

# FILL THE VOID



A Youth Study

For 2001

Laura Eward, Consultant  
Wayne Yee, Co-ordinator Youth Services-City of Richmond  
April 2001

## **A Youth Study For The Promotion Of Active And Positive Community Involvement.**

### ***Aims:***

***To identify determinants that encourage or discourage positive and active youth involvement.***

***To correlate developmental assets within a study group and their relationship to positive and risky behaviours.***

***To inventory scope, role and successes of front line youth service providers in Richmond.***

***To use these findings to identify specific areas of need in a recreation and cultural services context.***

**Table of Contents:**

Executive Summary

Purpose Of the Assessment.

Methodology.

Questionnaire Responses

Findings of Fact

Making Sense of the Data

Chart Summaries

Focus Groups

Findings of Fact

Making Sense of the Data

Findings From Interviews With Youth Providers

Summary of Responses

Conclusion

Recommendations

Appendix 1 – Complete Interviews with Youth Service Providers

Appendix 2 – Focus Group Sessions

Appendix 3 – Sample Questionnaire And Complete Responses

### **Executive Summary:**

**Fill the Void** is a study to investigate the determinants and motivations to youth participation in community based opportunities or other positive uses of their discretionary time. This study also identifies the current levels of services which support the developmental needs in youth. It will address any real and perceived gaps in existing services, and study the areas of needs for youth oriented recreation, social, and cultural opportunities.

A high percentage of youth involved in the survey said they engage in some form of risky behavior and low levels of pro-social behaviour such as community involvement.

This may be characterized by their a weaker support systems in their lives than those who engage in socially acceptable activities. **Fill the Void** supports a relationship between developmental needs, risky versus positive behaviour and levels of active involvement. This study group showed those who engaged in more risky behaviors were non-participants in pro-social activities related to community programs and services.

Determinants that discouraged positive behaviour and activities have been identified through extensive interviews and open discussion with youth and their providers. Unmet developmental needs as well as what youth perceive as ‘cool’, ‘safe’, and ‘boring’, all contribute to level and type of involvement or non-involvement.

The youth’s definition of what a ‘cool’ and ‘safe’ place looks and feels like is often differs from a child or adult’s definition. They listed a non-threatening environment with either no adult supervision or ‘relatively young’ adult supervision. These places elicit feelings of being accepted for who you are and partaking in activities that interest them. Recreation designed by youth for youth is a factor most participants listed as essential.

A focus group of mostly high-risk youth reported ‘there is nothing cool to do in Richmond’. When asked to expand on what they felt was ‘cool’ they listed activities and services which already exist in the Recreation and Cultural Services Department. Many of these youth associate leisure boredom and engaging in socially unacceptable behaviour such as substance use and loitering. This speaks to a philosophical foundation of youth programs which need to be youth friendly and marketed within a context of “cool” as understood in popular youth culture.

Youth providers interviewed for **Fill the Void** shared similar concerns regarding high-risk youth in Richmond. Common observations are the incidence of one or more risk factors including poor family relations, peer isolation, drug use and lack of community involvement. Many of the providers believe that high-risk youth would benefit greatly from more one-to-one attention and support.

**Fill the Void** has developed a proposal to include recommendations to align and tailor new/existing services to address the specific need areas of non-participating high-risk youth. New avenues for youth include the implementation of Youth Committees geared towards the improvement of existing programs, facilitation of new programs based on what youth perceive as ‘cool’ and ‘safe’. A Recreational Outreach Worker will act as a liaison between these youth and the community partners who work with them, as well as co-ordinate the implementation of future youth based development initiatives.

Fill the Void

### **Purpose Of the Assessment:**

**Phase 1** - Identifying general areas of need for additional recreation, social and cultural opportunities in the city and, determinants which encourage or discourage active and pro-social behaviors.

**Phase 2** - Develop proposal to include recommendations to align and tailor new/existing services to address specific need areas, by identifying gaps in services or under served target populations.

**Fill the Void** is a look at the lives of youth to better understand their needs and motivations with their leisure time. It will attempt to correlate a range of risk behaviors, their immediate support networks and willingness to engage in generally acceptable social behavior in the realm of recreation and cultural experiences. This study will also input observations and findings from other youth serving agencies in the City of Richmond as it relates to the safety and developmental needs of its young people. It will assess any real and perceived gaps in existing services, and study the areas of need and suggested pedagogies for youth oriented recreation, social, and cultural opportunities.

### **Methodology:**

Developmental Assets<sup>1</sup> – A planning tool useful for identifying likelihood of risk behaviors.

Developmental assets are factors that are essential to a young persons success - such as opportunities, skills, relationships, values and self perception that all youth need in their lives. In total there are 40 assets that contribute to a youth's overall health and well being. Studies show that the more internal and external assets that a youth displays, the more likely they will make healthy choices and engage in pro-social and positive behaviors. The greater the number of assets, the less likely a young person will make unhealthy choices and engage in risky behaviors, such as criminal activity, and drug use. Studies have shown that when internal and external developmental assets are not met, there is a negative impact on other areas of a young person's life. It follows that youth with a high number of risk factors are missing valuable tools to aid them in making a successful transition into adulthood.

*It is for this reason that developmental assets will be used to measure a youth's level of risk. Developmental assets and high/low-risk youth can be used interchangeably. The less developmental assets displayed in a youth, the higher they place on the risk continuum.*

Both the questionnaire and focus group sessions were designed to glean responses to indicate a behavioral relationship between those scoring with high and low number of assets in their lives.

Using multiple choice format with a few short answer questions the paper asked 31 questions relating to developmental assets, 8 questions on risk taking behavior and 8 related to community center involvement.

---

<sup>1</sup> Developmental Assets. Sinclair Institute, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

**Definition of terms in this study:**

**External assets** - are things that other people can provide for youth such as structure and encouragement, creative outlets such as youth programs and services, and pro-social behavior youth can emulate. ie; supports, feeling empowerment, aware of boundaries and expectations, and ability to make constructive use of leisure time.

**Internal assets** –While being influenced by external assets, these are things youth develop themselves such as motivation, responsibility, sense of purpose and making healthy choices, commitment to learning, positive values and identity.

**High-risk youth:** those possessing 0-3 developmental assets

**Low risk youth:** those possessing 8-11 developmental assets

**Recreation** is defined as being all those socially acceptable activities that a person chooses to do in order to make their leisure time more interesting, more enjoyable, and more personally satisfying.

**Risky Behavior:** Behavior that is often socially unacceptable and damaging to a person's overall health and well being.

**Risk continuum:** Youth-at-risk are on a continuum ranging from low risk to high risk. Measured by the number of developmental assets a youth has.

This study specifically highlighted 10 developmental assets to measure a person's place on the risk continuum. The theory being that the target population of "youth at risk" will have more unmet developmental assets and thus are more likely to underachieve, not participate in community center programs and be at risk to acting in socially unacceptable ways.

Adding the three components together, developmental assets, positive versus negative behavior and the level/type of recreational involvement the study sought to reinforce the hypothesis that all three are related. A young person high in developmental assets will engage in positive behavior and be actively involved in recreational and/or cultural programs offered in their local community. Once proved the study will then address those individuals on the other side of the spectrum, the so called "youth at risk" and attempt to provide recommendations on how delivery of recreation and cultural services can address these needs and support them in maturing into positive members of the community.

**Data Collection:**

1. Seven interviews were conducted with various youth serving agencies in Richmond. These interviews focused on their role, philosophy on working with youth, ideas and recommendations regarding youth involvement in the community.
2. Quantitative data was collected in the form of questionnaires.
3. Focus groups were held across Richmond which gave youth an opportunity to voice their opinion about issues, concerns and suggestions for future programs and services.

### **Participants:**

*Youth:* One hundred and sixteen Richmond youth volunteered to participate in questionnaires for "Fill The Void". Of those, 114 attend school in Richmond with the other 2 attending private schools in Vancouver. The majority live in the West Richmond, Cambie and Thompson area.

Ages of participants range from 12 to 19 years. The highest numbers of participants were 15 years old (34) and 16 years old (27). The participating youth ranged from having a very low number of risk factors to displaying a very high number of risk factors.

