ENGAGING YOUTH AND BUILDING STRONG COMMUNITIES

YOUTH engagement strategy
Acknowledgements

The Youth Engagement Strategy Steering Committee would like to acknowledge and make special mention of several individuals who have contributed a tremendous amount of time and energy in the creation of this report.

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Youth are active and contributing members of society now, not future citizens or leaders of tomorrow...
Executive Summary

The Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) is the result of a collaborative effort between staff of Recreation, Tourism and Culture – Community Recreation Services (RTC) and HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development (HeartWood). The strategy represents an evolutionary, developmental, community-based model aimed at improving recreational opportunities for the youth of Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) through youth involvement.

The intent is to create a process in which youth are proactively and creatively engaged in determining the types of programs and services that are of interest and benefit to them. Today’s youth are facing an ever increasing number of issues and a more holistic approach is needed – the youth need to be involved, and want to be involved, in the process.

The partnership with HeartWood brought experienced resources to the table in an effort to establish an approach unique to HRM – in short, HRM’s Community Youth Development Model (CYDM). HeartWood provided guidance, definition and assistance in the implementation of an overall project strategy. HeartWood provided a template for a CYDM which RTC’s staff then modified and redefined after receiving input from the youth of our communities.

The goals of HRM’s Youth Engagement Strategy are:

1. To increase the capacity of HRM RTC to engage youth and communities in the development and delivery of RTC Programs and Services.

2. To initiate various actions that will help make HRM a more youth friendly region.

There were five principles used in the design of the overall methodology for the Youth Engagement Strategy:

1. An appreciative approach would be used – find out what was working well, how RTC was making that happen, and then build on that work.

2. Youth would be involved in the strategy at the earliest possible opportunity.

3. The YES Steering Committee would explore innovative approaches whenever possible.

4. The Plan would emerge – rather than formulate a detailed plan at the outset, a general direction and framework for action would be agreed upon and then the most effective strategies would be discovered along the way.

5. Resources and tools would be developed/provided as the need arose so that no time or energy was wasted in devising tools that were not needed.
Process

One of the initial steps to be taken in the development of the YES was to ensure that RTC staff were well versed in the practices and theories of youth engagement. HeartWood played an integral part in ensuring that knowledge was in place. The basic concepts, tools and practices of community youth development were confirmed as the starting point.

There were a number of gatherings and events held as part of the YES development. These included workshops, dialogue sessions, coaching sessions, a residential leadership camp, and sharing sessions. Innovative and effective processes such as the Common Ground Process and the World Café were used to stretch the imagination and expand thinking beyond what was already being done. The successes of ongoing programs were also shared and celebrated.

Youth who attended the residential leadership camp were given training in skills such as photomapping, surveying, interviewing and asset mapping. The youth involved in this training and subsequent use of the new skills, formed the basis for RTC’s Youth Action Team, which continues to work for youth engagement in HRM.

The results from the asset mapping carried out by the Youth Action Team formed the basis for community dialogue sessions which sought to identify key learning points, underlying questions, themes and patterns of response, good ideas and actionable items. Eight community dialogue sessions were held. The communities were asked:

What makes your community a good place for Youth to live?

What else would you like happening in your community that would make it an even better place for YOUTH?

What can YOU do to bring this about? and how can adults support youth in doing that?

In spite of the diverse locations and participation rates, common themes emerged. These themes, the results of the asset mapping exercise and survey results, were all used by RTC in developing their Action Plans for the coming program year.
Research

As part of the Youth Engagement Strategy, RTC commissioned a demographic profile of Halifax Regional Municipality. The results of this profile have been used by each Geographic Area of RTC’s Community Recreation Services in the development of their Action Plans.

In addition, HeartWood was asked to conduct a literature review that highlighted strategies and best practices of youth engagement in governance. The Summary Literature Review can be found in appendix A; for the complete literature review, please visit www.halifax.ca/recreation.

Emergent Goals and Objectives

As the process that guided the development of the Youth Engagement Strategy was an evolving one, the following summary outlines the YES goals and the specific, measurable outcomes which emerged throughout the process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMERGENT GOALS</th>
<th>OUTCOMES / DELIVERABLES</th>
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| To provide RTC Staff with skill enhancement in youth engagement and Community Youth Development. | a. Recreation Staff trained in Facilitation Techniques  
b. Youth Inclusion  
c. Recreation Staff acquired more tools for Community Youth Development  
d. Recreation Staff trained in Asset Mapping Tools  
e. Recreation Staff (Full Time) trained as skilled Community Youth Developers |
| To develop a youth recreation service inventory baseline. | a. Youth Service Inventory |
| To identify, recruit, train, develop and mentor youth leaders within each of the 6 Geographic Areas. | a. Identified and recruited youth leaders  
b. Youth trained in Asset Mapping & basic facilitation  
c. RTC Youth Action Team “Youth Element”  
d. Youth Element - Branding and logo |
| To compile youth demographic information. | a. 6 area youth demographic reports compiled. |
| To conduct intentional and meaningful youth consultations within each of the 6 Geographic Areas. | a. 1,185 attended Youth Dialogue sessions  
b. 6,172 youth consulted through various methods (surveys, focus groups, etc.)  
c. Data compiled for Recreation Geographic Area Action Plans |
| To prepare community-based youth driven action plans. | a. Seven youth - driven area action plans  
b. One RTC action plan  
c. Recommendations to RTC and HRM |
| To review and update Recreation Service Delivery based on feedback from youth. | a. CRS Service level analysis  
b. Youth connections to other applicable HRM initiatives resources or HRM Business Units |
| To conduct a literature review. | a. Literature review focussed on Youth Governance and Leadership completed (Best practices). |
| For recreation Staff to develop and foster ongoing relationships with youth in their communities. | a. Youth Action Teams  
b. Youth Leaders |

Recommendations to support these strategic directions are detailed in the full report.
RTC Strategic Directions for Youth

In total, over 6,100 youth in HRM have been consulted throughout the project. The information collected provides insight into the current perspective of youth. Several themes consistently emerged and have provided eight Strategic Directions for RTC.

Organizational
In order to be successful in achieving youth engagement, RTC may require professional development in community youth development and strategies for relationship building and engaging youth. Organizational changes need to be put in place to support youth in communities.

Youth Friendly Facilities and Neighbourhoods
Youth want safe, welcoming environments where they can hang out with friends and engage in unstructured activities. They want access to affordable facilities. In some cases, existing facilities need to be fixed up while other facilities do not yet exist.

Direct Program Delivery
More opportunities exist for youth to play sports than to participate in music, culture and the arts. More opportunities in these areas need to be created.

Communication
Youth say that the most effective way to promote an event, or service, is through school, flyers, word of mouth, or the Internet. Advertising that is effective and relevant is desired.

Leadership Development
Youth want to be involved in their communities by organizing events and fixing up their neighbourhood. They value their communities and want opportunities to connect. Youth acknowledge the importance of leadership roles in their lives.

Governance
Youth want opportunities to express themselves, to be invited by adults to gather and discuss ideas, to be taken seriously and to have opportunities for public participation.

Community Development/Partnerships
It takes more than just HRM to fully implement a Community Youth Development Model. Success can be achieved by using resources and partnerships to meet the needs of youth.

Community Events
Youth want to be involved in organizing community events and want to see events that bring diverse groups of people together. They are proud of events that happen in their areas.
RTC Learning Points

A number of learning points emerged from the work carried out by the YES Steering Committee. These points highlight the need for internal changes within RTC and Community Recreation Services. It will not be sufficient to continue to do things the way they have been done before. Youth are clear in their needs and the success of youth engagement relies on considering their needs and not only the bureaucratic needs of the service providers.

Making these types of fundamental changes – from a task-oriented focus to one that is more qualitative and flexible for example – will challenge both management and staff. RTC needs to reach out to youth where they are, youth need to be taken seriously, priorities need to be reconsidered, relationship building must become a priority, time must be allowed to achieve results, and the primary focus of RTC’s mandate must be defined.

There is a desire to have RTC known as a leader within HRM for engaging youth. To achieve this, change is mandatory.

Community Youth Development Model

The RTC Community Youth Development Model is intended for application by RTC staff when working with groups within a given community or organization. As with HeartWood’s CYDM, it blends youth development and community development and is designed as a guide to encourage, plan for, and support active engagement of youth with HRM, their communities and agencies. The Model is intended to be adapted to fit the specific needs or desired outcomes that each community defines.

HeartWood’s Community Youth Development Model is comprised of five Core Values and five Tools for Growth which have been directly adapted by RTC’s Community Youth Development Model. In order to put the model into action, eleven RTC Resources have been identified as necessary and have been incorporated into the model. Finally, Outcomes for both Individual Youth Development and for Community have been identified as part of the model. These components build on one another to create a framework which acts as a means for adults and young adults to grow through their work with young people.

Goals and Recommendations

A number of tasks, goals and opportunities have come out of the full Youth Engagement Strategy and implementation of the Community Youth Development Model. These goals have been incorporated into the Action Plans for the six Geographic Areas of CRS. Many of the conversations and discussions with youth resulted in suggestions that went outside of RTC’s program and service delivery mandate. These goals and recommendations will involve other HRM Business Units and outside agencies. The goals and recommendations will continue to evolve as the CYDM is utilized throughout HRM.

Links to Related HRM Initiatives

Finally, there are several other youth-related initiatives currently underway within HRM. The YES will connect to, and impact, many of these initiatives.
“Come to our schools and ask us our opinions and involve us in community meetings.”
Halifax Youth (January 2005)
Introduction

The Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) described in this report is the result of a collaborative approach by staff of Recreation, Tourism and Culture (RTC) and the HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development (HeartWood). The strategy can perhaps be more accurately described as a "process" as it represents an evolutionary, developmental, community-based model aimed at improving recreational opportunities for HRM’s youth.

**Nationwide research funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (2000) revealed one of the most consistent concerns of youth - is that their voices are not heard, respected, or taken seriously by adults.**

The need for this type of strategy became clear when RTC was asked “what was being done for the youth of HRM who were not engaged in sport.” An inventory revealed that, indeed, much was being done. However, what was also revealed was that youth were not being included, or consulted, in the decision-making process that created these programs.

The intent of the Youth Engagement Strategy is to create and endorse a process in which youth are proactively and creatively engaged in determining the types of programs and services that are of interest and benefit to them. The idea is to create Youth Friendly Communities through the input and insight of the youth who live there.

The Youth Engagement Strategy Steering Committee, made up of staff from Recreation, Tourism and Culture, was tasked with devising a means of engaging the youth of HRM in a coordinated and comprehensive approach to youth programming. Today’s youth are facing an ever increasing number of issues and a more holistic approach is needed – the youth need to be involved, and want to be involved, in the process.

One key to success in the endeavour being undertaken by the Steering Committee, is the development of a RTC Community Youth Development Model. This essential element is a large part of the partnership being engaged in with Heartwood. The RTC Community Youth Development Model plays a significant role in engaging the youth of HRM.

**Steering Committee Members**

**Recreation, Tourism and Culture Staff:**
- **Claudette Levy**, Chair of YES Committee and Area Coordinator
- **Phil Hammond**, Community Recreation Programmer
- **John Henry**, Manager of Aquatic Services
- **Darren Hirtle**, Community Developer
- **Karen Lowery**, Community Recreation Programmer
- **Norma MacLean**, Community Developer
- **Heather MacLeod**, Community Recreation Programmer
- **Shawna Shirley**, Community Recreation Programmer
- **Ivy Warren**, Area Coordinator

**Facilitator**
- **HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development**
Adults can let youth know what opportunities are available to youth, support their efforts and let them know they are there to help and to listen.

- Youth Participant, Bedford World Cafe (2005)
Background

One of the key drivers behind the development of a Youth Engagement Strategy is Halifax Regional Council’s interest in youth in the communities they serve. In 2000, Council expressed a clear and direct desire to address the issues youth face in an effort to improve the quality of life for all who live in our region.

