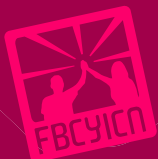


Power Pages

summer 05



this issue:
Independence
Sexual Health
Depression & Suicide
Summer's Diary
Your Submissions
Photos



fbcyicn.ca



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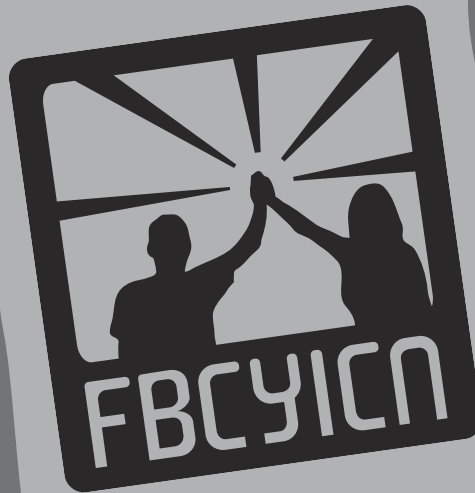
Special Thanx

The Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks currently receives its "core" funding from the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and would like to thank Jeremy Berland, Annette Harding and Clara Robbins of MCFD for their on-going support and encouragement.

Thanx also to all of the young people in and from care and supportive adults for your dedication to and participation in the Network and for making a positive difference in the lives of young people.

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The FBCYICN is a provincial, non-profit, youth-driven organization dedicated to improving the lives of youth in and from government care between the ages of 14 and 24.

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Federation of BC Youth In Care Networks

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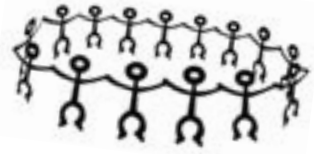
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Welcome to Power Pages The New Network Newsletter!

In the last NewsRag, we announced a contest for re-naming the provincial newsletter. In order to submit an entry, you also needed to submit something creative and original. We received a total of 11 entries. We sent an email out to all of our youth members and adult supports (who we had current email addresses for) asking you to vote on the name you like best.

And the results...

Power Pages was submitted by Don Connors who won \$100.00 for his entry:

"What the Network means to me is a family. A place where I can feel safe, not judged or feel left out in the cold with my unhappy feelings. The Network makes me feel good about myself and others around me. It gives me a ray of support to pick up, move on, and make being in care a better place for everyone. That's what it means to me - a home and a family I can trust and love."

Other submissions:

Network News

YIC Voice

Strength in Numbers

YIC Zine

Advocate Express

The Radical

YIC News

Power House

Express This YIC

YIC News World



Thank-you to everyone who took the time to vote!

Announcements

Steering Committee Meeting (SCM) #40

Well, it's about that time again – time to bring young people in and from care and supportive adults together for a fun and informative weekend! At this SCM, we will celebrate Halloween a little bit early with pumpkin carving, a costume party and a spooky mystery activity... we'll also throw in some team-building and leadership activities, consultations, workshops, outdoor activities, crafting and fun stuff!

Friday October 28th – Sunday October 30th, 2005
Zajac Ranch at Stave Lake, Mission
\$300.00

Fee Includes Travel from / to FBCYICN office in New Westminster to/from Zajac Ranch in Mission + shared accommodation + meals and snacks & all activities.

Subsidy Deadline: Friday September 30th, 2005 (4:30pm)
Registration Deadline: Friday October 14th, 2005 (4:30pm)

For more information, to apply for subsidy, or to register, please check-out www.fbcyicn.ca or call Colleen at our office at 1-800-565-8055.

We hope to see lots of you ghouls n' goblins there!



What's Going On?

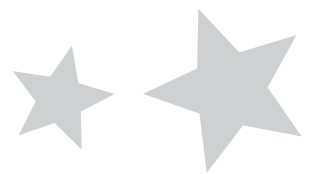
If you find yourself wondering “what’s going on out there?” then you’ve gotta check-out the Calendar of Events that we have on our website under “Be Informed.” The Calendar of Events lists all the up-coming FBCYICN events as well as other conferences, workshops, community events and deadlines from all over BC, Canada and beyond! If you know of an up-coming event in your community, please send whatever information you have to us at info@fbcyicn.ca so we can post it on the Calendar of Events for other people to check-out.



Congratulations!

On behalf of everyone in the Network, we would like to welcome Destiny into the world! Born on June 14th at about 2:15pm (and weighing 8lbs 12 ounces) to proud parents Arthur and Jolene!

We would also like to congratulate Jessica in Quesnel and Ayla in Kitimat for successfully graduating. Your hard work has finally paid off and paved your way to a better future!



Sexual Health

by Kayla Boudreau – Youth Project Staff



Now here is a topic I am sure almost all of you have heard of, SEX. Yes, this is all about sex and to get things rolling here are a few Canadian facts about sex:

- Over 42 000 young women between the ages of 15-19 become pregnant each year.
- In 2003, approximately 28% of 15-17 year olds had engaged in sexual intercourse at least once in their lives.
- Sex without condoms is more common in older individuals – 44% of 20-24 year olds, while only 22% of 15-17 year olds had sex without using a condom.

As mentioned, about 42,000 young women will become pregnant this year, and for many of these young women, this will result in either an abortion or single parenthood. Teen mothers often come from disadvantaged backgrounds. During the last 25 years there has been a decline in teen pregnancy. In the past, teen pregnancies ended in a live birth but in 1997 the most common outcome was to have an abortion.

Early sexual intercourse is becoming less and less rare by the day. About 12% of boys and 13% of girls have had intercourse between the ages of 14-15. Also about 3 in 10 young individuals, who had intercourse with numerous partners in the past year, did not use any sort of protection the last time they engaged in intercourse. Young men were more likely to have had multiple partners than young women.

As always, when you talk about sex you must also cover Sexually Transmitted Infections (which use to be called Sexually Transmitted Diseases or STD's). There are several infections one can get, but the most common STI's in Canada amongst young people are Chlamydia, Herpes, and rounding off the group is Gonorrhoea.

