Overcoming the Odds

Research and engagement with street involved youth

McCreary Centre Society
www.mcs.bc.ca
The Project

- Advisory committee formed
- Survey developed
- Community researchers hired and trained
- Survey administered and analyzed
- *Against the Odds* – Research report published
- KT workshop developed and delivered
- *Improving the Odds* – KT report published
Regional participation

- North 148
- Interior 150
- Fraser Valley 135
- Vancouver 212
- Vancouver Island 117
Participating Communities

2000
- Vancouver
- Victoria
- Abbotsford/Mission
- Surrey
- Prince Rupert
- White Rock and Langley
- Sunshine Coast

2006
- Vancouver
- Victoria
- Abbotsford/Mission
- Surrey
- Prince Rupert
- Nanaimo
- Prince George
- Kamloops
- Kelowna
Participants

- Aged 12–18, average age 16
- 48% male, 50% female, 1% transgender
- 54% Aboriginal heritage 40% exclusively Aboriginal, 33% European
- 1 in 3 females and 1 in 10 males identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual
- 84% of youth were originally from BC
Key Findings

- Percentage of street involved youth who were Aboriginal rose form 36% to 57%
- 1 in 3 females and 1 in 10 males identified as GLB
- 40% had been in government care
- 1 in 3 living in the most precarious housing were attending school
- 1 in 3 had been sexually exploited
Recommendations

- Provide adequate services to address needs of youth and their families (especially younger adolescents)
- Provide access to substance use, safe and supportive housing, job training and education, and youth mental health services
- Assist youth to reach educational goals
- Address unacceptable levels of violence and abuse
- Provide resources to Aboriginal organizations to offer housing and other youth services
Healthy Youth Development

- Building strengths and capacities among these youth will assist them to develop the skills needed to overcome their obstacles and thrive.
- Protective factors protect against risky behaviour and promote healthy youth development. These include strong adult-youth relationships, family and school connectedness, and community participation.
Opportunities

- The vast majority of youth seek help from adults - through their family, school and support agencies
- Youth have a clear and consistent idea of what would assist them to get off the streets
- Despite unstable living conditions and complicated lives, connection to school is very important in youth’s lives.
Workshop series took the results of *Against the Odds: A profile of marginalized and street involved youth in BC* back to youth who participated in the survey
Purpose of Next Steps workshops

- Respond to research and discuss ideas for action
- Make recommendations to government agencies and community organizations that make decisions that affect youth’s lives
- Encourages partnerships between youth and supportive adults in their communities
Workshop participants

- Approximately 95 youth ages 14–22

- At youth drop-in centres, resource centres, shelters, Aboriginal friendship centres and affordable housing units in 8 communities across BC
Next Steps Workshops

- Two components
  - Discussion of research findings
  - Creation of meaningful suggestions and ideas for action
Next steps Workshops

- **Trivia game**
  - Questions asked based on the findings of *Not Yet Equal*
    - “How many gay male–identified youth always felt safe at school”
      - 70%
      - **40%**
      - 10%

- **Discussion**
  - Does this reflect your school or community?
  - What can be done to address this?
Suggestions and Ideas for Action

- Decide on priority issues for community
- Make suggestions to tackle health challenges and to promote healthy youth development
- Create plans for action


Youth Engagement

- Made thoughtful suggestions and showed compassion and a desire to make change
- Reported that the workshop should be longer
- Stayed after the workshop was scheduled to end to continue discussing the results of the survey
- Asked about opportunities to get involved with local services or to remain involved with the *Against the Odds* project.
Wrap up Event

Youth reconvened to:

- Discuss the findings from the workshops
- Agree on the key points and messages
- Decide how messages should be presented
- Share what had happened in their community since the workshops
Youth’s Recommendations

- Assist youth before they leave home
- Ensure youth in care know their rights
- Increase sports opportunities
- Raise awareness about sexual exploitation
- Provide 24 hour drop in’s
- Make shelters youth friendly and safer
- Provide more programs for youth turning 19
Thank you