knowledge is a major strength” -group participant*



Yet, program providers also face several challenges, with the lack of adequate, long-term, prevention-focused funding being the most common and persistent challenge.

*“One of the biggest challenges for program providers is funding - it is typically is easier to get funding as a reactive program than a proactive or preventative program - it’s cheaper to buy the band-aid” -group participant*

Moreover, program providers often find that there is insufficient support for feminist-informed programs, especially in a changing political landscape. This can be an enormous challenge, especially for organizations without the capacity for advocacy work. In fact, several participants mentioned that time constraints within the sector often means that they do not always have time to communicate with one another and are unaware of innovative programs within the field.



## Government and Policymakers Reflections

*“Policy makers also need critical knowledge of what the risk factors are. For instance, what is the most up to date information on the online world, and what is its potential to affect well-being of all young people” –group participant*

There is a need for more collaboration and communication within the Field. Community organizations and program providers are doing the “heavy lifting” within the Field, and other sectors need to support this work. This is particularly necessary for governmental organizations and policy providers, who tend to work in silos even within their own sectors. For instance, it is important to build collaborative process between departments of health, family welfare, and violence prevention. Similarly, there is a need for provincial and federal governments to communicate and better align their efforts. A common language and set of definitions will support accomplishing this. In addition, it is important to take into consideration that collaboration is not always equal for all parties involved, and in our efforts to create collective action, we must be aware of the demands on different groups within the field.

## Academics and Researchers

*“We need to create evaluation tools along with input from community organizations. We have to think along the social ecological model and create evidence-informed decision-making tools to support community organizations” –group participant*

The primary responsibility of the research sector is to support the work of program providers. Researchers need to work closely with program providers to develop evaluation tools and implementation theories for Teen Healthy Relationships work. Some of the areas identified as being especially critical are: How do we measure impact? and How do we train teachers well? Many existing measurements and best practices are focused on heteronormative, white youth which provides a gap in really understanding the impact of healthy relationships programs. This is an opportunity for researchers to assess their work and improve the tools they are using. The approach to Teen Healthy Relationships work need to come from a holistic, development framework, such as the social ecological model. Co-creation and collaboration between program providers and researchers in order to create evidence-informed decision making to support community organizations is deeply needed.

## WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES BASED RECOMMENDATIONS

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Organize workshops to deepen knowledge of the TRC calls to action, and develop specific, organization-based commitments to implementing and integrating specific actions
- Design creative and respectful means of engaging with youth in program development, and take their input seriously
- Ensure that the national network for Teen Healthy Relationships is intersectional, inclusive, youth-informed and trauma-informed at its core

All three extant working groups presented their work from the past year to other participants at the National Forum. The sessions were designed to also be participatory and to encourage attendees to reflect on how the initiatives developed by the working groups could impact their own work, as well as provide feedback on the working group activities. Below is some of the most significant feedback that emerged from the working group sessions.

### First Nations, Métis and Inuit Programming

*“Over the years, we have seen the intergenerational effects of the residential schools. The TRC calls to action was about providing a space for people to tell their stories. Emerging out of this storytelling are concrete calls to action that can be used in our field” -forum participant*

In addition to the working group activities and recommendations for the field as a whole, some notable additional reflections from the field on how to integrate some of these calls within their own work include:

- **Most participants were unfamiliar with the TRC calls to action** and spoke about how it would be useful to have more sessions, within their own organizations, to review the calls to action and understand better how they can be implemented.  
*“We need to use a trauma-informed approach to teen healthy relationships, and we need to start by acknowledging our own privilege” -forum participant*
- **Participants identified the need for more curriculum changes**, in order to integrate Indigenous histories, arts, cultures, and literatures within education at all ages, which would also include more experiential learning *with*, rather than *about*, Indigenous communities. There is a need to integrate these perspectives within Teen Healthy Relationships curriculum more specifically  
*“We need to integrate more storytelling, and celebrate Indigenous cultures, languages, and practices within our field. We have so much to learn” -forum participant*
- **Organizations need to be accountable** to the TRC calls to action. While these calls are not mandatory, they could be powerful means of achieving meaningful change. Therefore, organizations could make position statements for accountability and create a way of tracking their progress.

## Equipping and Engaging Adults

*“It is so important to move away from an essentialist view of youth and not lump them all into one category” –forum participant*

In addition to the working group activities and recommendations for the field as a whole, some notable additional reflections from the field on how this process of youth engagement might be applied within their own organizations. Some of the key outcomes of the discussion include:

- **Recognizing the knowledge and expertise that youth hold** is essential to successfully engaging with them. Often discourse focuses on youth as “future leaders,” but this ignores the expertise of youth in the present. Even when youth are consulted, they are asked to share their problems but are not necessarily invited to contribute to the solutions, which typically come from “experts” who are not youth. It is important, therefore, to ensure that engagement with youth is not centered on them sharing their experiences of trauma. Rather, engagement should build upon the strengths, creativity, and solutions that youth offer.
- **Participants discussed the role of educators**, especially because they have the most access to youth, but are often overburdened and under trained. There is a need for equipping teachers with skills in trauma-informed, survivor-centered engagement with youth.

*“We talked to youth all over the country, and the biggest recommendation is that they want teachers trained in mental health - it needs to be a core part of their university education. Moreover, using a trauma-informed approach for this kind of training is essential - recognizing that educators are human beings.” –forum participant*

- **To engage parents and other supportive adults**, it is useful to send informative materials home and also use other creative means of engaging parents, including social media networks, communal meals, and events for collective learning.

## National Leadership

*“It is essential to engage youth in the network at all levels - youth advisory committees across different geographical locations” –forum participant*

In addition to the working group activities and recommendations for the field as a whole, some notable additional reflections from the field on the case for support and logic model, and comments on ways to enhance and improve it include:

- **An intersectional, inclusive, trauma-informed approach** to Teen Healthy Relationships. While these values were implicit throughout the two documents, this to be explicitly stated and integrated within the values of the field, and at every step of the case for support and the action plan for the national network.
- **Adaptability and flexibility of the network**, the national strategy should be cohesive enough for national-level coordination, but also be flexible enough to so that it can be tailored to the specific needs of local, provincial, and regional contexts.

*“How adaptable are the common tools that we hope to develop? There needs to be a balance between assessment on a national level and the differences in local contexts - we have to make them adaptable and flexible” –forum participant*

- **Greater clarity and specificity**, including addressing questions about *who* the network is meant for, as well as who will be responsible for its maintenance, its funding needs, and other logistical elements.

## REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Region-specific networks should be developed in addition to the National Network, and can help inform Province-specific policies and practices
- The National Network should be responsible for advocacy and funding
- Develop sector or issue-specific communities of practice relating to specific priority areas to enable knowledge-sharing within and across sectors



Reflections on the structure of the project, in particular, was whether a national network would be most effective in building the field, or if in fact provincial or regional networks might bring about more meaningful structural changes.