First we have Chlamydia, which is the most common STI amongst females between the ages of 15-19. Chlamydia is a curable STI which is caused by bacteria called Chlamydia Trachomatis. These bacteria live in vaginal fluid and in semen. This infection can be contracted in numerous ways including oral, vaginal and anal sexual activities with an infected partner. And if infected, a pregnant woman can pass the infection on to her newborn child resulting in an infection of the eyes or lungs. This STI can also cause a very painful, long-term condition called Pelvic Inflammatory Disease or PID and can even cause serious problems in both males and females becoming infertile.

Symptoms of this STI usually appear between 1-3 weeks after the fact. Those who have contracted the infection may experience abnormal discharge (mucus or pus) from the penis or vagina and also may feel pain when urinating. If left untreated, the infection may move into the body and infect the cervix, fallopian tubes and urine canal in women, which leads up to PID. In men, the bacteria can cause inflammation in reproductive area near the testicles called the Epididymitis. These bacteria can also cause inflammation in the anus and in the lining of the eye, commonly known as "pinkeye." It can also infect the throat resulting from oral sex.

The most reliable way to find out if you have been infected is to get lab tests done. This infection is easily confused with Gonorrhoea because the symptoms of the two are quite similar. Antibiotics are usually taken by mouth to treat the infection for one day if it is Azithromycin or 7 days if it is Doxycycline.

Next up is the STI known as Genital Herpes. Herpes are painful sores around the genitals. Herpes is spread by direct contact with open sores during sexual activity. Herpes, although not common, can be passed from mother to newborn and can be life-threatening to the baby. Once an individual has been infected with Herpes, outbreaks of the sores may appear again and again in the future.

[Herpes cannot be spread by toilet seats, bathtubs, hot tubs or swimming pools. There is no cure for Herpes but being medicated may make the sores less painful and also may shorten the outbreak.]

Symptoms of the infection may include either tingling or itching in the genital area within a week of having intercourse with an infected person. A cluster of tiny blisters will likely appear and then will burst and leave painful sores which will last between 2 and 3 weeks.

Finally, to end things off we have Gonorrhoea. Gonorrhoea is an STI caused by Neisseria Gonorrhoeae, a bacteria which easily grows and multiplies in warm, moist areas of the reproductive tract, including the cervix. Gonorrhoea is spread through contact with the penis, vagina, mouth or anus. Any sexually active individual can be infected by this specific bacteria.

continued on next page...



Symptoms which may appear to females include: a burning sensation when urinating, pain in the lower abdomen and possible fever and chills. In men; a burning sensation when urinating, pain or swelling in the testicles and discharge from the penis which may be thick and yellow-green in color. These symptoms may take as long as 30 days to appear.

If untreated, Gonorrhea can cause serious health problems for both sexes. Gonorrhea is a very common cause of PID in women and also causes something called Ectopic pregnancy in which the fertilized egg grows outside of the uterus, usually in a fallopian tube. In men, Gonorrhea may cause Epididymitis, which is a very painful condition of the testicles which if not treated can lead to infertility. If a woman is pregnant and gives birth to a child while infected, she may pass the infection to the infant which, in turn may cause blindness or even a life-threatening blood infection for the child. Gonorrhea is diagnosed in a laboratory and there are several antibiotics that can cure Gonorrhea. There are however, drug-resistant strains of the Gonorrhea bacteria popping up all over the world and also the infection is becoming harder and harder to cure because in most cases the individual will also have Chlamydia.

Now speaking of indulging in safer sex...

Hormonal Methods

Depo-Provera is an injection of a hormone (progesterone) that is injected into either the arm or buttocks. A woman gets an injection every 3 months to prevent pregnancy. The shot prevents the woman's body from releasing an egg each month, which prohibits the woman from becoming pregnant. The shot is 99% effective but does not prevent STI's.

Advantages:

- Women only need 4 shots a year
- Can be used by smokers, 35+ or women who breast feed

Disadvantages:

- Most women experience irregular periods
- Side effects include weight gain, mood changes and headaches
- For those who wish to become pregnant, they must wait 12 weeks after they have stopped getting shots for the hormone to leave the body

The "**Morning After Pill**" is not a regular birth control method. This emergency contraceptive pill can be used to prevent pregnancy after a barrier method, or any other safe sex method, was not used or did not work (eg. condom break). This method must be used within 72 hours (or 3 days) after the incident to be effective. Also, where a woman is in her menstrual cycle matters a lot as well; once an egg has implanted itself, pregnancy will not be terminated. This method is 95% effective but does not protect against STI's.

Advantages:

- Used after intercourse
- Easy to use
- Does not affect future fertility

Disadvantages:

- Depending where a woman lives, she may still need a prescription
- Most common side effect is nausea

The **Birth Control Pill** is a form of birth control that a woman takes daily which has a combination of the hormones estrogen and progesterone. There is also another pill called the "minipill" which just contains progesterone which prevents a woman from releasing an egg every month. The pill must be taken every day around the same time each day in order to be effective.

Advantages:

- Regulates a woman's period
- Reduces cramps
- Nothing needs to be done immediately before intercourse to prevent pregnancy

Disadvantages:

- Must remember to take it every day
- Side effects include nausea, tender breasts and moodiness
- Other medications may interfere with the pill's effectiveness

"I don't think there was ever a notion that went through my mind and said "you are ready." I think for males it is mostly about getting an erection though there are some males who are sensitive and have certain respect with virginity. And as a point of view, as far as a female all I think is that females are reserved because there is a respect involved and losing virginity can be more scary for most females as opposed to males."



The **male condom** is either latex or polyurethane which fits over the penis and prevents pregnancy and most STI's. A new condom must be used each time an individual engages in intercourse and when used properly, is about 98% effective which makes it one of the best forms of protection.

Advantages:

- Gives the greatest protection against STI's
- Easy to obtain

Disadvantages:

- Some people are allergic to latex
- May dull the sensation for either partner

The **female condom** is a non-prescription, pre-lubricated pouch that lines the walls of the vagina. It is made of polyurethane and also has a ring at each end. Once inserted, the ring covers the cervix. This method is used to stop the sperm from entering the uterus and can be even more effective if used with a spermicide. It can be inserted up to 6 hours prior to intercourse and a new condom must be used every time a person has intercourse.