Recreation, Tourism and Culture (RTC) responded to that desire with a look at the programs and services already being delivered. Inventories, assessments and discussions — the natural progression of review — were the result. As the work continued, it became clear that a change was required. Youth needed more than they had in the past, their issues had changed. And, most importantly, youth should be involved in the decision-making process.

In 2004, Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Recreation, Tourism & Culture initiated a partnership with the HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development to facilitate the development of a Youth Engagement Strategy. The key point was to get the youth of HRM involved, get them engaged.

HeartWood’s role was to assist RTC in developing and implementing the Common Ground Process (examined in more detail under Methodology) including the collection of demographics, community asset mapping, community workshops and community dialogue sessions. HeartWood’s main contribution to the YES was two-fold: firstly, it helped define and implement an overall project strategy; and secondly, it crafted a number of the main tools, events, and processes in the project’s methodology.

The strategy and methodology were developed using HeartWood’s own techniques which it uses successfully in its work with youth and communities. Understanding the approach provides context for the work carried out by the Steering Committee in developing the Youth Engagement Strategy.

HeartWood’s approach is one that:

- Has a shared focus on youth and community development (including professional and organizational development) for the purpose of building healthy communities.

- Embodies asset-building, appreciative principles and practices.

- Is emergent; i.e., uses action & learning processes to create innovative strategies to respond to complex issues within a results-focused framework of action that evolves as the initiative proceeds.

For an explanation on HeartWood’s approach, please see Appendix B.

In April 2004, the Youth Engagement Strategy Steering Committee was established. The goal of this Committee was to increase Recreation, Tourism and Culture’s capacity to engage youth and communities in the development and delivery of RTC programs and services for youth. The result would be the implementation and execution of various actions that would help make HRM a more youth-friendly city.
Partners

The successful development of the Youth Engagement Strategy is due to an effective partnership between RTC and HeartWood. The Youth of HRM are, by nature of the Strategy and in support of the Strategy, also an integral partner in the process. This section provides some background on these partners.

RECREATION, TOURISM & CULTURE

Recreation, Tourism and Culture is a Business Unit of Halifax Regional Municipality. The mission of RTC is:

Recreation, Tourism and Culture promotes the economic, personal, and cultural enrichment of HRM and its residents by providing inclusive leisure services and programs and growing HRM as an authentic and historical destination for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Community Recreation Services (CRS) operates as a division of Recreation, Tourism and Culture. CRS focuses on both programming and community development. Community development is the division’s approach to service. CRS works with groups and organizations at a community or neighbourhood level to develop programs and services for the benefit of the community.

Programming focuses on quality, introductory programs for children and youth as priority groups with access and affordability as the underlying principles of the program division.

CRS offers over 5,000 direct and in-direct recreation and leisure programs as well as facility membership opportunities, drop-in programs and services, and an Outdoor Education and Earth Education section. CRS offers community special events, special projects, and other community development services. In addition to “dryland” programs, CRS operates aquatic programming which includes pools, beaches, swim lessons and recreational swims. CRS has divided its resources into six Geographic Areas to provide programs and services to residents of HRM.

The following table provides additional information on the Geographic Areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Area</th>
<th>Council District</th>
<th>Population Served</th>
<th>RTC Area Coordinator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bedford, Sackville &amp; Fall River</td>
<td>2, 19, 20, 21</td>
<td>63,980 Total</td>
<td>Ivy Warren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11,675 Youth</td>
<td>869-4200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cole Harbour &amp; Eastern Shore</td>
<td>1, 3, 4</td>
<td>56,965 Total</td>
<td>Frances Matheson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10,045 Youth</td>
<td>490-4711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dartmouth &amp; Eastern Passage</td>
<td>5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10</td>
<td>76,575 Total</td>
<td>Kathy MacKinnon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12,665 Youth</td>
<td>490-4728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halifax Peninsula</td>
<td>11, 12, 13, 14</td>
<td>61,225 Total</td>
<td>Claudette Levy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13,065 Youth</td>
<td>490-4633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainland North</td>
<td>10, 15, 16, 22, 23</td>
<td>69,740 Total</td>
<td>Doug Branscombe</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11,130 Youth</td>
<td>876-8812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainland South**</td>
<td>17, 18</td>
<td>30,710 Total</td>
<td>Mary Angela Munro</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4,840 Youth</td>
<td>479-4486</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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RTC has two additional divisions which provide programs and services in HRM but do not fall under geographic areas. They are the Adventure Earth Centre and the Aquatics Division (including Beaches).

* 2001 Statistics Canada Information
** Census tracts do not necessarily run along District boundaries

Appendix D provides a map of Halifax Regional Municipality with the six Geographic Areas of Community Recreation Services identified.
HeartWood is a not-for-profit registered charitable organization founded in 1989, and based in HRM. HeartWood’s mission is to work with youth to develop their skills and confidence as community builders. They also provide professional development services (skill acquisition workshops, consultation, coaching, organizational learning/action processes, research, resource tools) to adults, groups, organizations and agencies to assist them in their efforts to support meaningful youth participation in building healthy communities. HeartWood works throughout Nova Scotia and, increasingly, across Canada.

The primary events and processes that HeartWood contributed to the Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) were:

- professional development for RTC staff in the concepts and practices of community youth development;
- coaching and consultation with various RTC work-groups, including Geographic Area teams to develop local strategies and actions;
- working directly with young people to take action in their own community, including an asset-mapping initiative to gather information about youth-related activities across HRM;
- dialogue sessions to consult with youth and adults as to their experience of HRM as a youth-friendly community;
- and finally, a literature review of current innovations in the field of youth development that are causing a shift towards community youth development practices, ones that could be successfully applied in HRM. These items are reviewed in more detail below.

On numerous occasions, HeartWood served as a coach and consultant to RTC staff in the development and implementation of the Strategy. HeartWood’s primary role in this regard was to work closely with the Strategy’s Steering Committee as they initiated and then guided the whole process.

In addition, HeartWood staff met with an Action Committee of Senior HRM Managers that organized a dialogue session on May 18, 2005 at City Hall for all HRM Business Units on the question of their potential role in youth engagement and how that would help build strong communities.

The last item provided primarily by HeartWood is the literature review (Appendix A), which was conducted by Laena Garrison, a contract staff member. She reviewed a host of research articles and web sites related to community youth development, innovative recreation programming, municipal youth engagement strategies across North America, and other relevant areas of inquiry.

Finally, HeartWood has participated in the writing and preparation of this Report. More information on HeartWood and their work, can be found in Appendix B.

As work progressed on the development of a Youth Engagement Strategy, it quickly became apparent that youth were really a partner in the development process. Youth were not just the client being considered. In order to be successful, the Youth Engagement Strategy had to include youth in the process.

As a partner, youth were involved in a significant number of activities and processes. Their input, actions and knowledge were vital to the Strategy and the implementation of a Community Youth Development Model.
Youth are the experts on their experiences, needs, and interactions with their local environments.
Methodology

GOALS AND PRINCIPLES

The Goals of the Youth Engagement Strategy are:

1. To increase the capacity of HRM RTC to engage youth and communities in the development and delivery of RTC Programs & Services.
2. To initiate various actions that will help make HRM a more youth-friendly region.

The overall methodology for the Youth Engagement Strategy was designed based on the following principles:

• An appreciative approach would be used.
   The Youth Engagement Strategy would, first and foremost, find out what was working well in HRM. Then how, specifically, RTC was making that happen. The YES could build on that work and be more intentional in its application and development. (For more information on the “appreciative approach”, see Appendix B, page 50.)

• At the earliest possible opportunity, the YES Steering Committee would involve young people in the strategy.
   The involvement of youth would begin with asset-mapping activity, followed by participation in community dialogue sessions, and move towards more active leadership roles in the design and delivery of RTC programs and services.

• The YES Steering Committee would explore innovative approaches wherever possible.
   The Committee would recognize that these approaches would materialize in various ways in different communities, given different populations, existing community assets, interests, and goals, staff resources, connections and relationships with other community partners, and so on.

   In short, a “cookie cutter” approach would not be used, so that the unique character and strength of each community would have full scope. We could, however, learn from each other, sharing good ideas, strategy, and resources. So, we chose a mixed collaborative and individualized approach.

• The plan would emerge.
   Rather than expend time and energy to formulate detailed planning at the outset of the YES initiative (such as strategic plans, role descriptions, action plans), we would agree upon a general direction (i.e., a “good enough vision”), a framework of action, and rely upon exploratory action, reflection/evaluation, and dialogue processes to discover the most effective strategies along the way. These would then evolve as more learning and action occurred, until a significant momentum was achieved.

• Resources and tools would be developed/ provided as the need arose so that no time or energy was wasted in devising tools that were not needed.
In short, the Committee started off with a good idea of where it was going, guiding principles, a bare-bones action plan, and a number of organizational processes that would capture learning and insight so that the farther the process went, the more clear the path became.

In consultation with RTC Management and Program Staff, the Steering Committee and HeartWood agreed that there was already a significant level of experience and knowledge regarding youth engagement and that a fair amount of innovative work was happening throughout HRM. At the same time it was also felt that more could be done, existing programs and services could be improved, and that collective expertise could be deepened with new knowledge and skills. Lastly, although the Committee couldn’t - at the outset – see all the possibilities, they were confident that these would unfold as they took this journey together.

**ACTION PLAN AND ACTIVITIES**

One of the initial steps to be taken, with HeartWood, was to make use of opportunities for the professional development of RTC staff in order to ensure they had the full slate of tools necessary to be successful in Youth Engagement. This consisted of a number of gatherings of Programmers, Community Developers, and Area Coordinators to explore current concepts and practices. As well, there was ongoing opportunity for RTC and HeartWood to co-facilitate youth programming and co-present dialogue sessions, which resulted in skills and knowledge exchange. Through this process, HeartWood presented the basic concepts, tools, and practices of community youth development as a starting point for the YES. The intent was to provide strategic opportunities for RTC to tap into their own knowledge and experience in youth engagement and then build on that.

**In keeping with the principle of using an appreciative approach, there were opportunities for RTC staff to identify:**

- what is already working well in HRM;
- what resources are currently available to leverage for more support for youth engagement.
- what else could be done if Geographic Area teams re-organized their workloads and found more ways to collaborate with one another, other HRM Business Units, and community partners.

In short, these sessions combined reflection, dialogue, possibility thinking, and the creative development of strategic actions.

There were a number of gatherings and events held as part of the YES development:

- A staff workshop on youth inclusion principles and concepts.
- A showcase of successful RTC programs and services that exemplify youth engagement (what is already happening that could be built upon and done more intentionally).
- A session to share stories, strategies, and preliminary action plans that had emerged during the YES over the first year.
- Two smaller gatherings of RTC staff who acted as coaches to define their responsibilities with youth, to build good working relationships, and to agree upon a common framework for action.
- A three day youth leadership camp.
- Meetings of the Youth Action Team (described on the following pages).
Common Ground Process

The Common Ground Process is a progressive method of evaluating where a project stands, identifying successes, determining how to build on those successes, creating a vision, making connections, and sparking ideas and creative thinking. For the YES project, three RTC staff gatherings were conducted to accomplish the Common Ground Process. At the first gathering, the basic framework for the Youth Engagement Strategy was outlined. The second gathering was to evaluate what youth initiatives were already working well, determine which could be expanded, share ideas and create a vision. The final session reviewed the expanded youth initiatives and the direction of the YES.

A significant benefit of using the Common Ground Process was enabling staff to join forces, compare notes and focus on a single topic – away from the daily routine. This process results in more collaboration among Geographic Areas and among staff in the task of youth engagement. Gathering staff together for one common purpose provides clarification, enthusiasm, connections and overall value to the organization.

