A Portrait of Urban Aboriginal Youth
In the Waterloo Region and Their Access to Services
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

1.1 "THE FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH WANTED TO UNDERSTAND THREE IDEAS"  
1.2 "A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE FOCUS GROUPS RESULTED IN THE FOLLOWING FINDINGS"

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW:

2.1 ABORIGINAL YOUTH IN CANADA  
2.2 ABORIGINAL YOUTH IN ONTARIO:  
2.3 ABORIGINAL YOUTH WITHIN THE WATERLOO REGION:

## 3.0 METHODOLOGY

## 4.0 OBJECTIVES:

## 5.0 WHAT THE FINDINGS DEMONSTRATE

5.1 SERVICES ABORIGINAL YOUTH ACCESS:  
5.2 THE ABORIGINAL YOUTH NEEDS ARE IN FOUR QUADRANTS:  
5.2.1 MENTAL ASPECTS  
5.2.2 PHYSICAL/ACTIVITY  
5.2.3 SPIRITUAL ASPECTS  
5.2.4 EMOTIONAL  
5.3 HOW DO SUPPORT SERVICES INTERACT WITH ABORIGINAL YOUTH?  
5.4 "WHAT SUPPORT SERVICE SECTORS ARE PRESENT IN THE WATERLOO REGION FOR ABORIGINAL YOUTH TO ACCESS?"  
5.5 "WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY’S PERCEPTION OF ABORIGINAL YOUTH AND SUPPORT SERVICES WITHIN THE WATERLOO REGION?"

## 6.0 THE SUMMARY OUTCOME OF THE TWO FOCUS GROUPS

6.1 THEME ONE: LOCAL ABORIGINAL IDENTITY.  
6.2 THEME TWO: SUPPORT SERVICE AND PROGRAMS.  
6.3 THEME THREE: NEEDED SERVICES.

## 7.0 FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS:
1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Anishnabeg Outreach Inc. initiated a two-year project to better understand the service needs of urban Aboriginal youth in the Waterloo region. The project was funded by Ontario Trillium Foundation, and was comprised of several components.

A research component sought to gather quantitative and qualitative data through survey questionnaires, focus groups, interviews, and journal exercises. The quantitative data were aggregated and used to produce a beginning portrait of urban aboriginal youth and their service needs. A thematic analysis of the qualitative data produced a rich, and nuanced understanding of the service needs of urban aboriginal youth. The data, when taken together, paint a comprehensive beginning portrait of urban aboriginal youth and their service needs in the Waterloo region.

Another component of the project was to build capacity with urban aboriginal youth through the development of a youth council, and the training of these youth as community-based researchers. The research component of the project followed an Indigenous Research Methodology, and the entire project was guided both by the Youth Council and an Advisory Council. The Advisory Council was comprised of urban Aboriginal service stakeholders and community leaders.
1.1 The focus group research wanted to understand three ideas:

1.2 A thematic analysis of the focus groups resulted in the following findings:
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW:

2.1 Aboriginal Youth in Canada

The Aboriginal population represents roughly 1.4 million people across Canada’s provinces and territories National House Survey (2011). A unique characteristic of the Aboriginal population is that Aboriginals are younger than the Canadian population as a whole; two contributing variables are this population produces more births, but also there are higher mortality rates reported (Cooke, 2013).