Of the five focus groups held across Richmond, two of the groups were made up of students in alternative school programs, and the third group was comprised of Burnette students who volunteered to participate during their school lunch hour. The fourth focus group was held at Night Shift - a weekly late-night program for youth held at Thompson Community Centre. Cambie Community Centre's Youth Committee (YTC) made up the fifth focus group

For the purpose of this study it was theorised that youth from the 2 alternative schools would generally score high on the risk-continuum while YTC youth would score very low on the risk-continuum. It was assumed that participants from Night Shift and Burnette School would represent a mix of low to high-risk youth. There were 37 students from the alternative schools who participated in **Fill the Void**. Forty-eight youth from Night Shift and Burnette, and 31 YTC youth participated in this study. To support this study's hypothesis that developmental assets measure where a youth is on the risk continuum, data should show high-risk youth engaging in more risky behavior and being less involved in youth based programs and services.

*Youth Providers:* Information on the study was sent out to high school principals in Richmond, and included a request for a possible interview and / or a focus group at their school. Unfortunately, only one of the ten principals responded. A focus group was organized consisting of two combined study classes at Hugh Boyd.

In addition to the schools, seven youth agencies / services were enlisted and all agreed to an interview. Station Stretch agreed to an interview and also provided in-class time to hold a focus group with the students. (See Appendix 1 for interviews). Interviews included a Drug & Alcohol Counselor at RADAT, a Youth Worker at Station Stretch, a Health Nurse for RHSS, a Manager at RYSA, a School Liaison RCMP Officer, a Community Liaison RCMP Officer for Steveston, and a Youth Coordinator at City Center.

All interviewees work extensively with Richmond Youth and are part of a large, though currently informal, networking system in the city.

### **Pedagogy:**

*Youth:* Participants were given a summary of the study and asked to sign a consent form pertaining to the confidentiality and anonymity of all participants. A twenty-minute survey

was completed with 54 questions followed by a forty-minute open discussion. As an incentive youth were provided with snacks after the survey was completed.

*Youth Providers:* These participants were given prepared interview questions and a summary of the study prior to the interview. They were met at their convenience; six of the seven requested the interview take place at their agency. Upon arrival a tour of the facility was provided and pamphlets given to enable further understanding of their work. The interviews generally lasted between one and two hours.

## **Questionnaire Responses - Findings of Fact**

(see Appendix 3 for actual questionnaire and complete responses)

Positive responses were measured against eleven developmental asset related questions.

### External Assets

Respondents generally scored low on external assets. 9% have parents actively involved in their school (*Support*) and the same percentage feel they are valued by their community (*Empowerment*). 27% live in families with clear rules and consequences for inappropriate behavior (*Boundaries & Expectations*). Forty-five percent of youth surveyed volunteer their services in the community (*Empowerment*). Thirty-seven percent spend 3 or more hours per week involved in music, theatre or other arts (*Constructive Use of Time*).

Possible reasons for the low scoring are; parent involvement tends to decline as the child gets older. This may explain why over 60% of respondents report their parent(s) as non-involved in their school. The question related to Boundaries and Expectations asked the youth what, if anything, they would discuss with their parent(s) about wanting to go to a party where alcohol will be served. Thirty-five percent of respondents answered that they would go to the party without asking permission from their parent(s). This demonstrates a lack of clear family rules and consequences. The relatively high score on questions related to empowerment and holding focus groups at a place (community centers) may skew constructive use of time, which generally promotes positive assets.

### Internal Assets

Respondents generally scored higher on internal asset questions. 28% spend 2 hours or more a day doing homework (*Commitment To Learning*), 53% do not use drugs (*Positive Values*), 12% know how to plan ahead and do so regularly (*Social Competencies*) and 57% feel their life has a purpose (*Positive Identity*).

Results may be affected by the nature of the question. A question asking a youth if he/she takes drugs may elicit a response youth thinks adults will want to hear. On the other hand in order for the results to have any credibility one must have faith that the answers were both honest and real. Many of the participants named smoking pot as something they do for fun during focus group. This supports the validity of the youth responses related to drug use. In regards to the low number of youth who feel their life has a purpose- it is safe to assume that many of these kids are not yet sure what they want to do in the future. While it is essential for young people to have a sense of purpose, many are still learning what their purpose in life is.

## **b) Categorizing the Participants by Asset**

### Developmental Assets (See Figures 1, 9, 10, 11)

The eleven developmental assets used for all the following graphs in this study have been divided up into three sections: 0-3 assets, 4-7 assets and 8-11 assets. Participants who displayed the corresponding assets were categorized as such.

According to the questionnaire responses 41% have 0-3 developmental assets, 53% have 4-7 and 7% display 8-11 assets. It follows that the youth participating in the study are relatively low on both external and internal assets. According to Developmental asset research this is

typical of most youth populations. One point to bear in mind is that only 11 assets were used in this study, and that if all were used the figure would probably rise.

**c) Behaviour And Community Involvement**

(See Figures 2-8)

As stated previously one of the aims of this study is to prove a positive correlation between the number of developmental assets a youth possesses and his or her behavior.

As developmental assets increase so do positive behaviors including abstinence from drugs, school success, good grades, having a diverse peer group and respect for the law.

Conversely respondents low in developmental needs will engage in more risky behavior such as drug use, school failure, trouble with the law and little diversity among the peer group . The graphs on the next page are good visual confirmation of the above.

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the correlation between assets and behavior among 0-3 asset respondents. Positive behaviour is listed in Figure 2 and reveals a low percentage of respondents engaging in them. Although given the city's diverse population it is hardly surprising all groups have a high percentage of friends from differing cultures.

Risky or negative behavior as displayed in Figure 3 reveal a surprisingly high proportion of respondents who would use marijuana and nearly half of the respondents have been in trouble with the Police more than once.

The graphs for those respondents with 4-7 assets (Figures 4 and 5) show a clear movement towards positive behavior and away from risky or negative behavior. The percentages climb even further when the figures for those respondents with 8-11 assets are graphically shown (Figures 6 and 7), proof that the above correlation is a valid one.

In terms of community involvement one of the best measures are those youth that volunteer. Analysis of the charts show clearly just 20% of youth with a 0-3 assets are less likely to volunteer within the local community as compared with almost 60% of 4-7 asset respondents and well over 80% of those with 8-11 assets.

## **Summary of Focus Group Findings**

(See Appendix 2 for complete findings)

### **A) If you were Mayor of Richmond for a day, what would you plan for the youth?**

- Youth-only center with a 16+yrs dance club, sports complex, arts and drama
- More late-night programs for youth featuring: MC battles, dances, graffiti art, open-gym, and Improv.
- Night Shifts at other Community Centers
- More arts and drama- put on by youth for youth: talent shows, art exhibits, outdoor concerts featuring local youth bands
- Skate Park improvements:
  - A place to buy food- a booth run by youth
  - Weekly maintenance on park's grounds
  - Water fountain
- BMX track in Steveston
- Youth dances organized by youth, offering various styles of dance, theater, arts
- A youth-only newsletter
- Focus more on visual arts, such as theater
- More recreational activities for youth, such as Taebox classes and water rafting
- More school fieldtrips

### **B) What are the Issues Facing Youth?**

- Not enough to do for youth in Richmond- leads to boredom
- Not enough 'cool' places for youth to hang out
- Not enough information provided on youth events and programs in Richmond
- Need to connect schools and Community Centers
- Some youth cannot afford to participate in programs and events that cost money i.e. open-gym basketball- discourages youth from participating
- Transportation in Richmond is too expensive- Limits places accessible to youth
- It's hard for young people to find jobs- transportation issues, lack of experience
- Youth are stereotyped as troublemakers
- Often targeted by police because they are teenagers

### **C) How can we increase proactive youth involvement in Richmond?**

- Involve more youth in youth committees and programs
- Promote existing and future youth programs, events, and committees- it will increase awareness and generate more interest in the programs if the youth know about them.
- Use radio, website, word-of-mouth, and information in schools to promote awareness.
- Become involved in youth committees and planning committees- has a voice
- Volunteer time and ideas to youth issues of interest, such as building a designated area for Graffiti art at the Skate Park
- Have a Youth Bus that transports youth to various youth-centered areas in Richmond
- Youth teaching youth. For example: responsible driving, tutoring, dance classes

- Counter-act the stereotype that youth are all troublemakers, by creating a pamphlet that speaks to the positive and proactive youth activities in Richmond-
- Improve on existing youth-centered places such as the Skate Park
- Create a youth council in Richmond that could represent youth and their voice
- Have more youth events at Community Centers that cater to a more diverse population
  - More late-night programs
  - Make open-gyms easily accessible to youth- lower the cost, increase the hours it's open to youth