Advantages:

- Easy to obtain
- Can be used by people with latex allergies
- Protects against many STI's

Disadvantages:

- May be hard to insert
- More expensive than male condoms
- May feel discomfort



Spermicides are chemicals that kill the sperm but should never be used alone. When used with other proper forms of contraceptive, spermicides can be 79% effective in killing sperm - but they *do not* protect against STI's.

Advantages:

- Minimal side effects

Disadvantages:

- Must be inserted immediately before intercourse



Barrier Methods

Now the simple way to ensure you do not become infected by any STI, or become or get someone pregnant, is to stay away from sexual intercourse altogether... but for the most part this may seem nearly impossible in this day and age. So the best thing to do is make sure you educate yourselves and ensure your partners are as well; participate only in monogamous relationships; and the most important of all, always practice safe sex.

Untitled: Our Time

By Stephan Jupenski

If days like today were to be today's best, then why should we be encouraged to make today, tomorrow and all that follows the next. We live in a world with rules and people who say, but if we do so they call them mistakes. Who decided what was right and what was wrong? So why should we listen? Why not make our own rules?

All that can be said is damn all those fools. I will walk and talk the way that I am and always stand firm and tall where ever I am. I am what makes this world so great and so are all of you so don't feel guilty by

their mistakes. This is our time to shine and this is where we live and for all of those that frowned down on us, "get yourself right before you are left in the dust." Remember this is our lives and this is the days of today and it's one world, our world, so play as a team.

This is for those who do their best to get by and for those who don't realize that this world is doomed unless we work as a team and learn to survive side by side.

Writing in a Loud Voice

By Winona Williams

Writing is a skill, a talent, a meaning in a form of a language. It's a way of getting ones point of view, ideas and stories to the world. It can cause wet eyes and happy smiles while gaining new insights.

There are many languages in the world. Some are fading while others are dominating. Some are barred beneath sands while others light up New York. It's a way of communicating to the world that goes back in time, our history. Only those who write will be remembered and those worthy of writing about, will be symbols under our sand. Writing is a voice of the past that talks to us today. It's an international voice no one bypasses. It speaks loud and clear while making a permanent mark.

When you write people have to read. Readers not only read, they listen. So when you write, write with a loud voice that speaks from your heart. Remember when you write, it becomes your voice and language that reaches the world and the hearts of others.



Jupe & Safe Sex

By Steve Jupe

I never saw myself ever being a parent growing up. I remember being a teenager and talking to people about how I always wanted children. I wanted to continue my family's lifeline but always thought that because of the ways I treated my body and not taking care of myself that chances of having a child was doubtful.

I remember one girl that I dated for about a year or so when I was sixteen wrote to me while I was in jail about how she just found out she was pregnant and that she was really scared and didn't quite know what to do. She was a year younger than me and was in school and had a family that, even though they were good people, would have no place for her or a baby in their home. Myself, I was in between group homes, treatment centres and jail and certainly wasn't doing anything with my life. But I remember when I got this letter from her and serving dead time and telling my roommate that I was going to be a father. We talked about what I would do to take care of this new family and I had no clue. This girlfriend of mine liked to party with her friends and did drugs and after a few months had passed, whether it was her lifestyle or just her body, she ended up miscarrying.

Afterwards, I was released from jail and I went back to spending time with my girlfriend. She was sad but also relieved. We knew that we were not able to care for a child and that we were also not responsible. After we got through being sad about a loss we weren't ready for, we started to think that it was our chance to do things right and be more responsible and start using methods of safe sex.

Over time I wasn't getting my act together and again went to jail and then was released to a treatment centre. We parted and it became just another chapter in my own book of life. A year later I met a girl. I was seventeen and was working on getting myself out of 'the system.' I had just gotten out of a housing shelter for youth; it was a place for last chances before you were out on your ass. During my stay there I met this girl who was a great person and very bright and we ended up getting together one night while we were living in this shelter home.

Two months had passed, I stopped working and started studying for my GED (grade twelve) and was living on independent living. It took me a long time to prove to people that it was worth taking a chance on me to give me an opportunity to get myself on track and get ahead. One morning during this time I received a phone call; she said to me "Steven I am pregnant." I told her that I was still in bed and would call her back when I woke up. I was real calm when I said this but when I tried to hit the pillow I couldn't sleep, all I could do was think "Holy ! What was I going to do?" I just got myself situated and was finally getting myself in the right direction; but I sucked it up and told myself that this was a good thing.

Thereafter, we started dating. I thought that if I was going to be a dad to a child that I needed to be a family man. She ended up getting into an independent living program herself for pregnant moms; unfortunately it was a different program than mine which made things very difficult. Our homes were blocks away from each other and it was

very easy for us to see each other and we were getting very close to each other, with our hearts as well. We started doing overnights, trying to keep things as real as we could get them. As time was going by, I found that I couldn't keep myself on track and I was jeopardizing everything that I had spent so much time working towards in the first place. But things had changed; I couldn't concentrate on going to school or coming home at night, I had to be with my girlfriend.

Five months into the pregnancy, I was cut off from child welfare as I wasn't doing what they wanted me to be doing. I was trying very hard to, but there were just too many distractions like hospital visits, work, studying and having a relationship that needed to be strong. I ended up moving in with her, which wasn't allowed, but we didn't care; we would have to learn to be careful but it was the best way for us at that time to be a family.

At seven months, my girlfriend's SIL worker caught on about what we were doing and said that we would have to move. We got into housing and we finally had our own home and our own things. We weren't on top, but finally we had what we wanted and that was to be a family together. My son was born on June 21st, 1999. He was eight pounds, ten ounces and we named him Chaysen Michael. The most exciting thing that ever happened in my life was having my son come into this world.

The thing now is that things changed and there were a lot of different struggles that happened and things eventually fell apart and me the girl that I ended up being with for three years went our own ways. Now we talk once in a while but when we talk, we talk about how our son is doing and what he enjoys and I am able to smile right after and say that is my son.