## Regional and National Networks

*"There is a lack of partnership at the moment between organizations in different languages. There are pockets of Francophone communities that feel isolated from others. We have to improve the bilingual accessibility in the field" -forum participant*

There are specific demands in terms of the local or provincial contexts, as well as challenges that are context specific. There are also values, needs, and challenges that impact the field at a national level. Therefore, it would be useful to have a national network with regional hubs, in order to strengthen the field at different levels.

## Responsibilities of the National Network

*"Engaging hard to reach youth should be an overarching value, like centering youth voice and gender diverse youth" -forum participant*

Roles and responsibilities are best addressed at the national level include two crucial, interrelated roles: policy-related advocacy, and securing funding for the field. A national policy with an inclusive, intersectional, trauma-informed approach to Teen Healthy Relationships will be integral in ensuring the success of the field. This will additionally support funding requirements from organizations working not only in urban settings, but also in currently underserved rural and remote locations. The Canadian Women's Foundation, as a national organization already leading in this area and dedicated to strengthening the field, should continue in this role.

## Building Communities of Practice across Regions and Sectors

There is a need for communities of practice dedicated to specific issues or areas of practice, in addition to networks based on geographic affinities. For instance, one of the major issues that emerged as a priority is that of creating programs for hard to reach youth, as this is one of the most critical areas for intervention, and yet also one of the most difficult. It would be useful, therefore, to have a community of practice to share learnings and practices, as well as collaboratively tackle obstacles and challenges.

# EVALUATION

## HIGHLIGHTS

### **Successes of the Building the Field project:**

- There is immense experience, knowledge, and passion within the diverse stakeholders who make up the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships
- Stakeholders are committed to sharing and collaborating to develop knowledge, resources, and opportunities
- The Building the Field project has provided an opportunity for network building, knowledge sharing, and resource development

### **Challenges and Shortcomings:**

- Insufficient engagement with stakeholders from the education sector
- Insufficient engagement with youth stakeholders
- Lack of diversity and intersectionality within the participants in the project
- Significant barriers to collaboration amongst the working groups

### **Opportunities Moving Forward**

- There is significant participation, membership and a collective sense of ownership of the Field amongst the stakeholders who have come together over the past three years
- Working groups and other participants have identified key priorities and actionable areas to strengthen the field
- There is immense momentum and energy created within the Building the Field project, which provides a great opportunity to take forward the work done so far and continue to strengthen the field

The *Building the Field* project, at the outset, had two overarching objectives:

- Enhance and strengthen the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships programs through a national collaborative approach, thereby contributing to ending gender-based violence in Canada.
- Facilitate increased collaboration among those operating within the Teen Healthy Relationships Field to increase and strengthen links and relationships between these stakeholders and thereby establish greater coordination, alignment, communication and knowledge sharing.

While the project met and even exceeded these goals, participants were asked to reflect on the process of co-creating a vision for the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships over the last three years. Reflections are presented here according to themes, and come from members of the Leadership Roundtable, members of the working groups, participants of the national forums, and from the team at the Canadian Women's Foundation.

Reflecting on the *Building the Field* project, several participants at the forum, as well as members of the working groups, offered that the project could be considered a model for the national network and knowledge sharing hub. It was suggested that, going forward, the field could use the **momentum generated by the *Building the Field* project**, and build upon the structure already created over the last three years. Thus, this is an important moment to reflect on the successes and challenges of the project so far, and how we can reorient ourselves to take the next steps, as a field.

## WORKING GROUPS EVALUATION

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### Successes

- Members of the working groups identified the immense passion and knowledge within their groups, which contributed to their success in collaborating nationally
- There was diversity and inclusiveness both in the membership of the working groups, and in their ways of working together
- Broad and deep understandings of the complexity of the work

#### Challenges

- The biggest challenge, by far, was that of collaboration: time and logistics of organizing meeting across different time zones and using digital platforms, are the two major factors that proved to be barriers
- Most members are frontline workers who are already overworked and under-resourced, posing another barrier for collaboration

InsideOut developed a self-evaluation tool to gather reflections from members of each working group. While reflections specific to each working group have already been discussed, here we provide some lessons learned collectively by all the working groups.

## Successes

- A range of strengths supported the collaborative process, including the range of experience, knowledge and passion for the work; the depth of knowledge on specific issues; commitment to sharing information; support from the Canadian Women's Foundation; the ability to be inclusive as well as understanding of the varied commitments that each member of the group brought; and the ability to overcome the many challenges to collaboration.
- An expressed pride and satisfaction in aspects of both process - ie: the principles that informed/characterized how to work together, and outputs - ie: the tangible results.
- Potential/forthcoming results that are subject to additional efforts and resources, indicating the importance of capitalizing the time and resources that have already been invested in this work.

## Challenges with respect to collaboration

Notably, while the collaborative strengths identified by groups were diverse, the main challenges identified were common to all three groups. They may be summed up succinctly as: **time and logistics**.

- Working Groups agreed that the **amount of time** that members were able to commit to the work, given that all participants had other work commitments/responsibilities and were volunteering their time, was a limitation that needed both to be recognized and mitigated as much as was possible.

Groups reported various approaches to dealing with the constraints on members' time:

- Sharing responsibility for chairing meetings between two members of the group - this provided flexibility and ensured that meetings could go ahead;
  - Setting realistic goals for what could be achieved with the time available; and
  - Assigning leadership responsibilities to those with more time/capacity.
- Groups also described challenges related to the **logistics of connecting/meeting** in the context of geography - ie: distance and multiple time zones, and members' competing priorities, including their paid work. Attempts to mitigate these challenges mainly focused on maximizing the use of email and online collaboration tools, such as Dropbox. However, groups noted that such tools did not entirely resolve the problem and the wish was expressed to support an in-person meeting at least once every year.



## Commonalities and/or intersections across Working Groups

Based on reflective questions on the ways working groups' work intersected or aligned with the efforts of the other working groups, overall groups were largely working in isolation from each other. All groups expressed an interest in working in a more coordinated way moving forward, because a level of interaction and information-sharing between the different working groups would likely have benefitted the specific work and increased the cohesiveness of the *Building the Field* initiative as a whole. In order to address this gap in the future, working group members suggested:

- Establishing an online collaboration platform through which working groups can share what they are doing, as well as provide and receive input from each other.
- Include an "update" on what the other groups are doing at all meetings
- Assign responsibility of ensuring communication and information sharing across groups to the Leadership Roundtable.
- Convene quarterly meetings for all the working groups where they could share updates with each other, as well as receive and provide feedback to one another.