Adults need to develop sensitivity “to the inherent difference in experience, status, power, control, knowledge of resources, language, etc...” between youth and adults (Australian Youth Foundation 1998.)

Youth Leadership Camp

In August 2004, a three-day youth leadership camp was held in Beaver Bank. The camp participants were 24 youth (4 from each Geographic Area), RTC staff, the YES Steering Committee and HeartWood staff.

This youth action initiative had the following objectives

- to have the youth and RTC staff experience a team-building process which would allow them to feel that they are working as a core group taking action across HRM.

- to prepare the youth in a wide range of community action tools, such as effective information gathering, hosting community conversations and events, and mapping the assets and strengths of their community.

- To provide an opportunity for the youth and RTC staff to learn together about successful youth-adult partnerships in community initiatives.
This camp was a high-energy point in the YES, primarily because it involved a significant number of young people for the first time. It provided a dynamic, creative, and “safe” container in which the young people clearly demonstrated their pride in community, their desire and passion for making a difference, and their ability to imagine a youth-friendlier region.

The camp also set in motion the information gathering activity that would take place over the following months (primarily asset-mapping, surveys, and interviews), and laid the foundation for future gatherings of the young people and RTC staff so as to continue making connections across communities, building relationships, and taking further actions.

Over the following year, these youth, RTC and HeartWood staff, met on three separate occasions. They continue to meet, without HeartWood’s involvement, most recently in October 2005. This group has formed RTC’s Youth Action Team, the “Youth Element” (see inside back cover for the history behind The Youth Element name, and a description of what the logo represents)

Asset Mapping

As stated above, one of the information gathering techniques that the young people and RTC staff were shown at the camp was asset mapping. The approach was based on the work of several individuals and groups:

- David Cooperrider, Case Western Reserve University (developed Appreciative Inquiry as a methodology for positive intentional systemic change);
- John McKnight and John Kretzmann, Northwestern University (primarily responsible for the asset-based approach to community development);
- the Environmental Youth Alliance, Vancouver (has developed many asset-mapping tools being used by young people in community building initiatives);
- HeartWood’s own experience in this approach.

Youth carried out asset mapping on behalf of the YES. The youth who attended the Youth Leadership Camp were provided training in techniques such as interviewing, surveying and photo-mapping. With the support of RTC and on returning to their communities, the youth went out and spoke to other youth.

Some youth utilized photo-mapping, while others used a three-minute survey tool developed by staff and youth. The method depended on which tools youth were more comfortable using. All youth performed surveys during Fall 2004. The data collected was reviewed and analyzed by Geographic Areas and the Steering Committee.

While youth from many different communities and backgrounds were being consulted, it was very interesting to see common themes emerging quickly as the data was analyzed.

The tools and processes that were provided to the youth and RTC staff in order to carry out asset mapping initiatives encouraged the youth to see their own community with “new eyes” and to take note of all that it had to offer young people. As well, the youth and adults being surveyed were asked what they could imagine would make the community a better place for young people and a better place for everyone.
Community Dialogue Sessions

The asset mapping processes brought interesting information and insights to the surface, and set the stage for the community dialogue sessions that followed. These were organized and facilitated by RTC staff and HeartWood from February to May 2005 in eight communities. The sessions used a World Café format www.theworldcafé.com, which is a large-group process of interactive conversations that address key questions, which leads to greater understanding and connection amongst participants, as well as setting the stage for action to occur.

Typically, each of the sessions focused on the questions of:

- What makes your community a good place for youth to live?
- What else would you like happening in your community that would make it an even better place for youth?
  
  Note: since people seemed to initially answer this question by dwelling on physical facilities, programs, events and the like, we started to ask as well: What about attitudes, relationships with adults, connection to other communities in HRM – what would you like to have happen along those lines?
- What can youth do to bring this about? And, how can adults support youth in doing that?

Some of the dialogue sessions attracted large groups of 60 or more, while others were smaller with around 20 participants. In either case, a huge amount of information was generated, which was then sorted, sifted, compiled, and then analyzed – in some cases by adults and young people. The analysis pulled out the key points, learning points, underlying questions, themes and patterns of response, good ideas, and actionable items. These reports were then circulated back to the session participants who had asked to be kept in the loop. They were also brought forward – along with information gathered in the asset mapping exercise and the surveys – and used by the Geographic Area teams to craft their Action Plans for the upcoming program year.
“I loved the sense of pride I gained from helping facilitate large-scale projects, giving back to the community and working with children!”

Claire Piccinin, Youth Leader, Girls on the Move
As part of the Youth Engagement Strategy (YES), RTC commissioned a demographic profile of the Halifax Regional Municipality. Census tracts where aligned based on Community Recreation Services’ six Geographic Areas. Each of the six RTC Geographic Areas was provided the demographic information for their area. Each area incorporated the data into the creation of their action plans. The following graphs depict an overview of HRM’s youth population break down.

**HRM Population Change Ratios 1996 to 2001 by RTC Geographic Areas**

**HRM has an overall population base of 359,180 persons.** Between 1996 and 2001, HRM has experienced an increase of 26,660 persons representing an overall population change of +7.42%, however this rate of growth is not a consistent trend within the six RTC Geographic Areas. It is evident from the data that the most significant growth has taken place within the Geographic Areas of Cole Harbour-Eastern Shore-Musquodoboit Valley (+25.0%) and Mainland North-Western Region (+16.8%). The Geographic Area that has experienced decline is Mainland South-Sambro (–0.1%).

HRM has an overall population base of persons between ages 12-24 of 63,350 and they represent 17% of the overall HRM population base. Between 1996 and 2001, HRM has experienced an increase of 5,195 persons representing a population change of 8.2%; however, this rate of growth is not consistent trend within the six RTC Geographic Areas.

It is evident from the data that the most significant growth of persons ages 12-24 has taken place within the Geographic Areas of the Peninsula (19.0%), Cole Harbour-Eastern Shore-Musquodoboit Valley (18.7%) and Mainland North-Western Region (13.2%). The Geographic Area that has experienced decline is Mainland South-Sambro (–5.2%)
### HRM 12-24 Age Cohort Distribution Ratios 2001 by RTC Geographic Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Population Distribution Ratios 2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CH-ES-MV</td>
<td>Cole Harbour, Eastern Shore &amp; Musquodoboit Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-S-FR</td>
<td>Bedford, Sackville &amp; Fall River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS-SAM</td>
<td>Mainland South – Sambro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-EP</td>
<td>Dartmouth &amp; Eastern Passage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN-WEST</td>
<td>Mainland North &amp; Western Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEN</td>
<td>Peninsula</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within HRM 17.6% of the overall population base are persons 12-24 years of age. It is evident from the data that 5 out of 6 Geographic Areas are statistically consistent with the HRM average with the exception of Mainland South–Sambro where the distribution ratio is only 7.6% of the overall population.

### HRM Age Cohort Distribution 2001 by RTC Geographic Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Population Distribution 2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CH-ES-MV</td>
<td>Cole Harbour, Eastern Shore &amp; Musquodoboit Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-S-FR</td>
<td>Bedford, Sackville &amp; Fall River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS-SAM</td>
<td>Mainland South – Sambro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-EP</td>
<td>Dartmouth &amp; Eastern Passage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN-WEST</td>
<td>Mainland North &amp; Western Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEN</td>
<td>Peninsula</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no one “right” way to promote, or “blueprint” to develop youth participation in governance. There are only principles and practices which have been proven to be successful.

Every city, community, and organization will have different youth issues and capacities to engage youth in governance. And, each and every young person is unique and will have different needs and abilities to engage.
The highest populations of youth ages 12 to 19, which are our primary focus, are located in the two RTC Geographic Areas of Bedford, Sackville, Fall River and Cole Harbour, Eastern Shore, Musquodoboit Valley. The highest percentage of youth ages 20 – 24 were located in the Peninsula Area.

HRM 12-19 Age Cohort Distribution 2001 by RTC Geographic Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>12-14</th>
<th>15-17</th>
<th>18-19</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CH-ES-MV</td>
<td>2,755</td>
<td>2,730</td>
<td>1,635</td>
<td>7,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-S-FR</td>
<td>3,060</td>
<td>3,015</td>
<td>1,880</td>
<td>7,955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS-SAM</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>1,160</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>3,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-EP</td>
<td>3,050</td>
<td>2,840</td>
<td>1,875</td>
<td>7,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN-WEST</td>
<td>2,460</td>
<td>2,290</td>
<td>1,530</td>
<td>6,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEN</td>
<td>1,415</td>
<td>1,570</td>
<td>1,670</td>
<td>4,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRM</td>
<td>13,880</td>
<td>13,605</td>
<td>9,305</td>
<td>36,790</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CH-ES-MV: Cole Harbour, Eastern Shore & Musquodoboit Valley  
B-S-FR: Bedford, Sackville & Fall River  
MS-SAM: Mainland South – Sambro  
D-EP: Dartmouth & Eastern Passage  
MN-WEST: Mainland North & Western Region  
PEN: Peninsula

Within HRM 16.6% of all families are lone parent, making 16,720 families. Females head a majority of these families. Three out of six CRS Geographic Areas have higher rates than the HRM average. If we analyzed individual census tracts, we would see that the incidents of lone parents might even be higher in specific neighborhoods. Lone parent families are a socially vulnerable group. They are often visible minorities who are dealing with high incidence of low income and low educational attainment.

SIX STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING YOUTH IN GOVERNANCE:  
1) research and consultation,  
2) youth advisory councils,  
3) youth on boards,  
4) youth action teams,  
5) youth-run programs,  
6) youth-run organizations.
There are 11,955 low-income families within HRM. This equates to 11.9% of all families. Three out of six CRS Geographic Areas have higher rates than the HRM average. If we analyzed individual census tracts, we would see that the incidents of low income might even be higher in specific neighborhoods. The rate of poverty is not going down. Over a ten-year period, families with the lowest income have had a 10% loss in income. The poor are losing ground. Incidences of low income are widely accepted measures of community stress and are closely associated with many social problems such as; poor health, lack of medical treatment, lack of family physician, high incidences of smoking and alcohol abuse, exposure to low income neighborhoods and low educational attainment (National Population Health Survey).

In HRM, 25,090 persons or 7.0% of the population, identified as visible minorities.

Adults need to develop sensitivity “to the inherent difference in experience, status, power, control, knowledge of resources, language, etc...” between youth and adults.

Youth from a multiplicity of cultural and economic backgrounds, geographical areas, abilities, must have the opportunity to articulate their own concerns.
**HRM Household Income 2001 Average Income by RTC Geographic Areas**

HRM average household income is $56,361

**HRM Household Income 2001 Median Income by RTC Geographic Areas**

HRM median income is $46,941

**Population Projections HRM 1996-2026**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2026</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(THOUSANDS)</td>
<td>(THOUSANDS)</td>
<td>(THOUSANDS)</td>
<td>(THOUSANDS)</td>
<td>(THOUSANDS)</td>
<td>(THOUSANDS)</td>
<td>(THOUSANDS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-24</td>
<td>115,010</td>
<td>115,475</td>
<td>112,325</td>
<td>111,450</td>
<td>109,340</td>
<td>108,010</td>
<td>109,590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33.53%</td>
<td>32.15%</td>
<td>29.77%</td>
<td>28.24%</td>
<td>26.59%</td>
<td>25.28%</td>
<td>24.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-54</td>
<td>166,145</td>
<td>172,155</td>
<td>176,980</td>
<td>177,530</td>
<td>176,475</td>
<td>174,325</td>
<td>176,345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>39.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55+</td>
<td>61,820</td>
<td>71,565</td>
<td>88,015</td>
<td>105,690</td>
<td>125,440</td>
<td>144,855</td>
<td>158,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>35.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>342,975</td>
<td>359,195</td>
<td>377,320</td>
<td>394,685</td>
<td>411,250</td>
<td>427,195</td>
<td>444,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When analyzing population projections and trends from 1996 – 2026 it is estimated that the total population will grow by 102,000 persons.