Preston (2008) explains that the median age of the Aboriginals is younger than non-Aboriginal people; Aboriginal youth 14 and under account for “28% of the total Aboriginal population [and] Aboriginal youth age[s] 15 – 24 represent 18.2% of the total Aboriginal population” (NHS, 2011). With a younger population than the general Canadian population, it is important to identify the needs, priorities and areas of concern for Aboriginal youth and the support services they access within the Waterloo Region. To better serve the Aboriginal youth in the Waterloo Region, it is important to gain an understanding of the relationship between Aboriginal youth and the support services this population accesses.
Across Canadian provinces, Aboriginal youth experience a higher risk for gang involvement, and criminal behaviour; furthermore, the Aboriginal youth are reported to experience higher suicide rates, higher poverty levels, elevated unemployment rates, greater health issues, lower education attainment rates and lower involvement in school as compared to the non-Aboriginal population (Cooke et al., 2013; Chandler & LaLonde, 2008; Gillespie et al. 2010; McCaskill et al, 2011; Preston, 2008, Totten, 2009). These themes suggest the gaps and areas of concern Aboriginal youth experience are inter-connected and require attention to ensure individual and community improvement of available support services within the Waterloo Region.

**Aboriginal Youth Experience:**
- Higher risk for gang involvement
- Higher suicide rate
- Higher poverty levels
- Greater health issues
- Lower education attainment rates
- Lower involvement in School

Literature has focused on the “epidemic of Aboriginal youth gang violence in ... parts of Canada” (Totten, 2009:136). The Aboriginal youth gang involvement exceeds that of the non-Aboriginal youth population. Researchers argue that current projects in Canada for male and female gang involvement are not sufficient in preventing youth from entering into gang life nor do the services in place support the community. A conservative estimate is that 22% of gang members in Canada are Aboriginal (Chandler & LaLonde, 2008; Morely, 2006; Totten, 2009). Researchers further argue this is a result of disproportionate suffering that this population endures; a shortened list of factors includes, but is not limited to: racism, colonization, poverty, addiction to intoxicants, high suicide rates, and most importantly, loss of traditional culture, spirituality and values (Chandler & LaLonde, 2008; Totten 2009). One can infer that if an aspect such as a connection to one’s traditional past had been maintained then the rates of violence might be lower in Aboriginal communities.
Evidence from the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 2001, Statistics Canada and additional reports approximates that in Canada, from the years of 1987-2000, suicide rates among Aboriginal youth was 2-3 times that of the general youth population. Researchers argue that strengthening the community as a whole rather than focusing on individual youth will reduce these numbers (Chander & Lalonde, 2008; Environics, 2010; Hill & Cooke, 2014; Totten, 2009).

Attention is also drawn to the problems Aboriginal youth face in the education realm and the importance of leading this population as well as Aboriginal community organizations to pursue post-secondary education (Gibbs, 2010; Preston, 2008). Improvement is required in service providers who are supporting the intellect of Aboriginal people in a way that is combined with spiritual, mental, emotional and physical well-being (Hill, 2014; Preston, 2008; Verniest, 2006). To ensure the advancement of Aboriginal youth in their academic career, it is crucial to have sustainable support services available that ensure educational opportunities and resources are accessible.
Challenges Aboriginal youth face are attributed to the lack of understanding of cultural needs moreover, provided for by support services and programs (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008; Verneist, 2006). A barrier that young First Nations people confront is learning and owning their identity through knowing their history; which will in turn lead them to owning their future (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008). The importance of having culturally sensitive support services available and accessible for Aboriginal youth in their communities must be stressed to the educators (Davis, 2012; Gillespie, 2008; Preston, 2008; Totten, 2009). To not provide programming that teaches their cultural identity and history will leave the youth vulnerable. There needs to be an integration of Western and community based approaches to ensure Aboriginal youth are not more vulnerable than non-Aboriginal youth populations. Totten (2009) mentions the importance of incorporating The Medicine Wheel into programming for a more rounded approach of spiritual, mental, physical and emotional well being rather than a Western based linear approach.
2.2 Aboriginal Youth in Ontario:

Aboriginal youth in Ontario face similar challenges to those across Canada. Within this province, Aboriginal youth represent roughly 146,000 of the population (NHS, 2011). Aboriginal youth in Ontario experience lower education attainment, high unemployment, higher occurrence of substance abuse and mental health issues along with greater difficulty accessing support services than the non-Aboriginal population (Anderson & Ledogar, 2008; Chalifoux, 2003; Cooke et al., 2013; LIHN, 2011). Together with these challenges, Aboriginal youth experience racism, discrimination, loss of identity, language and culture along with feelings of alienation and marginalization (Chalifoux, 2003; Cooks & Chiodo, 2010; McCaskill et al., 2011).

