Northern Youth Abroad: Evaluating The Canadian Placement Program

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Nurturing Capacity
Founding Sponsor
Preface

Nurturing Capacity: Building Community Success

Indspire’s K-12 Institute is focused on dramatically increasing high school completion rates among Indigenous students by building strong foundations in their K-12 education. Through various programs, resources, and events, the Institute fosters collaboration between educators, communities, and others to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students.

Indspire conducts research to identify and document educational best practices from across Canada and shares these successful practices through the Indspire’s K-12 Institute. Indspire also champions Indigenous approaches to education, those that honour Indigenous culture, values, and worldviews.

Project Abstract

The Northern Youth Abroad Canadian Placement program is a work placement program that seeks to provide northern youth with work experiences in southern Canada. Research shows that the Inuit youth population is growing however, they are less likely to graduate from high school and are underrepresented in post-secondary institutions and the labour force. Therefore, implementing work or study aboard programs provides youth with opportunities to travel, gain critical skills, learn the necessity of education, and to value their culture. This review provides an in-depth analysis of qualitative and quantitative data demonstrating a strong correlation between this program and the success in high school. Issues covered include possible long-term impacts and next steps to ensure further success for this program and Inuit youth.

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Executive Summary

In 1998, the Northern Youth Abroad Program (NYA) began in the area now known as Nunavut as a way to engage local northern youth (from 15 to 22 years of age). The initiative sought to provide northern youth with travel, work, and leadership opportunities in southern Canadian communities. Today the initiative has grown to include youth from Nunavut and the Northwest Territories and offers both international and Canadian placements. The program aspires to provide northern youth with an experience that might otherwise be unavailable due to barriers (both geographical and socio-economic) and has been successful in helping hundreds of northern youth achieve success.

The NYA Canadian Placement Program aspires to have a positive impact in the areas of:
- Cross-cultural learning;
- Volunteerism and job training;
- High school credit attainment;
- Leadership and community development; and
- Self-confidence and self-esteem.

By offering northern youth opportunities to temporarily live and work in southern Canada, this program alters northern youths’ perceptions of themselves, their communities, and the county as a whole. They learn to integrate their own culture and way of life with other cultures and communities in meaningful ways through work and study.

The following evaluation assesses the effectiveness of the Canadian Placement Program in creating a positive impact in the areas mentioned above, as well as the overall view of the program from the perspective of the administration and board of directors, as well as current youth participating in the Canadian Placement Program.

This report provides an overview of this program and includes a logic model that demonstrates the project flow and processes. In addition, both qualitative and quantitative data sets prove that the Canadian Placement Program has been very successful in achieving its short-term and intermediate goals and is poised to achieve its long-term goals in the near future. In terms of the perceptions of the program, the evidence overwhelmingly supports it, and all participants included in this evaluation greatly value the program and organization.

Finally, accomplishments, limitations, and next steps are outlined to assist the evaluator and NYA in moving in a direction that will allow the Canadian Placement Program, and possible other initiatives, to grow and thrive.
Project Title: Northern Youth Abroad: The Canadian Placement Program

Guiding Principles & Educational Practices
Northern Youth Abroad, including the creation of the Canadian Placement Program, is based on the following Indspire principles:

Principle 5: Learning is viewed as lifelong, holistic, and experiential, which is rooted in language and culture, is place-based, spiritually oriented, communal and open to multiple ways of knowing the world.

Principle 6: Programs, schools and systems are responsive to both the aspirations and needs of Indigenous peoples.

Principle 7: Recognizing the legacy of the colonial histories of Indigenous peoples, education is also a process of decolonization, which seeks to strengthen, enhance and embrace Indigenous Knowledge and experience through various strategies including but not limited to anti-racist, anti-oppressive pedagogies and Indigenous pedagogies.  

Best Practices in Youth Engagement: Working and Living Abroad

The vast majority of the NYA youth participants from Nunavut are Inuit and the majority of participants from the N.W.T. are First Nation (mainly Dene) with some being Inuvialuit or Métis. According to the 2006 Census, the Inuit and First Nations populations in Canada are young and growing. The population of Inuit youth increased 26% between 1996 and 2006, a rate three times faster than the non-Indigenous population (Ministry of Industry, 2008). Furthermore, Inuit children accounted for 40% of the total Inuit population (Ministry of Industry, 2008). Across all of Canada, and in particular in the north, children and youth from Aboriginal communities are grappling with the socio-historical-cultural impacts of Canada’s colonial past and present (Moore, Tulk, & Mitchell, 2005). The high suicide rates among First Nations and Inuit youth, which in some areas is thirteen times higher than the rest of Canada, are among one of the most devastating examples of these impacts. Research has closely linked suicide rates among Inuit youth with social determinants of health including geographical isolation, family breakdown, childhood trauma, and a loss of cultural connection (Hicks, 2007).

According to researchers Alfred, Pitawanakwat, and Price (2007), “the colonial foundation of Canada’s relationship to Indigenous peoples is acutely felt; youth in all settings are struggling to articulate awareness of the structure of injustice” (pg. 13). The youth of the north need opportunities to learn strong leadership skills including communication skills in order to engage in their communities to learn, live, and thrive. Moreover, youth need opportunities to use these skills in real-world contexts that are authentic and relevant. If we want to see a change in Inuit youth engagement, not only in their own communities, but also in Canada as a whole, there must be an increase in programming that speaks directly to them.

