



Supporting Victims and Strengthening the Health of Northern and Indigenous Young Women experiencing Teen Dating Violence in the Northwest Territories

FOXY



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Supporting the Health of Survivors of Family Violence



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FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT

*Supporting Victims and Strengthening the Health of Northern and Indigenous Young Women experiencing
Teen Dating Violence (TDV) in the Northwest Territories (NWT)*

Project # 1617-HQ-000033

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INTRODUCTION

The overall objective of this FOXY project is to increase knowledge and capacity on healthy relationships and healthy sexual practices and amongst First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and other youth in Northern Canada. FOXY has expanded to specifically target domestic violence and teen dating violence through integrated, trauma informed, culturally-relevant health promotion to improve relationships among youth and health and safety outcomes.

The project has been designed to achieve the following:

1. Improve health outcomes for participants by increasing individual knowledge of HIV/AIDS, other STIs, and safer sex practices; increasing capacity to adopt healthy sexual practices; and increasing capacity to avoid teen dating violence
2. Develop leadership skills through the community project initiative and peer leadership opportunities
3. Disseminate knowledge produced by the program as widely as possible
4. Ensure the program's sustainability for continued benefits to the target population
5. Learn from the results and lessons learned from yearly evaluations to maximize pro-gram impact and efficiency
6. The Public Health Agency of Canada provided \$1 275 466.00 from October 5, 2016 to March 31, 2021 through the Supporting the Health of Survivors of Family Violence investment.

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Background & Rationale

Research has demonstrated that the Northwest Territories (NWT) and Nunavut have disproportionately high rates of reported domestic violence compared with other Canadian regions (PHAC, 2017). Prior to FOXY, existing interventions in the Northwest Territories did not meet the needs of youth to prevent teen dating violence. Thus, a new and innovative approach was developed by FOXY. The FOXY program uses participatory, locally relevant, social, and arts-based methods to engage youth in building knowledge and developing the skills necessary to enact behaviour changes that will positively impact their health (Lys et al., 2016).

Since 2012, FOXY (Fostering Open eXpression among Youth) has worked with youth across the NWT to acknowledge and address the social determinants of health for Northern youth and engage them in innovative arts-based health promotion activities that have been developed by Northerners, for Northerners. The FOXY intervention is evidence-based, grounded in the theoretical framework of social-ecological theory, and utilizes adolescent Peer Leaders trained in sexual and mental health to educate, facilitate critical discussion, build leadership, coping, and assertiveness skills, and improve community wellness through health promotion in communities across the North. FOXY uses a trauma-informed lens and arts-based approach to focus on changing knowledge, skills, and behaviours among Northern youth to improve health outcomes. FOXY uses the arts (including visual arts, beading, traditional hand drumming, and digital storytelling) and grounds its teachings in ceremony that celebrates the cultures of Northern and Indigenous peoples to educate and facilitate discussion about relevant issues including violence, relationships, sexual health, mental health, and coping skills.

FOXY has seen the success of its honest, practical, realistic approach to health promotion, intervention development, and project implementation through extensive process and impact evaluations, and action-oriented, community-based intervention research (Logie & Lys, 2017; Logie, Lys, Okumu, & Leone, 2017; Logie, Lys, Okumu, & Fujioka, 2019; Logie et al., 2018a; Logie et al., 2018b; Logie et al., 2019a; Logie et al., 2019b; Logie et al., 2019c; Lys et al., 2016; Lys, 2018; Lys, Gesink, Strike, & Larkin, 2018; Lys, Logie, & Okumu, 2018). Process and outcome evaluation research indicates that the intervention is an effective, relevant, and efficient project that meets its intended objectives (Dutton, 2013, 2014, 2015; Taylor, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020).

Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence

Canada's Northern territories have the highest rates of violence against women in the country. (Moffitt & Fikowski, 2017; Statistics Canada, 2013). Rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) in the NWT are 9-fold higher than the rest of the country, disproportionately impacting women who are younger, Indigenous, and with lower income and education levels (Northwest Territories Health and Social Services, 2011). Violence against women is rooted in inequitable gender norms that devalue women; these gender norms are (re)produced in social values, roles, and behaviours that result in men's dominant social and economic position over women (Jewkes, Flood, & Lang, 2014). Indigenous women's vulnerability to IPV is rooted in historical and ongoing trauma from colonization and residential schools, racism, and at times disconnection from land, culture, and language (Smith, Varcoe, & Edwards, 2005; King, Smith, & Gracey, 2009). Young women in Canada aged 15-24 have the highest risk of teen dating violence (TDV), and rates of violence targeting teen girls are higher in the territories than the national average (Statistics Canada, 2013). This culture of violence is pervasive through the NWT, and innovative health promotion activities that recognize these health inequities and engage target populations through a culturally sensitive, trauma-informed lens are needed to support victims of violence and shift the culture of violence in the North.

KEY ACTIVITIES & OUTPUTS

The FOXY Project was designed to explore sexual health and relationships among youth in Northwest Territories (NWT) using arts-based workshops and on-the-land Peer Leader Retreats.

Healthy Relationship Activities	Purpose
Icebreakers/Games	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Allows participants to feel comfortable, establishes expectations and boundaries within the group
Birds And Bees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teaches the relationship between our bodies and boundaries with others.Reveals cultural expectations,Reveals how language can be used to uplift or to hurt others.
Teaching Your Own Sex Ed. Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reveals unhealthy relationships to othersReveals the influence of mediaTeaches about teen dating violence, including reproductive coercion, assault.
Body/Personality Mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Participants note their body cues for safety and security as well as violence.Participants share the types of relationships in which they want to be.
Healthy Relationship Charades	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Discussions on how to get needs metUnhealthy vs. healthy ways to get needs metShares ways TDV can present in relationshipsTypes of AbuseCycles of violencePower & ControlConflict Resolution
Sex Jeopardy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Debunks myths about relationshipsDiscusses reproductive coercionDiscusses abuse
Question Box	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Discusses rejectionHow to get needs met in healthy waysTypes of abuseDealing with unhealthy relationship behavioursConflict resolution
Community Resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Resources for healthy relationships discussionsResources and places to seek help when behaviours are unhealthy

Healthy Relationship Activities	Purpose
Rants, Raves, Or Feels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stereotypes • Relationship and abuse myths • Colonization/Racism
Visual Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing relationship behaviours • Identifying relationship practices participants want to include in their own lives. • Processing break-ups and providing closure
Digital Storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing relationship behaviours • Identifying behaviours participants want to include in their lives • Picturing romantics relationships realistically • Conflict resolution skills
Traditional Indigenous Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beading, sewing hide • Mindfulness/Intention • Discussions on body cues, relationships, dating violence.
Ceremonial Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e.g. smudging, Sharing circles • Discussions of types of abuse, trauma processing, dating violence, paths to healing.
Traditional Drumming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coping skills • Choosing healthy relationships
Community Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributing to community • Assessing community needs and working towards systemic changes • Several participants chose to assist women's shelters and dating violence specifically
Yoga & Mindfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions on body cues • Healthy relationships vs. unhealthy ways to get needs met • Conflict resolution • Relationship myths

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP ACTIVITIES

Aklavik	Behchoko	Déljne
Fort Good Hope	Fort Liard	Fort McPherson
Fort Providence	Fort Resolution	Fort Simpson
Fort Smith	Hay River	Inuvik
K'atlode-eche First Nation Reserve	Lutsel K'e	N'Dilo
Norman Wells	Sambaa K'e (Trout Lake)	Tsiighetchic
Tuktoyaktuk	Tulita	Ulukhaktok
Wekweeti	Whati	Yellowknife
Blachford Lake Lodge	Yellowknife Ski Club	

A total of 149 FOXY School-based Workshops and 7 FOXY Peer Leader Retreats over the funding period took place. For this project, a total of 2395 Northern and Indigenous young women and non-binary youth were reached.