- Age cohort 0 - 24 will see an overall decrease in population by 6,000 persons.
- Age cohort 25 - 54 will see an overall increase in population by 10,000 persons.
- Age cohort 55+ will see an increase in population by 98,000 persons.

This Demographic profile has focused on The Halifax Regional Municipality and RTC Geographic Areas. For more detailed information on individual census tracts and neighbourhoods please contact the Area Coordinator for a detailed demographic profile of their Geographic Area.
"The youth of Halifax Regional Municipality have many talents and great enthusiasm which they generously contribute to shaping our community. We are committed to enabling our young people to express themselves and fully participate in the ‘big ideas’ and decisions which will sustain and build the future we share."

Mayor Peter Kelly
Halifax Regional Municipality (2006)
Outcomes
Emergent goals and objectives summary

This summary outlines the Youth Engagement Strategy goals and the specific, measurable outcomes which emerged throughout the process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMERGENT GOALS</th>
<th>OUTCOMES / DELIVERABLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| To provide RTC Staff with skill enhancement in youth engagement and Community Youth Development. | a. Recreation Staff trained in Facilitation Techniques such as World Cafe  
b. Youth Inclusion  
c. Recreation Staff acquired more tools for Community Youth Development  
d. Recreation Staff trained in Asset Mapping Tools  
e. Recreation Staff (Full Time) trained as skilled Community Youth Developers |
| To develop a youth recreation service inventory baseline.                       | a. Youth Service Inventory                                                                                                                                 |
| To identify, recruit, train, develop and mentor youth leaders within each of the 6 Geographic Areas. | a. Identified and recruited youth leaders  
b. Youth trained in Asset Mapping and basic facilitation  
c. RTC Youth Action Team “Youth Element”  
d. Youth Element - Branding and logo |
| To compile youth demographic information.                                      | a. 6 area youth demographic reports compiled.                                                                                                                                                                   |
| To conduct intentional and meaningful youth consultations within each of the 6 Geographic Areas. | a. 1,185 attended Youth Dialogue sessions  
b. 6,172 youth consulted through various methods (surveys, focus groups, etc.)  
c. Data compiled for Recreation Geographic Area Action Plans                                                                 |
| To prepare community based youth driven action plans.                         | a. Seven youth driven area action plans  
b. One RTC action plan  
c. Recommendations to RTC and HRM                                                                                                                   |
| To review and update Recreation Service Delivery based on feedback from youth. | a. CRS Service level analysis  
b. Youth connections to other applicable HRM initiatives resources or HRM Business Units                                                                |
| To conduct a literature review                                                 | a. Literature review focussed on Youth Governance and Leadership completed (Best practices).                                                                                                               |
| For recreation Staff to develop and foster ongoing relationships with youth in their communities. | a. Youth Action Teams  
b. Youth Leaders                                                                                                                                                                      |
**Summary of Youth Engagement Strategy Milestones**

These milestones were developed by the YES Steering Committee to provide a framework for the Strategy. This summary represents milestones or actions which took place with RTC Staff and youth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date of Completion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Inclusion Workshop</td>
<td>RTC staff were introduced to the YES process</td>
<td>Apr 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching Common Ground</td>
<td>Each unit was coached by HeartWood as they prepared a presentation for Common Ground</td>
<td>May 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Ground I (Visioning)</td>
<td>RTC staff gathered to share successful youth initiatives and create a youth action plan</td>
<td>May 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Leadership Camp</td>
<td>Staff and youth participated in a 3 day camp to develop skills to engage youth</td>
<td>Aug 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp Evaluation</td>
<td>RTC staff met to debrief and identify what was learned</td>
<td>Sept 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset Mapping (Areas)</td>
<td>Youth working with staff began photo-mapping, surveys and discussion with other youth in their communities</td>
<td>Oct to Dec 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid Point Evaluation</td>
<td>YES Steering Committee met to identify what was learned, address issues and set the next steps</td>
<td>Nov 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Service Inventory</td>
<td>Each unit prepared an inventory of programs and services for youth</td>
<td>Nov 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaches Sessions</td>
<td>HeartWood provided coaching sessions to each unit as requested</td>
<td>Nov 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Development</td>
<td>Staff and youth that participated in the residential leadership camp gathered to create and RTC Action Team</td>
<td>Dec 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Literature</td>
<td>HeartWood conducted a literature review of youth participation in governance</td>
<td>Feb to Oct 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logo Design</td>
<td>RTC Youth Action Team initiated the process of developing a logo for YES</td>
<td>Jan &amp; Feb 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Analysis</td>
<td>A statistical analysis of each unit was completed using Statistics Canada data</td>
<td>Jan &amp; Feb 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue Sessions HRM</td>
<td>Each unit hosted a series of dialogue sessions with youth and community</td>
<td>Feb &amp; Mar 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Development</td>
<td>RTC Action Team met</td>
<td>Feb &amp; Mar 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Ground II</td>
<td>RTC staff gathered to share new youth initiatives and create RTC recommendations</td>
<td>Apr 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Plans (Area, HRM)</td>
<td>Each unit prepared community based action plans</td>
<td>Apr &amp; May 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Dialogue Session for HRM at City Hall</td>
<td>YES provided support to the Building Stronger Communities initiative in hosting an internal dialogue session with Councillors and representatives from all HRM business units</td>
<td>May 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report Writing</td>
<td>YES Steering Committee began compiling and writing the final report</td>
<td>Feb to Nov 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue Sessions Youth Service Providers</td>
<td>YES provided support to the Building Stronger Communities initiative in hosting a dialogue session for HRM Youth Service Providers</td>
<td>Oct 2005 (Transferred to Building Stronger Communities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Report</td>
<td>YES Steering Committee began presentations to staff</td>
<td>Nov 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>Nov 2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Youth Feedback

The following sections provide a summary of a qualitative analysis of the experiences, information collected and feedback achieved throughout the Youth Engagement Strategy process. The elements analyzed were those that directly involved youth, and include:

- Youth Inclusion Workshop
- Common Ground I and II
- Youth Leadership Camp
- Coaching sessions
- Youth development workshops
- Dialogue sessions
- Youth surveys
- Area Coordinators feedback sessions
- Steering Committee meetings and reflection sessions
- One-on-one interviews with HeartWood staff, youth, RTC staff and management

In all, over 6,100 youth in HRM have been consulted throughout this project. The following information provides insight into the current perspective of youth. Of course, this perspective may change as various factors in society change. From engaging youth in these meaningful conversations, several themes consistently emerged and have provided eight Strategic Directions for RTC.

These Strategic Directions are:
- Organizational
- Youth Friendly Facilities and Neighbourhoods
- Direct Program Delivery
- Communication
- Leadership Development
- Governance
- Community Development/Partnerships
- Community Events

RTC Strategic Directions For Youth

Organizational

It was realized through the analysis process, that in order to be successful in achieving youth engagement, RTC staff require support such as gatherings for staff within and between areas to encourage sharing and working collaboratively rather than competitively. A regular check-in and sharing of ideas to inspire staff with storytelling, coaching workshops, sharing successes, team building, inviting staff to youth socials, etc. Staff need to influence direction. Staff may require more professional development in principles of community youth development and strategies for relationship building and engaging youth. To ensure that the Community Youth Development Model is supported and nurtured, organizational changes need to be put in place to support youth in communities.

Youth Friendly Facilities & Neighbourhoods

The number one activity reported by youth is “hangin’ out” with their friends. Youth want safe, welcoming environments, where they can hang out with friends and engage in unstructured activities. Youth want access to facilities that they can afford and/or welcome them. Some facilities were cited by youth as being either too expensive or un-welcoming. In some cases, facilities do not exist and need to be built (hockey arenas, skateboard parks). In other cases facilities need to be fixed up (basketball courts).
**Recommendations:**

RTC needs to create more unstructured opportunities for youth to just hang out. HRM should explore youth rooms, centers and facilities for unstructured, youth-centered and youth-run activity time.

There is a need for dance centers and music venues for youth as well as non-traditional outdoor activities and facilities (i.e. skateparks, skating on lakes)

Youth want better access to schools and recreation centers at times that are best for them such as school holidays, late evening, or Sunday when the malls are closed.

Youth want more outdoor facilities such as parks, trails, natural spaces, skateparks, bike parks, etc

Youth want existing outdoor spaces fixed up and better maintained

**Direct Program Delivery**

More opportunities exist for youth to play sports than to participate in music, culture and the arts.

**Recommendations:**

More opportunities for youth concerts, music events, and places to dance.

More special events

More drop-in and unstructured programs

More all-ages programs

More gender specific programming for women

More adventure based learning

More cultural opportunities such as a Youth Art Project

**Communication**

Effective advertising and communication of youth relevant information is desired. Youth say that the most effective way to promote an event, or service, is through school, flyers, word of mouth, or the Internet.

**Recommendations:**

A Youth Website with listings for “what’s new for youth”.

Create a social marketing campaign to showcase positive youth experiences and events in their communities. Perhaps a promotional kit for schools, RTC link to high school websites, school newspaper articles, video announcements at schools, RTC staff can attend local youth events and promote RTC, develop an RTC youth newsletter and youth targeted website

**Leadership Development**

Youth want more opportunities to work, volunteer and fundraise. They want to be involved in their communities by organizing events and fixing up their neighbourhood. Youth value their communities and want opportunities to connect to them. They want to share resources, facilities and collaborate with other youth and adults. Unfortunately some youth expressed feeling disconnected from what was going on in their community and a lack of opportunity to make positive contributions. Youth acknowledge the importance of leadership roles in their lives. RTC and HRM should increase available opportunities for youth
(i.e. expand existing leadership programs so they are available year-round.), increase employment opportunities for youth within RTC and youth action teams, develop a youth group this year and be able to draw on them as mentors next year.

**Recommendations:**

- HRM Youth Conference
- HRM Youth Summer Camp
- Provide continued training and development to youth in the communities
- RTC should create mentoring opportunities for youth (youth to youth, youth to adult)
- Youth want to work with a diverse group of experienced, culturally sensitive adult staff

**Governance**

Youth want opportunities to express themselves, to be invited by adults to gather and discuss ideas, to be taken seriously and to have opportunities for public participation.

**Recommendations:**

- There should be increased opportunities for Youth to be formal decision-makers (i.e. youth advisory councils, youth representation on boards) as well as informal decision-makers (i.e. the design and delivery of youth programs and conferences, organizing community events or participating in Youth Action Teams).
- Regeneration of existing and/or creation of Youth Action Teams and/or Youth Council. Youth surveys and world cafes are processes which can be more focused on actions and can involve youth to create changes in their community. Youth want their opinions to count and they want to act.

**Community Development / Partnerships**

The true benefits to youth can often only be realized effectively through partnerships with interested organizations. It takes more than just HRM to fully implement a Community Youth Development Model. Success can be achieved by using resources and partnerships to meet the needs of youth.

**Recommendations:**

- RTC should strengthen its relationship with the HRM School Board.
- RTC recommends partnerships for youth to schools, other HRM business units (i.e. police), youth serving organizations and the private sector to leverage youth programs and projects
- RTC recommends yearly youth consultations

**Community Events**

Youth like community events and are proud of the events that happen in their areas (i.e. Northern Lights Lantern Festival in Halifax). Youth want to be involved in organizing community events, and want to see events that bring diverse groups of people together.

**Recommendations:**

- More community events
- Include youth in organizing and implementing community events
- Events should be linked to HRM Facilities
Other themes that emerged

Youth Timelines and Schedules: Youth don’t need to plan in advance thanks to cell phones and text messaging, so their plans are made on the fly and are constantly changing. For this reason, and the fact that many youth schedules are already really busy (with school, extra curricular and work), they are more likely to take part in one-time events that their peers are attending rather than programs with large time commitments.