Aboriginal Youth in Ontario Experience:

- Higher unemployment
- Higher substance abuse
- Higher mental & health issues
- Increase difficulties accessing support services
- Lower education attainment rates
- Lower involvement in School

Aboriginal youth experience many challenges that emphasize the need for improvement and sustainability to ensure they receive proper support from service providers. Opportunities such as employment, education, self-identity development, general health, and life can become sustainable by providing accessible and culturally sensitive support services to Aboriginal youth across Canada. Access for Aboriginal youth to support services and programs that feature cultural components that consist of not only an Elder but also an Aboriginal staff will ensure that positive youth development will occur (Gillespie, 2010; Totten, 2009). Furthermore, programs and support services created for Aboriginal youth guided by traditional teachings and models can provide a foundation of “partnerships, developing and sustaining community capacity, adequate and sustained supports and resources and public engagements” to “build upon principles of positive youth development and asset building. (Totten, 2009:144-145; Hill & Cooke, 2014).
2.3 Aboriginal Youth within the Waterloo Region:

Smaller cities located in Southern Ontario, including those within the Waterloo Region; do not have the same amount of Aboriginal specific programming available to Aboriginal youth, as do larger cities located in Southern Ontario (Cooke et al., 2013; Hill & Cooke, 2014; LIHN, 2011). Moreover, there is limited reported knowledge about Aboriginal peoples within Waterloo Region. The needs of urban Aboriginal people are being met in a manner that is more reactive rather than proactive (Cooke et al., 2013; Hill & Cooke, 2014). The Aboriginal population has more unique “social, cultural, health, and economic needs than the non-aboriginal population” (Cooke et al., 2013:20). Emphasis must be placed on the importance of culture, cultural identity and culturally sensitive and appropriate support services for Aboriginal youth in their communities to better serve their needs and priorities (Cooke et al., 2013; Gillespie, 2010).
The LIHN reported a population growth of 34.4% from 2002 – 2006 of residents who self-identified as Aboriginal within the Waterloo Wellington Region (LIHN, 2011). LIHN (2011) also reported the Aboriginal population to be younger on average than the general population within the Waterloo Wellington Region by roughly 7 years. With an increasing younger Aboriginal population in the Waterloo Region, it is important to better understand and identify characteristics to ensure their diverse needs are met by support services.

Within Waterloo Region, the Aboriginal population experiences lower education attainment, higher unemployment rates, lower income levels, greater health issues and a reported lack of access to traditional medicines and healthcare (Cooke et al., 2013; LIHN, 2011). Further, Aboriginal peoples exclaim there is a longing for traditional Aboriginal care; this remains a primary area of concern (Cooke et al., 2013; LIHN, 2011). Information surrounding successful wholistic elements implemented within these programs is useful to our research to determine if
Aboriginal youth within the Waterloo Region report participating in support services and programs that include culturally appropriate approaches to address their needs.

**Aboriginal Youth in Waterloo Region Experience:**

- Higher unemployment
- Higher substance abuse
- Higher mental & health issues

- Lower education attainment rates
- Lower income levels
- Lack of access of traditional medicines & healthcare