Never go and think that parenting is a piece of cake. I have met so many different young moms that have had to endure so much strain and even though almost all wouldn't take it back, they still wish they didn't have a child so young. Safe sex is so important!! If you are someone who practices safe sex, then you need to help get that message out and encourage your friends and your peers. And if you are one of those people who are unsure about safe sex, then you need to learn about it and ask questions.

Think of it like this... This statistic was done in 2001 and at that time there were 832,991 cases of HIV and AIDS in British Columbia alone, not including STD's. Imagine what those stats are now! It isn't about just one thing; it isn't about getting or not getting pregnant, about the sex that didn't infect you - it's about the other person who did get infected and those who had to sacrifice to take care of their child or even children. Be in control and have safe sex because chances are you will feel better about that decision later and if you don't believe me, go ask someone who is struggling because of a decision they didn't make. Safe Sex is the key so be safe and take care.



Dear Diary

Hi everyone, remember me? It's Summer John - from the Aboriginal Foster Doll Awareness Project! I just wanted to let everyone know how well things are going and how glad I am that the Network is working with the Federation of Aboriginal Foster Parents and the BC Federation of Foster Parent Associations on this cool project.

I have been super busy lately. I have participated in a bunch of special events - including a trip to Kamloops where me and some of the other dolls will be kind of camping out in a museum to raise awareness about Aboriginal young people and foster care. I have also been writing in my diary lots and have decided to share some more of my entries with you because lots of you have told me it makes you feel better to know that there are other kids out there who feel the same way as you. I hope all of you will enjoy my writing and I hope that you will take good care of yourselves. I'm really looking forward to seeing you all at the SCM in October!!!

All my relations,

Summer J.



You can read more of my diary and learn about the Aboriginal Foster Doll Awareness Project online at www.fafp.ca/fosterdoll.html

February 13th, 2005

Dear Diary,

It's really late - about 11:45pm I think and I'm just sitting here thinking about my mom and I really miss her. I went to a sweat earlier this afternoon with Brionne and at first I was really nervous because I had never been to one before. I was so scared that it was going to be too hot for me and that I would be rude if I had to leave. But Brionne told me I could leave any time if I got too hot or too scared and nobody would be mad at me. There were lots of people inside the little lodge and it was soooo hot. It was strange feeling inside too and I cried lots - I don't know why. At least I wasn't the only one, other people (all older than me) cried too. They sang some songs and we got breaks so we could go stand outside near the fire where they get the rocks hot. It was pretty cool and I'd like to try it again sometime but not for a while 'cause I felt all nasty from sweating so much.

I can't stop thinking about my mom. I'm really sad that she couldn't visit with me this week. I know it's because of her stooped boyfriend - he just doesn't want me to see her because he treats her like shit and doesn't want her to want me. I wish she would just take off on him and then her and I could go live together somewhere.

Sunday February 27th, 2005

Dear Diary,

Holy crap have I ever been busy over the past couple of weeks!!! I'm back at Nicole's house again and my room is exactly as I left it which is pretty cool that she didn't put away my stuff or anything. I even think she was looking forward to having me come back because she left a present for me on my bed - it is a pretty anklet that Martina made!

I've gone to a couple of interesting consultations with other native kids and some adults from the community because the Network is trying to develop a program for youth in care that will teach them aboriginal culture and stuff. I met some cool kids and I hope they will get involved with the Network too. I also got to go to the Harlem Globetrotters game with Brionne. It was sooo much fun - those guys are amazing tricksters who can do almost anything imaginable with a basketball!!! Nicole came a bit later because she had a meeting and after the game, we saw Brionne's sister and her kids - they are so cute!

The coolest thing though was the SCM this weekend. It was at a huge hotel in Richmond. I was really scared to go at first because I had heard all the kids at the Network talking about it so much and how many people are there and how they can't wait to hook up with their friends. I was nervous because I only know a few kids so far and I didn't know if other kids would like me very much. I was also scared because the NewsRag was coming out and I let the Network put in some of my other diary entries into it.

It was soooooo much fun though!!!! I met lots of cool kids and all of them have been in care like me. There were lots of older kids there and some younger ones too so I wasn't the youngest. I got to hang out ALL night on Friday in the hospitality suite. I made a bunch of funky magnets - I think I'll send some to my mom. I was really tired on Saturday and it was hard to stay awake and focused because some of the workshops were kind of boring. I didn't talk a lot during the consultations but I tried to listen to everything so I could learn about stuff like my rights and what services are out there. I also got to know some pretty cool adults too..

Meeting all of these cool old people makes me miss my mom a lot. I wish she could be more like some of these adults because they don't really get mad and freak out or anything - even when they are busy or pissed off, they talk to me like a person and ask me what I think about stuff. I don't know how to talk to my mom sometimes. Can't wait to see my mom this week and to give her the magnets I made for her and tell her all about all the stuff I've done!!!

March 5th, 2005

Dear Diary,

Mom cancelled AGAIN! I don't think she wants to see me anymore - I don't know if she even loves me anymore. I guess her boyfriend is more important than me - I HATE HIM! I chucked the magnets I made for her in the garbage. Nicole tried to make an excuse for her but I know she just doesn't want to see me so I just won't show up if she wants to make another appointment!

After dinner Nicole came to talk to me about my mom. She said my mom loves me she just gets sad when she sees me because she knows she can't take care of me. It shouldn't be hard for my mom to see me though if she loves me right? Nicole also suggested I write my mom a letter telling her how much I love her and how it makes me feel when she cancels our visits and doesn't keep her promises. Before she left my room, she put the magnets that I chucked out on my dresser. I don't know if I can tell my mom how I feel - I'll have to think about it..

March 10th, 2005

Dear Diary,

I volunteered all afternoon in the kitchen at the Friendship Centre while Brionne and David from the Network participated in a rights of passage ceremony. It was pretty cool being in the kitchen even though I got my favourite shirt all oily. I got to watch over the salmon on the grill and it smelled soooooo good. We cooked and put together plates for over 150 people!!! Then when the private parts of the ceremony were over, we all got to have the feast together in the gym. They even brought me up with the other kitchen helpers to thank us for the work we had done. I didn't want to go up in front of everyone at first because I'm too shy, but one of the other kitchen helpers made me come up with him and it was nice 'cause I got a blanket.

