

UNYA



NEWS

New Homelessness Programs

UNYA is very excited to have been awarded funds through the SCPI Homelessness funds to buy a house for our Native Youth A & D Treatment Program. We hope to have the Young Bears Lodge up and running in our new house sometime in January.

We will also start another Youth Hostel until May 31/2002. This Hostel will be for 17 – 24 year old homeless youth. It is a program that is based on youth working towards positive changes in their lives, by finding employment, housing, reuniting with family, entering training, etc.

The third project is a series of three Youth Healing Camps called the Sts'Ailes Lhawather Lalem Program. This project is in partnership with the Chehalis Indian Band in the Fraser Valley. There will be three, six-week programs with twenty at-risk youth from Vancouver and Chehalis. The program is based on helping youth to regain their cultural pride through cultural enrichment, recreation, lifeskills, and more.

Native Youth Resource Manual

In December we will be releasing a manual to help Native youth find services in the Vancouver area. These services include schools, counselling, arts programs, free stuff, cheap meals, drop-in centres, community centres, housing info, cultural info, cultural programs, drop-in clinics, detox services, A & D treatment programs, support services, Safehouses, parenting programs, pregnancy services, legal services, advocacy groups, victims services, pre-employment programs, anti-violence services, and more. This manual was produced by two Native youth who were hired through the Aboriginal Homelessness Initiative.

Native Youth Canoe

UNYA was very fortunate to have received a canoe on National Aboriginal Day from Justice Canada, the RCMP, Vancouver Aboriginal Council, and others who pulled together to help us acquire this 31 foot fiberglass replica war canoe. During our first year of caring for this canoe, we will only be allowing our staff and program participants to use the canoe until we figure out all of the protocol, safety, and liability issues that may come up in the future.

BYRC Aboriginal Youth Worker

The Urban Native Youth Association is very happy to have placed a Youth Worker at the Broadway Youth Resource Centre on Fraser and Broadway. This area has a very quickly growing Native population. When we were approached by BYRC to have a Youth Worker at their site, approximately 90% of the youth hanging around the neighbourhood were Native, but only about 30% of the youth going into the centre were Native.

Since Preston has started working in the resource room and hosting a Native youth group on Wednesday Nights, there are many more Native youth who now come in and access BYRC's resources. This position is funded by the UMAC Aboriginal Youth Council. You can reach Preston at 604-709-5736 or drop by and see him in the front office on Mondays from 12:30 – 7:00, Tuesdays from 12:30 – 7:00, Wednesdays from 4:30 – 8:00, or Fridays 1:00 – 4:30.

Quick Fact: There are approximately 2000 Native youth in the Vancouver school system



Youth in Transition Summer Camp

This summer UNYA's School Support Team, with help from our Prevention/Outreach Team and a summer student, held a summer daycamp for 12 – 14 year old Native youth. This camp was offered as a positive, casual educational camp for youth who were in the school transitional years of grades 6 - 8.

We chose to focus on these youth, as this is the time when our youth are most likely to leave the school system. So as a preventative measure, we held the five-week summer camp to build relationships with the youth, introduce them to resources in the community, and take them on educational outings to colleges, the Museum of Anthropology, parks, and other fun and interesting places. There were approximately 15 youth who attended each day. We hope to have the same camp available next year so that we can continue to support our youth.

Staff Training & Education

The Urban Native Youth Association has entered into a partnership with Douglas College Child & Youth Care Department to offer educational opportunities for our staff. This is a one-time, two semester project to help our staff upgrade their skills, as well as have a prior learning assessment completed so that they can obtain college credits for the experience they have gained while working.

Another long-term goal of the project is to help Douglas College build a First Nations focused component into their existing Child & Youth Care Program, as well as to explore whether or not the Vancouver Native community would like to develop a specific Native Youth Worker Program. The location, funding, and curriculum is something that the Native community would work on together so that it is representative of our community's needs and accessible to many different students.

Research Update

The Urban Native Youth Association recently hired and trained two Native youth to conduct surveys with Native youth to find out why they do or do not use services. This question is important as we have found that many Native youth do not use services until they are in a large crisis, if at all. We would like to find the reasons why they do not use services, as well as to find out why some youth do, so that we can make recommendations to the community on how to better serve Native youth. We believe that youth will use services if they are appropriate, safe, and welcoming to them. We have now cleaned all of the data and are in the mid-stages of analyzing the data. We hope to have the final report released to the community in late January.

SEY Resource Manual

We have been working on a manual about sexually exploited youth issues that will be released sometime in the new year. We use the term 'sexual exploitation' as we believe that for many different reasons youth may enter into prostitution, but most of those reasons are based on negative situations that force youth to make desperate decisions. We also believe that pimps, johns, partners, friends, family, or anyone else who knowingly profits in any way are exploiting or taking advantage of prostituted youth and their situation. Ways in which other people may knowingly benefit include: receiving money gained through prostitution, receiving anything else that is paid for with the money that is made through prostitution, or receiving anything that is traded for sex including a place to stay, cigarettes, clothes, food, etc.

This manual will include a review of existing services to identify gaps in the continuum of care, a list of ways in which the Native community can help end this large problem recommendations based on those gaps, and a section for parents and youth that will provide scenarios of recruitment, list warning signs, identify youth who are at-risk of being recruited into prostitution, ways in which parents can talk to their children about sexual exploitation, and where youth or their parents or guardians can go for help.

VAC Youth Portfolio

We encourage all those who are working with youth or are interested in helping youth, to come to the Youth Portfolio meetings. We discuss youth issues and concerns, new initiatives, and share information on our programs. Meetings are held every third Tuesday of the month from 1:30–3:00pm. To be put on the fax list, please contact David at 783-6629.

Two-spirited Youth Program

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation has discontinued funding to this program. According to their contact, they have had an internal review that has led to the A.H.F. only funding those programs which are more directly related to the physical and sexual abuse suffered in residential schools. We believe that this program was meeting that criteria. We were very surprised that this program was cut as we only had one day's notice before we had to shut down the project. Despite our request to have a wind down period to debrief with youth and to refer them to other resources, the A.H.F. did not see fit to do so. We were also confused as the A.H.F. had just written a very positive article on our program in their own newspaper, as well as their evaluator had given us a very favorable evaluation. We hope that other organizations continue to support this very marginalized and vulnerable group. We will be trying to regain funding to this program in the new year.