**(Responses by youth are listed from most to least mentioned)**

### **Feeling Safe**

#### ***a) Define 'feeling safe'***

- ❖ A place where you feel accepted and can be yourself
- ❖ A place where you feel secure, relaxed, and comfortable
- ❖ A place where people who respect and like you
- ❖ A place away from authorities i.e. Parents, police, teachers

#### ***b) Safe environments***

- ❖ Hanging out with friends
- ❖ At home
- ❖ Public places such as the mall, movie theaters, coffee shops
- ❖ Community Centers, specifically, Night Shift and open gym
- ❖ Public parks
- ❖ Driving in a car

#### ***c) Reasons they are safe***

- ❖ Relieves boredom
- ❖ A chance to hang-out with friends
- ❖ You can be yourself
- ❖ They are all non-threatening people or places
- ❖ Absence of adults, or 'relatively young' adults supervising

### **Cool**

#### ***a) Definition of 'cool'***

- ❖ Being part of a group
- ❖ A place where you can do the things that interest you with little adult supervision
- ❖ The way you act
- ❖ Being accepted by your peer group
- ❖ Being yourself
- ❖ Following current trends

#### ***b) 'Cool' things to do in Richmond, and why they are cool***

- ❖ Hanging out with friends- we can have fun together, talk, and laugh
- ❖ Hanging out at malls, movie theaters and restaurants. A place to hang-out with friends, relieves boredom, little adult supervision
- ❖ Night Shift at Thompson Community Centre- a cool place to hang out late at night with friends, participate in arts, drama, and sports.
- ❖ Public parks i.e. Minoru Park, Gilbert Beach, and Garry Point- we can hang out with friends, get drunk without getting into trouble with our parents or cops, it's a

- secluded area and away from authority figures
- ❖ Youth special events and Committees at Community Centers. Centers mentioned- South Arm, Cambie, and Thompson. They put on more youth events, such as dances etc,
- ❖ Richmond arcades and pool halls- You can hang-out with friends and play games
- ❖ Play basketball at community centers, parks or school- good exercise, hang-out with friends
- ❖ Partying and smoking at field and/or house parties. There's no one there to tell you what to do, and only a small chance of getting caught by parents and police
- ❖ Lasertag- some of the youth disagreed because it is too expensive
- ❖ Hanging out in Vancouver- there are more things for youth to do there
- ❖ Hanging out at bars in Richmond and Vancouver-you can drink, dance, and hang out with other people having fun

## **Boredom**

### ***a) Definition of Boredom***

- ❖ Nothing to do- no parties or activities planned
- ❖ No money to spend on food and entertainment
- ❖ No transportation

### ***b) Time of Boredom***

- ❖ On the weekends- especially at night and on Sunday
- ❖ After school and after dinner on weeknights
- ❖ At school

### ***c) Ways to relieve boredom***

- ❖ Hang out with friends and be 'bored' together.
- ❖ Hang out at home- watch TV, play on the computer, listen to music, and read
- ❖ Hang out at parks and friends' houses- some choose to drink and smoke there
- ❖ Go to the mall and/or movie
- ❖ Play basketball and other sports at the Community Centers, Schools, or parks

## **Making Sense of the Data**

It is apparent from data compiled through questionnaires that youth high on the risk-continuum are not participating in many recreational programs and services offered in Richmond. Findings from the questionnaire supports the relationship between developmental assets, behavior, and positive community involvement.

Three factors that affect this relationship, including the youth's perception of what is 'cool', safe, and boring. In order to increase positive behavior, active involvement in recreation, and the number of developmental assets owned by a youth, it is crucial to learn how these three factors affect participants high on the risk-continuum.

If a youth perceives existing programs and services as 'uncool' it is likely he will not participate. Leisure boredom is linked to affective states such as depression and loneliness, as well as risky behaviors including alcohol use, trouble in school, and over-eating in female adolescents. Youth hang-out at places where they feel safe- a place where they feel secure and respected. A youth's definition of a safe place often differs from a child or adult's definition. A youth's answer to feeling safe, 'cool', and bored, will help identify determinants

that encourage and discourage active and pro-social involvement in community-sanctioned recreation.

Ideas on what is 'safe', 'cool', and 'boring' are not wholly determined by a youth's level of risk or involvement in youth-based programs and services. 'Cool' and 'safe' places are interchangeable- it is possible that both illicit feelings of being accepted for who you are, and allow for relative freedom from responsibilities. Another factor that determines a 'cool' and safe place is the amount of adult supervision present- basically, the less supervision the better. Some participants expanded on this by saying 'relatively young' adults are still pretty 'cool'. The majority of participants are bored during certain times of the day and week. Most said they relieve boredom by playing sports, going to the mall with their peers, or keeping busy at home. More troubling are the youth that claim to drink and smoke with friends when they are bored.

All respondents named their peers as playing a crucial role in determining what they do during their spare time. When asked whether it is the place or people that make something 'cool', all youth answered 'the people'. The two focus groups of youth with a higher number of risk factors mentioned several socially unacceptable places and activities as 'cool' and safe. Places such as field and house parties, bars, and parks were perceived as places they can engage in risky behaviour in the absence of adult supervision. There are mixed feelings on Community Centres and whether they are 'cool' or not. Participants who have been involved in some youth-based program and/or service at a centre within the last 6 months, saw it as a safe and 'cool' place to hang out. Responses from youth regarding perceptions of what is safe, cool, and boring provide insight into what youth do in their spare time. They highlight the need for more youth-based initiatives where young people can hang out with friends in an environment that is safe and monitored at a distance (if at all), by adults to prevent risky behaviour.

## **Summary or Recommendations From Youth Providers**

*(See Appendix 1 For Full Report)*

### **Richmond Youth Service Agency (RYSA)**

- More later-evening programs for youth
- Art/drama/theatre programs needed
- Late-night swimming at Steveston pool
- Web site for youth by youth- outlining youth events and programs in Richmond schools, community centers, links to youth agencies and cool sites
- Youth tutoring programs
- Increase communication lines with community centers- promotes recreation
- Dedicated youth center- with access to other youth services, such as drug and alcohol counselors
- Youth bus that provides cheap transportation to places in Richmond- can act as a mobile youth center
- Affordable programs and services

### **Royal Canadian Mounted Police School Liaison Officer**

- 1 liaison officer per school
- More programs on prevention at all ages
- More money for staffing
- Less policy making – more action
- After school programs

### **City Centre Community Association Youth Coordinator**

- Web site developed by youth
- Teach skills i.e. merchandising
- Help youth build something i.e. a youth event from scratch
- Involve kids in council (see Youth consultation in RYSA agency)

### **Richmond Alcohol & Drug Action Team (RADAT)**

- A place for youth to hang out, feel safe, get information and referrals from professionals
- An outreach recreational worker to teach life skills, social aspects (working out of RADAT)
- Fee subsidies
- Increase awareness of current youth events, issues, programs – benefit youth and youth providers
- Web site?

### **Royal Canadian Mounted Police Community Liaison Officer**

- BMX track in Steveston – ample space in park now – should be designed and run by youth
- Midnight swimming at Steveston pool for youth – they are already doing it – why not charge fee and supervise
- Outdoor basketball court
- Safe parks – i.e. Triangle road near Silver City – a park for kids to hang out, feel safe, could be supervised

**Richmond Health Services Society (RHSS)**

- ☉ Parent support groups: information sessions connect with parents – youth are recognized as individuals but also as part of the family.
- ☉ Connect with youth coordinators to increase awareness of recreational programs available
- ☉ Web site – for youth by youth
- ☉ Outreach worker to liaise between youth providers

**Station Stretch, School District.**

- ☉ A place for youth to hang out, feel safe, get information and referrals from professionals

**Making Sense of the Data**

Youth providers in Richmond concur that there is a population of high-risk youth in this community who are engaging in risky behaviour, such as substance abuse loitering, vandalism and youth who are at risk of leaving school or being recruited to work in the sex trade. These youth share a weakened support system that agencies and other youth providers endeavor to strengthen through counseling, alternative measures of enforcement (RCMP), and programs that tailor to their interest and needs. Funding and staff numbers were mentioned by all youth providers as being a factor in the level of attention and support these high-risk youth receive from their agency or service. All agreed that youth providers including school, community centres, and agencies, need to work 1:1 with youth who are high on the risk continuum. Many feel that youth who engage in socially unacceptable activities are doing so because they are bored. Existing youth-based programs and services do not appeal to some youth, and youth providers interviewed believe that youth who are engaging in socially unacceptable activities are doing so because they are bored. Improvements to existing programs, as well as the creation of new avenues tailored to their interest, will decrease boredom, and increase positive behavior

## **Conclusion**

**Fill the Void** has identified that populations of youth in Richmond exhibit a number of high risk behaviors. They are low on developmental assets which place them higher along the risk continuum. These are also less likely to be involved in community programs and services. These may be the same youth who are engaging in socially unacceptable activities witnessed in the community as being problematic.