When I got home tonight, I started writing a letter to my mom. It's really hard to do though because I'm still mad at her. But I don't want to hurt her feelings - I'm afraid that if I tell her how I feel, she won't want to see me ever again. I don't know what to do. Maybe I will ask my counsellor next week.

March 22nd, 2005

Dear Diary,

Well, I finally wrote the letter for my mom but I don't know if I will be brave enough to give it to her this weekend when she comes to visit. I think I might just slip it in her purse or something when she's leaving so she won't see it until she gets home or something. I'm so nervous about seeing her but I'm a bit excited too. If it goes good, I'll probably give her the magnets. It's Spring Break right now and I'm glad to not be at school everyday. I've been working really hard lately and my tutor says I'm doing better. I finally picked which country I'm going to do my geography project on - New Zealand because I read about native people there called the Maori. They have some neat traditional dances that they do so I think I'm going to show my class one as part of my presentation.

March 27th, 2005

Dear Diary,

My mom HATES ME!!!! She never showed up for our visit yesterday. I don't understand why she doesn't love me anymore. What did I ever do to her? I wish I had just sent her that stoopid letter I wrote her 'cause maybe she would feel bad for always breaking her promises to me. I wish she would just stop saying she wants to visit me if she really doesn't!!!! I feel bad because I flipped out when Nicole told me my mom had to cancel again. I yelled at her and swore at her and told her not to make excuses for my mom because she's supposed to be here for me not for my mom. Then I went to my room and slammed the door and didn't come out again until after she had gone to bed. I guess I should tell her I'm sorry.

April 10th, 2005

Dear Diary,

DH MY GOD - I DON'T THINK I WILL EVER BE ABLE TO WALK AGAIN!!!!

We just got back from the 10 KM MS walk out in Maple Ridge and my feet and legs are soooooo sore right now that I can't even stand up. It was kinda fun though. We went all the way out to Maple Ridge and did the walk with Martina and her family. She is one of the hospitality staff and she just found out she has MS. That must be pretty scary for her but hopefully they will raise enough money to find a cure for it. After the walk, we went for lunch at this cool log cabin place and I had a humungous waffle that was soooo yummy! Time to lay on the couch in front of the tv - Nicole says she'll set up the foot spa for me too J

April 22nd, 2005

Dear Diary,

Today was my birthday - I'm 16 now and I wanna go get my driver's license as soon as possible but my worker hasn't called me back and I've left 3 messages already. The staff and some of the volunteers took me out for lunch on Wednesday to celebrate my birthday!

We went to IHDP because it's my favourite place near the office. I was super embarrassed when they sang happy birthday to me but it was ok anyway!

But Nicole and Brionne and Colleen all took me out to dinner and a movie for my birthday tonight! We went to a seafood place in Steveston called Shady Island. I have been trying lots of seafood since I moved out here and I had garlic shrimp and salad and a seafood hot pot for dinner which was really yummy. I think it was really expensive but they didn't tell me how much. After dinner, we got frozen yogurt up at the docks before going to see Sahara - with Matthew MacConahay (I got to pick the movie - he's a total hottie)! The movie was awesome and it was really funny.

I had such a good day with them but I'm really disappointed because my mom didn't even call me to wish me a happy birthday today. I'm really beginning to think she just doesn't want to have anything to do with me anymore. I don't know what I ever did to make her not love me. Now I wish I had sent her that letter after she cancelled the last time. I don't think I ever want to see her again if she can't even remember to call her own daughter on her birthday.

May 16th, 2005

Dear Diary,

I went to my second SCM this weekend and it was AWESOME!!! It was at this really nice camp place called Zajac but it was really far out in Mission and we had to go on a school bus down a gravel road to get there. We did lots of cool stuff all weekend and I talked a lot more this time about my opinions about stuff. I got to hang out with friends I met at the last SCM and even met some new friends too! We did some activities that made me really nervous at first but I participated because everyone else did too - even the adults. The activities ended up being really fun but we had to run around all over the camp finding stuff and doing stuff in teams - I was soooo tired I couldn't stay up late that night. I stayed up really late on Saturday night though and made pinyatas with Lacy and the other youth and then watched a real movie in the gym. I decided to watch the Incredibles which was pretty funny for a cartoon.

I also participated in Brionne's pipe ceremony in the tepee which was pretty cool. I'm not allowed to say what went on in there because it's supposed to be private for those people who were there, but it was very emotional. Some people were crying and sometimes we were all laughing too. I really like going to these ceremonies because it's ok for me to be sad or happy - whatever I'm feeling at the time is ok and good. And I never feel dumb because I can ask any questions and Brionne doesn't laugh at me he just tells me the answer if he knows it. I feel like it really helps me somehow but I can't really explain it.

I really like going to these conferences. I don't always get along with everyone but there's lots of other kids and cool adults that I do like so I just hang out with them. I'm also learning stuff that's important to my future - especially about rights and independent living and stuff. I hope I can keep coming to the Network when I get out of care in June because I will really miss everyone if I don't. I feel like people accept me for me when I'm there and I feel like people care about what I think and they treat me like I know some important stuff because of my experience in foster care. I wish I had found out about the Network sooner.

June 15th, 2005

Dear Diary,

I'm really sad about leaving Nicole's place and going to the delegated agency up in Kamloops. I don't really want to go on independent living yet 'cause I don't think I'm ready. I haven't really told anyone this though because they've all been helping me get ready for tomorrow. I'll give it a shot and see how things go and maybe if things don't work out, they'll let me go back to live with the folks from the Network???? I wish I knew what the future has in store for me 'cause I'm scared. Gotta go finish packing now.



"I wish every youth in care would discover their inner creativity and be proud of their accomplishments."



Depression & Suicide

By Kayla Boudreau – Youth Project Staff



Ok, here is a disorder that everyone, in some form or another, has felt in their lifetime. A time when things are not going the way an individual has hoped things would go, whether it has to do with school, work, job hunts, money situations, friends or family; there is always a moment where an individual will have a “low” feeling about themselves. If you have not guessed what I am talking about yet; I am talking about depression. No matter who you are, what you look like or living situation you experience, be it good or bad, depression will be felt at one time or another by any one individual.