Peer Support: Youth want to work together, to discuss, to share and teach, and to take on leadership roles. Information sharing networks within RTCs Geographic Areas and other HRM business units are important to youth. Youth-to-youth engagement is important but must not override the importance of youth-to-adult engagement.

Transportation: More accessible and cheaper transportation is also strongly desired. Some youth called for improved bus transit systems, and others wanted community centre locations within walking distance. Safety while walking is a concern for many parents.

Non-Participation: When youth don’t participate, it is usually because they can’t afford to, they don’t have the time (too busy with other commitments), or enough information. Some youth expressed an interest in more free events. Some youth use their free time for individual pursuits.

Crime: Surprisingly, youth did not identify policing or crime as an issue for them. In fact, youth feel safe in their respective communities and cite living in nice, safe neighbourhoods as a leading reason to convince someone to move there.

Learning Points

These are learning points that have evolved from what the YES Steering Committee experienced. These points identify how RTC/HRM would need to change to better provide programs and services to youth:

1. RTC needs to continue to go where the youth are and so must continue to reach out to schools, school-based extracurricular activities, churches and neighbourhoods. RTC staff need to support youth networking with other youth, youth leaders, other youth serving organizations and community organizations. Increased community awareness of RTC’s YES will strengthen community youth development. As an example, RTC staff connected the Urban Farm Museum with a young girls group at the YWCA for a knitting session.

2. Adult commitment to engage youth gives youth the confidence to voice their opinions, ask questions, and utilize their skills and abilities to affect their community. Youth engagement contributes to community development as a community is strengthened when anyone can take action and make changes, not just government leaders. Youth are pushed to think more deeply about their community and what role they play in it.

3. Given that RTC has a youth priority, more of a focus on relationship building with youth, and networking with community members and organizations should be strengthened. It takes time to build relationships and connect with community. In order to be successful, attention needs to be given to how to best nurture these relationships and connections. Flexibility is required in facilitating times to work together. The needs, and constraints, on RTC staff time need to be balanced with the needs, pace and available time within the community and for youth.

4. A focus on relationship building with youth also requires a heavier emphasis on relationship building among staff, between staff and Area Coordinators, and between areas. Youth need training and development opportunities to gain confidence in their ability to contribute to their community. Staff may require more training and development to gain confidence in their ability to engage youth. Recognizing the importance
of this team building and making time for this collaboration requires support from management and clarification of how staff time should be managed/spent.

5. Relationship building takes time and its results are best measured qualitatively. The quality of relationship building with youth cannot be measured by the number of youth involved in programs or the number of programs delivered in a year. Similarly, staffs’ capacity to engage youth cannot be measured by the number of programs they deliver in a year. However, management and HRM government measure results by numbers, tangible actions, and quantifiable results. Youth testimonials, storytelling, and celebration are key to bridging the gap between the process of shifting HRM’s culture and need for quantifiable results.

6. RTC found that it was already providing many successful youth programs and services such as the Pavilion, Leaders In Training, Sackville Youth Council, Special Events, employment, etc. RTC needs to better promote, celebrate, share and market its successes internally.

7. RTC needs to continue to define the primary focus of its mandate (children and youth). To date RTC has focused on providing programs to preschoolers, children and adults. RTC needs to focus on seamless programming from children to youth. In order to increase retention of youth, better transitional programs and opportunities are needed between children’s programs and pre-teen programs.

8. RTC staff will have to look at ways to continue offering direct programming while incorporating a youth emphasis on coaching and mentoring. Emphasis must be placed on the maintenance of relationships with youth. All staff will need to adjust their thinking, within the Community Youth Development Model, and recognize the impact of the natural and constant turn over of youth. Youth needs will change over time as younger children enter that age group and older youth become adults.

9. RTC and HRM excel at traditional problem solving processes. RTC (and other HRM Business Units) may struggle with conceptual processes such as the Community Youth Development Model. It is important to remember that coping with change can be a challenge. Efforts will be more successful if decision makers from all levels of HRM are involved through all stages of a project under the Community Youth Development Model.

10. All staff started at different levels of comfort in regards to the Community Youth Development Model. Some staff have apprehensions working with the youth demographic and may be more comfortable working with children or seniors. Staff who engage youth need a supportive environment in which to work - regular professional development training and team building with RTC/HRM staff, YES Steering Committee members, and Area Coordinators.

11. RTC learned that the dialogue sessions were positively received by youth. Youth felt a sense of belonging, that someone was listening to them, and that they were a part of something.

12. The YES Steering Committee members kept their full workload while taking on additional tasks for the YES. This is not sustainable. In the future it is recommended that staff need to be specifically assigned to work on a project of this scope. RTC staff will require clear direction from management in their new roles utilizing the Community Youth Development Model.
The Learning Points identified have some real challenges inherent in successfully making the necessary organizational shift. These challenges include:

1. Buy-in from individuals who may struggle with the qualitative nature and processes of YES. Some staff may be task-oriented and outside their comfort zone as programs and services shift to relationship building. This issue needs to be acknowledged and supported by Area Coordinator’s and senior management and HRM in general.

2. Measuring the success of Community Youth Development can be difficult as measuring the numbers of youth involved may not be as important as how youth are engaged and the roles that youth are taking in their community and in recreation (i.e. are they building confidence, being heard, contributing to their community?)

3. The shift from conventional program and service delivery to a community youth development model may be a “hard sell” because of the significant difference in the two approaches. The CYDM is a process rather than a series of procedures. Evolution of a process is intangible, takes time and may not be easily measured.

4. The existing timelines, procedures and processes which influence the development of programs and services are of a traditional government nature. The fiscal budget cycle, Council approvals, and business planning practices all have their own unique impact. However, these structured approaches do not always match the needs of the communities and youth. RTC human and material resources will have to be evaluated and possibly redistributed to better offer programs and services through the Community Youth Development Model. RTC Staff roles and responsibilities need to be aligned with the Community Youth Development Model.

Overall, RTC staff and management have a lot of pride in their Youth Engagement Strategy. There is a desire among staff at all levels that RTC becomes known as a leader within HRM for engaging youth; that RTC staff become known as the “go-to” people that have insight into community youth development; and that the YES plan becomes “branded” (i.e. widely recognized by the citizens of the HRM).

NEXT STEPS

“Please don’t walk away and forget about it (youth consultation). Act on our ideas...” - HRM Youth, World Cafe (2005)

The most common theme recurring in the Youth Engagement Strategy is the shift from a conventional program and service delivery approach to one which utilizes a Community Youth Development Model focusing on youth and relationship building. Since 2004, RTC has found itself on the leading edge of service delivery practices by utilizing the Community Youth Development Model as compared to other municipal and city recreation departments across the nation.

Conventional program delivery provides services to youth through government staff making decisions, possibly in isolation from other staff, with little or no input from their clients (youth). Programs and services are delivered along corporate time lines dictated by a bureaucracy which may or may not meet the needs of youth. Youth are usually negatively stereotyped and are seen as an issue to be solved as opposed to an asset to the community. This encourages a tendency towards reactive program service delivery.

There will always be a place for conventional program delivery in RTC, however, predominantly utilizing conventional program delivery will not meet the diverse needs of youth in our communities. It must be used in conjunction with alternative service delivery models such as the RTC Community Youth Development Model.

The Community Youth Development Model approach to program and service delivery combines Youth Development and Community Development. Relationships are formed between staff and the community as youth are consulted and engaged. Staff enable capacity building and provide support to each community in an effort to be self sufficient and to implement local solutions. Community youth projects follow time lines that suit the community. Programs and services are proactive in nature and youth are viewed positively as a resource. The community formalizes youth representation for input and decision making.
From an organizational perspective, the success of this service delivery shift will require:

1. That all staff see youth as people with skills, talents, energy and insight who care about people and their communities. Youth must be viewed as assets.

2. That a clear and consolidated vision of this shift be communicated to other HRM Business Units and community youth service providers.

3. A conscious shift in management’s preference about the way staff work and how they manage their time. This shift is from task-oriented administration to process-oriented change and is focused on engaging youth and the community and building relationships.

4. Staff shift their attitudes and energies from task-oriented, results-driven projects to relationship-building with youth and the community.

5. Continued professional development on the Community Youth Development Model for staff and management.

6. Clarification of job descriptions (staff and management) to clearly communicate the new expectations.

7. A heavier emphasis on collaboration between Geographic Areas and shared leadership among Geographic Area staff.

**The success of this strategy requires everyone to be behind the initiative. Celebration and sharing of success stories with Regional Council and the media will assist in ongoing education and awareness required to sustain the Community Youth Development Model and grow within HRM.**
HeartWood has developed a Community Youth Development Framework based on its 15 years of experience and its research into variables that contribute to successful youth action teams with over 25,000 young people in Nova Scotia. The Framework is intended for application when working with groups of young people, young adults, and adults within a given community or organization.

The Framework blends youth development and community development, and is designed as a guide to encourage, plan for, and support active engagement of youth with their communities and agencies. ‘Community’ may be defined administratively by geography, or by group, by organization, or by a network of shared interest. The Framework is adapted to fit the specific needs or desired outcomes that each community defines.

The HeartWood Community Youth Development Model has been adopted and modified by RTC to guide its work in Youth Engagement utilizing the experiences gained by RTC Staff and their work with over 6100 youth in HRM since 2004. The RTC Community Youth Development Model was designed for RTC’s unique program and service delivery, resources and outcomes.

The Black Element represents the core values of the RTC’s Community Youth Development Model. They are:

1. following passion
2. connecting with others
3. making a difference
4. taking action
5. having fun

The five Grey Elements represent the tools for growth:

1. Meaningful Contribution – Taking action to meet genuine need.
2. Adventurousome Learning – Engaging, real life experiences that challenge individuals to step outside their comfort zones to learn and grow.
3. Peer Support – Creating the atmosphere that fosters a strong peer team where individuals feel connected, appreciated and supported by others.
4. Adult Youth Partnerships - Gaining inspiration, support and guidance through a relationship of mutual caring and respect.
5. Empowering Culture - Providing opportunities to initiate, commit, plan and choose paths to work together with peers and the community as active citizens.

The eleven White Elements identify RTC Resources that are necessary to put the model into action. The foremost resource is the untapped potential of youth. However the other ten resources are important to engage youth in the community development process. These are pictured around the periphery of the element.

1. RTC Programs
2. Accessible Facilities
3. Community Partnerships
4. Skill Development
5. Volunteerism: Junior Leadership, Leaders In Training
6. Community Events
7. Youth Action Teams
8. Leadership Education
9. Community Development: enables communities to create partnerships, be self sufficient, and to increase citizen responsibility for implementing local solutions.
10. Employment: HRM is a large youth employer.
11. Youth
The community youth development framework is also a means for adults and young adults to grow through their work with young people. The final components of the community youth development model are the outcomes, for both the individual and for the community. These outcomes have similarly been represented with element models.

**Outcomes for Individual Youth Development**

To describe the individual youth development outcomes we utilize the metaphor of free molecules which, when they encounter the catalyst of RTC, come together to form the element.

The molecules can describe each young person as having untapped personal resources that they may be unaware of or have had no opportunity to explore. The element itself describes the Individual Outcomes.

Through RTC Program Delivery and Community Development, youth come together and find opportunities to develop, enhance and share their personal resources. The Outcomes of bonding these molecules into an element will be young people demonstrating and living their personal bests and in so doing contributing to the lives of others and their community. The specific resources and the particular outcomes will inevitably vary among individuals, programs, and experiences. The illustration defines a number of resources we typically find in working with young people and a number of general outcomes that we have observed through the community youth development process (e.g., taking action, making active and healthy choices, community pride, etc.).
We depict the community outcomes in the framework of a metaphor of an element. The molecules represent the diversity of individuals in the community. We consider youth as one important and often untapped community resource. By engaging and developing a strong set of HRM resources, including supportive RTC staff, community networks, partnerships and collaborations, accessible facilities and open spaces and regional council, young people can be drawn into community life as a powerful resource for the benefit of all. The Outcomes proposed in the illustration are simply examples that RTC has observed in its work with youth in communities (e.g., Active Healthy Choices, Healthy Sustainable Vibrant Communities, Youth Taking Community Action, etc.). It is essential that each community define outcomes for itself.