## NATIONAL FORUMS EVALUATIONS

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### Successes

- Opportunities for building their professional networks
- Collaboration, participation and collective engagement
- Centering First Nations, Métis and Inuit knowledge
- Collective sense of ownership and belonging to the field

#### Challenges

- Lack of diversity, especially from participants from French-speaking, Northern, and remote communities in Canada
- Lack of sufficient youth engagement and participation
- Lack of sufficient engagement with educators, including teachers and school boards

InsideOut an evaluation form to complete after each of the National Forums, in order to better understand the strengths of these meetings, as well as opportunities for future improvement.

## Strengths and Successes

### 1. Network building

Overall, both the National Forums for Teen Healthy Relationships were successful in meeting the stated objectives. They provided the opportunity for representatives from across the field to come together in face-to-face interactions that are invaluable for the kinds of knowledge sharing, network building, and collective learning and decision making that the *Building the Field* project set out to accomplish.

### 2. Participation, Collaboration and Collective Engagement

Both national forums were designed with a workshop and knowledge-sharing design at their core to collectively come to a shared understanding of the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada. Specifically, providing the opportunity for collaborative reflection, discussion, and framing what Teen Healthy Relationships work entails. In doing so, they were able to identify ways of enhancing it together.

### 3. Centering Indigenous knowledge

Both forums, but especially the Second forum, centered the knowledge of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities in Canada, and provided specific resources, models of engagement, and opportunities for learning.

## Limitations, gaps and opportunities for improvement

### 1. Lack of diversity

While Leadership Roundtable outreached to and provided travel bursaries to different communities, prioritizing those that face barriers or are underserved, final participation at the forums was **not adequately intersectional**. More diverse participation is required in the future. **Specifically, participation from French-speaking individuals** remained low at both forums. While there was specific outreach to engage French-speaking communities in Quebec and elsewhere (see Appendix B), this did not result in sufficient representation. Given that this is a national field, this signals that more work needs to be done to ensure that the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships is inclusive and attentive to cultural and language needs of all provinces.

### 2. Lack of Youth Representation:

Both **national forums** highlighted the need to include youth voices across the field. At the first forum, the low level of youth participation was a significant concern. In recognition of this gap, significant efforts were made to reach out in a more focused way to diverse youth groups throughout the country to engage and centre young peoples' perspectives. **Youth representation at the Second National Forum, while greater than at the first, unfortunately remained low.** This signals the need to recognize that, while youth participation at meetings is important, there is a need to find means of further engaging young people, perhaps in the collaborative processes of actually defining and shaping the field.

### 3. Lack of Engagement with Educators:

Although teachers and staff at schools are key stakeholders in the field, there remains a gap between the formal education sector and Teen Healthy Relationships programming. There is a need to develop more avenues for interaction and collaboration between these closely aligned sectors, not only at the national forums, but within the field as a whole.

# LEADERSHIP ROUNDTABLE EVALUATIONS

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Successes

- Detailed and thoughtful planning throughout the Building the Field project
- Successful collaboration and distribution of labour amongst members of the Leadership Roundtable, especially in the first half of the project
- The design of the project allowed for evaluation, reflection, and iteration at critical stages of the process

### Challenges

- Lack of energy and focus in the second half of the project
- Unequal distribution of work and responsibility in the second half of the project
- Competing demands on members' time posed a barrier for collaboration

InsideOut developed an organizational partner reflection tool and conducted individual interviews with Leadership Roundtable members to gather their thoughts about the project. Specifically, they were asked about their perspectives regarding:

1. The extent to which the needs and goals of the initiative had been met;
2. The working process of the Leadership Roundtable; and
3. The difference that had been made to the Teen Healthy Relationships field.

## 1. Extent to which the needs and goals of the initiative were met

Members of the Leadership Roundtable had mixed perceptions regarding whether or not the initiative's overall goals were met. Notably, those who felt that the goals had broadly **not** been achieved provided more extensive and detailed input.

### Successes

Amongst the key successes of the project as a whole is the detailed **planning process**, which includes the **collaborative development of key concepts and plans** by not only the Leadership Roundtable, but also participants from across the field. Furthermore, it is essential to note that the **project was planned with a robust monitoring and evaluation plan** at its core. This ensured that there were regular, planned moments for reflecting on the project, allowing for an iterative process by which any gaps or barriers could be addressed as the project unfolded. One member reflected on the positive outcomes of the initiative for their own organization, which included strengthened programming informed by a deeper understanding of what is happening across the country, and a new partnership with a national organization. This input provides anecdotal evidence at a regional level of the kinds of impact that the initiative was seeking at the national level.

## Challenges and barriers

Members of the Leadership Roundtable noted that, despite good planning, the project faced challenges in putting these plans into action, primarily because of **lack of capacity and time**, and **high turnover of participants in working groups**. They also felt that there was a **perceived waning of focus** and a difficulty to **maintain engagement** of both working group members, as well as members of the Leadership Roundtable. One member concluded quite definitively that the initiative did not, ultimately, “get to the [stated] goals.” Notably, they made the important observation that the process of the initiative itself, which was dynamic, iterative and developmental in nature, may not have been conducive to fulfilling goals that had been defined at the outset of the work.

Other barriers mentioned include the fact that there was an unequal distribution of effort among participants within working groups, competing demands on participants' time, and difficulties working in a truly collaborative way.

## 2. The Leadership Roundtable's working process

Members of the Leadership Roundtable highlighted a variety of positive attributes of their working process, all of which are associated with **effective collaboration**. These include:

- Effective, well-organized leadership/facilitation;
- Clear structure and roles;
- Diversity of representation and perspectives that increased with time;
- Good, collegial relationships between members;
- Inclusive environment where all contributions were valued;
- High level of engagement;
- Positive attitudes and commitment to the work; and
- High degree of focus and productivity.

There was some agreement that these qualities were more in evidence in the **first two years** of the initiative and that, following the establishment of the Working Groups, the Leadership Roundtable became less actively engaged,” its function became less clear, and participation and momentum waned.

While several members observed that individuals' roles on the Leadership Roundtable were clear, others reported that they would have liked **more clarity** about what was expected of them, and that this would have supported them to make a greater contribution. On the topic of the iterative and developmental nature of the work, one member admitted their lack of familiarity and comfort with this approach, noting that while “excellent relationships” were built, the process was “not efficient.”

Some comments contrasted the effectiveness of the in-person meetings (described as “very powerful”) with the challenges of virtual meetings, in which the lack of visual connection between participants were seen to have created barriers to successful communication, including for example, “lots of silence taken for agreement”.

### 3. The difference that the initiative made to the field

Several members' responses to this question was a sense of uncertainty about the impact on the field. Responses also included expressions of uncertainty regarding how to measure "in concrete terms" the kind of changes that the initiative was seeking to make as well as how to surmount the apparent barriers to influencing change at the policy level – barriers such as "inertia" and a "deep resistance" to change at the institutional level.