A youth's developmental support system, which includes their family, peers, school and community, needs to be present in order to provide the opportunities, skills and values required for positive and active living. Consequently, a breakdown in one or more of these areas increases the risk for high risk behaviors. An alarming number of youth participating in **Fill the Void** presented a compromised network of these supports in their lives.

When asked to define what a 'cool' and 'safe' place looks and feels like, all Fill the Void participants listed being with friends in a non-threatening environment as the most important factor. Other critical factors include feeling like they have the freedom to be individuals and to express themselves through interactions designed with their interests and needs in mind.

One of the major concerns raised by youth is that 'there is nothing to do in Richmond.' When asked to expand what they do to relieve leisure boredom, many reported engaging in socially unacceptable behaviours such as drinking and loitering. It follows that in order to decrease leisure boredom and increase recreational involvement in high-risk youth, service delivery at all levels need to consider that 'cool' and 'safe' environments are paramount to youth. Furthermore, the physical "place" may be secondary to how youth feel they are being treated or how welcome they feel in any given place. This speaks to youth gathering in parks and other secluded spaces as there are fewer external forces in play which could compromise their sense of belonging.

All youth participants of Fill the Void shared similar ideas on how to increase proactive involvement in the community. Programs need to be organised and operated by youth, for youth. Strategies and related programs should be developed that actively integrate all youth, particularly youth at risk, into the decision making process for the delivery of all youth oriented services, but especially recreation. Collectively, youth said that more awareness of existing youth opportunities through youth groups, programs and projects needs to occur given that numerous opportunities that youth wished for currently exist in the city, but not to their knowledge.

Youth providers in Richmond concur that appropriate communication strategies must be instituted in homes, schools, and community organisations to increase awareness of youth needs and interests. Several suggested one-to-one support for high-risk youth. Such undertakings will require increased funding and staff. These youth providers recommend a strong networking system that would ensure a reliable form of collaboration amongst the core group of front-line staff working with these youth. Schools and other youth providers in the city need to have mechanisms to share information on what is happening for youth around the city.

While the study concludes that youth at risk and youth exhibiting risky behaviours are being under served in Recreation and Cultural Services, there exists a strong foundation of youth services which has been successful in addressing boredom, sense of belonging and more importantly cool things to do, such as the Night Shift program. Developing rapport and creating awareness with youth is an on-going task. Future directions will challenge recreation departments to use these tools and expand the client groups to engage a more diverse client group. A shift to work with diverse youth populations also requires that the service delivery system be able to accommodate these differences through staffing, philosophies and outcomes.

## **PROPOSALS**

1. Recreational Outreach Worker. Will act as a liaison between Youth providers (including Government and community youth services) and youth in Richmond. To facilitate the involvement of high-risk youth in community programs and services including recreational activities, counseling and health services. Some of the responsibilities of an Outreach Worker will include: implement and oversee Youth Promotions Committee (see proposal 2), Services Directory (see proposal 3), the Youth Board Program (see proposal 4), Youth Transit Program (see proposal 5), facilitate communication between high schools and Community Centres, first point of contact for high risk youth.

2. Create a Youth Promotions committee. They will co-ordinate awareness of ongoing youth programs and services through media, Internet, and newsletters. This group will consist of both high and low risk youth with the interest and skills required. This committee will help in the creation of a youth website. (See Appendix 4 for an example of a Fill the Void Webpage). In the past local media such as CBC has donated on-time air to community driven initiatives. This committee can promote programs and events in ways to attract other youth.

3. Improve on existing referral system used by youth providers in Richmond including schools, community centres and other professionals by creating a Services Directory used to identify and describe all youth services available in Richmond. This directory will be used to refer youth in need of a specific service to the appropriate place. Information given by youth providers for Fill the Void will be the foundation of this Services Directory.

4. Increase communication lines between schools and their nearest Community Centre. Youth board in each school, which displays current programs and upcoming events for youth in the community. This board will be updated weekly by students identified as non-participants in community programs and events. The Recreational Outreach Worker will supervise a Richmond wide implementation of youth boards in all high schools (including Stretch and Re-entry).

5. Youth Transit Program. A form of inexpensive transport for youth in Richmond to use during allotted times. The vehicle will follow a pre-determined route and schedule (as listed on Fill the Void Website and Youth Boards). Youth Transit will run between Richmond Community Centres and schools at agreed upon times. A vehicle will need to be purchased or donated primarily for this use and a driver with a Class 4 License will also be needed. This driver could be sourced from current Community Centre employees.

6. Youth-based community development projects. Maintain and upgrade existing outdoor facilities such as Richmond's Skate Park. Monthly grounds keeping and upgrades such as a water fountain. A youth committee can be formed to ensure maintenance of park and various parties accomplish upgrades.

7. Expand Night Shift to other community centres in Richmond who are able to provide their facility. Night Shift coordinators would be hired by the City of Richmond to supervise and implement events activities tailored to the interests of neighbouring youth. Community

Fill the Void

Centres who partake in Night Shift will have to study the demographics of youth in their area to determine what activities to plan.

Purpose Of the Assessment.

Methodology.

Questionnaire Responses

Findings of Fact

Making Sense of the Data

Chart Summaries

### **Key Issues**

Causal Relationship of developmental assets

At risk behaviors – drugs/alcohol/street involved

Creating and Marketing the “cool”

Safety

Boredom – disconnected /Accessibility

Key Recommendations

- underlying need to make it cool
- creating more environments that are safe – need to embody youth participation/involvement/respect/freedom to be yourself
- youth outreach component – need for more 1:1 o
- better marketing of what’s going on in the schools
- more collaboration and networking amongst service providers and finding the time to do it.
- less red tape
- fee subsidies
- youth website
- safe, productive afterschool pursuits
- more late night programming
- more “cool” and youth friendly staff
- activities in general need to reflect current youth culture

### **What is working? :**

- Late-night programs at Community Centers i.e. Night Shift
- Skate park- proposed and designed by youth

Working with Youth Coordinators in the past has been successful (Ben Moon) i.e. improving park safety at Cambie

Fill the Void

Existing Youth committees are great i.e. Liquefaction, HYPE, YTC, Nightshift, Youth Week, Potluck for street involved youth

- Youth events such as youth dances have been very successful  
Building of skate park – proactive and positive youth work

**References:**

Bouchard, C., Shephard, R. & Stephens, T. (Eds.). (1994). Physical activity, fitness, and health: International proceedings and consensus statement. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publisher, Inc.

Chassin, L., C.C., Montello, D. Sherman, S.J., & McGrew, J. (1986). Changes in peer and parent influence during adolescence. *Developmental Psychology*, 22, 327-334.

Fitness Canada (1987). National recreation statement. Ottawa, ON: Health Canada.

McDonald, R., & Howe, C. (1989). Challenge/initiative recreation programs as a treatment for low-concept children. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 2, 242-253.

Pass it on! Ready-to-use Handouts for Asset Builders (1999). Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute

**Appendix 1**

## **1) Richmond Youth Service Agency (RYSA)**

Feb.19, 2001

**Contact:** Denise Woodley (Manager of Adolescent Services)

### **Role of RYSA:**

RYSA offers counseling and advocacy for Richmond youth ages 13-19, and families. Funded by the Ministry of Children and Families (MCF), United Way, and private sponsors, RYSA is a non-profit society that has provided a variety of services to youth since 1973. Provides support, information, and referrals to other agencies, mediation, problem solving, parent education, and more. RYSA counselors work in the community, often meeting with their clients at their office, at school, or at home.

As stated in RYSA's pamphlets, there are 4 sections within RYSA that work with youth:

- **Street-involved Youth Outreach Program-** Provides prevention and intervention to youth who are already street-involved, or at-risk of being street-involved. Includes identifying and locating these youth, crises intervention, maintenance, and transition.
- **Pregnant and Parenting Youth Program-**
- **Youth and Family Outreach Program-** Counselors support youth who one or more of these issues- home, school, relationships, the law, and feeling alone or down is affecting. Also offers counseling, education, and information to families and groups.
- **Youth Agreement Support Program-** Under the *Child, Family, and Community Service Act*, the MCF has the authority to provide educational, residential, financial assistance, and support services for youth who are unable to re-connect with their family, are 16-19 yrs., and have 2 or more high-risk factors. RYSA employs a Youth Worker who ensures the Agreement is being followed by the youth, and that they are making the transition to independence as smoothly as possible.

