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A Word From Our CEO

Time is always one of the biggest challenges in life and the reality is, it's a problem usually only perceived by ourselves. It's been several months since we produced a newsletter and for no other reason then, time simply slipped by and the busyness of what we do overwhelmed our ability to tell you about it but here we are and I'm pleased to be able to share some of our recent work with you, our partners and funders.

The fall season is typically one of our most busy periods of the year as we re-launch our school programs, often hold a youth engagement summit of some sort and begin to digest the summer that has just passed and yes, plan for the next one 10 months away. It is also a time for funding applications and our financial year end as well, so it's no surprise that our recent fall and winter season has been one of the most intense on record. Hundreds of children and youth are currently directly involved in our programs in middle and high school and more still are involve in Youth in Care Network activities. Of particular interest most recently, was the opportunity we had to hire a former leadership participant for a 6 month terms to help us update and refine our middle school program curriculums.

In this newsletter you will not only find references to past work but also to upcoming activities planned for later this year. You will also read about one of our dedicated staff, Susan King, who as our lead outreach social worker, helps those most in need in our community – she is certainly representative of the dedication and passion of our staff team.

What you won't read, except for here, is anything about one of our staff being out on medical leave as they undergo cancer treatment, which we can tell you is almost over and by all accounts has been a success – we look forward to their return in the months ahead. I mention this as their co-workers not only offered support to them during this time but also took on all their work and performed seamlessly – a true testament to a group of people, who we are so thankful for and who put their heart and soul into this work every single day.

A First for Making Waves

Last December, we hosted the first ever Making Waves conference for a group comprised exclusively of First Nations youth. Youth participants from Bonar Law Memorial High School took part in a series of workshops to discuss what everyone can do to identify and prevent relationship violence.



This partnership with First Nations communities has been a focus of ours for some time. This is true not only for the Making Waves program, but also for other programs and events we coordinate on a regular basis. While we have worked in First Nations communities before, we hope to look back on this past fall as a next step towards even more youth engagement programming for First Nations youth.

We want to take this opportunity to thank all of the youth who attended the conference. As we fully expected, you were fantastic participants. We look forward to hopefully seeing some of you again as we work towards more such programs in the years to come. We also want to thank Bonar Law Memorial for helping us put all the necessary pieces in place to make this happen. Now let's work to keep these waves rolling on.



Ring A Bell for Youth Mental Health



For the fifth year in a row, the Dots NB Ring A Bell Campaign provided students throughout New Brunswick with the opportunity to connect and discuss topics related to youth mental health. As part of the campaign, teachers received materials and lesson plans for use in their classrooms to engage students with a variety of educational exercises.

In a new twist, this past year we opted to engage provincial MLAs in the Ring A Bell Campaign. 19 MLAs took part in the campaign kick-off event by visiting schools throughout the province to talk to students about the complexity of this issue and why it's important to talk about it. Premier Brian Gallant also participated, visiting two schools over the course of the day.

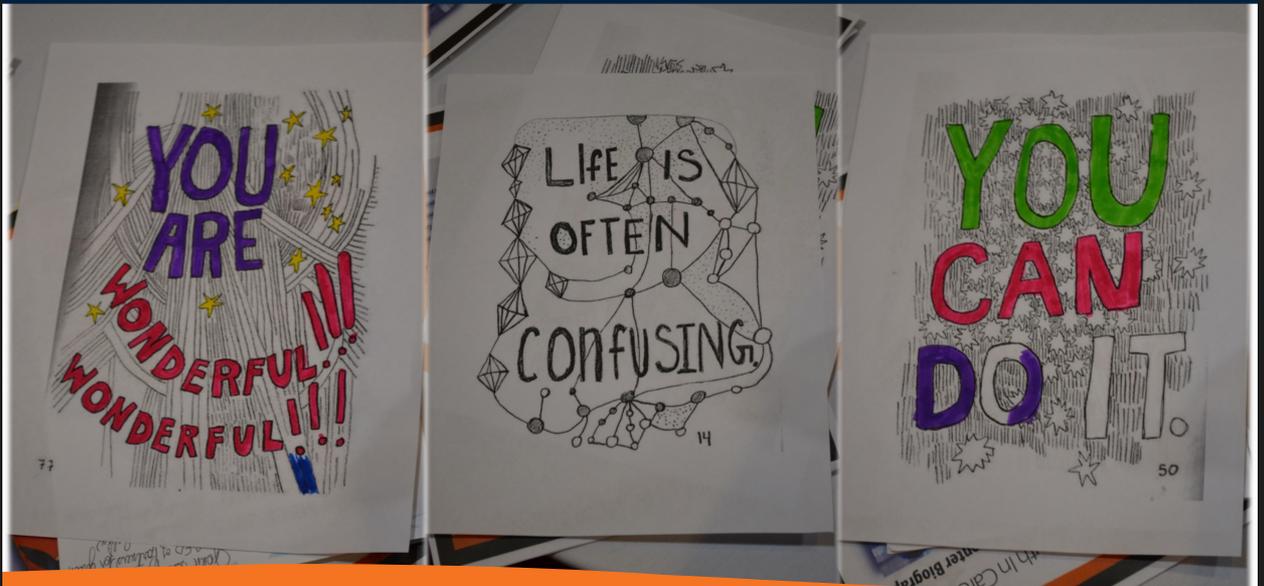
The week was capped off by a fun-filled gathering in the gym of McAdam Elementary School. Students and staff were on hand for a handful of presentations, live music, and delicious cake. It was the perfect way to finish off a great week, and we want to thank all the students and school staff who helped make it all possible.