There is of great importance to understand the frameworks of support services and programs within the Waterloo Region to determine whether Aboriginal youth have the opportunity to access Aboriginal-focused supports. The “colonization and forced assimilation … disintegration of family units, and the loss of language, culture, economic status, and parenting capacity” (Totten, 2009:141-142) has resulted in intergenerational problems where Aboriginal youth experience great suffering. Aboriginal youth and their families require culturally sensitive support services that are founded upon traditional frameworks and approaches to guide them throughout their transitions into adulthood, ensuring they can overcome challenges successfully individually, and as members of a community.
3.0 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to develop a better understanding of the relationship between urban Aboriginal youth and the support services this population accesses within the Waterloo Region. Through the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, this research project sought to gain insight from the community’s perspective of Aboriginal youth and support services along with the perspectives of Aboriginal youth and support services towards each other. Furthermore this research project sought to answer the questions, “What services do Aboriginal youth access?” “What services do Aboriginal youth think need to be developed?” “How do support services interact with Aboriginal youth?” qualitative data, this research project sought to gain insight from the community’s perspective of Aboriginal youth and support services along with the perspectives of Aboriginal youth and support services towards each other.

Furthermore this research project sought to answer the questions, “What services do Aboriginal youth access?” “What services do Aboriginal youth think need to be developed?” “How do support services interact with Aboriginal youth?” “What support service sectors are present in the Waterloo Region for Aboriginal youth to access?” along with “What is the community’s perception of Aboriginal Youth and support services within the Waterloo Region?” Through administering surveys at public events, conducting Key Informant interviews, along with focus group with support service providers, and a focus group with Aboriginal youth a better understanding was gained.

Employing an Indigenous Research Methodology and using a Community Based Research approach created an opportunity to harmonize Aboriginal-focused and mainstream frameworks to gather information surrounding Aboriginal youth and the support services they access within the Waterloo Region. Indigenous perspectives were incorporated through “using
aligned methods” (Kovach, 2005), of oral technique, along with capacity building activities with the Aboriginal Youth (Hill & Cooke, 2014). A community based research approach that was founded upon collaborative principles and participatory research between the community and Anishnabeg Outreach necessitated the creation of a Steering Committee and a Youth Committee. Throughout the research project combined effort by all levels of participants ensured that the relationships were honored in respectful ways (Kovach 2005; Wilson, 2001). Working together as a collective is a way of knowing and Kovach (2005) argues; this is a fundamental method to carry out community-based research from an Aboriginal perspective.

Within this research project, youth were involved in two ways. First, Aboriginal youth from the community were openly invited to become members of the Youth Committee. Throughout the research project, the Youth Committee met every two weeks to discuss and provide advice towards the creation and formatting of the community survey. In addition, members of the Youth Committee were hired and trained to be Community Based Researchers (CBR’s). A Cultural Advisor trained the CBR’s over three days in August 2013. After training the CRB’s assisted with the administration of surveys at community events. Including Aboriginal youth in different levels of the research project through the Youth Committee and as CBR’s, allowed for an Aboriginal youth perspective and unique understanding to be incorporated throughout the project.
A Steering Committee was also formed for this research project. An open invitation was issued to representatives from different sectors of the Aboriginal community and from this, the Steering Committee was chosen. The elected group of twelve participants that ranged from youths, Anishnabeg Outreach board members, elementary and post-secondary representatives, and Aboriginal focused support service representatives comprised the steering committee for this research project. The Steering Committee representatives were chosen based on their education, lived and professional experience within the Waterloo Region. As members of the Steering Committee and/or the Youth Committee, the representatives played an advisory role and provided feedback for the research team with regard to each stage of the research process.
There were three surveys: each survey contained 20 questions that were developed by the youth committee and the steering committee. These surveys were administered to various stakeholders within the Waterloo Region; Service Providers of programs for youth, and urban Aboriginal Youth.

The total number of survey responses was 342 (n=342). Variables such as age, gender, residency, identity (aboriginal or non-aboriginal), and beneficial services to youth were explored.

