



RIGHTS 2 SUCCESS PROJECT SUMMARY

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**TERESA LUM, FEDERATION OF BC YOUTH IN CARE NETWORKS
KATHY BERGGREN-CLIVE, CHILD AND YOUTH OFFICER FOR B.C.
ANNETTE HARDING, MINISTRY OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Project Sponsors

Teresa Lum, Director of External Relations, Federation of BC Youth In Care Networks
Jeremy Berland, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Children and Family Development
Jane Morley, Child and Youth Officer for British Columbia

Project Coordinator

Jocelyn Helland, International Institute on Child Rights and Development (IICRD)

R2S Steering Committee

Kathy Berggren-Clive – Project Lead, Associate Child & Youth Officer, CYO
Annette Harding, Project Team, A/Manager, Children and Youth In Care, MCFD
Teresa Lum –Project Team, Director of External Relations, FBCYICN
Kris Archie –Project Team and Facilitator, Youth Participation Coordinator, CYO
Derek Hansom –Project Team and Facilitator, Youth Participation Coordinator, CYO
Ed Berry – Manager of Child and Youth Services, Public Guardian and Trustee
Nin Mand – Supervisor Case Management, Burnaby Youth Custody Services
Michelle Fortin – Executive Director of Watari and member of the
Federation of Child and Family Services
Sarah Watson – former Right Way Facilitator
Fred Milowsky – Deputy Child and Youth Officer, CYO
Wilma Clarke – Associate Child and Youth Officer, CYO
Sheila Durnford – President, BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations
Gary Mavis – Executive Director, Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents
Sheila Davidson – City of Vancouver Child & Youth Advocate
Mary Clare Zak, former Executive Director, Society for Children and Youth
Jess Chant – Executive Director, Society for Children and Youth
Michael Egilson – Associate Child and Youth Officer, CYO

Other Contributors to R2S

- Jen Mantyka and Sally Campbell for the background research on the original draft and their foundational work on the workshop
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Executive Summary

Background

Rights 2 Success (R2S) is a project sponsored by the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks (FBCYICN), the Child and Youth Officer for British Columbia (CYO), and the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). The project supports the legislated mandate to educate¹ children and youth in care and at risk² by those serving children and youth within the child welfare system and advances the rights of children and youth as stipulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child and Family Community Services Act (British Columbia).³

R2S is based on a former rights education program called Right Way. Right Way was developed by Save the Children Canada and based on research by the Office of Child and Family Services Advocacy in Ontario which found that children and youth in care had limited knowledge of their rights, how rights work and how to responsibly advocate for themselves. R2S takes the basic rights education model of Right Way further to help communities promote and create a culture of children's rights by engaging the entire community including youth, parents, caregivers, guardians, service providers, and advocates.⁴ It seeks to empower young people to assert their rights through participation in decision-making and advocating on their own behalf if their rights are not respected. It also involves acknowledging what a community is already doing to support and promote children's rights and builds on those strengths using a common language and vision.

What is Rights 2 Success and how is it delivered?

R2S consists of two youth-facilitated workshops. An interactive youth workshop brings young people in care and "at risk" together in a safe environment in their community where they explore the world of rights, participation and advocacy and learn practical skills that will assist them in having their rights fulfilled through participation in decision-making. The adult workshop provides service providers, parents, caregivers, advocates, guardians and citizens with an increased understanding of children's rights and the importance of rights education, explores the prevalent myths about children's rights, and identifies the adults' role in actualizing children's rights. Both workshops use an approach which is supportive of children's development, participation in their family and community, and facilitates respect for, and understanding of, the rights of others.

¹ Educate: to educate is more than just providing information, it also includes a process of teaching until a child or youth understands the information fully.

² **At risk children and youth:** this term refers to those children and youth who are in high risk circumstances and are often known to Ministry of Children and Family Development and accessing services from the system.

³ The UNCRC defines anyone under the age of 18 as a 'child'; however, R2S distinguishes children (0-12) from youth (13-18) and uses 'young people' to refer to all children and youth (0-18). In R2S, "Youth Facilitators" is defined as someone under the age of 29.