### **Accessibility to Youth:**

Drop in, appointments, outreach, and referrals

### **Philosophy on Youth:**

As said by Denise Woodley, RYSA's goal is to provide services that empower youth and encourage their success. RYSA is client-centered, confidential, and free- making it a youth-friendly service.

### **Types of Youth:** "All youth are at risk".

Many Of the youth providers work with youth that often exhibit one or more of these risk factors:

- Little or no connection with families and caregivers and/or other community services or agencies,
- Lack of community support
- Learning/behavioral/mental health issues
- History and cycles of abuse
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Street-involvement
- Trouble at school

- Involvement in criminal activity

**What can be improved on? :**

- More communication between schools, community centers, and other youth agencies in Richmond
- Need more alternative schools- as it is, Richmond has 2
- More family support
- Little access to affordable rental housing for youth and college students
- Access issue - are youth aware and well - informed of all youth services and programs offered in Richmond?
- A move from adult-oriented to youth-friendly community
- Youth have mentioned being targeted by the police for looking different and being young.
- Not much for youth to do at night
- Youth consultation concerning community decisions
- Lack of policy and awareness around fee subsidies for community programs. For example: some teenage parents and street-involved youth, cannot afford to program fees and may be unaware of subsidy program

**Recommendations:**

- More later-evening programs for youth
- Art/drama/theatre programs needed
- Late-night swimming at Steveston pool
- Web site for youth by youth- outlining youth events and programs in Richmond schools, community centers, links to youth agencies and cool sites
- Youth tutoring programs
- Increase communication lines with community centers- promotes recreation
- Dedicated youth center- with access to other youth services, such as drug and alcohol counselors
- Youth bus that provides cheap transportation to places in Richmond- can act as a mobile youth center
- Affordable programs and services

**What is working? :**

- Late-night programs at Community Centers i.e. Night Shift
- Skate park- proposed and designed by youth

**Networking System:**

- Richmond Alcohol and Drug Action Team (RADAT)
- Richmond Health Service Society (RHSS)
- Probation officers
- Mental health services
- Community Centers and their Youth Coordinators
- Schools
- Family
- Youth & Social Workers

- Other professionals working with youth in the community

**Points of Interest:**

Richmond youth, who are homeless, tend to move to the streets of Vancouver. Street-involved youth in Richmond usually couch surf

**2) Royal Canadian Mounted Police School Liaison Officer**

Feb.23, 2001

**Contact:** Raj Uppal- School Liaison Officer For Cambie, McRoberts & McNair

**Role of a RCMP School Liaison Officer:**

Police liaison officers have several roles: Foremost as mentors, to educate youth (i.e. bullying, drug issues), to interact with youth on a friendly basis, offer counseling. Also acting as enforcers of laws and rules.

A 2-year position. Five to six liaison officers share all Richmond high school. “Re Entry” and “Stretch”. Two elementary liaison officers share all 49 Richmond elementary schools.

**Accessibility to Youth:**

Outreach, appointments, drop in.

**Philosophy on Youth:**

RCMP’s philosophy is to treat youth with respect, to approach problems with proactive solutions, whilst enforcement is secondary. Treat each situation and youth involved on an individual basis – “kids often only need a second chance”. RCMP operates an open door policy.

**Types of Youth:**

Generally RCMP has trouble with around 1% of youth population in schools. Risk factors include:

- Family breakdowns, little connection or attention paid
- “Latch key” kids
- Involvement in gangs
- Poor grades
- Truancy
- Peer pressure influenced by other kids at risk
- Peer identity

**What can be improved on? :**

- More education and prevention in elementary schools-essential to future success
- Connection to family, school and community

**Recommendations:**

- 1 liaison officer per school
- More programs on prevention at all ages
- More money for staffing

Fill the Void

- Less policy making – more action
- After school programs

**What is working? :**

- Working with Youth Coordinators in the past has been successful (Ben Moon) i.e. improving park safety at Cambie

**Networking System:**

- Richmond Alcohol and Drug Action Team (RADAT)
- Richmond Health Service Society (RHSS)
- Probation officers
- Mental health services
- Community Centers and their Youth Coordinators
- Schools
- Family
- Youth & Social Workers
- Other RYSA
- RADAT
- Alcohol & Drug Counselor at McNair
- Teachers / Principals

**Points of Interest:**

- While youth crime (14-24 years) is high Raj Uppal states “more than 95% of high school students are not causing trouble”

**3) Youth Coordinator at City Center**

*Feb.23, 2001*

**Contact:** Tameen Barakat (Youth Coordinator)

**Role of Youth Coordinator:**

Paid by the association the youth coordinator works with preteens, teens and committees. There to facilitate youth-driven programs and events. Promotes recreation and cultural services.

**Accessibility to Youth:**

**Philosophy on Youth:**

Empowerment. Encourage each youth to learn their passion and nurture it. Highlight the good, encourage enthusiasm and promote long-term vision.

**Types of Youth:**

Youth coordinators work with all types of youth from all sorts of backgrounds. Doesn't often get to work with newly immigrated Asians.

**What can be improved on? :**

- Trim down bureaucracy
- Need more communication between youth agencies and services
- Improve communication and involvement with schools
- Lack of information and awareness of existing services and programs

**Recommendations:**

- Web site developed by youth
- Teach skills i.e. merchandising
- Help youth build something i.e. a youth event from scratch
- Involve kids in council (see Youth consultation in RYSA agency)

**What is working? :**

- Existing Youth committees are great i.e. Liquefaction, HYPE, YTC, Nightshift, Youth Week, Potluck for street involved youth (politicians came, help from youth agencies)

**Networking System:**

- Other Youth Coordinators
- RYSA
- RHSS
- RADAT
- RCMP

**Points of Interest:**

Potluck in March open to any youth interested in a free meal and music. Huge success – media, politicians and other youth providers attended.

**4) Richmond Alcohol & Drug Action Team (RADAT)**

*Mar.01, 2001*

**Contact:** Kathy Mah (Youth Counselor)

**Role of Youth Coordinator:**

Ministry For Children & Families – Addiction Services - RADAT

1 Prevention worker at McNair – primarily secondary intervention, some elementary prevention

2 youth counselors

Role:

- Substance affected youth
- Users
- Contact for social workers and probation officers
- Parents
- Presentations @ Schools
- Training other youth providers, joint projects, youth services, health centers, case management teams
- Outreach
- Refer and assess to residential government programs
- Referral Service

**Accessibility to Youth:**

Drop in, appointments, outreach, and referrals.

**Philosophy on Youth:**

Harm reduction perspective for youth using an open door policy. The team does not require youth to abstain from drugs and alcohol unless they choose to.

**Types of Youth:**

Counselors often work with youth with a high number of risk factors:

- Rise in heroin, crystal methadone use
- Criminally involved
- Alternative school programs
- Parents with addictions
- Coexisting factors
- History of abuse
- Poor family relations
- Drop outs form school
- Prostitution
- Couch Surfing

**What can be improved on? :**

- RADAT can be used more as a referral in schools
- Prevention and education in elementary schooling
- Communication centers sometimes perceived by youth to serve only certain genre of kids
- Access to community center programs
- Increased funding and staff
- Larger and youth friendly RADAT youth center

**Recommendations:**

- A place for youth to hang out, feel safe, get information and referrals from professionals
- An outreach recreational worker to teach life skills, social aspects (working out of RADAT)

Fill the Void

- Fee subsidies? Do youth at RADAT know about this service?????????
- Increase awareness of current youth events, issues, programs – benefit youth and youth providers
- Web site?

**Networking System:**

- Richmond Health Service Society (RHSS)
- Probation officers
- Mental health services
- Community Centers and their Youth Coordinators
- Schools
- Family
- Youth Workers
- Social Workers
- Other professionals working with youth in the community

**5) Royal Canadian Mounted Police Community Liaison Officer**

*Mar.06, 2001*

**Contact:** Cst. Ed Ryhall Steveston Community Police Officer

**Role of RCMP Community Liaison Officer:**

Work with local community centers and nearby schools – McMath, Steveston, London, Hugh Boyd, sharing school responsibility with school liaison officer. There are 4 community officers in Steveston.