No one is invincible to depression and this is a very well known fact. Everyone has been through a time when they have felt “low” about themselves, whether they had a friend or family member who passed away, lost a job or even when a persons favourite soccer player decided to be traded for the simple fact that it paid a few more million then his current team was willing to pay. Anyways moving on, the point I am simply trying to make is that everyone at one time or another will experience times of depression.

Here are some facts about depression which is important for all individuals to be aware of:

- People of all ages, backgrounds and lifestyles suffer from major depression
- About 20% of all people experience some symptoms of depression
- The first onset of major depression occurs between the ages of 25-29
- Women will experience some sort of depression twice as often as males

This last statement mainly has to do with hormones associated with the menstrual cycle and pregnancy which males do not have the marvelous ability to experience. So what exactly is depression and how can someone as yourself help out an individual in a depressive or suicidal state of mind, well I will tell you!

Depression is a disorder which involves an individual's body, mood and thoughts. An individual who suffers from depression will have all aspects of their life affected by this illness. The way one eats, sleeps and how they think are affected along with everything else an individual part takes in. Depression is one of the most common disorders and about 1 in 4 Canadians have some degree of depression.

There are 3 major types of depression: *Major depressive disorder*, *Dysthymia* and *Bipolar Disorder*.

Major Depressive Disorder comes with the feelings of constant sadness and hopelessness; also feelings of guilt and that no one loves them. They also feel like punishing themselves or even killing themselves. This disorder usually goes away in a couple of months with proper treatment.

Dysthymia, otherwise known as *Depressive Neurosis*, lasts for years at a time and the individual will usually suffer for years before they are cured.

Bipolar disorder, which used to be called manic depressive illness, involves both ups and downs in mood. They also feel little need for sleep and increased sexual and physical activity and many feel almost as if they were invincible and will overlook any possibility of harm. About 1 in 10 people suffer from manic episodes.

Some individuals who suffer from depression will also suffer from suicidal tendencies as well (approximately 15%). Most individuals have several reasons for thinking and attempting suicide and in most cases do not even want to die in the first place. They just want all the pain and suffering to come to an end. Also there has been evidence to show that after an individual is prevented from committing suicide, they feel thankful afterwards. Sudden changes in behaviour and attitude are some signs which may indicate there could be a problem.

A person who is contemplating suicide may start to take more risks, start giving away prized possessions, complain about being “rotten inside,” all of a sudden be happy and joyful immediately after a period of depression and they may also give some verbal hints such as: “nothing matters” and “ I won’t be a problem much longer.” Some exceptionally interesting facts about suicide are as follows:

- In the last 45 years suicide rates have increased 60% worldwide
- Suicide is now among the 3 leading cause of death among those aged 15-44 (both sexes)

“Everyone I know is depressed sometimes or another...”

The Network can help by... “Addressing the variety of different levels of mental health and having support groups for young people dealing with these problems. And maybe having a Counsellor on board so young people have someone they can talk to.”

“The Network can be the ones that are there for the kids...”

continued on next page...

Apparently, suicide has claimed almost 300 lives in Canada over the past 15 years. Sources say of those deaths, 21 were of youth in care. That's approximately 14%. Hanging was the most common method followed by firearms.

Many signs and symptoms are quite similar to those of depression such as the following:

- Violent actions and behaviour
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Neglect of personal appearance

Since depression is a big contributor to suicide, the key is to deal with depression before it gets the best of an individual. There are 3 types of treatments which will differ according to the individual's condition:

The first one is *drug therapy*. These 'anti-depressants' will correct the chemical imbalances in the brain which produce some forms of depression. Also, mood stabilizers are used to help in preventing depression from returning to an individual. Both of these drugs work slowly and may produce some side effects such as dry mouth, headaches and nausea.

The second type of therapy is *Electro-Convulsive Therapy* (also known as shock therapy) which is used to relieve severe depression. This type of therapy makes individuals feel and act less depressed and side effects from this includes disorientation and headaches directly after treatment.

The final therapy is *Psychotherapy* or "talk therapy" and this simply means to just talk out the problems and this has the ability to help with any form of depression. There are many places that one can go to or check out for help such as: family doctors, mental health centers, hospitals, health specialists and even family and friends when appropriate.

It is important to take people who are depressed or who make suicidal comments seriously. Some things individuals can do to help others dealing with depression or suicidal tendencies are to; let them know you are worried about them and encourage them to get help. Say simple phrases like "I love you" or "I might not fully understand what you feel right now, but I support you" and "you are not alone in this." It is also important that you don't try to help this person all on your own – tell someone you trust (a parent / caregiver, a worker or even a teacher) what's going on so they can help too.

Networking (1)

By Sarah Watson

The rain is streaming down my face
Or is it tears I've cried
Longing or waiting for the moment I die
I live with despair
It isn't fair in the darkness in this world
I live in the shadows with my pain

'Til the sun shone down and I saw the right way
My tears dried up
I still feel the pain
But now there's help
There's hope for me yet
So I got up and found friends
With all the other children in the shade
Now I don't feel so alone



Networking (2)

By Sarah Watson

Once I lived isolated and alone
Holding up the world on my shoulders
Buckling under the weight
I lived my life
'Til one day I stumbled under the burden of
grief I carried

And reached out for help
Through chance and luck
I found someone to help me
Because one person can't do it on their own
We all need a little help sometimes
So like a spider's web I connected myself from
person to person

And resource to resource
Connecting, networking
Alone I buckled under the weight
But together
We can make the difference
I wish to make



Crystal Meth: My Friend? Not!

Being a young teenager and in the Narcotics Anonymous program was difficult. I first got introduced to the program when I was 15 years old and I was only staying clean for my stepparents. Later on I realized that I couldn't stay clean unless I was doing it for myself. So, eventually I had 111 days clean, my longest. I was dating this guy named Brandon and he was also in the program. Brandon ended up relapsing four days before I did. I had tried Crystal Meth once before but on June 2nd I started using Crystal Meth heavily.