In spite of this uncertainty, a strong theme across all members' answers is the inherent value of bringing people together to talk, connect, build relationships and start operating as a network. One member noted that "any dialogue is change" and, collectively, this emerges as the main impact of the initiative from the perspective of the individuals on the Leadership Roundtable.

#### Successes

- That people who are not normally together in the same space were brought together;
- That the terms on which these people can and will work together were established;
- That a great deal of learning took place, e.g. about organizational approaches to programming, the perspectives of different sectors and groups, and elements of effective practice, etc.; and
- That "important and valuable" connections between organizations and individuals in different sectors of the field were made.

#### Further Outcomes

- The field was mapped, and an understanding developed of the similarities and differences within it;
- Participating organizations gained an increased understanding of the impacts of colonization and the need for reconciliation; and

#### At a Regional Level

- Some organizations have been engaging in shared planning, with the goal of supporting each other and avoiding duplication of services; and
- Conversations have been taking place between organizations that apply a gender lens to Teen Healthy Relationships work, with some progress on "getting that lens into schools."

More broadly, the observation was made that the initiative has "started an incredibly important process." The work has enabled considerable knowledge creation and mobilization, although more time is required to get to consolidating and acting upon that knowledge. The crucial foundational work of developing relationships and building trust has taken place and there is "so much potential" for effecting change assuming the initiative can continue.

## COLLECTIVE LESSONS LEARNED

The evaluation processes mentioned above sought to gather reflections from all the participants in the *Building the Field* project. While there are important nuances and details within each group's perceptions of the project, some of the collective lessons learned through this project are:

- The *Building the Field* project was successful in taking some initial steps towards **creating a sense of collective engagement** within the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada.
- There are important **challenges with regard to insufficient diversity, intersectionality, and engagement with youth** that have not been adequately addressed, and which will require further work to accomplish.
- **Effective collaboration across the field** is difficult due to barriers of geography, silos, language, differing goals and objectives, and more. However, the *Building the Field* project provided some important lessons in this arena, in terms of how the use of digital platforms, in conjunction with face-to-face meetings, can help to overcome some of these barriers.
- There is an **overwhelming sense of the collective energy and momentum** resulting from the *Building the Field* project, and participants from all working groups, national forums and the Leadership Roundtable have underscored the **need to make use of this energy to continue working on strengthening the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada.**

# KEY OUTCOMES FROM THE PROJECT

## HIGHLIGHTS

### VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE FIELD

- Centering youth voice in a diverse and inclusive way that is attentive to 2SLGBTQI+ youth, youth from marginalized communities, and Indigenous youth
- Developing a shared framework and vocabulary that is anti-colonial, intersectional, feminist, and based in a trauma-informed approach
- Taking a holistic focus to healthy relationships, including personal/mental health, romantic relationships, friendships, family relations, professional relationships, and more
- Focusing both on prevention and intervention regarding unhealthy relationships

### KEY PRIORITIES for the FIELD

1. Supporting Teen Healthy Relationships Program Providers
2. First Nations, Métis and Inuit Programming
3. Involving Parents, Caregivers & Other Support Systems
4. Community Program Settings
5. Hard to Reach Youth
6. Online & Digital Programming

### NEXT STEPS

- Secure the requisite funding, partners, and other resources for the following two steps
- Develop the National Strategy for the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships
- Build the National Network and Knowledge Sharing Hub using an accessible digital platform

Throughout the *Building the Field* project, the Leadership Roundtable has sought to gather participants' recommendations for the best ways to meaningfully strengthen the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada. The project has been designed with a collaborative, iterative process at its core, so that participants can review and refine recommendations at crucial steps along the way. In many ways, the single most prominent, cohesive recommendation for the field is the **need to create a National Network and Knowledge Hub** for Teen Healthy Relationships. This idea comes from all the participants in the project, with all additional recommendations informing this central idea in various ways.

The recommendations for the field as a whole relate to three large areas:

1. Values and principles of the field;
2. Key activities and focus areas for strengthening the Field; and
3. Processes for creating, coordinating and maintaining the national network.

## VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE FIELD

The Field of Teen Healthy Relationships is diverse and wide-ranging, with a wide range of programs, focus areas, and stakeholders. Yet, through the *Building the Field* project, it became evident that there are shared values and principles that resonate across the field, which include:

- **Centering youth voice**, which involves having youth representation at all the steps of the project. This could involve more focus groups with youth or consultations, hiring youth representatives to work in key roles in the national network, involving youth in program development, and engaging with youth in advisory committees or youth councils.
- **Intersectionality and inclusion**, which includes centering marginalized voices and perspectives within the field, as well as ensuring that programs are tailored to specific communities, such as 2SLGBTQI+ and First Nations, Métis and Inuit identified youth and those identified as Hard to Reach.
- **Developing a shared framework** that is anti-colonial, intersectional, feminist, and committed to amplifying the leadership of youth alongside adult stakeholders. This is also related to the need for developing a **shared vocabulary** across the field, with agreement on basic principles for the work of Teen Healthy Relationships programs.
- **Taking a wide and holistic lens towards healthy relationships**, which means maintaining a wide focus of programs to include personal/mental health, romantic and dating relationships, but also relationships with family, friends, community, and the environment.
- **Focusing both on prevention and intervention**, which means developing programs both to prevent unhealthy relationships, as well as programs that respond to violence within relationships by providing support and care.



## KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE FIELD

In terms of program areas, there are identified priority areas for the field, with Youth Voice and Gender Diverse Youth as a key value for the field.

1. **Supporting Teen Healthy Relationships Program Providers**, as they form the core of the field, and interact most closely with youth. This, in many ways, is a means of ensuring that the needs of youth are well represented and form the core of the field.
2. **First Nations, Métis and Inuit Programming**, which needs to emanate from a strengths-based perspective rather than one that is based in the risks and dangers that Indigenous youth may face, a shift in perspective that can provide an important means of empowering youth.
3. **Involving Parents, Caregivers & Other Support Systems** within Teen Healthy Relationships programming for a more holistic approach that can begin to change different aspects of teen lives, within the family, with the community, and at school.
4. **Community Program Settings**, supporting programs that are offered in out of school settings such as community centers
5. **Hard to Reach Youth**, including youth populations who may be harder to reach due to being in treatment, care or custody, as well as in geographically remote rural communities
6. **Online & Digital Programming**, which highlights the possibilities of using digital media and new media technologies to reach youth populations online.