“More focus can be placed on the positive things youth are doing in the community and less on the bad.”
- Youth Participant, Bedford World Cafe (2005)

**GOALS**

The table that follows identifies a number of tasks, goals and opportunities which have come out of the full Youth Engagement Strategy and implementation of the Community Youth Development Model.

Many of the conversations and discussions staff had with youth regarding how to make their community better often resulted in suggestions that went outside of RTC’s program and service delivery mandate. It is important to include this information and its potential impact on other business units in HRM.

In addition, each Geographic Area has created its own unique action plan to best serve the youth in their communities. The tables below represent only a portion of what each of the Geographic Area has set out in its action plan. Many projects tie in to one another – between action items and between Geographic Areas. (To see the detailed action plan, please contact the Area Coordinator for that Geographic Area referring to Page 12 for contact information).
## ORGANIZATIONAL Recommendations for Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Business Unit(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To focus RTC job descriptions on the community youth development model</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To identify the necessary supports and training RTC staff will need to focus on</td>
<td>RTC</td>
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<tr>
<td>community youth development model</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To review RTC policy and procedures using the Community Youth Development</td>
<td>RTC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>RTC</td>
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<tr>
<td>To review current RTC program and service delivery using the Community Youth</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Model</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To analyse and realign existing resources, both staff and financial, within</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>each of the six Geographic Areas based on service level criteria and the</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Youth Development Model</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create a youth component for the RTC Blueprint</td>
<td>RTC</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## GOVERNANCE Recommendations for Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Business Unit(s)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To establish an advisory council</td>
<td>RTC</td>
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<tr>
<td>To develop a youth action team and sustain existing action teams</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ensure youth are consulted and involved in the creation of any new</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facilities or purchase of equipment (where appropriate)</td>
<td>Strategic Initiatives In Governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have 25% youth representation on all HRM Boards and Commissions</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have youth public participation in the Outdoor Facility Master Plan</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create youth public participation policy, procedure and process criteria</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RTC Planning &amp; Development</td>
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## YOUTH FRIENDLY facilities & neighbourhoods Recommendations for Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Business Unit(s)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To create safe friendly space at each RTC centre for youth to hang out in the</td>
<td>RTC</td>
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<tr>
<td>neighbourhood and in general community facilities</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To work with youth to inventory and identify capital upgrades for indoor and</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outdoor facilities and to involve youth in the maintenance of the facilities</td>
<td>RTC</td>
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<tr>
<td>and equipment where appropriate.</td>
<td>RTC</td>
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<tr>
<td>To add youth representation component to the Indoor recreation Facility</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masterplan.</td>
<td>Real Property &amp; Asset Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To identify a capital fund for youth friendly facilities and infrastructure</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create youth friendly facilities and neighbourhoods</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To purchase two mobile skateparks</td>
<td>Real Property &amp; Asset Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create youth access to Regional Facilities such as Sackville Sport Stadium</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stadium, Dartmouth Sportsplex and Cole Harbour Place for youth in low income</td>
<td>RTC Real Property &amp; Asset Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>families and neighbourhoods</td>
<td>Real Property &amp; Asset Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT / PARTNERSHIPS</strong></td>
<td><strong>Business Unit(s)</strong></td>
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<td>----------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To produce an inventory of youth service providers</td>
<td>RTC</td>
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<tr>
<td>To create working relationships with other youth serving organizations for the development of youth and promoting the benefits of youth inclusion</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have youth representation on all relevant HRM, RTC and community projects, initiatives and committees</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To identify youth service providers within our community</td>
<td>RTC</td>
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</table>
| To create a youth development fund | RTC  
Finance  
Taxes & Grants |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>COMMUNICATION</strong></th>
<th><strong>Business Unit(s)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommendations for Action</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To market our programs and services for youth more effectively through the use of a target marketing approach by including youth input on promotions and materials</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| To design a social marketing campaign | RTC  
Corporate Communications  
Shared Services |
| To create and maintain a youth website | RTC  
Corporate Communications  
Shared Services |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>LEADERSHIP</strong></th>
<th><strong>Business Unit(s)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommendations for Action</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide year round youth leadership training opportunities</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To recruit and employ dynamic youth from the communities we serve</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop a young adult mentorship program</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create year round service learning, leadership and volunteer opportunities for youth within community</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create a HRM wide youth leadership camp</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To design and implement a young adult mentorship program</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To form an RTC staff team to support HRM’s Youth Element Action Team</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### DIRECT PROGRAMMING Recommendations for Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Business Unit(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To give youth an opportunity to develop programs and services</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To offer low cost programs to youth</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase youth access to recreation facilities such as gymnasiums.</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To plan and implement neighbourhood youth dance / coffee house / facilities</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase the number of programs that are short in duration or require little/no commitment on behalf of youth to attend</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create opportunities for the youth to experience cultural diversity through events and programs</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To operate two mobile skateparks</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### COMMUNITY EVENTS Recommendations for Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Business Unit(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To partner with agencies to host community events which incorporate youth planning and leadership components</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To host a youth conference</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide small manageable events which incorporate youth input and youth leadership components</td>
<td>RTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide intergenerational programs and family community events</td>
<td>RTC Special Events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Currently there are several other Youth-related initiatives underway within HRM:

1. **Cultural Plan.**
   Youth have clearly indicated that they desire more opportunities for culture such as music and dance. The Cultural Planning process began in February 2005. Integral to the creation of the goals and objectives of the plan was the input garnered through the public stakeholder consultation program. Education, youth engagement and cross generational learning have been identified as key areas of the Cultural Plan. Priority has been placed on gathering feedback from HRM’s youth and continues to be a priority as the plan evolves. The results of dialogue with HRM’s youth show that youth are passionate about culture and need to be a part of how it develops. Recommended policy direction and implementation include mentorship programs, new ways to communicate with our youth and talent incubation programs with a strong link to Recreation Program Delivery, Libraries, and education.

2. **Building Stronger Communities.**
   The Building Stronger Communities initiative was started in Spring 2005 and has also identified a youth component to their theme. It is felt by making communities more youth friendly this will lead to stronger communities. The Building Stronger Communities Initiative is an opportunity for youth to build a communication tie with Regional Council. A more positive portrayal of youth in the media will result in a more positive image of our communities.

3. **Healthy, Sustainable, Vibrant Communities — Youth Sub-committee.**
   In Fall 2004, the issue of Youth was identified by the Healthy Sustainable Vibrant Communities Theme Team as an area requiring additional examination and possible resources. A Youth Sub-committee was created and tasked with reviewing existing HRM Youth programs and initiatives and conducting a gap analysis. To date the Sub-committee has gathered a variety of information and has found that there is no consistent definition of “Youth” across HRM and that there is a lack of clarity in regard to HRM’s mandate for youth. Youth are not explicitly mentioned in municipal legislation or policy documents. While there appears to be a generally held assumption that engaging youth will make our community safer, this needs to be confirmed, documented and communicated. HRM is directly and indirectly providing a large number of youth programs and initiatives including direct program delivery, employment, leadership development and advocacy. There may not be a gap that needs to be filled, as much as a need for a re-alignment or a re-organization of initiatives. An inventory of Youth programs and services being provided by RTC is included in Appendix C.

4. **Regional Planning**
   In 2002, HRM initiated the development of a Regional Plan. The Regional Plan is a detailed, long-range region-wide plan that will outline where, when and how future growth and development should take place in HRM. The consultation program for the plan has involved youth in planning, seeking their input on community planning issues and solutions. Staff worked with youth to develop interactive workshops for young people addressing regional planning issues, conducted youth focus groups, and integrated regional planning in high school curricula. With the plan now nearing completion and approval, the next step will be an extensive community visioning process to determine how the plan will be implemented at the community level throughout HRM. The approaches, models and lessons learned during the Youth engagement process will be vital in ensuring the voice of young people is reflected in the implementation of the plan.

5. **Council Focus Areas**
   In October 2005, HRM Council approved a list of Council Focus Areas. HRM staff have committed to prepare status reports on each item which will describe Council’s concerns, what is currently being done in each of these areas, the issues impacting these areas, options for addressing these issues, and the implications of pursuing these options. One of the eleven focus areas identified by Council is ‘Youth’. Issues related to youth are significant and varied, and there are not enough resources available to address all of the issues and concerns raised by Councillors, youth, residents and staff. It is recognized that focus is required and most issues related to youth will not be resolved quickly but staff will use the existing Youth Engagement Strategy as a foundation to work with Council to address the issues as appropriate.
What is Community?

A place where I can be myself. Where I can be true to me.

A place where kindness is the theme Between friends and neighbours alike.

Where opinions are offered and judgement is banned.

Where trust and compassion outweigh anger.

Where the tears you cry have a shoulder to fall on.

Where age doesn’t measure your knowledge and appearance doesn’t determine what kind of person you are.

It would be a place where everyone can belong.

A place to call your own.

A place we could call our home.

Lisa Delaney - age 17
Youth Participation in Governance

“Focus on the promotion of participatory skills for all, not just leadership skills for the few. Leaders will always emerge, but all children and young people need the chance to learn the multiple skills of listening and collaborating in groups if they are to discover that they can play very different roles in building communities and achieving change.” (United Nations, 2004, pp. 286 & 287)

Laena Garrison, a contract staff member with HeartWood conducted the literature review. She reviewed a host of research articles and web sites related to community youth development, innovative recreation programming, municipal youth engagement strategies across North America, and other relevant areas of inquiry. She also interviewed key individuals involved in the YES Steering Committee, including young people, RTC Programmers, Area Coordinators, Community Developers, and Senior Managers, as well as HeartWood staff.

Laena participated in a number of the YES events and processes, including the camp and the 3 evaluation sessions that HeartWood conducted with the Strategy’s Steering Committee. She reviewed a number of RTC documents, including the Geographical Area analyses of information gathered through asset-mapping, dialogue, and youth gatherings. She sorted, sifted, and organized all of this material into an overall analysis of lessons learned and insights gained into youth engagement in HRM. In addition, she completed a comprehensive literature review focused on current thinking and practices in the area of youth participation in governance (i.e., youth participating in decision-making processes - including policy development - and governing structures).

Laena broadened her inquiry – whilst still retaining its depth of quality – to go beyond formal government structures, such as youth advisory councils or youth on Boards, to include participation in governance at the level of the community, the neighborhood, and in youth-serving organizations, which involve both formal and informal processes.

I. Purpose

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has a vision of a healthy, sustainable, thriving community. The foundation of this vision is the active engagement of all its members. Through its implementation of the Youth Engagement Strategy, the HRM Recreation, Tourism, and Culture Department (RTC) has learned that young people must be included in community decision-making and planning toward HRM’s vision. No longer should youth be excluded from the definition of “the public”.

To this end, HRM has called for a literature review that highlights strategies and best practices of youth engagement in governance. This document will help guide HRM as it creates an inclusive, sustainable strategy to bring young people to the decision-making “table”.

II. Defining the terms

In the literature, there are many definitions for the terms youth, participation, and governance. In practice, youth participation in governance can and does look differently depending on who is involved and the structure in which it occurs. The following definition of youth participation in governance is based on other literature and is articulated here to clarify a working definition for this literature review:

Youth participation in governance means that youth have equitable access to and play an active role in making decisions, setting policies, and influencing outcomes on matters relevant to their lives at the municipal, organizational, and program level. Youth is defined as the stage of life between ten and nineteen years of age.

