



# **Calgary Youth Advisory Table - Influencing policy, Improving Services and Creating Awareness About Youth Homelessness**

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# Thank- You



- We would like to offer our thanks to the following donors who made this project possible:



- With Support from the following organizations:



# Acknowledgment of the Land



To acknowledge the traditional territory is to recognize its longer history, reaching beyond colonization and the establishment of European colonies, as well as its significance for the Indigenous peoples who lived and continue to live upon this territory, and whose practices and spiritualities were tied to the land and continue to develop in relationship to the land and its other inhabitants today.

With that, we would like to acknowledge that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, and respect the histories, languages, and cultures of First Nations, Metis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community.

# Who are the Youth Advisory Table?



- Subsidiary of Calgary's Youth Sector
- Created in February 2015
- Consists of youth aged 13 to 26 who have:
  - Experience with Homelessness
  - Have been at risk of Homelessness
  - Who believe they have something to offer in addressing the root causes of Youth Homelessness
- Provides opportunity to:
  - Have homeless youth voices heard
  - Influence policy
  - Improve youth services
  - Create awareness

**Who We Are:**  
The Youth Advisory Table (YAT) provides the opportunity for youth (aged 16-25) who have experience with homelessness to share their experiences and perspectives and have their voices heard, to influence policy, improve services and create awareness about youth homelessness.  
The YAT is a subsidiary of the Youth Sector Committee, which is comprised of a number of stakeholders and organizations in the youth-serving sector. The Youth Sector collectively advocates on the needs of youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

**Mission:**  
YOUTH CREATING THE BASIS FOR CHANGE BASED ON EXPERIENCE, BOTH INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE.

**What We Do:**

- Provide an opportunity for youth to come together to own the actions needed to end youth homelessness
- Provide a way for youth to influence decision-making about youth homelessness

**What We've Done:**

- Strongly influenced Calgary's Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness and Alberta's Plan to End Homelessness
- Hosted the only youth-led event for Homelessness Awareness Day in Calgary
- Participation in Youth Week
- Consultations with various local organizations who serve youth, to improve service delivery

**Who's Welcome:**  
Youth aged 16 to 25 who:

- Are committed to influencing change and believe they have something to offer in addressing causes of youth homelessness
- Are committed to active engagement and regular attendance in monthly meetings
- Have experience with homelessness (current or former), or have been at risk of homelessness

**What We Offer:**  
The YAT provides a forum for you to connect with other youth who are passionate about making a difference. For your active participation, the YAT will provide a small honorarium. Pizza and snacks are also provided prior to the meeting.

**What happens to the information collected from the YAT?**  
Information and feedback from youth will be used to inform the Youth Sector and youth-service organizations on how to best meet the needs of youth who are at risk of and/or experiencing homelessness.

# History/Formation of the YAT



- Youth experiencing homelessness were asking for time to share/talk about services/events that were available for youth
- First meeting of the YAT was February 2015
  - 3 members at the first meeting
- Originally only supposed to meet 3 times a year, which changed to monthly
- Often requested for consultation by various groups (ex. City of Calgary, non-profits, Government etc.)
- Members typically came to the first meeting for the money/food, but kept coming back because they recognized the potential to share their voice and the impact it could have on the community
- The group strives for inclusivity, diversity and equality in membership

# YAT Accomplishments



- Instrumental in the creation of Calgary's Plan to Prevent and End Youth Homelessness 2017 Refresh and Alberta's Plan to End Homelessness
- Helped in the creation of a youth LGBTQ2S+ housing program in Calgary called Aura
- Recipient of the Together We Can Award from United Way of Calgary and Area (pictured below)
- Consultations with various local organizations who serve youth, with a focus on improving service delivery and influencing policy
  - A Way Home 2016
  - ReDefin'd Project
- YAT member attended the 2018 CAEH Conference in Winnipeg
- Consultation with Irfan Sabir, Minister of Community and Social Services
- Hosted the only youth-led event for Homelessness Awareness Day in Calgary
- Youth Week event in the Beltline
- Created a video about youth homelessness in collaboration with Antyx...



# Antyx Video



# Suggestions for Creating Your Own YAT



- Recruitment: Use schools and youth serving organizations.
  - Word of mouth is great for recruiting new members.
  - Be intentional in recruiting members for a spectrum in points of view
  - Don't recruit based on tokenism
- Compensation:
  - food/bus tickets/service fee
  - Fewer than 10 participants = \$20
  - More than 10 participants = \$10
  - Gift card first time attending, service fee/honorarium when they return a second time



# Suggestions for Creating Your Own YAT



- Facilitators/Location:
  - Have neutral non-agency affiliated facilitators
  - Facilitators need to be people that the youth can trust and be dedicated and willing to put in time/effort
  - Facilitators need to be knowledgeable about issues surrounding youth homelessness
  - Central Location, close to transit, accessible, and located near services
- Rules need to be created by the group and adhered to
- Confidentiality is essential
- Outside consultants needs to contribute to compensation
- **Even though the process may be slow at first, don't give up, and be persistent!**

# What We Have Learned So Far?



## • **What has worked well?**

- Food/service fee/bus tickets
- Involvement and freedom
- Including everybody's voice (lived experience experts)
- Communication outside of meetings (emails, Street Messenger)
- Flexibility/adaptability in schedule (evening meetings)
- Central location close to transit
- Active Recruitment
- Comfortable atmosphere
- Confidentiality
- Rule Adherence/Enforcement
- Ideas generated in the group create tangible change (ex. Aura)
- Communication within community (Youth digest)
- Directly influence service in Calgary for youth
- Chance to network
- Common purpose and goals
- Extended membership age from 24 to 26
- Members are usually invited by other members
- "Drama left at the door" (for the most part)

## • **What has not worked so well?**

- Only meet once a month (could be every two weeks)
- Need to include newer generation of youth experiencing homelessness in membership
- Less attendance in sub-committees than monthly meetings
- Securing funding is an issue
- Progress can be slow
- Don't always see the impact right away
- Distraction is sometimes an issue in the group
- Schedules don't always allow to attend other events
- Should we mention honorarium for recruitment of new members or not?
- Outside drama can seep into the group on occasion

# Keys Messages/Takeaways



- Listening to the youth voices and experiences is key to addressing youth homelessness
  - Try to understand us
  - “Talk with us, not at us”
- Youth voices should help shape policy that directly effects them
  - “Nothing about us without us”
- Addressing youth homelessness prevents adult homelessness
- Don’t give up on the youth; you never know what their true potential could be
- There is hope for young people; we are strong

**Youth have a  
valuable voice  
and want to use it**

The background features several large, semi-transparent house-shaped icons in light blue, light green, and light orange. At the bottom, there is a decorative graphic consisting of overlapping, colorful geometric shapes in shades of teal, orange, and blue.

# Panel Discussion and Question Period