## CREATING THE NATIONAL NETWORK AND KNOWLEDGE HUB

The need for a national network and knowledge sharing hub emerged as the single largest priority for strengthening the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada, including:

- **Communities of Practice** for program providers at the national level as well as at regional or provincial levels, to enable an ongoing sharing of knowledge, collaboration, and discussion. Here participants envision a web of stakeholders, with overlapping and concurrent interests that may pertain to their particular geography, or to one of the priority areas listed above.
- **Funding requirements** must be considered in the creation of the national network. This entails funding for the creation and moderation of the digital platform, as well as for enabling other activities such as meetings, engagement with youth, training, and other forms of knowledge creation and capacity building.
- **Organizational buy-in**, as we have observed over the course of the *Building the Field* project, is key to successful collaboration, so that participation in the network is considered a core function, rather than a voluntary engagement. This will ensure the long-term sustainability of the network.
- **Continued mapping and partnerships** are essential for ensuring that the field is adequately represented through the national network and brings together diverse perspectives from different communities and geographies throughout Canada.

## Structure and Function of the National Network

### Advocacy Strategy

This set of recommendations arises from the fact that many program providers, especially smaller organizations, are understaffed and overburdened with responsibilities, and do not have the capacity for grant writing, monitoring and evaluation, and advocacy with policymakers. These tasks, while important for building the field, are time consuming and labour intensive. Therefore, one of the key functions of the National Network would be to centralize some of these tasks to enable program providers to focus on developing and delivering healthy relationships programs. Key activities for this part of the network include:

- Advocacy for a National Strategy for Teen Healthy Relationships
- Developing a shared vocabulary for the Field
- Developing Monitoring and Evaluation Tools
- Grant writing and funding needs for the Field

### Knowledge Sharing Hub

This set of recommendations emerges from another significant observation of the existence of silos within as well as across sectors. Participants remarked how meetings such as the two national forums enabled knowledge sharing and relationship building within the Field and advocated for more such opportunities on a sustained basis. This could take the form of a knowledge sharing hub at the national level, which would include several key functions:

- Developing a resource sharing hub
- Creating Communities of Practice
- Capacity Building and Training
- Youth engagement and mentorship

## NEXT STEPS

The three-year long *Building the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships* project has now ended. However, the team at the Canadian Women's Foundation, as well as our partners and participants are keen to sustain the energy and momentum of the project. Overall, there was broad support in principle for the continuation of the *Building the Field* project and to take forward work on the key focus areas identified and developed.

Possible next steps include:

- Creating a meta plan that identifies one or two key areas with the maximum impact for the field, and finding the right partners to do the required pieces
- Supporting regional level work, through smaller, regional collaborations that might build on emerging regional partnership approaches resulting from the *Building the Field* work to date
- Organize regional forums to highlight the work being done in specific regions, areas and communities
- Developing and strengthening collaborative partnerships between program delivery organizations to support peer problem solving and learning about effective practice
- Importance of involving youth in any future work.
- Aligning future work with other initiatives and entities, including:
  - National, provincial and territorial work on Reconciliation;
  - Advisory Council of the Federal Strategy on Gender-Based Violence; and
  - Provincial and Territorial Friendship Centres.

In order to accomplish all these steps, however, there is a need for **funding and logistical support** to ensure the sustainability of the work.

# APPENDIX A:

## Priorities for the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada

## Eight priorities for the field

During the First National Forum, 8 major themes surfaced as the most significant for strengthening the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Canada. Of these, the need for diversity and inclusion, of youth voices as well as marginalized populations such as 2SLGBTQI+ youth and Indigenous youth, were so significant that the Leadership Roundtable proposed to **include youth voice and gender diverse youth, as overarching themes or guiding principles for the field as a whole**. Additionally, the needs of Indigenous youth were considered in need of greater attention, thereby making **working with First Nation, Métis and Inuit youth a priority area in itself**.

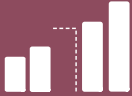

The eight priorities were presented back to the larger group, and participants were asked to collectively identify the **strengths, challenges, and opportunities for each theme**. Participants could circle around the room and engage with all eight topics, in order to have the greatest cross-fertilization of ideas within the forum. The ideas that emerged are briefly presented below.

1. **Teen Healthy Relationships Program Providers**, and the need to better support their efforts . Participants highlighted the need to identify a core set of skills, as well as basic training and evaluations programs, in order to strengthen their work .
2. **Involving Parents, Caregivers & Other Support Systems** within Teen Healthy Relationship programming for a more holistic approach that can begin to change different aspects of teen lives, within the family, with the community, and at school.
3. **Building National Leadership and Network**, who would be responsible for engaging and advocating with government, building relationships with funding agencies, and connecting frontline service providers with one another.
4. **Indigenous Programming**, which needs to emanate from a strengths-based perspective rather than one that is based in the risks and dangers that indigenous youth may face, a shift in perspective that can provide an important means of empowering youth.
5. **Community Program Settings**, including youth populations who may be harder to reach, such as rural communities, as well as programs that are offered in out of school settings such as community centers.
6. **Access & Engagement for Youth Not in School**, including youth who may be in treatment, in care, in custody, or being home-schooled . Here, it is important to consider the challenges specific to certain populations when developing programming .
7. **Online & Digital Programming**, which highlights the possibilities of using digital media and new media technologies to reach youth populations online, in order to both reach a larger population of young people, as well as reach them through the media they are most invested in.
8. **Youth Voice & Gender Diverse Youth** provide the overarching core principles for all action areas . Centering these voices will become a guiding principle of all the work in Teen Healthy Relationship programming .

1. **Teen Healthy Relationships Program Providers**, and the need to better support their efforts . Participants highlighted the need to identify a core set of skills, as well as basic training and evaluations programs, in order to strengthen their work .

 <b>STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSES</b>	 <b>CHALLENGES AND GAPS</b>	 <b>OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTIONS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teen healthy relationships work is increasingly recognized and gaining momentum and social acceptance.</li> <li>• There is a greater focus on involving men and boys within this work, which has historically focused on interventions with women and girls.</li> <li>• More program evaluations are providing evidence about the impact of this work, thereby yielding valuable information about trauma-informed best practices in the field.</li> <li>• More mentorship and training programs are available for program delivery staff, helping to build capacities of program providers in the field.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program providers face the dual challenge of maintaining fidelity to their programs as well as making them sufficiently flexible and responsive to diverse contexts.</li> <li>• Despite increased recognition of teen healthy relationships programs, there is insufficient funding for the work. It is also not sufficiently prioritized in some educational systems.</li> <li>• The “field” is very disjointed at the moment, and operates within a scarcity mentality, such that program providers are not thinking long term and not investing sufficient time in training and capacity building.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We need consistency in skills, trainings, evaluations, resources, and messaging across the field . Although these may vary across contexts, there should be some established standards.</li> <li>• We need to create a knowledge sharing and communication system or network across the field, to share research, evaluations, best practices, and discuss challenges.</li> <li>• We need a shared community of practice, or a hub, where we can share information, trainings, programs, and funding information as well. This is connected to the knowledge sharing point above.</li> <li>• We need to conduct long term evaluations of teen healthy relationships programs in order to have evidence-based programs. In order to do so, we need funding support.</li> </ul>

2. **Involving Parents, Caregivers & Other Support Systems** within Teen Healthy Relationship programming for a more holistic approach that can begin to change different aspects of teen lives, within the family, with the community, and at school.