4.0 OBJECTIVES:
5.0 WHAT THE FINDINGS DEMONSTRATE:

The information presented here was gathered from 2 focus groups

1. Youth group
2. Service providers

5.1 Services Aboriginal youth access:

- Reaching Our Outdoor Friends (ROOF) housing project
- Lutherwood Front Door
- Youth drop in centre
- YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association),
- YWCA (Young Women’s Christian Association),
- Mosaic
- Monica Place
- Mary’s Place
- Al-Anon
- The John Howard Society
- Counseling services
- Churches
5.2 The Aboriginal Youths needs are in the four quadrants: Mental, Physical, Spiritual, and Emotional

5.2.1 Mental aspects
- Homework club or educational programs
- Mentorship program

5.2.2 Physical/activity
- An Aboriginal specific school that will teach Aboriginal culture and a medical centre for youth only
- More drop-in programs and centres
- More inclusive clubs or gender exclusive clubs
- Free sports in the community
- Daycare
- Transportation (Bus) Passes.

5.2.3 Spiritual aspects
- Singing Aboriginal songs
- Crafting with teachings geared towards Aboriginal culture including, and not limited to, regalia making/teachings, drum making/teachings, etc.
- Parenting homes that are accepting of cultural practices like smudging.

5.2.4 Emotional
- Healing circles
- Connect to cultural identity
- A smudge room
5.3 How do support services interact with Aboriginal youth?

- Like the services that they attend
- Have a good time,
- They feel safe and trusted at the programs
- Feel that the services that they do attend meet their cultural needs.
- The youth return time and again to the services

5.4 “What support service sectors are present in the Waterloo Region for Aboriginal youth to access?”

- Anishnabeg Outreach Inc.,
- Healing of the Seven Generations,
- Weejeendimin Native Resource Centre,
- Waterloo Aboriginal Education Centre,
- K/W Urban Native Wigwam Project
5.5 “What is the community’s perception of Aboriginal Youth and support services within the Waterloo Region?”

- There is a lack of knowledge of First Nation Culture in the region.
- Need more Aboriginal focused services
- The service provider employees perceive that all youth are one and the same; therefore services ought to be uniform.
- The service provider group states, “Not enough services for Aboriginal youth” “a lot of services are only for mainstream” and “may feel more comfortable going to a friendship centre.”

6.0 THE SUMMARY OUTCOME OF THE TWO FOCUS GROUPS:

For this research project there were two focus groups conducted (see appendix 1 for questions). There were the youth focus group members and the service provider’s staff. Due to the age separation there was little commonality that the two groups shared. The survey consisted of 12 questions that were divided into three themes. Theme one: Local Aboriginal identity, theme two: Support Services/Programs and theme three: Needed Services. Some questions were not applicable to both groups therefore the same questions were not asked of both groups; furthermore, due to time restraints some questions were passed over in the service provider’s focus group.

6.1 Theme one: Local Aboriginal Identity.

In response to question one, “What do you think of when I say Aboriginal youth?” the service provider group’s answers were distant, both in physical location as well as at an individual level. One participant answered, “Six Nations because of growing up in Haldimand County.” Haldimand is 93- kilometers away from Kitchener/Waterloo and Six Nations is
96-kilometer away. Another participant said: “We don’t ask anybody to ID, so we’re not really aware sometimes of the background or culture.”

The youth group talked more when asked this question; one member talked about being active in the community, while other group members used the following words to answer: culture fest, community events and dancing, a reason to do research on their own Aboriginal identity. A major difference between the groups in how Aboriginal youth are seen was that the service providers saw “Aboriginal youth are the same as other youth”, but the youth group questioned, “Why that community is different than the normal community?”

In response to the next question “What is unique about you/ your heritage?” both the youth group and the service providers talked about multiculturalism. The youth group was more in-depth with their answers, like sharing similar ceremonies with the Bardez culture of India; one member said “we’re more diverse, more accepting.” The service provider group spoke of their connection to nature “I was raised quite literally in the bush.” As well as, “my nephew saw a fox for the first time. It is nice to see the animal, to watch the animal, and to learn from the animal.” “Youth in general, what are some things that come to mind?” was then asked. The youth were not asked this question; the service provider group answered with: transition, changes, pushing boundaries, testing boundaries, trying to figure themselves out, sex and pouches for condoms that one participant developed. An important piece of information that this group shared is that there are not enough services for Aboriginal youth.