III. Rationale for engaging youth in local governance and community decision-making

Youth are active and contributing members of society now, not future citizens or leaders of tomorrow, as they are referred to by many adult leaders. Nationwide research funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (2000) revealed one of the most consistent concerns of youth is that their voices are not heard, respected, or taken seriously by adults. In a Health Canada

For the complete Literature Review, please visit www.halifax.ca/recreation
Report, 51% of teenagers said they were rarely or never listened to (2001). Young people in HRM have said “... youth should have a say in the things that happen in the neighbourhood [and governments should] talk to the youth, see what they want and look into it more [and] come to our schools and ask us our opinions and involve us in community meetings” (Halifax youth participant, Growing up In Cities Canada, January, 2005). Youth in rural Nova Scotia are echoing the same sentiment: “Youth really want to be involved, that’s the whole point that we are trying to get to. Let us be involved. Let us be a part of your town” (Levy, as cited in Siegbahn, C., 2001, p. 1). The strong desire of youth to participate is the most compelling rationale for engaging youth in governance. Other rationale include:

- **Municipalities have a legal obligation to engage youth.** The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the most universally supported human rights treaty in history, was adopted in 1989, and states that children (0 to 18 years) have a right to express their views freely and fully participate in all matters that affect them. Since the ratification of the UNCRC, other international and national commitments to engaging youth in governance have been made. These commitments will only be fully realized when they are supported by local governments and rooted in the communities that children inhabit.

- **Youth participation in governance benefits youth.** Research shows that youth who have opportunities for meaningful participation in their communities will be less depressed, have higher self-esteem, be more physically active, show a greater commitment to friends, families and communities and will more likely reach full and healthy development (United Nations, 2004; National League of Cities, no date; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2000; International Institute for Child Rights and Development, & Environmental Youth Alliance, 2004; Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, 2003).

- **Youth participation benefits communities.** Young people’s energy, creativity, unique perspectives, and propensity for action lead to positive, beneficial change in organizations, communities and nations. Young people’s energy and initiative has built international and national reform movements, i.e. antinuclear, environment, gay and lesbian rights (Lui, J., 2003; Carpini, M., no date). At the community level, youth initiatives have addressed issues such as safety, health, public transport, and parks and recreation.

- **Youth participation benefits governments.** Municipal leaders regularly make decisions, shape policies and take action on issues that directly affect youth, i.e. public transport, parks and recreation, use of public spaces, health, child care, education, housing, etc... Youth are the foremost experts on their experiences, needs, and interactions with local environments and their community. Engaging youth in decision-making processes helps governments make decisions that are more responsive and appropriate to youth needs and interests.

- **Youth engagement in governance is sound professional practice.** Over the decades of 1960 to 2000, youth serving organizations have shifted from focusing on youth deficits and working on or for young people to solve their problems, to focusing on youth assets and partnering with youth to build “positive futures for themselves, communities and society” (Pittman, K., 2000; HeartWood, www.heartwood.ca/approach.shtml Para 2). As a result of this shift, youth-serving organizations have increasingly been working to achieve participatory involvement, decision-making and leadership with youth, rather than their ability to deliver services to youth (Milburn, 2000). Municipal government departments and youth-serving organizations will increasingly be expected to integrate these practices into their work.

### IV. Strategies for engaging youth in local governance

There is no one “right” way to promote, or “blueprint” to develop youth participation in governance. There are only principles and practices which have been proven to be successful. Every city, community, and organization will have different youth issues and capacities to engage youth in governance. And, each and every young person is unique and will have different needs and abilities to engage.

One crucial principle is employing a diversity of strategies for engaging youth in governance. Youth councils and youth representation on boards are typically thought of in relation to youth governance. While these strategies tend to allow youth direct interaction with adult decision-makers, and a greater capacity to directly influence planning and decision-making, they generally only reach a small percentage of the youth population, often those youth who already feel comfortable in leadership roles. On the other hand, less formal structures, such as youth action teams, typically engage a larger number and broader

1) Chapter 25 of Agenda 21, signed by world leaders at the 1992 Earth Summit; Habitat II, the 1996 UN Conference on Human Settlements; The UN’s World Program of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and beyond; A World Fit for Children, adopted by 180 nations at the 2002 UN special session on Children; Government of Canada’s A Canada Fit for Children released in 2004.
A thorough review of youth governance practices revealed that the most authentic, meaningful and active practices of diversity of youth. The hands-on nature of youth action teams is appealing to young people’s desire for action. To build the capacity of all youth to engage in governance, a framework which incorporates multiple levels for youth participation is the best strategy, including opportunities to engage at the neighbourhood and community level (i.e. youth action teams) as well as opportunities to engage within formal government structures (i.e. youth representation on boards).

**Six different strategies are described in this literature review. In Nova Scotia, established organizations, projects, processes and structures can serve as foundations on which to build a better integrated framework for youth participation in governance.**

**Research and consultation** involves a range of approaches, from adult or youth-led consultation research, i.e. surveys, focus groups, interviews to adult or youth-directed participatory action research, i.e. community asset mapping. Best practices include a participatory action approach or on-going consultation including follow-up with youth and opportunities for youth to be involved in the actions that result.

Coached by the HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development, **HRM Recreation Tourism and Culture (RTC)** used participatory action research with youth to guide the development of their Youth Engagement Strategy. The results of this research have been used to develop RTC unit action plans that will increase youth participation in the planning and delivery of RTC youth services. The research results will also guide RTC recommendations to city council for a youth friendly HRM.

**Youth on Boards** is youth representation on municipal or organizational boards of directors. Youth should comprise 25% of the board; have full voting rights, and well-defined roles and responsibilities. When these conditions are met, youth have the power to influence outcomes through direct interaction with adult decision-makers. The **Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth Project (Halifax, NS)** has a youth board and 25% youth representation on the board of directors. Youth and adults genuinely share decision making at the LGBYP and youth have a tremendous sense of ownership over the governance of the organization.

**Youth advisory councils** are made up of youth members, who represent and advocate for youth needs in their community to a governing body, i.e. city council. Effective councils have specific roles and responsibilities for youth, direct links to power (i.e. will directly meet with the mayor or city council at a designated time each month), core funding and resource supports, a consistent adult mentor, and longevity. Without these attributes, councils are at risk of being merely token practice of youth engagement. The **town of Parsboro (Nova Scotia)** has had a youth council since 1997. The youth council is funded and supported to carry out projects, one of which was the development of a skate park. The towns of Bridgewater and Truro are currently working to initiate similar youth councils.

**Local Action Projects** are meaningful initiatives that aim to change some aspect of, or contribute something beneficial to the community. The most meaningful projects are youth-identified, engage a broad diversity of youth, and involve collaboration between youth, adults, and organizations or municipalities. Youth are attracted to the hands-on, action-oriented nature of the projects, and the direct, tangible results of their participation. Since 1999, the **HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development** has helped more than 15 Youth Action Teams (YATs) get started in Nova Scotia. The **Spryfield YAT** is one example. Every year, members of Spryfield’s YAT host an annual clean up of the MacIntosh Run River, a Valentine’s Dinner for the Single Parents Centre, and a memorial on December 6th in honour of the 14 women killed at L’Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal in 1987.

**Youth-run programs** are run by youth but delivered by an adult-led municipal department or community organization. Peer-led initiatives have been shown to be successful – often youth know how to create engaging programs for their peers better than adults do! The promotion of youth-run programs which serve the community is also necessary to help raise the profile of youth as equal members in a community. **Capital Health** provides funding for student-driven tobacco education in secondary schools (interested students write a proposal and submit it to Capital Health).

Many youth are founders and directors of their own organizations. Youth own all of the primary governance and decision-making power in **youth-run organizations.** Youth hire staff, run their own meetings, raise funds, develop budgets, and make decisions on expenditures. While youth-run organizations often struggle for funding and membership continuity, they have tremendous capacity to effect positive change in their communities. The support of an adult can be helpful for the continuity and success of the organization. **The Nova Scotia Secondary Schools Students’ Association** is a non-profit organization run by student leaders. Divided into two main groups, the Provincial Cabinet and the Conference Committee, the Provincial Cabinet advises the Minister of Education on student issues and school matters, and the Conference Committee hosts an annual conference to help students learn more about themselves and their abilities.

**V. Indicators of successful youth participation in governance**

A thorough review of youth governance practices revealed that the most authentic, meaningful and active practices of...
youth participation share common elements. These common elements can be described as success indicators of youth participation in governance, and are goals towards which organizations and governments can strive.

**Inclusion**
A diversity of youth, not just the select group that tend to stand out and speak up in their communities, is affected by government and organizational decisions. Youth from a multiplicity of cultural and economic backgrounds, geographical areas, abilities, etc… must have the opportunity to articulate their own concerns. Adults need to:

- Know which youth communities\(^2\) are marginalized or not being heard.
- Create mechanisms to connect with marginalized youth communities.
- Recognize and validate different learning styles by employing multiple strategies to engage youth in governance.

**Scheduling and transportation**
Lack of transportation, busy schedules, commitments to school, work and extra-curricular activities can be barriers to youth participation. Youth and adults will inevitably have different scheduling and transportation demands. Adults need to be flexible and give youth equal consideration in planning board meetings and activities:

- Provide transportation or public transport vouchers.
- Schedule meetings and activities to accommodate youth.
- Provide child care for youth with children.
- Partner with schools so that young people can earn credit for participation during school hours.

**Adult capacity**
Building adult capacity to work with youth requires both internal (team effort) and external (connect with youth-serving organizations) support networks, which enable adults to talk about their fears and challenges, and to develop their skills and competencies in working with youth. Adults need to develop sensitivity "to the inherent difference in experience, status, power, control, knowledge of resources, language, etc…" between youth and adults (Australian Youth Foundation, 1998, p.4). Building adult capacity requires:

- Adult understanding of youth culture - working with youth in authentic and meaningful ways
- Adopting youth-friendly language, and operations
- Building participatory skills, i.e. relationship building, communication

**Youth capacity**
Helping youth develop a positive identity, and realize their potential to participate in decision-making is key to building youth capacity. Many youth don’t recognize their right to participate in processes and decisions that affect them. Youth need to gain confidence in their right to share decision-making with adults. They also need to build their participatory capacity. Building youth capacity requires:

- An adult mentor who can consistently “be there” for youth.
- Self-discovery, confidence building.
- Participatory skills development, i.e. communications.
- Orientation to the organization, board, program, council, etc…
- Opportunities to evaluate and celebrate their contributions.

**Continuity of youth participation**
Youth lives are constantly changing and youth are often in transition from high school to post-secondary education, from school to work, from living at home to living on their own, etc. Adults should not expect that particular young people will continue for a long time (K. Naylor, personal communications, August 2nd, 2005). Strategies and support systems to accommodate youth turnover include:

- A consistent, paid adult or youth coordinator.
- Established networks for “recruiting” youth.
- Youth-led training during youth turnover transitions.
- A system for recording and passing on learning and information.

**Healthy Youth-Adult Partnerships**
Healthy youth-adult partnerships are based on caring, respectful non-hierarchical relationships in which leadership and decision-making power are shared. Adults should

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\(^2\) A youth community can be defined as a population of youth who share backgrounds, situations, or lifestyles with common concerns, i.e. ethnic background, socio-economic background, geographical area (rural, for example), lesbian or gay youth, etc.
strive to create a balance between providing direction and making space for youth initiative and action.

- Share roles and responsibilities
- Youth have equal opportunity to share their opinion and ideas
- Youth voice is given equal consideration
- Time is set aside to play together and team-build
- Youth contributions are regularly celebrated.

Meaningful Contribution
Mayor Nancy Bates, Farmington Hills, Michigan: …before you involve young people, you better be clear in your mind why you’re doing it … Their involvement has to be meaningful. You can’t fool young people for very long. If you don’t mean it, and you don’t sincerely want them at the table, they’re going to figure it out. (National League of Cities, 2002)

- Youth identify key areas of concern
- Youth are meeting a genuine need – their contributions make a difference
- Participation is linked to first-hand experience, rooted in local spaces and places
- Participation offers youth a challenge, adventure, and new learning
- Youth contributions are recognized and celebrated by an outside community
- Youth feel a sense of accomplishment
- Youth return to the program or process and more youth join

Youth participation is institutionalized
Institutionalization means that “local governments champion the inclusion of children and youth as routine practice” (EYA & IICRD, 2004, p. 52).