Responsibilities:

- Administration
- Management (60 volunteers)
- Meeting community groups
- Liaise with local businesses
- Work and problem solve
- React to calls
- CAP program
- Youth Against Violence program through Attorney General

**Accessibility to Youth:**

Outreach, appointments, drop in.

**Philosophy on Youth:**

Alternative Measures Policing – treat each youth incident on an individual basis – community hours, mutual respect, flexibility, youth empowerment, encourage initiative.

**Types of Youth:**

Community officers usually work with the same youth – 2 core groups 12-15yrs 15-18years. The latter tending to hang out at parks late at night drinking and smoking. These core groups need more 1:1 attention from youth agencies.

- “Latch Key” kids
- Lack of family support
- Peer pressure
- Drugs and alcohol

*Ed Ryhall has not seen a significant increase in youth violence and risky behavior in the last couple of years. He believes that while there are core groups getting into trouble that what the youth in Steveston need is a safe place to hang out.*

**What can be improved on? :**

- Community officers are supposed to be afforded the time to work and problem solve in their community, but because they are understaffed and must share many responsibilities.
- Steveston is a youth friendly community but their response to youth behavior can be reactionary and out of proportion to the actual incident.
- More prevention and education in elementary schools
- Increased funding and staff

**Recommendations:**

- BMX track in Steveston – ample space in park now – should be designed and run by youth
- Midnight swimming at Steveston pool for youth – they are already doing it – why not charge fee and supervise
- Outdoor basketball court
- Safe parks – i.e. Triangle road near Silver City – a park for kids to hang out, feel safe, could be supervised

**What is working? :**

- Youth events such as youth dances have been very successful
- Building of skate park – proactive and positive youth work

**Networking System:**

- Work closely with agencies
- Probation officers
- Community Centers
- CAP programs
- Wilderness / Boot camp
- Other professionals working with youth in the community

**6) Richmond Health Services Society (RHSS)**

*Mar 12, 2001*

**Contact:** Anne Lacey (Nurse from Youth Program)

**Role of RHSS:**

- Community Development – to educate youth on nutrition, anti – smoking, benefits of exercise and injury prevention.
- Health Promotion at Schools – through activities, displays, classes, sex education and wellness days.
- Youth Clinics – drop in and appointment. Three health clinics, one outreach clinic averaging 24 youth per day – counseling, prevention, referrals and sex education.
- Parent Education.
- Stand on various committees i.e. eating disorder clinics.

**Accessibility to Youth:**

- Voluntary
- Word Of Mouth
- Teachers And School Personnel
- Community
- Strong Referral System
- Network With Other Youth Agencies

**Philosophy on Youth:**

To empower youth with education, encourage informed and safe choices. Under the Infants Act, youth have the right to services without parental consent. To educate and refer. To use mutual respect.

**Types of Youth:**

All youth are at risk – it's about making informed choices. Occasionally see youth with 1 or more characteristics:

- Early substance use
- Sexually active
- Sexually assaulted
- Troubles in school

Not all youth are high risk; the RHSS work with low risk  
Reduction in family connection and support.

**What can be improved on? :**

- Increased funding and staff
- Services provided to youth often cost money the society doesn't have i.e. birth control
- More clinics
- Parent education is essential

**Recommendations:**

- Parent support groups: information sessions connect with parents – youth are recognized as individuals but also as part of the family.
- Connect with youth coordinators to increase awareness of recreational programs available
- Web site – for youth by youth
- Outreach worker to liaise between youth providers

**What is working? :**

- Youth Forum being held on March 29<sup>th</sup> 2001 – Health issues from the youth perspective

**Networking System:**

- Probation officers
- Mental health services
- Community Centers and their Youth Coordinators
- Schools
- Family
- Youth Workers
- Social Workers
- Other professionals working with youth in the community

**7) Station Stretch, School District No. 38 (Richmond)**

*Mar 12, 2001*

**Contact:** Vince- Youth And Family Counselor (Funded by MCF)

**Role of School:**

A school board, run school for grades 9/10 (13-17yrs). To provide continuity in education, academic upgrading and case transition to further schooling. The school has 4 courses (non-elective). Structure is essential and goals and standards must be met. These are academic, attendance and conduct. Most grade 10's complete their program and go on to pre employment, modified regular school or regular school. There are 3 subject teachers, one resource teacher, one classroom assistant and one Youth and Family counselor (Vince).

Vince's role is funded by M.C.F. and is to provide counseling, drop in, and outreach programs and to teach about peer relationships, family relationships and problem solving. The option is there to refer to other agencies if beneficial.

**Accessibility to Youth:**

- Youth can go to stretch voluntarily, through regular school suggestion or forced

**Philosophy on Youth:**

The school is client centered and encourages self - determination, the ability to learn natural consequences, to facilitate, to provide guidelines and feedback. To recognize the differences in youth and that youth develop at different times. To encourage mutual respect, accountability and capability.

**Types of Youth:**

50% or more of youth at Stretch share one or more of these risk factors:

- Poor family relations
- Peer isolation
- Drug use
- Criminal activity
- History of abuse
- Single parents
- Low self esteem
- Little community involvement

**What can be improved on? :**

- Improve the facility via increased staffing, having a place to hang out around the facility i.e. a coffee house
- Improve connections between community centers and other recreational and cultural services

**Networking System:**

- Probation officers
- Mental health services
- Community Centers and their Youth Coordinators
- Schools
- Family
- Youth Workers
- Social Workers
- Other professionals working with youth in the community

## **Appendix 2**

### **Youth Focus Groups:**

- A. Night Shift @ Thompson Community Center**
- B. Thompson Community Center- Burnette students during lunch-hour**
- C. Grade 10 Students @ Station Stretch**
- D. Youth Taking Charge (YTC)- Cambie Community Center's Youth**
- E. Combined Studies @ Hugh Boyd School (ages 16+)**

#### **A. Night Shift:**

A youth-only program held every Friday night from 10pm-1am at Thompson Community Center. Supervised by 2 Night Shift Coordinators, and 1 Youth Coordinator. Recreational and cultural activities offered, such as, Open-gym basketball, break-dancing, art by youth, Improv. nights, games room. Youth and Nightshift Coordinators generate new ideas weekly- a successful late night program. Youth participation has increased steadily in the last year, with nearly 100 youth showing up to play basketball, hang-out, and participate in arts and theater.

#### **Questions:**

**1. If you were Mayor of Richmond for a day, what would you plan for the youth?**

- Outdoor concerts featuring local youth bands
- More Improv. Nights

- A youth-only newsletter
- Focus more on visual arts, such as theater
- Aerobics classes for youth, such as Taebox
- More late-night programs
  - Night Shifts at other Community Centers
  - Youth dances organized by youth, offering various styles of dance, theater, arts

## 2. Feeling Safe

### a) What does it mean to feel 'safe'?

- A safe place to hang-out by yourself or with friends
- Somewhere you don't feel threatened
- A place where you feel accepted and can be yourself

### b) Where is a 'safe' place for you?

- Home
- Community Centers, specifically, **Night Shift**
- Public places such as the mall, movie theaters

### c) Why do you feel 'safe' in this setting?

- A chance to hang-out with friends
- Either no adults present, or 'relatively young' adults supervising
- Relieves boredom
- You can be yourself, and do things that interest you, such as playing on the internet at home, or playing b-ball at **Night Shift**

## 3. Issues Facing Youth?

- Adults often stereotype all youth as trouble-makers
- Often targeted by police because they are teenagers
- Lack of jobs available for youth entering the workforce for the first time
- Not enough 'cool' places for youth to hang out
- Some youth cannot afford to participate in programs and events that cost money
- Not enough information provided on youth events and programs in Richmond
- Need to connect schools and Community Centers- will increase awareness and access to programs and events that the youth don't know about

## 4. How can we increase proactive youth involvement in Richmond?

- If we get more youth involved in youth committees and programs, we can make a bigger difference and see changes that we want to see
- Promote the benefits of getting involved with other Richmond youth- make it 'cool' to participate in recreational and cultural activities
- Youth teaching youth. For example: responsible driving, tutoring, dance classes
- Counter-act the stereotype that youth are all troublemakers, by creating a pamphlet that speaks to the positive and proactive youth activities in Richmond

## 5. Do you think this report based on youth opinions and ideas will make a difference?

- A majority answered 'no' to this question. **There are not enough of them to be heard by adults in Richmond. They came up with some great ideas that would make them feel more valued by this community. (see #4)**