 <b>STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSES</b>	 <b>CHALLENGES AND GAPS</b>	 <b>OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTIONS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are already several initiatives in place to engage parents and caregivers in healthy relationships programs, such as Facebook groups, workshops, and intergenerational cooking classes.</li> <li>• There is some concurrent programming offered in an unassuming way, to parents as well as children.</li> <li>• A national program called “Strengthening families for the future” indicates buy-in at the policy level.</li> <li>• The most successful programs, in terms of engaging parents, offer childcare and food. We can learn from this when designing future programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although organizations do send information to parents, it is difficult to know what is reaching them, what is effective, and how to effectively engage parents without overwhelming them.</li> <li>• Many parents are working—sometimes several jobs—and may be struggling with other challenges, which makes engaging them difficult.</li> <li>• Although Facebook groups exist, they can be problematic because of privacy settings, and hard to know which messages are reaching the audience.</li> <li>• There are some parents who are already very engaged; the challenge lies in finding out how to reach those who are not engaged at all.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizations working with youth need to build their internal capacity to effectively engage with parents at the same time. However, this not always feasible because it requires extra funding.</li> <li>• We need to connect with other organizations who work with adults and communities and integrate teen healthy relationships programming with their work.</li> <li>• Teen healthy relationships program providers should have a means to communicate, share, and vent about their efforts, experiences and learnings from engaging parents in this work.</li> <li>• We need to be careful about our own assumptions regarding parents and caregivers. Some of the worst role models can be teachers themselves—a whole other problem.</li> </ul>

3. **Building National Leadership and Network**, who would be responsible for engaging and advocating with government, building relationships with funding agencies, and connecting frontline service providers with one another.

 <b>STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSES</b>	 <b>CHALLENGES AND GAPS</b>	 <b>OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTIONS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is existing expertise in the field of teen healthy relationships work at the provincial and regional levels.</li> <li>• We need to capitalize on this existing expertise to work towards making it more sustainable.</li> <li>• Governments and practitioners recognize the importance of healthy relationships programming and its value to the larger goal of preventing violence against women.</li> <li>• There is some momentum at a national level towards supporting teen healthy relationships work, but this needs to be further mobilized.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We need to agree upon a theoretical approach to teen healthy relationships in order to develop a national strategy that can guide the work at provincial and regional levels.</li> <li>• While these guidelines will not be prescriptive, they can be useful to ensure some consistency.</li> <li>• We need to navigate the balance between a national framework and regional specificity. The framework therefore has to allow for flexibility and context-based responsiveness .</li> <li>• There has to be greater involvement of funders and philanthropists in determining the strategy in order to ensure the programs are sustainable and supported.</li> <li>• We need champions at different advocacy, funding, and policy making levels to take the strategy forwards and ensure the work on the field is sustainable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a listserv for information and knowledge sharing, as well as opportunities for funding and collaboration across the field.</li> <li>• We need more evaluations of programs in order to know what is successful, and what is not. We could start collecting anecdotal information as well as quantitative evidence .</li> <li>• We need a regional or national hub that can support frontline work in multiple ways: network building, knowledge sharing, capacity building, and funding.</li> <li>• We need to highlight the role of youth leaders and involve them in every initiative, including the national strategy and national leadership hub.</li> </ul>



4. **Indigenous Programming**, which needs to emanate from a strengths-based perspective rather than one that is based in the risks and dangers that indigenous youth may face, a shift in perspective that can provide an important means of empowering youth.

 <b>STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSES</b>	 <b>CHALLENGES AND GAPS</b>	 <b>OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTIONS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are some excellent examples of community-driven work, as well as research and programs for indigenous youth.</li> <li>• There have been excellent efforts to build relationships with First Nations communities and on-reserve schools, to offer teen healthy relationships programming.</li> <li>• The relationships amongst and within indigenous communities can be very strong and powerful, and can therefore be an excellent foundation to build further healthy relationships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a major lack of indigenous content in most school curricula, which poses a huge gap to overcome, because there is a kind of absence and refusal to acknowledge indigenous communities and knowledge.</li> <li>• The rural and remote locations of many First Nations communities is a challenge in terms of providing adequate and context-specific programs to youth.</li> <li>• There is a long history of mistrust and lack of allyship that makes it difficult to build trust without retraumatizing indigenous communities.</li> <li>• There are massive funding constraints that make it difficult to provide the kind of careful, respectful, bottom-up, trauma-informed approach that is required. It is necessary to include indigenous communities in building and delivering these programs, rather than a top-down approach.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is essential to take a trauma-informed, strengths-based approach to teen healthy relationships programs within indigenous communities. These programs should be owned and delivered by the communities.</li> <li>• We must learn from, and meaningfully implement the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.</li> <li>• We must work hard to develop a model of mutual respect, trust, and benefit. This begins with non-indigenous people learning from and about indigenous communities and culture.</li> <li>• We have to take into account and respect the diversity within indigenous communities in Canada, and to learn about the complex and differing realities which they face everyday.</li> <li>• We must address the funding disparities that currently exist, and dedicate sufficient funds to support initiatives for indigenous youth in urban and rural context.</li> </ul>

5. **Community Program Settings**, including youth populations who may be harder to reach, such as rural communities, as well as programs that are offered in out of school settings such as community centers.

 <b>STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSES</b>	 <b>CHALLENGES AND GAPS</b>	 <b>OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTIONS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community-based programming offers diverse programs that are open and available to all youth. These are created to be responsive to the community's needs, and are flexible enough to be altered when necessarily, in order to better serve target populations.</li> <li>Community programs, and community spaces in general, can be a stable constant for some youth, especially those who are part of unstable home and school environments.</li> <li>Community-based programs are arguably more flexible than school-based ones, because they are not tied to a curriculum and do not need to be.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although community programs would be strengthened by partnerships, there are currently not enough because there is competition for resources and funding, creating a competitive atmosphere instead of an atmosphere of collaboration and co-working.</li> <li>Community programs can sometimes be working in isolation, without the support of an institution such as a school board, or without the mandate of a school-based curriculum.</li> <li>Building and maintaining relationships with the community can be hard work, particularly in rural and remote communities. This is compounded by the fact that communities are already responsible for other programs and can experience burnout.</li> <li>There is an ongoing struggle with inconsistent funding, inconsistent participation, and inconsistent ownership of the program and curriculum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community programs need to be further supported through strategic partnerships with other programs, including health services, teen healthy relationships programs, schools, libraries, and other youth-centered services, in order to provide holistic care.</li> <li>Community programs should be created with a sustainability methodology, to consider the longevity of the program offerings, and see how these can be taken forward without burnout.</li> <li>It is essential for community programs to establish a voice, and define what a safe space means in their particular context. Moreover, even with established guiding principles, the programs must retain flexibility and be responsive to needs of the entire community.</li> <li>Regional and provincial guidelines for community programs may be helpful in setting a baseline for the services provided, ensuring that everyone has access to basic care.</li> </ul>

6. **Access & Engagement for Youth Not in School**, including youth who may be in treatment, in care, in custody, or being home-schooled . Here, it is important to consider the challenges specific to certain populations when developing programming .

