

Step Four: Project Planning

Now that your youth council is up and running, it's time to start some activities. Some ideas for activities may have already come up in your previous discussions, but if not, here are some things to consider:

- What are projects that would reflect your goals?
- How will you raise funds for your project?
- Consider the details: location, time, date, things you need to prepare and who will prepare them.

Your project will be more successful if you plan all the details in advance. It might even help to make a schedule and assign jobs for tasks leading up to the activity. As you gain more experience in project planning, you will have a better idea of what needs to be done to prepare.

Step Five: Growth

Once you have a completed project behind you, you will be ready to move on to more ambitious projects. As your youth council becomes more active, it is important not to forget about the basics. Here are some things to remember:

- Recognize the achievements of youth council members: Make sure that you have a system to reward the hard work contributed by youth council members. Some ideas are prizes such as movie vouchers, fun activities such as dinners or field trips, or public recognition/awards.
- Staff support: It is important to have the support of the youth workers, staff, and board of directors at your centre. Make sure they know what you are up to, and have opportunities to get involved or provide feedback. Cultivate a relationship with a youth worker who can support your council on a regular basis.
- Community Support: As your youth council grows, it will become known throughout the community. To gain community support, it is important to provide the community with information about your youth council. You can make brochures, membership cards, or information sheets. Distribute these in the community so your positive reputation grows, and you receive the support you deserve.
- Trouble-Shooting: As your youth council grows, new problems and issues will surely arise. If you encounter a problem that is difficult to deal with, you may want to seek support from others. Contacting another Friendship Centre youth council for advice is a good idea.

You can also contact the Provincial Aboriginal Youth Council Coordinator for advice at 1-800-990-2432 or rmason@bcaafc.com.



SO YOU WANT TO



START A YOUTH COUNCIL?



**A Guide from the Provincial Aboriginal Youth Council
of the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres**

This brochure describes steps to take when starting a youth council. Of course, starting a youth council is a different experience in every community, and some steps may not be useful to you, or you may want to mix up the order. But you can use this guide as some ideas to get started.

Pre-Planning What is a youth council?

Before you get started, you should consider what a youth council is and does. A youth council is a group of youth who meet on a regular basis to plan and conduct activities together. Although youth councils may be organized in many different ways and may have different goals, the general purpose of a youth council is to provide youth with a meaningful way to make decisions about matters that affect them. In Friendship Centres, youth councils are meant to provide a way for youth to give feedback on and become involved in their youth centre's activities. Youth councils may also choose to conduct projects that will help the community or other youth at their centre. Youth councils give youth a voice and an opportunity to work towards their own goals with the support of adults in their communities.

Step One: Getting Youth Involved

Your first step is to get youth interested. Think about the most effective ways to reach youth in your community. You could put up posters or make announcements in places where youth hang out, such as schools, youth centres, and other places. If you make posters, make sure to explain on the posters what being a part of youth council is about, because people might not already know. Use exciting phrases to attract people, like, "Do you want to make a difference in your community?" or "Do you want to be a leader at your youth centre?" You can also get the information out through word of mouth. For example, have everyone who is interested bring at least one other friend who is interested.

Step Two: First Meeting

At the first meeting, you should begin by explaining what the concept of a youth council is, and why it's a good idea to start a youth council. After setting the context, you may want to discuss:

- **Goals:** Ask people why they are here, what they want to contribute to the youth council, and what they envision the youth council doing. Have a conversation about the purpose of the youth council. Set broad goals (like, "help youth in our community by providing fun and safe activities") not just specific goals (like "go to Vancouver for a conference.")

- **Structure:** Brainstorm how people would like to organize the youth council. Do they want to hold elections? Have a hiring committee? Or open involvement up to anyone who volunteers? Do they want to have specific positions, or simply all be equal positions? What will the responsibilities of each member be?
- **Timing and Transport:** Discuss when, where, and how often the youth want to meet. How will you all communicate about meeting times (email, phone list, postings at the centre)? What time works well for people? Do people need arranged transport to get to or from the meetings? Remember to set a date for the next meeting! Throughout the first meeting, it is important to keep the energy high and to convey the point that being a part of youth council is an exciting chance to contribute to the community and have your voice heard.

Step Three: Second Meeting

Now that you have done some brainstorming, it is time to start making decisions about your youth council. You can always change these decisions if they don't work out, but try to think about what will work best in the long run, because consistency will make your youth council stronger. Here are some decisions you should consider:

- **Structure:** What the various roles will be and how they will be chosen. For this, it is best to define roles and responsibilities in writing. This is called a "terms of reference" and describes how your youth council will be organized, how they will make decisions, and how members will be chosen.
- **Mission:** You should also put down in writing a sentence or two that describes why you exist. This is called a mission statement, and will be a useful reminder of your goals when you are planning projects and making decisions.
- **Communication:** Make sure you set out guidelines for how you will communicate in the meeting. How will decisions be made? How will conflicts be resolved? How will you ensure respectful communication?

Again, don't forget to set the date for the next meeting, or even set up a regular schedule!