## **B. Thompson Community Center**

Grade 10-12 Burnette students during lunch-hour

### **Questions:**

#### **1. If you were Mayor of Richmond for a day, what would you plan for the youth?**

- Recreational activities:
  - Weekend trips to Seattle, youth cruises, more fieldtrips at school
- Youth-only center
  - 16+yrs dance club
  - sports complex
- Talent shows
- More late-night programs with MC battles, dances, graffiti art
- Access to jobs for youth
- Bike track
- Rollerblade park
- Skate Park improvements:
  - A place to buy food- a booth run by youth
  - Weekly maintenance on park's grounds
  - Water fountain
- More youth activities and events offered in the Thompson area
- Native recognition and awareness
- More places to play basketball and other indoor sports- Free late-night open-gym

#### **2. Boredom**

##### **a) Definition of Boredom?**

- Nothing to do- no parties or activities planned

##### **b) When are you bored during the week?**

- On the weekends
- At school
- After school until 4:30 or 5:00pm
- At night

##### **c) What do you do to relieve boredom?**

- Being bored can become a problem- the more bored I am with nothing to do, the more likely my friends and I will get into trouble
- Watch TV or play on the internet
- Go to the mall and/or movies
- Play basketball and other sports at the Community Centers, Schools, or parks
- Hang out at parks and friends' houses- some drink and smoke at the parks

#### **3. Cool**

##### **a) What is the definition of cool?**

- Being part of a group
- The way you act
- Being accepted and acceptable to the majority

##### **b) What are some of the 'cool' things to do in Richmond, and why?**

- The park at Minoru- we can hang out with friends, get drunk without getting into trouble with our parents or cops, it's a secluded area and away from authority figures
- Lasertag- some of the youth disagreed because it is too expensive
- Paintball
- South Arm Community Center- the people there are 'cool' and they put on more youth events, such as dances etc.
- Certain restaurants- Places where the food is cheap, and we can hang out with friends

**c) Is it the place or people that make something 'cool' to youth?**

- *The people*- when you're hanging out with other young people, you can usually find something 'cool' or fun to do. When adults get involved, it's usually pretty boring- there are rules and an authority figure telling you what to do.

**4. Issues facing youth?**

- Transportation in Richmond is too expensive- Limits the places we can go.
- Not enough to do for youth in Richmond- leads to boredom
- It's hard for young people to find jobs- transportation issues, lack of experience
- Programs and events at Community Centers often cost money- such as open-gym basketball- discourages youth from participating

**5. How can we increase proactive youth involvement in Richmond?**

- **Improve on existing youth-centered places such as the Skate Park**
- **Have a Youth Bus that transports youth to various youth-centered areas in Richmond**
- *Create a youth council in Richmond that could represent youth and their voice*
- **Have more youth events at Community Centers**
- **More late-night programs**
- **Make open-gyms easily accessible to youth- lower the cost, increase the hours it's open to youth**
- *Promote existing youth programs, events, and committees- it will increase awareness and generate more interest in the programs if the youth know about them.*

**C. Station Stretch:**

Station Stretch is a 9/10 program, with a population of 50 students ranging from 14 to 17 years. Staff includes four teachers, one classroom assistant, and one youth and family worker. Station Stretch is a modified school program for youth that, for various reasons, have had trouble in 'regular' schools.

**Questions:**

**1. If you were the Mayor of Richmond for a day, what would you plan for the youth?**

- A Youth-only Center
- 16yrs.+ dance club
- Organize raves
- Sports center

- MC battles at Richmond Halls i.e. South Arm and Minoru Hall
- Boxing

## 2. Cool

### a) What is the definition of cool?

- The way you act
- Being accepted and acceptable to the majority

### b) What are some of the 'cool' things to do in Richmond, and why?

- Richmond arcades and pool halls- You can hang-out with friends, play games
- Hanging out in Vancouver- there are more things for youth to do there
- Play basketball- good exercise, hang-out with friends
- Open-gym at Community Centers
- Partying and smoking at field and/or house parties. There's no one there to tell you what to do, and only a small chance of getting caught by parents and police
- 

### c) Is it the place or people that make something 'cool' to youth?

- **Definitely the people. When you hang out with other young people, it can be pretty 'cool'. We share the same interests.**

## 3. Feeling Safe

### a) What does it mean to feel 'safe'?

- A safe place to hang-out by yourself or with friends
- Somewhere you don't feel threatened
- A place where you feel accepted and can be yourself
- A place away from authorities i.e. Parents, police, teachers

### d) Where is a 'safe' place for you?

- Home
- Hanging out with friends
- Public places such as the mall, movie theaters
- Church
- Coffee shops
- Parks

### e) Why do you feel 'safe' in this setting?

- A chance to hang-out with friends
- Either no adults present, or 'relatively young' adults supervising
- Some listed above allow for smoking and drinking

## 4. Issues facing youth?

- Youth are stereotyped- some adults think we're always making trouble for the community
- Youth can be made to feel like criminals
- Not enough for youth to do after school

**5. How can we increase proactive youth involvement in Richmond?**

- *Promote future youth programs and youth events-* We don't participate because a lot of the times we don't know about what's being offered
- Promote youth news in Richmond- *through radio, website, word-of-mouth, and info. in schools*
- *Youth can volunteer and join youth committees- may change the existing notion that youth are all trouble-makers*

**D.Youth Taking Charge (YTC)-** Cambie Community Center's Youth Community:

A group of youth working with Cambie's Youth Coordinator- Ben Wong Moon. Their mission statement is to be involved in proactive and positive deeds in their community, such as running a weekly drop-in babysitting service at Cambie Community Center, and organizing youth dances that fund trips and events.

**Questions:**

**1. If you were the Mayor of Richmond for a day, what would you plan for the youth?**

- Youth-only center: A cool place to hang out with your friends. A place that offers computer access, billiard games, sports area, and music. The center would be designed and decorated by youth for youth
- More fieldtrips at school
- Have youth representatives from Richmond participate in International Youth Conferences. Talk about youth issues, such as, bullying, violence, and racism
- Have a youth bus that would take the youth to various places of interest in Richmond, including Community Centers

**2. Feeling Safe**

**a) What does it mean to feel 'safe'?**

- A safe place to hang-out by yourself or with friends
- Being comfortable and relaxed
- A place where you feel secure and trust the people there
- Somewhere you are respected

**b) Where is a 'safe' place for you?**

- Driving in a car
- At home
- My friends, people I am comfortable around
- Community Centers

**c) Why do you feel 'safe' in this setting?**

- They are all non-threatening people or places
- Gives me the freedom to be myself and make choices that are good for me

**3. Cool**

**a) What is the definition of cool?**

- Current trends that people attempt to follow
- Being accepted and acceptable to the majority

**b) What are some of the ‘cool’ things to do in Richmond, and why?**

- Hanging out with friends- we can have fun together, talk, and laugh
- Silvercity- Watch a movie, go for dinner, hang out with friends, little adult supervision
- Cambie and Thompson Community Centers- youth committees, hang out with friends, games room, sports and programs, something to do
- Malls in Richmond and Vancouver- a place to hang-out with friends, something to do
- Billiard halls- a place to hang-out with friends, play games, and gives us something to do

**4. Boredom**

**a) What do you do when you’re bored?**

- Take action- call a friend, exercise
- Play on the computer or watch TV
- Listen to music
- Get into trouble

**b) When are you bored during the week?**

- On the weekends, after school and after dinner on weeknights

**5. How can we increase proactive youth involvement in Richmond?**

- **Promote future youth programs and youth events at Community Centers and Schools** through word of mouth, Richmond newspapers, PA systems at school, Internet (youth websites), Flyers, Radio, Youth paper, youth radio station in Richmond

**E. Combined Studies @ Hugh Boyd School (ages 16+)**

**Questions:**

**1. If you were the Mayor of Richmond for a day, what would you plan for the youth?**

- *Youth-only center* offering dances for 16yrs+, food, DJ’s, games, sports
- *Improve on Skate Park*- install lights for night skating
- Increase the number of arts and drama programs and events in Richmond
- A Graffiti wall for youth to graffiti without getting into trouble
- Car shows

**2. Cool**

**a) What is the definition of cool?**

- Being part of a group
- Being yourself
- Being accepted and acceptable to the majority
- A place where you can do the things that interest you without tons of adult supervision

**d) What are some of the ‘cool’ things to do in Richmond, and why?**

- Public parks- we can hang out with friends, get drunk without getting into trouble with our parents or cops, it’s a secluded area and away from authority figures
- Go to over-19 bars
- House parties