Youth In Care Summit

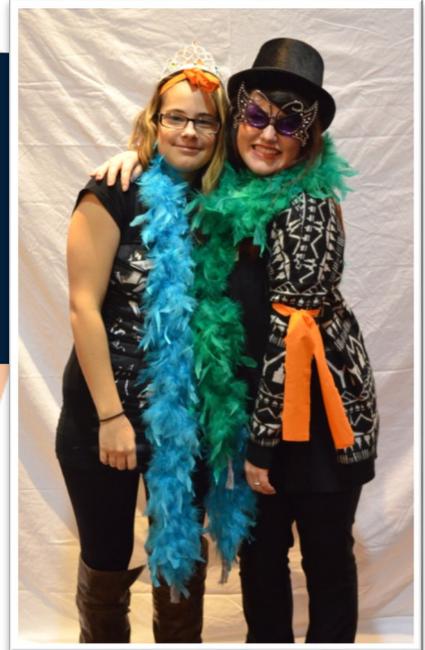


We want to thank the over 100 people who participated in the first ever Youth In Care Summit on November 27th. We're hard at work delving into the wealth of information collected over the course of the workshops and discussion events that took part throughout the day. Suffice to say that those in attendance were absolutely phenomenal. Over the next number of months, we will be formatting much of the information gleaned from summit participants into a formal report. For the time being, we thought we would give you a snap shot of the key issues raised. A special thanks goes out to the T.R. Meighen Family Foundation as the principal funder of this fantastic initiative.



Youth In Care Summit

The summit ran on a conference model called the open-space format. In short, this format prompts discussion through the use of an overarching question and allows participants to identify specific key issues that relate more directly to their lives and experiences. The initial question: What are the main issues facing youth in and from government care?



Front of mind

“I feel social workers, foster families, and group home staff lack training on the issues we face.”

“How can I rebuild or maintain a relationship with my biological family?”

“Why do foster families have stricter rules for me than for their biological children? I just want to be treated the same.”

“We are often not ready to leave the system when we age out.”

For more information on the NBYICN and how you can get involved, contact network coordinator Robyn Lippett at rlippett@partnersforyouth.ca.

Reaching Out



Founded in 2010, our Fredericton Outreach Services program uses a housing first model of delivery to offer services to homeless and near-homeless people in the capital region. With the help of a variety of community partners, our team of social workers have provided expert guidance and services to over 1000 people through the Fredericton Outreach Services program.

As part of the program, our outreach team also conducts regular home visits for service users. In the last six months, they made 190 such visits, averaging 30+ per month. Visits are used to assess how each person is doing in regards to both their physical and mental health. Our team then provides individualized assistance on a variety of topics, including: apartment maintenance, meeting basic needs, accessing community resources, medication management, substance use counselling, connecting with family and friends, and of course, what folks are doing for fun.

How effective is this approach? Recent reports note 95% of those involved in this program have remained in the stable housing unit provided to them. This is 10% higher than the national average of 85% throughout Canada for similar housing-first programs. What do our service users say about it?

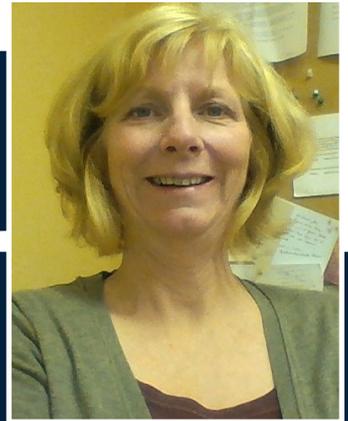
"I love my apartment, and I am very grateful for everything."

"Reaching out for help was difficult, but now I have a place to live."

"For the first time in a long time, I feel safe again."

Staff profile: Sue King

A hairdresser for almost 20 years, Sue had a gift for listening and making people feel valued. She's since honed those skills and opted to use them to aid those most in need of a helping hand—she became a social worker.



Since 2011, Sue has been an integral part of the Partners For Youth team. She currently acts as project coordinator for our Fredericton Outreach Services, a project that seeks to help homeless and near-homeless people find a place to call home.