 <b>STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSES</b>	 <b>CHALLENGES AND GAPS</b>	 <b>OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTIONS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are mandated programs within the youth justice system. Many such programs take a strengths-based, restorative approach rather than a punitive one. Initial evaluations suggest that these are successful.</li> <li>• In B.C. there are youth hubs, supported by provincial funding, that provide support and education including outreach, physicians, mental healthcare, nurses, sex and sexuality education.</li> <li>• In Ontario, there is mobile programming to reach small, rural communities that reach home-schooled youth and provide opportunities for socializing.</li> <li>• There are many partnerships with organizations working with marginalized and at-risk youth, such as youth in shelters, in custody, and more.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This theme, by definition, is a gap in the teen healthy relationships field. Most programs are offered in school or after-school settings, and therefore don't reach these extremely vulnerable youth groups who do not have access to these spaces.</li> <li>• Within court mandated programming, there are few resources/programs for girls who have experienced violence . The focus is on programs for male perpetrators of violence.</li> <li>• Many kids in the justice programs are pulled away from their communities and sent far away and punished in brutal ways, rather than being shown care and support.</li> <li>• How do you navigate consent for/with someone who's incarcerated? Kids who are in juvenile detention don't always have the choice to attend the programming, or the same ability to draw boundaries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People working with youth justice and detention should be provided with sufficient education, training, and resources. These must be trauma-informed and culturally appropriate such that they help with restoration and rehabilitation rather than further alienate these youth.</li> <li>• We have to learn more about why parents are choosing to homeschool their children, and what particular kinds of needs homeschooled children may have, in terms of social skills, relationship-building, etc.</li> <li>• We must address the special requirements for youth who are homeless, have substance abuse issues, and who live in shelters. We should develop partnerships with organizations who support them.</li> <li>• Ongoing mentorship may be an appropriate approach for working with youth who are in the justice system or homeless or otherwise marginalized.</li> </ul>

7. **Online & Digital Programming**, which highlights the possibilities of using digital media and new media technologies to reach youth populations online, in order to both reach a larger population of young people, as well as reach them through the media they are most invested in.

 <b>STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSES</b>	 <b>CHALLENGES AND GAPS</b>	 <b>OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTIONS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital programming can reach diverse audiences more easily, and therefore makes teen healthy relationships work more easily accessible to underserved youth and remote, rural communities.</li> <li>• Online programs can also reach parents, teachers, and other adult influencers and stakeholders.</li> <li>• This can be a more creative way of reaching youth. As young people are already online, it meets them where they are. Several successful community based and youth-run programs are online .</li> <li>• Programs created by youth can be empowering and teach them new media-making skills. In the process of making media, they learn other forms of communication, negotiating relationships, and useful skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is often a gap between service providers ideas for online programs, and what youth actually want to see. We have to make sure programs are accessible, interesting, and creative.</li> <li>• Creating online programs can be expensive and require skills that many service providers do not currently possess.</li> <li>• Digital spaces can be empowering, but online abuse, bullying and violence also thrive. It is essential to educate youth about digital media literacy skills to navigate online content critically and safely.</li> <li>• It is difficult to make sure the information provided online is reaching the intended audience and consumed in the right way.</li> <li>• Without a facilitator, online programming may not be disseminated and used properly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizations must build digital capacity, recognizing the labour that goes into online communication.</li> <li>• Thoughtful media creation should respect the safety of participants and allow for them to ask questions.</li> <li>• We could create a youth-led online directory or database for organizations working in teen healthy relationships.</li> <li>• Online programming should be creative, use humour, popular culture and other references that will be engaging for youth. Engaging youth in creating these programs is essential.</li> <li>• When involving youth, we need to teach them critical media literacy skills, whilst also including diverse youth so we can center marginalized perspectives more firmly within teen healthy relationships programs.</li> </ul>

8. **Youth Voice & Gender Diverse Youth** provide the overarching core principles for all action areas . Centering these voices will become a guiding principle of all the work in Teen Healthy Relationship programming .

LANGUAGE & SAFE SPACES	ENGAGING YOUTH	BEING ADVOCATES WITH FUNDERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important not to make assumptions and to be heteronormative through the program or the language we use. This includes respecting chosen pronouns and using gender-inclusive language wherever possible .</li> <li>• We cannot always provide safe spaces, but we can work towards creating them and encourage “brave” spaces, in which youth can be open, empowered to be themselves, and identify and speak as they wish.</li> <li>• In some communities, having spaces that are explicitly for LGBTQ youth can be unsafe because attending means “outing” yourself; it may be better to run programs in spaces with a variety of services.</li> <li>• Importantly, these spaces need to be inclusive to all . Therefore, we need to set guidelines for engaging respectfully, which could include “calling in” rather than “calling out” ..</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth-centering needs to be built into the structure of the program, which is best achieved when youth action committees help create the programs. This will also help avoid tokenism, and ensure that youth voices are centered and taken seriously</li> <li>• It is important to pay youth for their services, knowledge, and engagement . If we want youth to participate, we should make sure that their knowledge is valued and that their time and labour is taken seriously and considered work .</li> <li>• We have to ensure inclusivity of youth from different backgrounds—varied nationalities, religions, races, and genders to make sure we have diverse representation. This will also help us make programs more responsive to different needs .</li> <li>• Youth representation is needed at every stage . We should include them in creating research surveys as well as in the process of analysing the results and disseminating the data .</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funders and governments are not always as invested in youth voices. We need to educate policymakers and funders about why it is important to fund youth engagement for stronger and more effective programs .</li> <li>• There is strength in numbers: Organizations who offer teen healthy relationships programs should come together to advocate for youth voices in order to convince funders that this is a priority within the field as a whole, and not merely the mandate of a single organization .</li> <li>• We need research and evaluation to show the benefit and value of engaging youth, and use this data to convince funders. However, we need funding to conduct the research and evaluation .</li> <li>• We need to use inclusive language and youth voices throughout our work (and not only on awareness days) to establish these changes within our own organizations, in addition to teaching funders</li> </ul>