- Municipalities establish a “Local Government Plan of Action”
- Youth on boards have the right to vote
- Youth are paid employees of city planning and development departments
- Formal political rights are extended to young people, i.e. voting age is lowered to 16
- Policies require a direct relationship between governments and youth
- Percentage of municipal budget (not subject to cuts) is allocated to youth participation

Public relations
Media images and stories of youth often portray youth as problems or “issues” in their communities, rather than valuable assets and contributing citizens. Positive media coverage of youth can break down negative youth stereotypes, increase public and governmental support of youth participation in governance, and encourage more youth to participate.

- Outreach to, and build positive relationships with local media
- Invite media to cover stories about youth contributions to community or governance
- Lobby for a weekly column on youth in the newspaper (or show on television or radio)

“Effective youth participation needs a comfortable and protected environment in which it can continuously develop” (Golombek, S., 2002, p. 48).

- Core budget to support youth initiatives and operations
- Funding is consistent and renewable over the long-term (at least five years)
- Consistent, paid mentor who supports youth
- Youth have access to material and human resources of organization or department

Evaluation
Regular evaluation of youth participatory processes is necessary to provide evidence of the positive outcomes of engaging youth in decision-making and to learn more about effective and ineffective practices so that programs may be strengthened or restructured (United Nations, 2004).

- Have a systemic approach to documenting, evaluating, integrating, and replicating successful participatory processes.
- Include youth as evaluators and developers of evaluation processes.

VI. Recommendations
HRM is in a great position to begin establishing structures, programs and projects that integrate youth participation in governance. The work that has been completed by young people and adults in the development of HRM Recreation Tourism and Culture’s Youth Engagement Strategy can potentially pave the way for an HRM-wide youth inclusion strategy. Further, the Building Strong Communities Initiative currently underway is based on principles of the contribution and participation of all citizens and building face-to-face relationships between governments, citizens, and community groups. Therefore, the success of this initiative necessitates the active engagement of youth. This could be well-facilitated by integrating the Youth Engagement Strategy into the Building Strong Communities Strategy. Any efforts that HRM takes to more widely integrate youth into governance structures and processes will do well by building upon and learning from this Youth Engagement Strategy and the other youth participation initiatives in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and North America which are highlighted in this literature review.
Over the past 16 years, HeartWood has worked with over 25,000 young people in communities throughout Nova Scotia, including rural areas, small towns, and urban centres. The focus of this activity has been leadership development programming that would – in our view – help create positive futures for young people, their communities, and the planet. About five years ago (2000) we became more convinced that young people could be a primary force in building healthy, vibrant, and sustainable communities.

With a 3-year grant from the McConnell Family Foundation, we invested a great deal of organizational time and energy engaging staff, volunteers, youth, and community representatives in reflection, dialogue, and visioning processes to clarify what we were doing and why. As the McConnell grant was winding down, we received funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to conduct research (using various qualitative methods, including participatory action research) into our own methodology – how we do our work. The overall effect of these various processes was analogous to lifting the hood and seeing how all the different parts of the engine function and mesh together.

We now understand that most young people, most of the time, are attracted to programs, activities, services, and so on, which embody certain core values, which are: being able to make a difference, connection with others (peers and supportive adults), being able to follow their passion (things that are really important to the young person), having fun, and taking action. These are what draw young people to tasks, events, and processes in organizations and communities. These will also keep them involved for as long as the values are active.

To put these values into practice on an everyday basis, we discovered that there are 5 program tools, or components, which must be present - and in equal, or balanced, proportions. Different practitioners use different terminology, ours are: adventuresome learning (i.e., learning that is fun, engaging, and challenging), meaningful contribution (i.e., serving others, the community, the planet), peer support (i.e., feeling a sense of belonging, being part of a group, team, or community), adult/youth partnerships (i.e., being in relationship with positive, supportive adults and older youth), and empowering culture (i.e., being in circumstances, and/or a place, and/or with others who appreciate and value the individual’s contribution and where he/she finds the self-confidence to step forward to make a difference).

We then learned that youth development couldn’t happen in a vacuum, whether it is in an organization, system, or community. When young people are engaged, they need to have the support of individual adults, who, among other things, help the youth get started as a group, get organized to work on an initiative, and help connect them to the greater community. The community itself – represented by individuals, formal agencies and organizations, as well as informal groups and associations – has to step forward and actively support the youth. This is a matter of viewing all youth as “our youth” and thinking in terms of support being given the youth - the time, energy, and resources – as an investment for the whole community, both in the short term and for years to come.

To some extent, these views sound a bit radical, but they are right in line with current thinking around innovative community development approaches, such as asset-building (McKnight and Kretzmann), appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider), community dialogue processes (Open Space Technology, World Café, and Future Search Conferencing, to name a few), and civic engagement.

In our work at HeartWood, we started to use the term “community youth development” to more accurately describe what we are doing.

“Community Youth Development is an approach that espouses the principle that when youth are enlisted as active agents of community building, it contributes positively to both youth development and community development. Community Youth Development assumes the involvement of young people in their own development and that of the community - in partnership with adults - to make use of their talents and increase their investment in the community.”

(Curnan, Susan P. & Hughes, Della, Community Youth Development: A Framework for Action, Community Youth Development Journal, Volume 1, #1, 2000.)
This meant a shift for HeartWood towards a shared focus on young people and the adults, agencies, groups, and organizations that serve them. In 2003, we began to offer professional development programming (primarily in the form of contracts and public workshops), services (consultation, coaching, facilitation, large group learning/action processes), research projects, development of resources and tools, and a great deal of collaborative learning/action with other youth-involved organizations, youth-led initiatives, community groups, and government agencies.

The mainspring of our work is an appreciative approach, which is based on developmental processes that are positive in nature; that is, it focuses attention/thinking on strengths, potential, and possibilities. It increases capacity in individuals, organizations, and communities by identifying/tapping into resources/gifts they already have - including their own knowledge and life experience - and building on that.

In a community development context, it means using local skills and existing resources to find/create solutions, rather than relying on outside “expertise” to fix problems.

In fact, an appreciative approach is quite different than traditional problem-solving methodology. Many of us have been conditioned to focus on the negative – what’s wrong, what’s not working, reasons why a new idea won’t work, etc. When we take that stance, we end up looking for someone to blame, people feel defensive, creativity is stifled, energy is drained, and we tend to stay stuck in the way we’ve always done things.

If, instead, we focus our attention on positive results, we put a spotlight on what is working, we look for and create possibility, we cultivate involvement, we generate energy and enthusiasm as we naturally move towards our goal, we create the best atmosphere for coming up with innovative solutions, and we tend to view obstacles in our path as opportunities for personal and organizational transformation. Clearly, this approach is more likely to nurture the pre-conditions for a healthy, strong, vitally active, inclusive, and sustainable community to grow and develop.

This does not mean that we ignore problems, pretending that they do not exist. Rather, by starting with what is working well and what we have going for us, it creates a different perspective, a different stance. When we do address our problems, we see more possibility for solutions than we could ever see before, and we are more able to leverage all our resources towards the resolution of the problem. Even better, we rise above the problem to see all the possibilities and benefits that lie beyond!

In the context of youth development, this approach means that we view young people not as dependents, service recipients, or problems, but as competent innovators who contribute to the community, and as energized participants/leaders in social change initiatives.

Taking an appreciative stance allows us to see our own community from a different perspective, in a sense with “new eyes.”

...our work is an appreciative approach, which is based on developmental processes that are positive in nature; that is, it focuses attention/thinking on strengths, potential, and possibilities.
## APPENDIX C  - RTC Youth Program and Service Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Program Delivery</th>
<th>Employment (provide #)</th>
<th>Leadership Development</th>
<th>Facilities - Indoor &amp; Outdoor</th>
<th>Advocacy &amp; Governance</th>
<th>Community Development &amp; Partnerships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A wide variety of recreation programs (sport, active, aquatics, fitness, cultural, arts, dance, leadership, outdoor recreation, etc) delivered at various sites within six recreation areas throughout HRM. Total participation in the 2004 calendar year was approximately 3500 in youth programs (ages 13-18), 6200 in preschool programs (ages 3-5) and 15,300 in child programs (ages 6-12). HRM Kids provides recreational opportunities for children who would be otherwise unable to afford to participate. RTC and other partners contribute funding to ensure that spaces in programs are donated or discounted. In an effort to determine the most appropriate tools and methods to address physical inactivity among children and youth in HRM, current program tools include the Active Kids / Healthy Kids project, the creation of the Active Halifax community partnership, and creation of an internal Physical Activity Team. As an officially identified site for High Five quality program assurance, program evaluation tools for preschool, child, and youth recreation programs and services are being implemented throughout HRM; Each recreation area is developing a youth action plan, with the assistance of local youth, which will be complete by April 2005 and implemented in 2005-2006.</td>
<td>Approximately 500 youth hired annually as Recreation Program Instructors and Aquatics staff</td>
<td>Several Junior Leadership and Leader in Training programs offered through recreation facilities</td>
<td>Youth programs delivered through 20 HRM operated recreation facilities / offices, three indoor pools, one outdoor pool, and four arenas</td>
<td>Programming and/or supervision provided at 23 beaches Specialized HRM owned youth facilities include outdoor basketball courts, ground hockey pads, several skate parks, several outdoor rinks, Earth Adventure Centre, St Mary’s Boat Club, Firehouse Youth Centre in Bedford</td>
<td>Reciprocal agreement with Halifax Regional School Board regarding school usage for recreation programs (a percentage of total facility usage is youth programming) Partnerships with a wide variety of community groups and organizations to deliver recreation programs to youth, obtain space to deliver programs, and/or receive funding assistance for youth programs Working in partnership with Heartwood, a youth leadership organization, to implement a process and obtain required support for development of an HRM-wide youth engagement process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four seasonal Civic Events and Festivals Assistants hired annually</td>
<td>Babysitter training courses offered at several sites</td>
<td>Lifeguard and Aquatics instructor programs</td>
<td>Earth Adventure Centre (Outdoor Recreation) provides several youth leadership programs, several of which are delivered by junior leaders. Many programs are delivered in conjunction with local schools.</td>
<td>Facility Scheduling Division schedules coordinates bookings and manages customer service for over 30,000 outdoor sports fields users, approximately 140 Halifax Regional School Board operated facilities, and four arenas (a percentage of total facility usage is youth programming)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D - Map of Geographic Areas
The Youth Element – Creating an Identity

Early in the youth engagement process, youth were questioning their role in the project... “who are we?”, “what are we called?”.  

As youth continued to meet in their communities, requests for a logo followed. Youth wanted something that was representative of their link to community and the power they represented.  

Youth were given the opportunity to team with local emerging artists in the creation and design of a logo. An initial gathering was held in December of 2004 when youth participated in various creative processes that gave them a ‘voice’ to share ideas, feelings and the challenges of what “community” meant to them. Through dance, song, drama, mural and collage creations, the youth communicated many messages that were compiled to be used for a first draft design.  

Ideas continued to be fed into the design process by the youth through a web message board, meetings with the artists, and two group gatherings. Logo choice was made by voting and then further discussed by a group of youth who were interested in the continued evolution of the design and who ultimately made the final choice.  

So what does the logo represent?  

The ‘youth element’ is based on the concept that this youth group is the element in HRM’s plans for youth. It is representative of the power, voice, and diversity of HRM youth and the unique communities that connect them.
HRM youth are active and ready to make a difference in our community...

Claire Piccinin - age 17

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