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There are several factors required in order to effectively engage Inuit youth through programming. Research into youth-based wellness and empowerment camps in northern Canada yielded many best practices. First, programs and organizations need to be strengths-based and promote feelings of self-worth among youth. Second, they need to focus on improving self-esteem and acquiring new skills. Finally, they need to involve the community, focus on mentorship, incorporate fun relevant activities, and include goal-setting practices (Noah, 2007). Moreover, effective programs must include a practice of reciprocal exchanges, wherein “the more I learn about you and your culture, the more I will learn about myself and my culture” (Hewitt, 2011).

In 1998, Northern Youth Abroad (NYA) implemented the Canadian Placement Program in an effort to engage northern youth successfully (measured by high school graduation, volunteerism and leadership efforts, and ultimately reflected in post-secondary graduation rates). While most youth in the north have the option to travel and work within or beyond their home territory, most do not. In fact, the youth in the north are less likely to finish high school or attend post-secondary institutions and Inuit adults are underrepresented in the labour force. The decrease in academic and career pursuits is often hindered by geographical and cultural distances that prevent northern youth from achieving success (Abele & Delic, 2014). According to recent national statistics, the current graduation rate in the North West Territories is 55% and 35% in Nunavut. NYA aspires to have a positive impact on these rates and bring them closer to the national average of 78% (Statistics Canada, 2013).

Connecting Indspire Principles & The Canadian Placement Program
This program speaks to the three Indspire guiding principles highlighted above. It recognizes that “learning is viewed a lifelong, holistic, and experiential, which is rooted in language and culture, is place-based, spiritually oriented, communal and open to multiple ways of knowing the world.” For this reason, NYA seeks to create an opportunity for youth where they are able to learn through an experiential, dynamic, and holistic experience. All aspects of the youths’ lives are expected to be challenged and impacted. It is a work placement, but it is also a largely personal journey that for many is transformative, spiritual, and has life-long impacts.

In terms of ensuring that “programs, schools and systems are responsive to both the aspirations and needs of Indigenous peoples,” the program operates as on a strengths-based, youth-centred model that is not based on youth identifying personal deficits, problematic family dynamics, or negative community aspects. Rather the youth identify their personality strengths, personal needs and passions, and the program seeks to find the best possible opportunities for youth beyond their northern experience. In this case it is about finding best possible fits rather than fixes.

NYA also “recognizes the legacy of the colonial histories of Indigenous peoples, education and that there must be process of decolonization, which seeks to strengthen, enhance and embrace Indigenous Knowledge and experience through various strategies including but not limited to anti-racist, anti-oppressive pedagogies and Indigenous pedagogies.” It is for this reason that NYA allows the youth multiple hands-on learning experiences that are designed to educate, inspire,
and foster a greater sense of self. Cultural aspects are not separated from the learning experiences. Youth are encouraged to explore and express their own culture while learning and appreciating other cultures. Indigenous ways of knowing and learning are encouraged through the assignments given, during Orientation and Re-Orientation, and throughout the placement. Youth are encouraged to consider what makes them unique but also what connects to them to one another as Indigenous northern peoples.

**Context**

**Project Background**

Northern Youth Abroad, as a non-profit organization, was created to address the need for northern youth to travel, live, and work abroad. The program began in 1998 and accepted a total of 20 applications from the youth in the Nunavut area. It was able to accept ten of those youth and offer them placements to live and work in southern Canadian communities. In 2005, the program expanded the Northwest Territories (NT) and in 2014, it accepted 220 applications and was able to place 50 youth across the country and abroad. Currently, there are four full-time staff, several part-time staff, a board of directors, a strong alumni presence, and hundreds of volunteers and mentors, all of whom have made the organization stronger and prepared to meet the needs of northern youth.

NYA seeks to strengthen youth leadership, individual career goals, cross-cultural awareness, and international citizenship amongst youth from Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. As an organization, they seek to enable youth to become full participants in on-going development in the north. By investing in youth and providing them with hands-on learning and career opportunities coupled with exposure outside of the north, they are hoping the youth will return and invest in their own communities as leaders.

Currently, NYA runs are two programs annually:
- The Canadian Placement Program
- The International Placement Program

They also offer alumni supports for youth who have already graduated from the program as well as volunteer, career, and mentorship opportunities for alumni and young adults living in the north. They also have several partnerships with local businesses, schools, and organizations that are also interested in investing in youth.

**Objective of the Project**

NYA identified several objectives of the project that would eventually guide them in developing a comprehensive and cohesive project plan (as evidenced in the Logic Model). The following objectives were:
- Provide a cross-cultural learning experience;
- Increase volunteerism;
- High school credit attainment;
- Career exploration;
Northern Youth Abroad

- Job training;
- Leadership;
- Self-confidence;
- Self-esteem; and
- Community development.

Furthermore, NYA noted the following benefits:

- 150-175 hands-on work experience;
- 9 high school credits attained;
- First Aid training;
- Increase in confidence;
- Public speaking training;
- Exposure to a new culture; and
- Ability to share culture.

**Scope of the Project**

Northern Youth Abroad’s mandate is:

> “to foster leadership, cross-cultural awareness, individual career goals, and international citizenship in the youth of the north. The program promotes success in education by providing life-changing experiences through volunteer work and travel.”

**The Canadian Placement Program**

Over the years, the Canadian Placement program has developed into a well-organized, comprehensive, youth-based initiative that empowers youth through a work-based travel experience. The work placement portion of the program takes place annually in the summer, however preparations begin in October as applications are reviewed and youth are selected to participate in the program. Once all successful applicants are registered in the program, they are paired up with a mentor in their community. A mentor is someone who has previously completed the program (an alumni) or is any supportive adult living in the participant’s home community. As such, mentors can best help the participant prepare for their work-placement in the south. This mentorship aspect of the program serves a dual function, as it prepares the newest generation of youth, but also helps in keeping alumni engaged and provides them with meaningful leadership opportunities.