The following question was “What does it mean to be an Aboriginal youth in the Waterloo region?” Both groups came to the same conclusion that there is a lack of knowledge of the First Nation culture within the
general population and among the Aboriginal youth. Both the youth and the service providers talked about the negative stigma of being Aboriginal in the Waterloo region. A youth group member said of another youth, that the other youth “didn’t even know what it meant to be Aboriginal.” One person from the service provider focus group said, “youth [are] uncomfortable identifying because they don’t know the culture” One of the service provider participants also said “just a kid growing up like other kids, but with all stigma around Aboriginal issues are negative.”

The comments from the youth participants were more specific, “I know in general, it’s not a good thing to be considered an Aboriginal in Kitchener…” “Worse in Cambridge than in Kitchener” as well, some people “Kind of talk about Aboriginal people like they are some kind of extinct species.” Another youth adds “or some kind of disease.” The service provider participants state more than once that Aboriginal people experience isolation or distance from urban community “parents aren’t connected, kids aren’t connected either.” The youth focus group members talk about negative comments from friends and classmates around the myths about status cards, that: Aboriginals do not have to pay taxes, also that Aboriginals get free gas and free school.

6.2 Theme two: Support Service and Programs.

Question number three, asked the youth focus group to chat about support services and programs that they have accessed. The service provider focus group was asked: “What are some of the local non-Aboriginal support service providers that you go to?” Both groups identified one program named Reaching Our Outdoor Friends (ROOF) housing project and several counseling projects. The youth group also mentioned: Luther Wood Front Door, Aboriginal services that come to the college and the youth drop in centre.

Responding to a question about popularity of the services, the youth group answers were focused on an after school program: “there’s like a lot of people there last night,” and “Always the same people that go there.” On the other hand the service providers were asked: “Are they popular?” The answers were more about the physical activity the youth would do at the services some of the responses were: “Activities and interactive
things,” “Interactive games,” and “Never lecturing,” “Resources and things they can take (condoms).” The two focus groups answered this question differently, the service provider group answered looking at facts but the youth group members answered from personal experience.

Question number four asked the two focus group members to think of reasons to not go to a resource or service. Both the youth group members and the service provider group members identified three items in common, these were: 1) location of the service, 2) transportation to the service, 3) the youth working part time jobs. These are the reasons youth would not be able to go to a service.

The service provider group did have a longer list: 1) stigma attached to downtown community centre Candler, 2) Parents won’t want their teens there because they think its unsafe, 3) program clashing with school, 4) the program is not the cool place to be, and 5) if the program is an extension of the youth’s school day then they won’t come back. When asked, “Do you feel comfortable and trusted there?” the youth participants’ answers were positive. The adults of service provider focus group responded that the fact the youth returned to the program was a sign that the youth were comfortable. The service provider group was asked four more questions. 1) Are they hard to find? 2) Or are they hard to get to? The responses centered on the cost of extra curricular and recreational activities and again transportation. 3) “How do we get it out in different ways? (Advertising)” The adult service providers answered, “Find a good kid and get them to spread the word,” or “find locations near something else,” and the final response was “find a safe place where parents can drop off kids then the kids can sneak off to the service.” The last question in this area was 4) “Do the hours conflict with your schedule?” The service providers gave many responses, like “finding funding or people to work the evening or weekend shifts rather than only doing a day shift,” and “youth have to care for younger siblings or have children of their own” “too late that the parents do not want student out and if the program is late” “the youth would already be home and not want to go back out.”