I left with Brandon on June 1st and ended up in East Vancouver. Brandon was working the streets as a sex trade worker and we used everyday and all night. I was gone away from home; left my friends and family, and got hooked onto Crystal Meth and I didn't care about anyone or anything except for my dope and boyfriend. Brandon and I slept in a park or under a bridge or if we were lucky, we got a hotel. We didn't sleep in the hotel, it was just a place to shower, do laundry and have a warm place to do drugs.

When I actually did miss my friends and family and when I did want to come home, I couldn't and didn't. Why you might ask yourself? Because I felt trapped down there and that was the most scariest feeling that I had ever felt; being 16 years old and living on the streets.

On June 10th I called my Social Worker and got my older sister's phone number. I called her even though the last time her and I were together, we were on bad terms. She extended her caring arms to me and picked me up from the New Westminster skytrain, brought me to her boyfriend's house and she talked a lot of sense into me.

I've decided that drugs and living on the streets is not the way to go. Detoxing is the most painful experience that I've had to go through and I don't plan on going through it again. I've been detoxing from June 10th to June 16th and I've still got another week.

What I learnt from this is that family and friends will be there for life - drugs will not. Drugs are the worst friend that you could ever have; it will eventually kill you but your true friends and family won't! I still pray for Brandon to get healthy and to stay clean. I just want to say thank-you for my friends and family that have stuck by my side.

Thank you and I love you Mona, Dennis, Winona and Brandon.

All my relations...

Rose

The Perfect Meaning

By Winona Williams

Some people say we live in a perfect world. Well if perfect means having no faults or weaknesses, exact, correct and complete in all respects; then I should improve as much as possible to perfect my perfection.

In a perfect world there is a happy ending that's wrapped up for us, that gives us the feeling of happiness with the world around us. In a perfect world there is no need for a deep sense of regret for having done something wrong and the word remorse does not exist in a perfect dictionary. In a perfect world success is an everyday achievement and no one loses.

In this perfect world I do not belong.

An imperfect world does not always end happy and Cinderella is not real. Perfect people always try to justify what went wrong just to make things justifiable. Imperfect people know justification can mislead and justice will not always be served. In our imperfect dictionary the meaning for sorry is remorse. Accepting our mistakes can be an everyday thing.

Success is a fight, a battle that we endeavor. Sometimes we fall short of our conquest. I live in imperfection and in that world I know I have faults and weaknesses. I'm not always correct or exact and I always strive. Whatever is it I try to do, I try to do with all perfection, but it doesn't always work out that way. That's when I learn something really important about life.

Guidance

By Sarah Watson

Watching the world pass me by
Tripping and falling
As the world dances by
Standing in the sidelines
Because nobody has ever taught me the dance of life
I don't know the steps to take
I don't know where my feet should go
Until somebody took the time to show me how
And to tell me I could do it
I've never walked this path before
I don't always comprehend where my feet are taking me
But now I'm not afraid to slip
Because somebody's guiding me

The Wisdom of Love

By Winona Williams

A quick-witted mind reflects the passionate, eloquent gaze of ones perception. The eyes that attract can read your mind without hesitation. The erotic, yet pitiful attraction brings the essence of love to the air. A love so pure, so fresh, the world begins to blossom. It's no longer you in this world. It becomes you and the world around you. Lovers can look each other in the eyes and see the purity in ones heart, one's desires and one's hopes.

The power of love becomes the power of the world. A power so great it evolves. It brings new eyes to this world, to see lovers true meaning. The passionate gaze can tell the world how much you love but the soul of love is the soul of a new life. This soul carries your love for another lifetime and gets passed to another generation.

Love never dies when love is true and the wisdom of love is to know you're loved.



Independence

By Kayla Boudreau – Youth Project Staff

For most individuals, hitting the big 1 – 9 is a huge and exciting day. The birthday which makes us British Columbian's officially 'legal age' Woo-hoo! It is a time to cut loose and enjoy some things we never were able to do as minors. But for youth in care, we have a different perspective of this "big day." Like everyone else, we as youth in care are usually happy about reaching this day because now we are officially adults.

However, we have something to worry that many other individuals who happen to live with their "biological parents" do not have to worry about... Aging out and being kicked out of 'the system' and pretty much forgotten about by our so-called 'governmental parents.' For some individuals, they have been able to make a happy home with foster homes and to all of a sudden be told they have to leave because government will no longer be paying your way anymore is complete nonsense. Now what really gets me going is that everyone knows in the last decade it is not uncommon for a young person to stay living with their parents until around the age of 24 - 26.

On the other hand, individuals who are "parented" by the government still have to be out by the age of 19. This dumbfounds me and it needs to be sorted out. I know lots of individuals who were of age and given the boot and now it is a struggle day-to-day trying to make ends meet. Just because we as youth grew up, and in many cases still are growing up in care, we are somehow different then those other youth that always lived at home with mommy and daddy. We are no different then those other youth, yet we are expected to leave without making a scene or problem and usually have very little help and in many cases no help whatsoever.

See for me, I was placed on independent living with very short notice. I was 6 months away from turning 19 so I was learning how to cook and how to budget my money. All of a sudden I was kicked out of my foster home and then all the help I was receiving was halted to a stop. I had one month to find a place to live. I was given \$500 to help buy all my furniture and other household items. Thankfully, I had all the kitchen stuff or I would have been in trouble.

I had to go out on my own to find an apartment and deal with the fact I had very little idea how it was going to be on my own. I also had to try to stay focused and finish grade twelve. It was a very hard month but I did it. I have one very important tip for any individual who is or will be on independent living...

Before your time is up and you age out, make sure you do your best to get a job. I aged out and ended up on welfare and it was the hardest 1 ½ years of my life. There was never enough money to eat or have any sort of entertainment. And if you decide to have any kind of fun, be prepared to miss out on a few meals along the way. There were days when I had no food in the house and was told by my worker to get used to it and that I had better make arrangements with my friends and family to feed me. I like to think of myself as very independent and to be told to basically beg my friends and family for food in order to survive made me feel like a piece of garbage. To go from independent living which is \$680 or so to \$510 on welfare is a ridiculous and strenuous transition.

The scariest / most challenging thing about becoming independent is... "Losing all your support. Also, feelings like you are alone."