During late fall and throughout the winter and spring, the youth are given as series of assignments that build cross-cultural awareness, leadership skills, and self-confidence. These assignments also continue throughout the placement and during the debriefing period (in late August). The students are also interviewed and asked to fill out a Pre-Placement Survey to best gauge their values, individual career goals, confidence, and other personality characteristics that assist the NYA staff in making the best possible placement available to the youth. Through this portion of the program (coupled with the work experience) youth are able to gain 9 high school credits, which allows them to stay on track with their education and career goals.
At the end of June, all of the youth selected then travel to Ottawa for an orientation. This orientation is set up as a youth camp and for many of the youth it is their first experience travelling outside of northern Canada. The orientation serves to prepare the youth by allowing them to: form relationships with the NYA staff and one another; learn leadership and self-confidence skills through games and hands-on learning; travel to an urban centre; and focus on their short and long term education and career goals. Following orientation, the students return home better prepared for their summer placement abroad.

In July, the students then travel to a southern city where they will live with a buddy (another NYA youth enrolled in the program) and a host family. The host families come from a range of backgrounds and family situations and may or may not have children. The youth also begin their work placement in a field that best fits their individual career goals and personality. The work experience is done on a volunteer basis and each youth puts in 175 hours of time over the course of the summer. There is an expectation that the host family will provide the youth with opportunities to engage in community and/or cultural events in the community (i.e. festivals, celebrations, parades, etc.) in order to experience more than the environment their work placement offers. The youth are also given some money and downtime to enjoy sports and recreational activities such as swimming or going to the movies.

Throughout the program, the youth, their host families, and their employers are in constant contact with NYA staff. This allows for all parties involved to stay connected, feel supported, resolve any conflicts or concerns, and ensure the youth are having the best possible learning experience. The youth are also encouraged to stay connected with their own families to prevent homesickness and provide additional supports and guidance.

In late August, following the completion of the placement program, all youth return to Ottawa for a “Re-Orientation” or debriefing session. The same camp-style structure is used and the youth focus on bonding, debriefing, reflecting, celebrating and documenting their experience. The youth also complete a Post-Placement Survey (similar to the Pre-Placement Survey) that includes a written reflection, as well as a self-evaluation and career survey. This portion of the program is essential to ensure the youth return to the north with enough momentum to continue learning, working, and leading in their home community. NYA also provides opportunities for the youth to become involved after their placements. They are able to become mentors and facilitators to assist the next generation of youth and participate in several alumni programs and initiatives (including serving on the board of directors).

Data Collection & Analysis

Logic Model

A logic model has been created to demonstrate the inputs, outputs, outcomes, and time frame of the Canadian Placement Program. This model has been instrumental in designing and driving the program and evaluating its impact. It provides a visual of nearly all aspects of the project as well as its goals.
Quantitative Data Review

Since its inception, NYA administrators have been collecting quantitative data on the Canadian Placement Program. This includes data that would normally be collected (i.e. demographics) as well as data that pertains to the effectiveness of and attitudes towards the Canadian Placement Program (i.e. pre and post-placement surveys). A presentation and analysis of the most relevant data has been included in this report in order to draw useful conclusions, and generate possible next steps.

Qualitative Data Review

As part of the formal evaluation process, in-person interviews were conducted by Infinity Consulting during the evaluation period (August, 2015). NYA personnel (including administrators, board members, mentors, and programming staff), and the youth who participated in the 2015 Canadian Placement program were interviewed. The questionnaire consisted of eight open-ended questions given in an interview format so that participants could use their own words while someone else recorded their responses. Given the open-ended nature of this interview, the responses generated span a wide range and encompass many experiences. As such, the transcriptions of these interviews were analyzed and similar responses were grouped together thematically. However, whenever possible direct quotations have been incorporated into the report to capture the participants’ actual responses.
VI. Logic Model

Inputs
- Staff time and skills
- Collaboration among staff, teachers, families, host communities, and host families
- Materials and resources (i.e. for Orientation and Re-Orientation)
- Training for host families and places of employment
- Technology
- School, community, and parental involvement
- Administration
- Financial Resources
- Planning, research, and evaluation time and resources
- Promotion and youth selection development and procedures

Outputs
Activities
- Complete all assignments
- Complete 175 hours of volunteer-based employment at work placement
- Provide useful feedback and problem solve with youth
- Create and evaluate assignments
- Develop and administer tools to best train, place, and debrief youth
- Ensure youth are safe, learning, and fully engaged in all aspects of program
- Offer supports to youth

Participation
- NYA Youth (Ages 15-22)

Outcomes
Short Term
- Increase in school attendance and engagement
- Increase in volunteerism and work experiences
- Increase in travel experiences and cultural awareness

Intermediate
- Increase in confidence and independence
- Increase in problem solving skills and social skills

Long Term
- Increase in post-secondary education/training
- Increased knowledge and appreciation of Northern culture and way of life
- Engaged, educated, and employable Northern youth

Time Frame
- One year
  During Placement
- Two years
  After Placement
- Five years
Data Results

Overview

The data presented below reflects the short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals of the implementation of the Canadian Placement Program. When possible, data sets were compared on certain outcome measures of the pre and post-placement surveys. In order to effectively measure the success of the project, several data sets were used, as well as qualitative and quantitative surveys and interviews.