The fifth question for the youth focus group was “What are some of the local Aboriginal services you go to?” The youth focus group responses were: Anishnabeg Outreach, Seven Generations, Weejeendimin Native Resource Centre, Waterloo Aboriginal Education Centre, and
KW Urban Native Wigwam Project. The youth were asked what they use the programs for; they answered: getting volunteer hours, using the computers to finish a school project, and friendship. The youth feel that the services meet their cultural needs.

Question six, “how do they meet your cultural needs?” was also asked of the youth group but was not asked of the service provider’s focus group. Due to time restraints the seventh, eighth and ninth questions were not asked of the service provider group. When the youth group was asked how the services met their cultural needs, they answered with “songs, hand drumming” “some supports that I need are unique to my heritage.” Then the youth focus group talked about ways that would benefit or bring more youth to Aboriginal organizations adding a different form of culture that is social media to get the information out to the youth: “utilize social media… Like a lot of places don’t even have a website or anything”; another youth said that with “posters everywhere. Someone is going to glance at but they’re not actually going to read it.” “Utilizing the internet and the power of the internet,” and the youth explained that Facebook is popular way to circulate information. Again the conversation moved back to the lack of transportation to events. The youth group further stated they wanted to “build partnerships with organizations,” but when the opportunity did arise to build a partnership and co-host an event with Wilfrid Laurier University, the youth focus group participants were not able to make themselves available and build that partnership.
6.3 Theme three: Needed services.

The youth focus group was asked to imagine having no financial limitations and to describe what they would picture as services that could be developed. The responses were: a big building, “everything free because I’m not paying for counseling” and services dedicated to “things kids can do.” The youth wanted a place that was “adult structured” but have the youth involved, where “youth are speaking to youth” and “youth run the groups.”

Question eight focused on Aboriginal youth needs that are not offered in the Kitchener/ Waterloo/ Cambridge region right now. The youth’s list was extensive; it included: parenting homes that are accepting of cultural practices like smudging, a drop in centre, teachings geared towards Aboriginal culture, regalia or drumming workshops, medical clinics geared towards youth, and “we need our own little school that we can all just go to” or an in depth and longer Aboriginal culture section added to the curriculum with an Aboriginal teacher. One youth wants a smudge room; but another participant is aware of other cultures and said “there are so many more other religions and different cultures that they can’t get into the curriculum and they don’t want to leave [out], because we have so much immigration here….”

Both the youth and service provider focus groups were asked question nine, “How should the services be designed or delivered?” Both groups bring up culture, but the youth said, “take into consideration the audience”. The service providers did mention culture three times but went on to bring up items like food and potluck. This group then went on to talk about community ties “whole family units/ multigenerational”. Several more items were talked about, one being community lunches are held on Wednesday; three organizations vie for the same group of people. As well one group member talked about her difficulty with “take your kid to work day”; this
was a problem as some Aboriginal parents do not have jobs, and again financial ties and transportation are major factors that bring problems to attending the services. Questions a, b, and c were not asked of the service provider focus group when the youth group members were asked a) “Should they include elders?” one participant spoke of being listened to on an equal level: “Get an Aboriginal youth perspective but it’s like always going to be shadowed by whatever else like elders think.” Then question 9 b, When should these programs be available? On two occasions the answer was given; after school and not on weekends. The last part of question nine “Where would they be ideally located?” Produced three answers: community centre, any school and on a bus route. These three answers could be seen as centering on transportation.

What is the best way to spread the word? was the next question; both groups said that social media and technology is the primary, current way to get the message out, with youth based advertising that has a student operated system. Both groups also agreed that youth listen more to other youth. The service provider group would like more involvement “focus on parents, let them know programming for kids” and “Parents active, engaged and going…comfortable to let youth go if they know about it.” On the other hand, adult involvement was an issue; the youth group said “quite a few where I didn’t go because every time I went, adults didn’t seem to know what youth like.”