⁴ IICRD,

The Provincial Piloting of Rights 2 Success

Under the guidance of a Steering Committee and direct work of a project team, the workshops were developed, piloted and evaluated during the period of May 2005 through January 30, 2006. In June 2005, presentations were made to the Regional Executive Directors and Directors of Child Welfare from the five MCFD regions and to the members of the Federation of Child and Family Services to gain their support, input and commitment in bringing R2S to communities in B.C. A commitment was made to deliver the workshop in two communities per region in addition to one rural and one urban aboriginal community and one youth custody centre. Representatives from regional MCFD staff and community agencies were identified (volunteered and recruited) to work with the project team. Pilot workshops were completed in eight of the thirteen identified communities. These were: Quesnel, Vancouver, Powell River, Dawson Creek, Abbotsford, Kelowna, Cranbrook and the 'Tri-Cities' (Port Moody, Coquitlam & Port Coquitlam). Workshops were not implemented in the following sites: Courtenay, Victoria, Nezul Be Hunuyeh Child & Family Services (Ft. St. James – Rural Aboriginal agency); Surrounded by Cedars (Victoria – Urban Aboriginal Agency), and the Victoria Youth Custody Services.

The workshop was delivered to approximately 65 youth: 60 percent identified themselves as in care and 23 percent on youth agreements.⁵ Twenty six percent of youth identified themselves as aboriginal. The average age of youth attending the workshop was sixteen, but the workshop was delivered to youth between eleven and nineteen.

The workshop was delivered to approximately 138 adults. This included a cross-section of MCFD staff, community service providers and caregivers.

Evaluation

The project evaluation framework included four categories that combined both the overall project process evaluation and the pilot evaluation. These included: output (number and profile of participants), formative (workshop content), impact (effect of workshop) and process (overall project and setting up of the pilots).

Bringing R2S to a community involved a significant amount of preparation and organization. Central to the success was the partnership between the R2S project team, local MCFD staff and community agencies. Roles and responsibilities were outlined in a partnership agreement with the project team providing concrete support in the planning process. Other key pieces included: ensuring that the community partners fully understood the goals and objectives of R2S, that they were engaged and interested in using R2S as a tool to fulfill their mandate, continuous dialogue about the principles of youth engagement and creatively exploring and supporting efforts to 'recruit' adults and youth to attend the workshops. The 'recruitment' of adult and youth participants was particularly challenging in some pilot sites. This appeared to be related to community

⁵ Fifty three youth submitted evaluation information.

partners' not fully understanding and articulating the purpose of the workshop and an underestimation of the effort and strategies necessary to attract youth participants. Another key component was creating a balance that allowed for community partners to adapt the process in a way that worked well for their community while at the same time holding true to the goals and objectives of R2S. Pilots were most successful in the communities where the agencies volunteered to host a pilot and where local MCFD offices and community agencies had a successful history of working together.

Overall, adult participants were highly receptive to the workshop at all pilot sites. Adult participants valued the facilitation and participatory style of the workshop and the resource packages. The complexity and potential controversy of the subject matter and the number of key messages significantly impacted the ability of the facilitators to present all the material. Adult participants also had varied knowledge about the subject matter. Consideration must be given to redesigning the adult workshop in terms of content and possibly delivered by an adult and a youth facilitator rather than the current model of two youth facilitators.

Youth participants rated the workshop highly and identified the facilitators as "cool" and "rocking." They reported that their ideas were listened to, that they learned something about rights, participation and advocacy and they knew where to go for help. The youth workshop relied heavily on the skill of the facilitators to move through dense material on rights, participation and advocacy using participatory activities. The workshop goals and key messages were very ambitious and although the workshop was received well, a strategy to streamline the material must be implemented in order to keep the young people fully engaged.

Next Steps

The Evaluation Report provides an in-depth analysis of the piloting process and identifies the strengths and the challenges. The accompanying recommendations provide a comprehensive framework that outlines how to overcome the challenges and supports the continuance of this very important initiative on behalf of children in care and at risk in this province. The project partners are recommending that an implementation plan for the future delivery of R2S in British Columbia be established. . This decision is based upon completion of the R2S piloting process, the evaluation and the approval of the R2S Steering Committee.