Through a combination of charts, graphs, and thematic analysis the following outcomes were measured:

- **Short-Term Goals**: attendance, volunteerism and work experience, travel experiences, confidence and independence, problem solving and social skills
- **Intermediate Goals**: leadership and career opportunities, enrolment in post-secondary education/training, appreciation of northern culture and way of life
- **Long-Term Goal**: engaged, educated, and employable northern youth

Credit Attainment

Each NYA participant has the opportunity to earn up to 9 credits by completing the NYA Canadian Placement Program, and up to another 9 by completing the International Program. Both the Nunavut and the Northwest Territories high school curriculums are based on the 100-credit Alberta Secondary School system wherein students require a minimum of 100 credits to graduate from high school. Therefore, NYA can provide approximately 9% of total credits needed to graduate for participants who complete just the Canadian Placement Program, and up to 18% for those who complete both Programs. For each program one credit is earned at the introductory level (10-), 3 at the intermediate level (20-) and 5 at the advanced level (30-). The advanced level credits are especially relevant as they help fulfill a specific requirement of graduation, rather than an optional course requirement.

Presented in this section is a breakdown of the credits attained from both the Canadian Placement Program and the International Program in 2015, as well as the possible credits attained versus total credits achieved from 2007 to 2015.
## 2015 Canadian Program Credits

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<tr>
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<td>NU 99% (2)</td>
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<td>NU 4.7</td>
<td>NT 4.8</td>
<td>NU 5 (12)</td>
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<td>NU 78%</td>
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## 2015 International Program Credits

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<td>NU 67.5%</td>
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<td>NU 86%</td>
<td>NT 82%</td>
<td>NU 100% (1)</td>
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<td>Volunteer Work Practicum – Average # Credits</td>
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<td>NU 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Re-Orientation and Follow-up 2 – Average Mark</td>
<td>Re-Orientation and Follow-up 2 – Highest Mark</td>
<td>Re-Orientation and Follow-up 2 – Lowest Mark</td>
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<tr>
<td>NU 66%</td>
<td>NT 59%</td>
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These data tables indicate that there is a high overall student achievement in attaining credits. In 2015, for both territories the participants earned on average, just over 4 credits for their volunteer placements and the class averages for course work ranged from 67% to 95% with the majority earning above 82%.

It also reveals that the total number of credits NYA has awarded since 2007 has remained between 88% and 95% of the total possible credits available. The average percentage of actual credits attained through the program versus those available each year is 92%.

This data demonstrates two trends:

- Most of the students who register for the program are able to complete it successfully and earn all of the credits available.
- Those students who are not able to complete the entire program are able to earn some high school credits.
Pre and Post-Placement Questionnaire

Both the pre and post-placement questionnaires focus largely on personality factors as well as how youth respond to certain situations. While it can be useful to compare their responses before and after their placements, the data has not been analyzed for the purposes of tracking changes in individuals or with the intention of evaluating the program as one that increases or changes personality traits. For example, a decrease in the total number of youth who felt “very strongly” about taking risks does not necessarily indicate a deficit in the program. It may actually indicate the program’s success in altering the youth’s ability to self-reflect.

The questionnaires consisted of several Likert Scale questions (where 1 = very weak, 2 = weak, 3 = average, 4 = strong, and 5 = very strong). There were also some open-ended questions that allowed students to identify their own skills or provide useful feedback on different aspects of the program.

Relationships with Others

Relationships with others data was gathered by comparing responses to pre and post-survey questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. This included questions related to respecting the opinions of others, respecting differences, having empathy, appreciating differences, and showing respect. The pre-placement data is displayed on the left and post-placement data is on the right.
The data demonstrates that there are no overall significant changes in factors relating to *relationships with others* between the pre and post-questionnaire. However, changes in the percentages within each category (i.e. show respect) do indicate that the students were reflecting on the program and how it might impact their interactions with others. A decrease in feeling strongly about showing respect for example, might show that the students have learned, through the placement, that they are not as respectful as they felt they were prior to their placement. These changes demonstrate a reflective process indicative of personal change and growth.

**Confidence & Adaptability**

*Confidence and adaptability* data was gathered comparing responses to pre and post-survey questions 6, 7, 9, 19, and 20. This included questions relating to enjoying when meeting new people and being in new situations, adapting to change well, taking risks, and enjoying challenging situation. The pre-placement data is displayed on the left and post-placement data is on the right.

The *confidence and adaptability* data reflects the following trends:

- There was an increase from 14% to 27% of students who felt “very strong” that the program helped them deal with new situations.
- There was a decrease from 50% to 11% in the number of students who felt “very strong” about engaging in risk taking behaviour. This may be interpreted as the program’s impact on youth making low-risk but positive choices.
Interacting with Others

Interacting with others data was gathered comparing responses to pre and post-survey questions 8, 10, 12, and 21. This included questions relating to avoidance of using hurtful words, sharing feelings and thoughts with others, asking for help, and accepting feedback. The pre-placement data is displayed on the left and post-placement data is on the right.

The interacting with others data reflects the following trends:

- There was an increase from 11% to 19% of students who felt “very strong” that the program helped them learn to share their feelings.
- There was a decrease from 64% to 58% in the number of students who felt “average,” “strong,” or “very strong” about asking others for help. This may be interpreted as the program’s impact on the youth ability to solve problems independently.
Commitment & Self-Discipline

Commitment and self-discipline data was gathered comparing responses to pre and post-survey questions 11, 13, 14, and 15. This included questions relating to having a positive attitude, having self-discipline, having a sense of commitment, and setting goals. The pre-placement data is displayed on the left and post-placement data is on the right.