On behalf of our organization, Sue sits as a member of the Fredericton SUN Committee, a group that secures supportive housing units in the Fredericton region. She designs and develops workshops for landlords who provide supportive housing in the Fredericton region, and she provides additional support and guidance as needed. Over the years, she has provided assistance with everything from conflict mediation to family reunification. She also works with elementary aged students, providing workshops designed to promote empathy, understanding, and respect for others. The next time you see her, ask about her extensive collection of Elvis memorabilia (you'll want to sit down).

Her favourite PFY memory

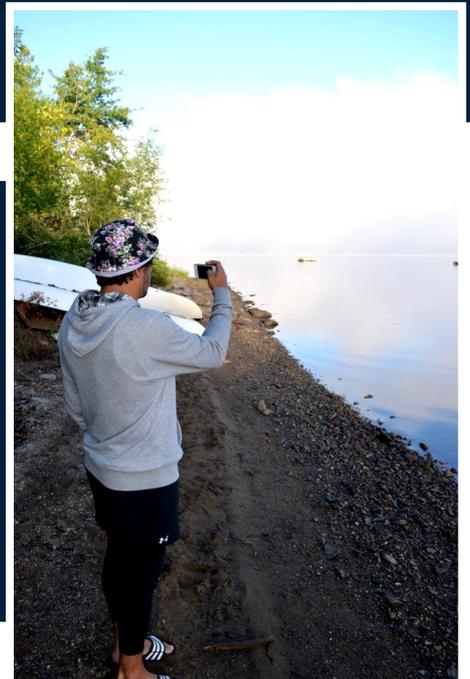
"I remember walking into one person's apartment shortly after a move. It was so amazing. This is someone who just weeks earlier had been living out of a tote under his bed at the shelter. He had nothing—literally nothing—and here he was in his own place with furniture to sit on, a bed, food, and so on. We sat down and had a cup of tea. You never would have known it was the same guy. I just sat there and looked around—took it all in. I almost cried."



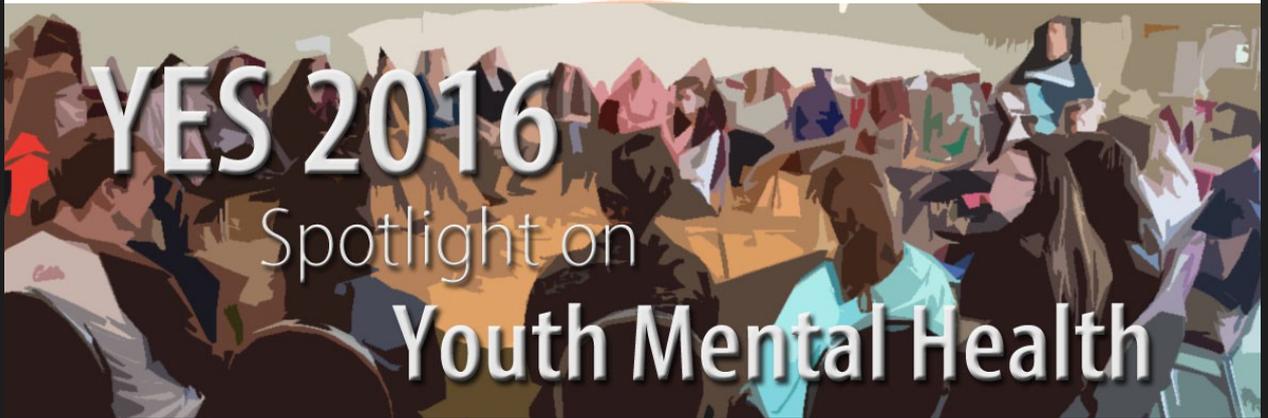
A Heartfelt Thanks

In our over 20 years of operation, we have seen tens of thousands of participants enroll in our programs. In most cases, these are young people who lack support in their lives and who need a helping hand. We see these people first hand, and it provides us with a tremendous amount of motivation to keep growing and enhancing the programs we offer each year.

As a non-profit organization, securing funding for our projects is always front of mind. If we are able to keep doing the work we do; to keep developing new and innovative youth engagement projects; to keep having a positive impact on the most important group in our society; to keep providing young people with access to great experiences and opportunities they may not otherwise have—it's because of the generosity of our funders. For this reason, we want to offer our heartfelt appreciation.



On the Horizon



On May 3rd, we are hosting a full day Youth Engagement Summit that will focus specifically on youth mental health. The event will provide an opportunity for high school aged students throughout the province to speak together and to policy makers on issues related to mental health and well-being. The input and feedback gathered will be used by us and by relevant government departments to set priorities to address the needs identified by our New Brunswick youth.

Guided by the overarching conference theme of youth mental health, the summit will feature a day of “Open Space”: a dynamic format that allows participants to identify specific topics of discussion and develop the agenda of the day. Rather than hemming participants within a strict set of workshops, open space allows them considerable flexibility to participate in the activities and discussions they consider to be of priority to them.



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