An implementation plan for the future delivery of R2S should be developed with the goal of establishing community-based delivery of rights education workshops. It had been suggested that upon completion of the piloting process, the next step would be to move to community sustainability of the workshops. The complexities associated with this project indicate that it would be premature to proceed in this direction and that R2S should be held centrally for a period of time to address the issues arising from the evaluation and develop an

implementation plan that incorporates the learning and engages communities in the process of implementing R2S at the local level.

The resources and skill set required to adequately support a R2S workshop initiative the way it is currently structured is substantial. For R2S to be successful, it needs to be part of an overall strategy to promote and fulfill children's rights including rights education, community mobilization, monitoring and reporting, and policy development. For child rights education to have an impact, the local community must be mobilized to take on this task themselves. R2S must:

- include a component that reports back to the partners to measure outcomes/impact,
- occur in close collaboration with community partners and local child rights champions,
- link with other child rights initiatives in BC and strategize and coordinate activities accordingly, and
- provide tools to the community to directly support their own child rights education (which must include partnering with children and youth to identify community strengths and build on them).

The Implementation Phase will need to be managed as a project in and of itself and will require dedicated resources to support this. Initially, the CYO was prepared to recruit and hire a young person with the specific skills and abilities required to assume the role of R2S Project Coordinator. This position would be responsible for further refinement of the workshop content and resources, delivery of the workshop, recruiting and training youth facilitators, community development and other associated tasks.

However, a number of factors have influenced this plan. First, there are impending changes to the CYO and a lack of clarity around the time frames for the creation of a new office called the Representative for Children and Youth. As such, has been made not to pursue this direction and to await the establishment of the new Representative for Children and Youth. Second, The Federation of BC Youth In Care Networks has made a decision to withdraw as a project partner but to remain on the Steering Committee. Finally, there are also impending changes within MCFD and as such further work must be done to gain the support and commitment of MCFD both centrally and regionally. Ultimately, the continuation and success of the next phase of the project rests on whether MCFD assesses R2S as being a useful tool in assisting them with their mandated responsibility to educate young people about their rights and facilitate their participation in decisions affecting them and is willing to work with the community to implement R2S.

R i g h t s 2 S u c c e s s

Youth-facilitated children's rights, participation and self-advocacy workshops for children and youth in care or at risk and the adults who support them.

What: Rights 2 Success (R2S) is comprised of two sessions: One session is a three-hour workshop for children and youth in care and at risk that teaches them about their rights and how to advocate for their rights on their own behalf; and the second session is a two-hour workshop for service providers, parents, caregivers, advocates and guardians on advancing the rights and participation of children and youth in care and at risk in our community.

Who: The adult workshop is for adults who are working with children and youth in care or at risk who are attending the R2S workshop. This includes, for example, their social workers, youth workers, one-to-one workers, parents, caregivers, advocates, and guardians. The youth workshop is for young people over the age 12 who are in government care or receiving MCFD direct or funded services such as mental health, foster care, family & youth services, youth justice, youth agreements.

How: Bringing R2S to a community is seen as a partnership between the provincial project partners (The Child and Youth Officer for BC (CYO), the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks (FBCYICN), and the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and the local MCFD office or delegated Aboriginal agency and a lead community agency in the five regions. The lead community agency will work with their local MCFD office or delegated Aboriginal agency to do the actual organizing of the workshops (where, who, etc). There is a partnership agreement that is signed by all parties and outlines the roles and responsibilities of each.

Hosted by: A lead community agency and local MCFD office or delegated Aboriginal agency.

When: To be determined by hosting organizations and what will work best for all the participants and in particular, the young people.

Where: community-based location that is child and youth friendly (community centre, youth drop-in centre, etc)

Adult Session Agenda

For about 15-20 service providers, parents, caregivers, advocates and guardians (2 hours).

1. Introductions and welcome
2. Exploration of Children's Rights
 - What do we want for our children? How does this vision compare to the UNCRC/CFCSA and other rights?
 - What are some of the benefits and concerns related to teaching young people about their rights?
3. Exploration of the Right to Participate
 - What does 'participation' mean? What does it mean for young people? What are the challenges young people face to participation? What are the benefits of children's participation?
4. Mapping, resources, support, evaluation and wrap-up
 - How do you currently support rights, participation and advocacy in your community? How could you improve this support?
 - What resources are out there for your community?