The data demonstrates that there are no overall significant changes in factors relating to commitment and self-discipline between the pre and post-questionnaire. However, changes in the percentages within each category (i.e. set goals) do indicate that the students were reflecting on the program and how it might impact their commitment and sense of self. A decrease in feeling strongly about setting goals, for example, might show that the students have learned, through the placement, that they do not set goals as often as they need to. These changes demonstrate a reflective process indicative of personal change and growth.
Self-Reflection

Self-reflection data was gathered comparing responses to pre and post-survey questions 16, 17, 18, 22, and 23. This included questions relating to feeling relaxed, acknowledging strengths and weaknesses, forgiving oneself, trying new things, and having strong observational skills. The pre-placement data is displayed on the left and post-placement data is on the right.

The self-reflection data reflects the following trends:

- There was an increase from 15% to 19% of students who felt “very strong” that the program helped them learn to feel more relaxed.
- There was an increase from 53% to 69% in the number of students who felt “strong” or “very strong” about forgiving themselves after the program compared to prior to their placement.
- There was an increase from 0% to 15% of students who felt “very strong” about having strong observation skills after the program compared to prior to their placement.
Community Involvement

Community involvement data was gathered comparing responses to pre and post-survey questions 24, 25, and 26. This included questions relating to the importance of volunteerism and curiosity about other cultures. The pre-placement data is displayed on the left and post-placement data is on the right.

The community involvement data reflects the following trends:

- There was an increase from 11% to 30% of students who felt “average” about the importance of volunteering in the community. There were no other significant changes before and after the program indicating that volunteering was important to the youth both before and after the program.
- There was a decrease from 55% to 42% in the number of students who felt a “very strong” curiosity about learning about other cultures. This decrease may indicate exposure to different cultures as a result of the placement.

Furthermore, the post-placement questionnaire asked youth to reflect on what skills they felt they had learned or strengthened during their placements. The results are presented below.

When asked what leadership skills the participants felt they possessed after the program, the respondents gave a wide range of responses including:

- Communication and listening skills (37%)
- Having a positive attitude (20%)
- Public speaking skills (20%)
- Having confidence (17%)
- Being organized and prepared (13%)
➢ Encouraging others (13%)

When asked what the participants felt they gained from the program, the respondents gave a wide range of responses including:

➢ Work and volunteer skills (40%)
➢ Independence (20%)
➢ Leadership skills (13%)
➢ High school credits (10%)
➢ Confidence (10%)
➢ Travelling experience (10%)

Finally, according to one participant, “The program taught me I can do amazing things!”

**Participant Self Evaluation & Career Summary Survey**

Following the program placement, the participants were asked to complete a Self-Evaluation and Career Summary Survey consisting of Likert Scale questions (where 1 = yes, 2 = no, and 3 = somewhat/maybe). These questions are designed to help youth reflect on their experiences as they pertain to future choices (i.e. finishing high school, interest in post-secondary programming). In addition, the survey allows the youth to document their experience and evaluate their work placement, volunteer experiences, and feelings about living in their host community. This survey evaluates aspects of the program but allows the youth to reflect on their own growth.
Impact on Education

When asked if they planned on graduating high school, the youth responded:

In addition, all of the participants stated that they planned on attending a post-secondary institution or training program.
When they asked if attending NYA made them more interested in attend university, the participants responded:

**Attending NYA has made me more interesting in post-secondary education/training**

- Yes: 90%
- No: 10%

When asked if finishing NYA has made them more prepared for university or another post-secondary institution, the participants responded:
When asked has NYA increased their attendance at school, the participants responded:

- **Yes**: 75%
- **No**: 0%
- **Somewhat**: 25%

**Attending NYA has increased my attendance at school**

When asked has NYA increased their attendance at school, the participants responded:

- **Yes**: 75%
- **No**: 0%
- **Somewhat**: 25%
**Impact on Career**

When asked has NYA made them think about future jobs/careers, the participants responded:

**Attending NYA has made me think about my future career**

- Yes: 97%
- No: 3%

When asked if they have a job at home, the participants responded:

**I currently have a job at home**

- Yes: 43%
- No: 57%

When asked has NYA helped them to decide what job/career they would like in the future, the participants responded:
When asked if they would like to do the same work as their placement in the future, the participants responded:

**I would like to do the same work in the future**

- Yes: 21%
- No: 25%
- Maybe: 54%

**Attending NYA helped me decide about future job/career**

- Yes: 36%
- No: 50%
- Somewhat: 14%
When asked on a scale of 1-10 (where 1= very easy and 10 = very difficult) how difficult the placement work was, the respondents answered with the following:

- 88% of the respondents answered between 1 and 5 indicating they did not feel the work was overly difficult.
- Only 12% rated the work as difficult (between 6 and 9) and none of the participants rated the work placement as very difficult (a rating of 10).

**Impact on Decision Making & Self-Confidence**

When asked if NYA has made helped them plan and make decisions in the following areas, the participants responded:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get Along</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, the survey asked students about several other personality and situational factors both before and after their placements. Their responses are as follows:

- 57% felt more confident speaking to people, and 57% felt more comfortable asking questions they don’t understand following their placements.
- 61% overcame challenges at their work placement, 46% felt they learned new skills, and 52% felt they had grown as a leader.
- 79% of the youth felt they have changed over the summer as a result of the program.

When asked if they had a better sense of what they wanted to do in the future, the participants responded:
Finally, when asked if they would recommend this program to other youth in the, 100% of the participants stated “yes.”

**Program Preparation, Supports, and Satisfaction**

When asked if they experienced culture shock, the participants responded:
I experienced culture shock

- Yes: 29%
- No: 67%
- Maybe: 4%
When asked if they felt prepared for the placement, the participants responded:

![Pie chart showing the percentage of participants who felt prepared for their placement.]