The final question that was asked was: Is there anything else you would like to suggest? The one item that both the youth and the service provider groups agreed on was a need for adults to research what youth want and like to do. The youth focus group wants what has been longed for, for some decades; they want to be heard and taken seriously. If there is a function, transportation to the function is an issue but food will bring in the youth. The service providers focus group list was quite lengthy; the list included: a Native Friendship Centre, working with youth, sustainability, partnership of organization to create a program, programs that allow youth to bring younger sibling, outreach programs for high risk moms, cultural classes like beading and weaving, community unity building, break up age groups, and babysitting courses.
7.0 FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS:

Problem – First Nation Culture is absent in the Kitchener/Waterloo/Cambridge area. This was mentioned by both the youth participant group and the adults from the service provider group.

Recommendation – Start programs that incorporate and celebrate the First Nation culture of the Kitchener/Waterloo/Cambridge area.

Problem – Transportation to the location of services is a difficulty for the youth.

Recommendation – Seek out a structure that will be easily accessible for youth, be it closer to schools or accessible on the public transit route.

Problem – The programs that are currently in operation do not meet the youth wishes, the youth’s would like to have youth involved and work with other youth’s in the programs.

Recommendation – Have a focus group with representatives of the service providers/programs and the youth’s who will be attending the programs, to learn what interests the youth have. This process will identify how the youth can be involved and contribute to the programs. Working as a team will develop leadership skills in the youth.
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Apendix 1

Theme 1: Local Aboriginal identity: Now I’d like to have your opinion about what it means to be an Aboriginal youth in the K-W area. I want you to think about the good parts and parts that might not be so great.

1. What is the first thing that comes to mind when I say Aboriginal youth?
   o (PROBE) – What is unique about you/your heritage?
   o (PROBE) – What do you have in common with people from other backgrounds?

2. What does it mean to be an Aboriginal youth in Waterloo region?
   o (PROBE) – Do you feel that there is a local Aboriginal identity?

Theme 2: Support Services/Programs: As I mentioned before, we’re holding this focus group so that we can get your insight about the services and supports that are available and needed for Aboriginal youth in the K-W communities. For this next set of questions, I want to get an idea about the kinds of programs you use and what your experiences are with them.

3. What are some of the local non-Aboriginal support service providers that you go to (i.e. YMCA, Working Centre, ROOF, etc.)?
   o (PROBE) – What sorts of programs or services do you access there?
   o (PROBE) – How often do you go there?
   o (PROBE) – Are they popular?

4. Are there any reasons why you might not go there?
   o (PROBE) – Are they hard to find?
   o (PROBE) – Are they hard to get to?
   o (PROBE) – Do the hours conflict with your schedule?
   o (PROBE) – Do you feel comfortable/trusted there?

5. What are some of the local Aboriginal services that you go to (i.e. Anishnabeg Outreach, etc.)
   o (PROBE) – What sorts of programs or services do you access there?
   o (PROBE) – What do you use these programs for (i.e. recreation, job finding, emotional support, etc.)
   o (PROBE) – Are they popular?
   o (PROBE) – How well do these services meet your cultural needs?

6. How well are any of these services meeting your needs?

Theme 3: Needed Services: Now that we’ve discussed available services, I want you to think about the services and supports that you would like to have but aren’t available. For a minute, imagine you had unlimited money to spend on creating or improving services for Aboriginal youth like yourself:

7. What services are needed in K-W for Aboriginal youth that aren’t currently available?

8. What supports are needed in K-W for Aboriginal youth?

9. How should they be designed/delivered?
   o Should they meet cultural/spiritual needs?
o Should they include Elders and other people with life experience?
o When should they be available?
o Where would they be ideally located?
10. What's the best way to spread the word about new services and supports?

11. Is there anything else you’d like to suggest?
Thank You

Miigwetch  Ojibway
Nya:weh   Mohawk
Yaw'ko   Oneida
Kinanâskomitini  Cree
Wanishi   Delaware
Merci   French
Iwgewinn  Inuktitut
Ngwehen   Potawatomi