**3. Boredom**

**a) Definition of Boredom?**

- Nothing to do- no parties or activities planned for youth
- No money to do anything
- No transportation

**b) When are you bored during the week?**

- On the weekends, after school and after dinner on weeknights
- At school
- Late night

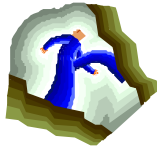
**4. How can we increase proactive youth involvement in Richmond?**

- **Promote future youth programs and youth events at Community Centers and Schools** through word of mouth, Richmond newspapers, PA systems at school, Internet (youth websites), Flyers, Radio, Youth paper, youth radio station in Richmond
- Become involved in youth committees and planning committees- have a voice
- Volunteer time and ideas to youth issues of interest, such as building a designated area for Graffiti art at the Skate Park

**Appendix 3**

**Questionnaire and Responses**

# FILL THE VOID



A Youth Study for 2001

1. How old are you?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Where do you live in Richmond?  
-see map insert
3. What school do you go to?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What Grade are you in?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. If you do not go to school, what grade did you complete before leaving?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What community center in Richmond is closest to where you live?
  - Cambie
  - Steveston
  - Thompson
  - Sea Island
  - e) Hamilton
  - f) City Center
  - g) West Richmond
  - h) I don't know
  - i) South Arm
7. How much contact do you have with your family? –meaning immediate family
  - I live with my mom (22%)
  - I live with my dad (4%)
  - I live with both my parents (66%)
  - I live with neither parent but see them 3 times or more a year (4%)
  - I live with neither parent but see them 3 times or less a year (2%)
8. Do you feel comfortable asking for help and advice from your parent(s)?
  - a) Yes- often (24%)
  - b) Yes- occasionally (48%)
  - c) No (22%)
  - d) Don't know / not applicable to me (5%)

9. Other than your parent(s), do you seek advice and help from any other adult or adults?
  - a) Yes- I receive support from 3 or more adults other than my parents (22%)
  - b) Yes- I receive support from 3 adults or less other than my parents (48%)
  - c) No- just my parents (17%)
  - d) No adult support (12%)
  
10. Do you like your neighbors?
  - a) Yes (42%)
  - b) No (20%)
  - c) Sometimes (16%)
  - d) I don't know my neighbors (22%)
  
11. Do you feel you are treated with respect by your school's staff?  
Yes (50%) / No (13%) / Sometimes (35%)
  
12. Do you feel your peers at school treat you with respect?  
Yes (67%) / No (4%) / Sometimes (25%)
  
13. Do your parent(s) encourage you to work hard in school?  
Yes (90%) / No (3%) / Sometimes (6%)
  
14. Are your parent(s) actively involved with your school?  
Yes (9%) / No (62%) / Sometimes (28%)
  
15. Do you feel your community values you?  
Yes (12%) / No (42%) / Sometimes (44%)
  
16. Do you volunteer your services anywhere in the community?  
Yes (45%) / No (36%) / Sometimes (17%)
  
17. If so, how many hours per week do you volunteer?
  - a) 3 hours or more (26%)
  - b) 3 hours or less (34%)
  
18. If you answered yes to #17, where do you volunteer?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
19. Do you feel like your ideas and suggestions count at the place you volunteer your services?  
Yes (41%) / No (28%) / Sometimes (16%)
  
20. Do you feel like your ideas and suggestions count at the place you work?  
Yes (39%) / No (24%) / Sometimes (23%)
  
21. If you had a chance, where would you choose to volunteer?  
\_\_\_\_\_

22. Do you feel safe at school?  
Yes (73%) / No (10%) / Sometimes (15%)
23. Do you feel safe at home?  
Yes (91%) / No (1%) / Sometimes (7%)
24. Do you feel safe in your neighborhood?  
Yes (71%) / No (9%) / Sometimes (19%)
25. Scenario: Your friends call you up and invite you to a party where alcohol's being served. What, if anything, do you say to your parent(s)?  
a) Ask if I can go and respect whatever decision they make (27%)  
b) Tell them but make my own decision (35%)  
c) Don't tell them at all (36%)
26. Scenario: You have just been caught by your parent(s) sneaking in from a rave at 4 am. Considering the rules and consequences in your home, how do you predict your parent(s) will react?  
\_\_\_\_\_
27. Do you often get into trouble at school?  
a) Yes, everyday (6%)  
b) Yes, at least once a week (14%)  
c) Occasionally (32%)  
d) Hardly ever (47%)
28. Do you find adults saying one thing and doing another?  
Yes (69%) / No (5%) / Sometimes (26%)
29. Do you have a best friend?  
Yes (79%) / No (20%)
30. On average, how many hours do you spend per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.  
a. 3 hours or more per week (34%)  
b. Less than 3 hours per week (30%)  
c. None (36%)
31. On average, how many hours per week do you spend in sports, clubs, or organizations at school or in community organizations?  
a. 3 hours or more per week (58%)  
b. Less than 3 hours per week (22%)  
c. None (20%)
32. On average, how many hours per day do you spend doing homework?

- a. 2 hours or more per day (28%)
  - b. Less than 2 hours per day (42%)
  - c. None (28%)
33. On average, how many hours per week do you spend watching TV and playing on the computer?
- a. 2 hours or more per day (63%)
  - b. Less than 2 hours per day (30%)
  - c. None (7%)
34. What community center programs have you participated in in the last 6 months? - please circle any that apply to you
- a. Outdoor sports (22%)
  - b. Indoor court sports (15%)
  - c. Other indoor sports (13%)
  - d. Youth group (38%)
  - e. Drama/arts (10%)
  - f. None (26%)
  - g. Other (7%)
35. Scenario: If you were asked to create a community center program for you and your friends to participate in, what would it be?
- 
36. Is there a stigma attached to 'community center programs'?
- Yes (19%) / No (25%) / I don't know (35%)
37. Would you and your friends sign up for a 'community center program'?
- Yes (55%) / No (18%) / I don't know (12%)
38. Do you think youth programs and organized sports are too expensive?
- Yes (20%) / No (38%) / Sometimes (41%)
39. Have you thought seriously about quitting school in the last 6 months?
- Yes (16%) / No (73%) / Sometimes (10%)
40. Have you ever been in trouble with the law?
- a) Yes, more than once (32%)
  - b) Yes, only once (9%)
  - c) No (57%)
41. How often do you exercise per week?
- a) 3 hours or more a week (61%)
  - b) 3 hours or less a week (26%)
  - c) None (11%)
42. Do you have friends from different cultural & ethnic backgrounds than yourself?
- Yes (93%) / No (4%)

43. Do you feel your life has a purpose?  
Yes (57%) / No (8%) / Sometimes (34%)
44. How do you live your life?  
a. One day at time (28%)  
b. Plan in advance (12%)  
c. A bit of both (58%)
45. What do you prefer doing during your spare time?  
a. Hanging out with friends (64%)  
b. Hanging out at home (10%)  
c. Participating in community-based programs and recreation (10%)  
d. Nothing (2%)  
e. Other (13%)
46. When was the last time you were in a community center?  
a) This week (79%)  
b) This month (6%)  
c) 3 months ago or more (10%)  
d) Never (3%)
47. How did you do on your last report card?  
a) Mostly A's and B's (33%)  
b) Mostly B's and C's (45%)  
c) Mostly C's and D's (16%)  
d) Mostly D's and lower (5%)
48. What sport/hobby/activity do you really excel at?  
\_\_\_\_\_
49. How do you make your pocket money?  
a) I get money from my parent(s) regularly (34%)  
b) I have a job and get money from my parents (28%)  
c) I have a job (26%)  
d) I don't usually have pocket money (10%)
50. If you regularly go to a community center, how do you feel you are treated by the staff working at the Front Desk?  
\_\_\_\_\_
51. Do you feel comfortable hanging out at community centers in Richmond?  
Yes (77%) / No (7%) / I never hang out at community centers (16%)
52. How many hours do you spend hanging out with friends during the week?  
a. 3 hours or more during the week (87%)  
b. Less than 3 hours during the week (10%)

c. None (1%)

53. How many hours per week do you spend doing homework?

- a) 3 hours or more during the week (37%)
- b) Less than 3 hours during the week (34%)
- c) None (28%)

54. Scenario: A guy you know offers you some marijuana for free- do you accept it?

- a) Yes, but I wouldn't smoke it (13%)
- b) Yes, and I would smoke it (34%)
- c) No, I don't use drugs (53%)

Fill the Void