- Yes: 62%
- No: 25%
- Somewhat: 13%

When asked if they felt supported by the staff, host family, placement buddy, mentor, and their own family during their placement, the participants responded:
This data indicates the youth felt an overwhelming amount of support during their placements, particularly from the NYA staff and their own families.

When asked if the program was harder than they expected, the participants responded:

The program was harder than I expected

- Yes 32%
- Somewhat 20%
- No 48%
When asked if they would be interested in the International Program, the participants responded:

![Pie Chart](image)

The participants also rated their satisfaction with various aspects of the program on a scale of 1-10 (where 1 = not satisfied and 10 = very satisfied). Overall, the data revealed the following trends:

- **Host Family** - 84% of respondents gave their host family a rating of 7 or higher with 40% giving their host family a rating of 10.
- **Work Placement** - 72% of respondents gave their work placement a rating of 7 or higher with 28% giving it a rating of 10.
- **Orientation** - 84% of respondents gave the Orientation a rating of 7 or higher with 28% gave it a rating of 10.
- **Re-Orientation** - 92% of respondents gave the Re-Orientation a rating of 7 or higher with 52% giving it a rating of 10.
- **Canadian Program** - 96% of respondents gave the program an overall a rating of 8 or higher with 80% giving it a rating of 10.
Canadian Placement Program Qualitative Interviews

The breakdown of the interview participants is as follows:

### Program Personnel

2. For the purposes of this interview, “personnel” includes both paid NYA staff, and volunteers (including program alumni).

**Q1. Please tell me how long you have worked for the Northern Youth Abroad program and in what capacity.**

- The NYA staff interviewed have worked with the program for a range of eleven years to four years. The mean years of service is approximately 6 years (5.86 years).
- There is a wide range of positions held with the program and many participants have been involved with the program in more than one capacity. In fact, 86% of those surveyed have held two or more positions within the organization.
- Two participants are program officers. One began as a communications assistant and the other was a summer student, administrative assistant, and program assistant previously.
- One participant was a coop-student and contractual employee but began as a full-time employee in the position of program and communications officer, three years ago.
- Two interviewees began as student participants in the program, and then became alumni, board members and facilitators. Currently, one member serves as the Chairperson on the NYA Board of Directors.
- One participant is in his/her fourth year as a facilitator and third year as a mentor.
Finally, one participant is employed as the Executive Director of NYA and was hired as a Program Officer (at this time there were just two staff members both of whom were Program Officers). She was then appointed the first Director in 2007.

Q2. Can you tell me briefly how the program works?

- Overall the staff have a very detailed understanding of the program and offered a large amount of information, most of which has been used in other sections in this report (i.e. Project Background, Scope of the Project, Logic Model, etc.).
- Aside from many specific details offered about the structure and function of the program, the staff highlighted the unique aspects of the program and its ability to meet the needs of northern youth. For example, one staff member/volunteer mentioned how essential the high school credit attainment piece of the program is, stating, "You gain credits for your placement in the south in your junior year, which has a huge impact as youth [as you] need a certain number of credits to graduate. This is hard to do in Iqaluit. This is substantial for youth in the north."
- All of the staff interviewed mentioned the barriers that exist in the north, which prevent youth from experiences that assist them in creating education and career goals. The power of this program lies in breaking down these barriers. According to one interviewee, "[The program is] a way for the youth in the north to leave their homes and get an outside perspective. Isolation in the north can hinder growth, the youth don’t have a greater view of what they can do, they don’t get all the choices of what they might have."

Q3. What do you see as the main benefits to the youth? Can you provide an example?

- All of the staff interviewed identified an increase in confidence as the main benefit to youth. According to one staff member/volunteer, "when you see youth come in for orientation they are nervous about leaving home. They get insight into their weaknesses and the orientation opens up their perceptions about themselves, and they learn to trust the staff. After their placements and the Re-Orientation, they are more outgoing and you can see their personal growth."
- Another interviewee stated, "It’s pretty incredible to see them come out of their shell. Many won’t even make eye contact or will whisper. Many are shy and introverted. Coming back at Re-Orientation is special because they are doing things they never used to because of how shy and introverted they were in the beginning."
- Five interviewees noted how the travel component pushes the youth out of their comfort zones and the benefits to travelling outside of northern Canada.
- Four of those interviewed mentioned the work experiences and increase in responsibilities as a main benefit to the program. According to one interviewee, the program provides a lot of work experience and gives youth the opportunities to learn about different career paths. Another interviewee discussed that the youth get the chance to meet new people, be more independent, budget, learn how to get to and from work, and wake up on time.
- Four staff members/volunteers mentioned the increase in crucial life and social skills as a benefit, acknowledging that the youth meet people and develop relationships, increases communication skills, learn how to deal with conflict in healthy ways, and
learn how to overcome obstacles. One staff member/volunteer mentioned that the youth are chosen because learning these skills will have the greatest impact on their lives. For this reason, NYA “doesn’t necessarily look for high achievers but rather engage youth who show potential for leadership but have barriers to overcome. They have so much potential but also the most to learn.”

- Three participants mentioned the increase in academic achievement and exposure to post-secondary opportunities as being a huge benefit. One staff member/volunteer noted the academic strengths of the program such as helping youth finish high school and identify their goals. Another acknowledged the goal setting process that occurs during the program, as these youth “aren’t always aware of importance of setting goals even something as simple as graduating high school and having a plan after.” Finally, one interviewee discussed the post-secondary preparation the program offers stating, “Many NT and Nunavut youth abandon their post-secondary studies because of culture shock. The early exposure helps them to prepare for future experiences.”