EVENTS	NUMBER	# OF PARTICIPANTS
FOXY Peer Leader Retreats 2016-21	7	160
FOXY School-Based Workshops 2016-2021	149	2235
TOTAL	156 Events	2395

FOXY provided knowledge dissemination activities throughout school-based workshop activities and the FOXY Peer Leader Retreats. All Participants of the FOXY workshops and FOXY Peer Leader Retreats received a resource bag, sexual health, mental health, and healthy relationship information. Participants of the FOXY Peer Leader Retreats also received their art creations, digital stories, a journal filled with even more resources, and links to our online content.

Project Outcomes

According to the results of our evaluation reports, the program was well-suited to the priorities of key stakeholders. All proposed objectives were completed. The FOXY team reported overall satisfaction with the program, as did Parents/Guardians and Youth Participants.

FOXY activities were especially relevant to Northerners when lessons were tied to traditional Indigenous teachings and traditions. FOXY embraced the power of “ceremony” and traditional songs to impact participants profoundly. Peer Leaders were introduced to the cultural ceremonies through teachings related to the history of ceremony and the effects of colonization and intergenerational trauma on Indigenous peoples and cultural connection.

Ceremonies offer the hope of a healing way forward through cultural connection. Many Indigenous Participants left the Retreats feeling more connected to their cultural roots and with an increased appetite for cultural connectivity. The inclusive manner in which cultural programming, such as drum circles and smudging, was delivered helped participants to feel welcome and find value in cultural programming.

Participation in the FOXY Retreat led to an **84% increase in sexual health knowledge** from the start of the Retreat to post-Retreat and a **32% increase at 6-month follow-up**, according to survey data. Qualitative data collected at the end of the Retreat and at 6-month follow-up indicated lasting increases in knowledge of HIV and other STIs, and safer sex options.

Participants appear to have an **increased capacity to adopt healthy sexual behaviours** as a result of the knowledge and skills gained from participation in FOXY. Participants reported that they learned useful skills and were confident in their abilities to assert healthy sexual behaviours in their relationships. **59% of Participants at post-test and 57% at follow-up** expressed increased capacity to uptake personal behaviours that prevent the transmission of HIV, Hepatitis C, or related STBBIs.

According to qualitative data, Participants appear to have **increased capacity to avoid teen dating violence as a result of the knowledge and skills gained from participation in FOXY**. Participants reported that they learned useful skills and were confident in their abilities to navigate relationships in a healthy way and spot the red flags that may lead to teen dating violence. **42% of Participants at post-test and 22% of Participants at follow-up** reported decreased acceptance of dating violence.

Community Projects are a key component of the FOXY program with the capacity to result in an exciting increase in youth-led initiatives in this population, Community Projects were far more successful than previous years, with 35% of Participants completing their project. Examples of Community Projects directly relating to reducing teen dating violence include: Supplying personal kits to the day shelter and women shelters x7, working with Elders, bringing awareness to Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women by providing culturally activities x2, volunteering with the Tae Kwon Do for young women to build self-confidence and self-efficacy, collecting food and donations to the local food bank to reduce food insecurity for women and families x5, promoting connection and healthy relationships through sports x3, as well as creating a girls’ lunch program with healthy relationship activities x2. In addition, FOXY knows that one of the ways teen dating violence manifests is through isolation. By providing opportunities for FOXY participants to complete community projects, they are combating isolation by building relationships within their communities. This is essential work which prevents and addresses teen dating violence.

NEXT STEPS

Specific teen dating violence analysis of data is currently underway and FOXY will provide peer-reviewed manuscripts to PHAC when available. Participants were found to have a meaningful experience that connected them to Northern cultures and positively impacted their sexual health knowledge, capacity to make healthy decisions, and capacity to avoid teen dating violence. 100% of Work Plan objectives were achieved, the project achieved sustainability, and the project garnered national praise!