Rights 2 Success Workshop for Youth Agenda

For about 8-15 young people between the ages of 13-18 who are in care or 'at risk' (3 hours).

1. Introductions and welcome
2. The Rights of Children and Youth
 - What are rights? What are my rights? How are they different from wants and needs? How can I remember them and where do I go to find out more information about them?
 - What does it mean to have rights and how do I use them?
3. Participation and Advocacy
 - Why is participating in my life important? What does that look like?
 - Self-advocacy – how can I really participate and be heard?
 - Other types of advocacy – what if I want to participate but they don't listen?
4. Resources, support, evaluation and wrap-up

Rights 2 Success: Future Directions

Steering Committee Recommendations

1. The evaluation of the project suggests that there is value in pursuing the implementation of Rights 2 Success. The evaluation provides an in-depth analysis of the piloting process and identifies the strengths and the challenges. The accompanying recommendations provide a comprehensive framework that outlines how to overcome the challenges and supports the continuance of this important initiative on behalf of children in care and at risk in this province.
2. Community sustainability of the workshops is one of the key goals of the project. However, the complexities associated with this project indicate that it would be premature to proceed in this direction and that Rights 2 Success should be held centrally for a period of time to address the issues arising from the evaluation and develop an implementation plan that incorporates the learning and engages the community in the process of designing how best to bring R2S to their community.
3. Community Sustainability will be achieved by:
 - Obtaining the support of MCFD to implement Rights 2 Success as part of “good practice” and “quality assurance.” MCFD is mandated to educate young people in care about their rights. R2S is a tool that can help to fulfill this mandate.
 - Obtaining the support of youth serving organizations to deliver Rights 2 Success as part of their service delivery model
4. Ideally, resources should be dedicated to recruit and hire young people to fulfill the role of R2S Project Coordinator and a Project Assistant. This would be consistent with the principles of youth participation.
5. It is important to recognize the current context within which Rights 2 Success is being promoted. The three project partners for Phase 1 are at different places in terms of their potential involvement with R2S. First, the evaluation report was written prior to the release of the Hughes Report. As a result of this report, MCFD is currently undergoing significant changes and restructuring. The Child and Youth Officer for BC will be replaced by the Representative for Children and Youth and the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks has made a decision to withdraw as a project partner but to remain on the Steering Committee. While there are many unknowns about the future directions of the organizations, it is safe to assume that children’s rights will and should be at the centre of the work.
6. The youth workshop should include a component that safely and more effectively allows for the “youth voice and experience” in the system to be heard and documented. This will contribute to the identification of what is working well in the system as well as the issues affecting young people within the community that can be brought forward to the service providers.

7. Long term R2S goals should include mobilizing and providing tools to the community to directly support their own child rights education. This will need to include community leaders partnering with children and youth in their community to identify strengths and build on them to fill gaps in children's rights implementation.
8. Rights 2 Success needs to be positioned within the larger context of current Children's Rights Initiatives. There are a number of projects and organizations that have an interest in children's rights. There is a real window of opportunity to situate R2S within the broader scope of children's rights on a provincial level. It was suggested that we look at the creation of a Children's Rights Round Table.
9. Rights 2 Success needs to be considered from the perspective of "what is the relevance of rights education?" It is an important topic. We need to have a "rights lens" in all the work that we do.
10. There needs to be delivery of a consistent message about the importance of children's rights and approach it using Appreciative Inquiry. This approach focuses on what is working well and how to build on strengths.
11. Conceptually, the idea of children's rights is acknowledged; however, it remains an abstract concept that needs to be grounded in reality. What do children's rights look like in everyday life? How do we develop some key messages that provide a common language?
12. Rights awareness, rights education and rights monitoring must be brought together on a provincial level.
13. The membership of the current Steering Committee should be expanded to ensure that it is full representation
14. Rights 2 Success must be community-driven initiative. There also needs to be a "next steps" component to the workshop so that the community continues to engage in the dialogue and moves it beyond the individual.