- One interviewee discussed the benefit of creating a unique, life-long community of NYA participants stating, “part of the magic of the program is the atmosphere we create. No matter where you go or what you do, you are always part of the NYA. It’s hard to capture in words the true growth you see in the participants especially in the Canadian program, but it is there.”

- Finally, two staff members/volunteers noted that the program allows youth to overcome barriers and community issues in a positive way. According to one staff member/volunteer, “many of the youth come from challenging backgrounds (food insecurity, abuse, addictions). We provide them coping mechanism to take home as they strive to achieve their goals. Also we provide English-speaking skills. Most youth go home to graduate; that’s a tangible benefit.”

Q4. Do you see any areas for improvement? If so, what would you recommend? Please provide an example if possible.

- Three staff members/volunteers mentioned the need for continuous alumni support once the youth complete the program. One staff member/volunteer noted the importance of trying to improve on the program’s impact and the transformative experience, while another claimed that more alumni support is crucial. For example, pairing an alumnus with a mentor could keep momentum going, as often, when they return home, they feel stuck.

- According to one staff member/volunteer, more staff is needed to successfully run the program stating, “currently, NYA relies on a huge network of volunteers and their interpretation of what we are trying to do and that’s a challenge. Having more staff might help. Having experienced permanent staff will always provide greater stability.”

- Two staff members/volunteers would like to focus more resources on developing the International program. One staff member/volunteer noted that the International program is an opportunity for youth to focus skills learned in the Canadian program and would ensure momentum and continuity for youth.

- One interviewee acknowledged the limitations of the number of youth the program can accept and would like to see the Canadian program expand.
According to one staff member/volunteer NYA is “always looking to refine the program and one-on-one interactions, pre and post-evaluations, and switching the international program. Things are working well but it’s always good to adapt and reflect to best meet the needs of the youth.”

Finally, one interviewee discussed the need for the government of Nunavut to play a bigger role in supporting NYA both financially and in terms of volunteers. For example, the government could allow teachers to volunteer (i.e. giving them leave days to help).

Q5. What has been the biggest change, positive or negative, that you have noticed in terms of the youth that take part in the program? Please give an example.

All of the staff interviewed identified confidence as being the biggest change. As one staff member/volunteer noted, “It’s like they are new people. It’s my favourite part of the program.”

Another mentioned the youth come back more driven and determined, while another discussed how the youth create life-long relationships over the 5-week placement.

Finally, one staff member/volunteer acknowledged that sometimes the program isn’t for everyone, “but the benefits far outweigh any setbacks we have had. Sometimes the youth struggle on a placement but they are still supported and over all enjoy the program.”

Q6. What have youth told you about the Northern Youth Abroad program since it has been implemented? Please provide an example or two.

The staff members/volunteers expressed that the majority of youth feedback has been positive. Overall NYA has great image and reputation in northern communities because as one staff member/volunteer stated, “we provide a family atmosphere where youth feel they belong.”

The youth mentioned it’s a life changing program as they become more confident, more outgoing, more likely to travel, and able to make new friends.

The largest challenge expressed by youth was homesickness.

The success of the program can also be measured in youth involved in NYA after their placement. Many of the youth go on to be volunteers and some of the volunteers have gone on to be employees.

Finally, according to one staff member/volunteer, “the youth feel safe, secure, supported. Their goals are supported and the program gives them the confidence to be themselves.”

Additional Comments

Four did not have any additional comments.

One staff member/volunteer discussed how the program is a success because of the energy of the staff and that all the staff have an understanding; the program is not designed to “fix” anything. According to this interviewee, “the program focuses on offering an experience to northern youth. We are not taking youth to change them because we think there is something wrong with them. We give them the tools they need to have the best possible experience. The youth have their own challenges and if they want to address those challenges we will give them the tools during and after to do so.”
Another staff noted the strong leadership at NYA and states, “as a staff we are very close and supportive of one another. If there is an issue or challenge, we all work together to address the issue and support each other.” One interviewee discussed the impact the program has on him/her as an educator stating, “It has improved my ability to work with youth in Nunavut.”

Current Students

There are a total of 31 youth participants who took place in the Canadian Placement Program. They were placed in a number of communities in July and August of 2015 including: Campbell River, BC; Bear River, NS; Windsor, ON; Sidney, BC; St. John, NB; London, ON; Hamilton, ON; Osgoode, ON; Kitchener, ON; Kingston, ON; St. Katherine’s, ON; Dartmouth, NS; Powell River, BC; and Saltspring Island, BC. The responses to their interview questions are presented below. Work placements ranged from childcare, to baking, to working for non-profits or with city work crews to Habitat for Humanity.

Q1. What do you see as the main benefit of the Northern Youth Abroad Program now that you have completed your Canadian placement? Please share an example.

- 42% of the youth felt the sense of independence gained was the greatest benefit of the program. Several students elaborated they gained confidence, overcame homesickness, navigated a new city, and persevered through challenges.
- 39% of the participants mentioned the work experience as the biggest benefit.
- 32% of the students felt the chance to gain 9 high school credits was a real benefit and encouraged them to engage more in school and the program.
- 32% of the students appreciated that they were able to meet, live with, and work with new people. For them, this was the greatest benefit of the placement.
- 29% of the youth interviewed acknowledged the travel aspects to be a benefit.
- An additional 23% named the leadership opportunities as one of the greatest benefits. As one of the participants stated, “I can help my community more. I can do more than I thought in NT. I always wanted to do more and now I know that I can. I thought this program was just sending us out to work, but it taught us to be leaders. Now we help out the Elders more.”
- 19% of the participants mentioned the cultural aspect of the program to have a large impact. One of these participants stated he/she developed a new appreciate for northern culture as a result of the placement.
- One participant discussed the opportunity to join the NYA after the program as a volunteer and mentor.