# APPENDIX B:

Focus group with stakeholders in Quebec

After the first half of the project, the *Building the Field* team took the opportunity to reflect upon the project, and to identify any gaps or challenges that could be addressed as we embarked upon the next phase of the project. One of the most critical gaps that emerged was that there was that the representation of Quebec-based representatives was low relative to the number of healthy relationships programs offered in the province. To address this gap, we planned a focus group discussion to bring together organizations that offer healthy relationships programs in Quebec. The purpose of the focus group discussion was for us to better understand the particular challenges and barriers that these groups face in their work, to identify the opportunities to strengthen and improve their work, and to discuss the possibilities for collaboration, both within the province as well as nationally. The discussion was split into three main areas:

## What are the most pressing challenges and barriers for Teen Healthy Relationships programs in Quebec?

The five most pressing challenges that emerged include:

- **Programs not integrated in academic curricula:** Teen Healthy Relationships programs are currently offered outside of the regular academic curriculum and are not mandatory. This means that sustaining participation is challenging, and that many students are not receiving these programs in an integrated, sustained manner.
- **School teachers lack training and knowledge:** School teachers often do not have the training and knowledge in healthy relationships programs. Hence, an important recommendation is that teachers should be properly trained to give the interventions about healthy relationships, as well as in ancillary skills such as active listening, and cultural sensitivity.
- **Lack of continuity and short-term engagement:** Healthy relationships programs are often “championed” by specific teachers or principals rather than being institutionalized. This means that, in case of a change in personnel, there is no continuity, and program officers then have to have to remake relationships with the school anew. This is closely tied to short-term funding and engagement, which severely impacts the possibility of long-term, sustainable change.
- **Normalization of violence:** Sexual violence is normalized in popular culture, including on social media, in games, and in the music industry. This is accompanied by a culture of hypersexualization of girls and women in media, as well as the proliferation of online violence. The sheer ubiquity and normalization of violence poses a great challenge for Teen Healthy Relationships programs.
- **Lack of capacity:** The provincial government in Quebec has recently introduced new legislation for sex education in schools, which mandates sex education at every grade of study. The revised curricula is supposed to be implemented in September, but both schools and school boards, as well as community groups, have all identified that teachers and schools do not have the necessary training and resources to appropriately implement these new programs.

## What are the most promising opportunities to strengthen the Field of Teen Healthy Relationships in Quebec?

Five key recommendations that emerged include:

- **Youth-Centered and Youth-Led Programs**

Participants recommended that centering youth voices should be a guiding principle for all Teen Healthy Relationships work. In practice, this would mean integrating youth participation in the creation, review, and dissemination of programs. They also stressed the need for programs to be inclusive of all youth, especially including sexual- and gender-diverse youth. Participants felt that healthy relationships programs should be intersectional and recognize the fact that sexual violence is intertwined with other forms of violence, including racism, colonialism, and Islamophobia, and more.

- **Education**

Participants advocated for a more integrated approach to healthy relationships, with greater collaboration between program providers and schools. They stressed that community organizations and schools should work together in a collaborative, non-competitive way wherein each actor's roles, responsibilities, strengths and capacities are maximized to benefit youth. They also advocated for a long-term approach to healthy relationships programs, recommending that they begin early and follow students through their school career. To better address the challenges of the contemporary media environment, participants stressed the need for healthy relationships programs to integrate critical media literacy and overall critical thinking skills.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Given the challenges of measuring the impact of Teen Healthy Relationships programs, participants recommended the integration of a framework for monitoring and evaluation within the program design.

Related to this, participants recommended that program design should take the aim of long-term sustainability. In this view, programs should be offered to students beginning in primary or elementary school and follow the students throughout their career in school. This would allow the monitoring of their knowledge and behaviour change, and to see the impact of programs on a longer time scale.

- **Safe Spaces**

All programs should strive to create safe, inclusive, and non-judgmental spaces that encourage discussion and participation. As many participants noted, safe spaces can act as a powerful means for creating solidarity and encouraging learning. The following principles should be integrated in order to create safe spaces: an intersectional approach that is attentive to the diverse lived realities of young people; the use of inclusive and non-discriminatory language; awareness and sensitivity to different cultural and social positions; and ensuring that the workshops and programs integrate the principles of harm reduction.

- **Training and capacity building for facilitators**

The success of interventions is highly dependent on the facilitator. Therefore, participants stressed the need for adequate training of facilitators in subject-matter knowledge, active-listening skills, encouraging participation, and creating a safe, inclusive and non-judgmental space. Related to the previous recommendation for long-term sustainability of programs, participants also articulated the need for keeping the same facilitator for programs, in order to maintain the relationships that they have built, both with the school as well as the youth.



## What is the relationship between organizations and programs in Quebec and those in other regions of Canada?

This final discussion focused on the advantages of collaboration, as well as the barriers and opportunities to work across provinces and borders in order to have a more coordinated approach to Teen Healthy Relationships. It asked participants to think about ways of working together, across distance and divisions of language and culture.

### Advantages of Collaboration and Benefits of a National Network

- Many organizations across the different provinces in Canada are doing similar work, but with unique perspectives and tools. Collaboration between different healthy relationships programs across the country would allow for more sharing of knowledge, tools, techniques and lessons across different programs.
- A national network of Teen Healthy Relationships would allow for more sharing across the field, not only amongst program providers, who could share best methods and practices, but also amongst different stakeholders.

### Challenges to Collaboration

- Even though many of the organizations working in Teen Healthy Relationships work in closely-aligned ways, their specific goals and objectives may be distinct. Moreover, the needs of different provinces may be different due to the local context. It is important to ensure that the specificity of context and need are not erased or lost in the process of collaboration. This necessitates a delicate balance of finding alignments and similarities whilst keeping differences in mind at the same time, which can prove to be a difficult challenge.
- A lack of sufficient funding can prove to be a challenge for collaboration outside of Quebec, as collaboration necessitates funding for travel, translation, and more.
- The lack of adequate funding also impacts collaboration in other ways: many organizations struggle with a lack of sufficient personnel and time. This means that collaboration is not seen as an integral part of their responsibilities within the organization, but rather as an additional (often voluntary) efforts outside their regular responsibilities. This means that collaboration often takes place in a piecemeal, ad hoc fashion rather than being integrated within the logic of the organization itself.
- There are very few opportunities for face-to-face meetings and other events (especially in-person) which could bring the different organizations together to create the relationships required for meaningful collaboration.

### Possible Strategies for a National Network

Participants discussed a number of practical solutions and methods to create a national network and collaborate across provinces:

- Sharing methods, lessons and knowledge, via platforms such as Facebook.
- Organizing a monthly webinar in order to share ideas with other organizations. The webinar needs a facilitator or facilitating organizations to ensure sustained and regular engagement.
- Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all participants, and ensuring that participant organizations include participation in the network as one of their core responsibilities to ensure sustainability.





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