There are several things which could make a youth's transition onto independent living much easier:

Make sure the youth is physically capable of caring for them self. Find out what the youth needs and wants for help and what they want to do in the future. And it is extremely important to make sure the youth has identification (eg. Social Insurance Number and BCID) before they age out of care.

And another thing, youth need access to various services that will help them resolve any issues they may have because in a lot of cases, youth in care do not have any type of support system. The law states that an individual may live independently after the age of 16 and not any sooner. There are many things youth should be aware and accepting of in order for their quest to independence to be a successful one.

To go on independent living YIC should be... "18 because any younger it would be hard to learn how to budget and keep to the budget. Also, to make sure the youth is doing what they need to do and is emotionally and physically ready to take on such a high responsibility."

For starters, you need to be able to find a place to live and here are some of the best ways to go about your housing search:

- Ask all the people you know... someone always knows something
- Check out adds in the paper
- Look for bulletin boards around the area (grocery stores, malls and schools)
- Internet searches are always a good idea

continued on next page...

Now while you are looking for a place to call home and meeting with possible landlords, here are some important tips which will help you find the most suitable residence:

- If you do not like the landlord when you first meet, more than likely you will have problems with this person, hence, you should not rent from them
- Once you have decided on a home, always get receipts so you do not get screwed for anything
- Never agree to move into a place you have not seen
- Ask questions and double check the place to make sure it is ok
- Only under certain circumstances can a landlord enter your home (emergency situations, you say it is ok, or your landlord gives you 24-30 hours notice)
- Always consider the consequences before breaking the lease

Another super important skill any individual living on independent living should possess is the ability to budget and shop. From what they spend on bills to what they spend on recreation, in the end it pays to budget. Always make sure to pay your bills before anything else, good credit pays in the end.

- When grocery shopping, never shop when hungry
- Make a list and stick to it, get what you need and try to avoid wants
- Coupons are a good thing and no-name products are not the end of the world
- Also try to save a few bucks for emergencies
- Isle shopping is a very, very bad idea!



Baked Chicken Parmesan



- 4 boneless skinless chicken breasts or equivalent chicken tenders
- 1/4 cup melted butter
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder (or probably a couple of minced garlic cloves)
- 1 Tbs Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1/3 cup bread crumbs
- 1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/8 cup dried parsley

Mix together the butter, garlic powder, Dijon, and Worcestershire in a dish. Mix the bread crumbs, Parmesan, and parsley together in another. Dip the chicken in the butter, then in the bread crumbs, then place in a buttered or greased 9x9 or so pan. Bake at 350 for 50-60 minutes, until done through.

Pasta with Fresh Tomatoes, Basil and Onions



- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 2 pounds tomatoes, chopped
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 pound mozzarella, cubed
- basil to taste, chopped (start with 3/4 cup or so)
- salt to taste
- 1 pound fettuccini, sea shell, or other pasta

Put the olive oil, tomatoes, onion, mozzarella, basil, and salt in a bowl and mix together. Let stand at room temperature an hour or so. Cook the pasta and drain, then stir into the tomato mixture. Variation: Use cheddar cheese instead of mozzarella. Add some chopped parsley and crushed red pepper. Omit the pasta, cut down on the cheese, and serve it as a tomato salad on the side!

Sources & Resources

Sexual Health

www.sexualityandu.ca/eng/teachers/YSH/pregnancy.cfm
www.statcan.ca/english/kits/pregs.htm
www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheets/stdclam.htm
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/std-mts/sti_k.html
www.cdc.gov/std/Gonorrhea/stdfact-gonorrhea.htm
www.cbca.ab.ca

What You Need To Know About STI's
Health Canada

Preventing Pregnancy
Vancouver / Richmond Health Board

Options for Sexual Health www.optionsforsexualhealth.org
Youth Co AIDS Society www.youthco.org
Canadian Health Network www.canadian-health-network.ca
Sex Etc www.sxetc.org
Planet A Head www.planetahead.ca

Mental Health

www.clinical-depression.co.uk/Depression_Information/teen.htm
www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/mental/depression.html
www.nlm.nih.gov/publicat/depression.cfm
www.services.unimelb.edu.au/counsel/issues/Depression/signs.html
www.forces.gc.ca/health/information/health_promotion/engraph/suicide_e.asp
www.familymentalhealth.com/suicide.htm
www.befrienders.org/suicide/statistics.htm
www.hlth.gov.bc.ca

Kids Help Phone

1-800-668-6868

Psychosis Sucks

www.psychosissucks.ca

Pacific Community Resources Society www.pcrs.ca

Hollyburn Family Services www.hollyburn.ca

Just for Youth www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/for_you/youth.htm

BC Health Guide www.bchealthguide.org

Local Hospitals or Clinics (*check your Yellow Pages*)

Independence

www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/child_protection/guardianship/protection_practice_manuals/ps39.html
www.fsgv.ca/programpages/youthservices/programsforindependence.html
www.cheapcooking.com www.auntleahs.org
www.stleo.ca www.pathinc.org
Tenant Survival Guide: Your Legal Rights (2004)



We hope you've enjoyed this edition of Power Pages – the new Network newsletter. Thanks to everyone who submitted something because that's what it's all about – YOU and YOUR voice and creativity! We hope that Power Pages will grow and become even more fun and informative but we need your help to get there...

Please submit your artwork or writing – you can submit a story about an experience, an article or letter about your needs, issues and ideas, drawings, photos – anything to help people understand what life is like for you and other young people in and from care (the good, the bad, the ugly, and the hopes for the future). The more submissions you send us – the better the next edition of Power Pages will be!

For more information about submission deadlines or previous newsletters, please check-out www.fbcyicn.ca or contact our office at 1-800-565-8055.

Now go and submit something!!!

Point us in the right direction
Do not run that way
And expect us to follow
Remember it is best
To let us learn
From our own mistakes
As you have learned from yours
Do not stand in front of us
For our protection
Instead, stand beside us
And whisper your wisdom
In our ears
Let us lead the way
For the future is not for you
The future is ours
To live...

Written by a former youth in care

By coming together,
we are not alone!