Q2. What do your peers think of the Northern Youth Abroad Program? Can you share any examples (positive or negative)?

- All of the participants (31) heard positive comments from their peers. The examples of some feedback given include: a great staff, a fun program, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, get to meet new people and learn about new cultures, great work and travel experience, a chance to leave the north, preparation for college, and preparation for a better future.
Of those participants, a few did receive negative feedback from their peers (4 participants). Their concerns included: homesickness and feeling the assignments were too frequent or hard.

Q3. Did you experience anything negative while completing your Canadian placement? If so, please share an example.

- 45% of the youth respondents did not have any issues with their placement. The remaining participants had concerns ranging from minor issues such as homesickness (that passed or came and went) to more serious problems such as racism and bullying. However, none of the youth felt these problems were indicative of NYA or the program, but rather the nature of living and working in a new environment with strangers.

- Four participants stated they were homesick for either all of or a portion of their placement.

- Five youth had issues living with their placement buddy. As one participant mentioned, “we started to get one each other’s nerves and we were both homesick. I talked to my parents and staff. My host mom was really nice and told me we could do anything that made me feel like we were more at home.” Another interviewee stated her home buddy was really negative, but she persevered claiming, “I’m here for myself and to meet new people...I always try to be positive. I handled it well. I didn’t react and tried to be positive to have a good experience.” Some of the other issues mentioned were personality conflicts and program stress.

- Four participants noted issues with host families. One participant expressed concerns as the host daughter bullied her, while another discussed the often racist attitudes from the host family.

- One youth mentioned being treated poorly at the work placement (i.e. they would check his bag and accuse him of stealing), however the NYA supported him and told him to be strong.

- Finally, one participant described an unfortunate incident that took place during his down time. When he was on the way to the movies, he had his iPod stolen while getting off the city bus.

Q4. Do you have suggestions that you think might improve the Northern Youth Abroad Program?

- 77% of the respondents did not have any suggestions.

- Two participants mentioned it would be beneficial to have more information about the nature of the assignments required in the program and possibly less assignments.

- Two youth wanted more options for healthy eating and exercise during Orientation and their work placement.

- One wanted a longer placement, while another suggested later sessions time.

- One youth felt it would be useful to have more autonomy over the work placement, while two more felt it would be beneficial to work less and spend more time engaging with the host family and learning about the host community and culture.

- Finally, one participant suggested an anonymous format (perhaps online) for asking questions or asking for help if there are concerns they wish to keep private, but need guidance.
Q5. What was the one single best thing or lesson learned from your Canadian placement? How do you think this will help you in the future?

- 26% of the students mentioned the work experience placement as the best part of the program listing reasons such as learning patience and getting to work in their desired fields.
- Six of the youth felt the greatest lesson was learning to be more independent, while another four acknowledged the leadership skills they learned.
- Three of the students noted that problem solving was the greatest lesson learned. As one student stated, “I learned] working out your problems with someone is easier than being silently angry with them.”
- Two students appreciated learning more about First Nations culture, while two more acknowledged learning about budgeting and two more mentioned travelling as the best part of the placement.
- Two participants discussed learning how to listen and be respectful. Specifically, one participant stated, “I listen more and am not disrespectful. I never really had help when I was growing up. I listen more and that will help me in life, especially to the Elders.”
- One student mentioned the exposure to university as being a huge benefit, while another appreciated the friendship aspect of the program.
- Finally, one interviewee did not like the program and one could not think of anything to add.

Q6. How has this affected your schoolwork? For example, has it increased your interest in post-secondary school or technical training? If not, could you provide me an example of if or how this program has affected your schoolwork?

- 65% of the students interviewed mentioned that the program has increased their interest in attending post-secondary institutions. In fact, these students were also interested in specific institutions such as Algonquin College or the University of Victoria and/or specific programs such as policing, psychology, forensics, child-care, nursing, education, and mechanics.
- Another 32% stated the program impacted their decision to go to college but were unsure which institution or which program. As one student stated, “we did trips to universities so that made me interested. My work placement didn’t require a lot of schooling and I wasn’t a big fan of it so I want to get my education.”
- Six students noted wanting to participate in the International Program and one developed an appreciation for working and liked “the idea of having a job.”
- Finally, two students acknowledged that the program assisted them by giving them high school credits.

Q7. Would you recommend the Northern Youth Abroad program to other youth from your home community? Why or why not?

- A total of 30 of the 31 participants interviewed would recommend the program to other youth. The reasons given for endorsing the program include: it’s so fun; learn independence; learn to get along with others; learn budgeting; supportive staff; gain work experience; meet new friends; travel; learn about new cultures; preparation for college; and extra school credits.
As one student stated, “there are lots of kids in my community who drop out. I’m trying to get out of this community and this is a great way to get students out to open our eyes to new experiences.” Another student noted, “I had an amazing experience. I learned more about myself and what I’m capable of,” while another said, “it’s an amazing program. You learn about yourself and you make friends. You gain an experience that is unforgettable.”

Three were pushed to volunteer and help with NYA.

One participant stated they would recommend the program to others even though it wasn’t for him/her.

One participant would not recommend the program but did not elaborate as to why, and one youth did not answer the question.

Additional Comments

One student responded, “It’s one of the best programs I’ve ever been on. I loved it, it was a great experience!”

Unfortunately, another mentioned, “I didn’t have the experience I thought I would have. The host family was not nice to me, but I kept going and I am proud of that.”

Results & Conclusions

Overview

This section will provide highlights from the data results presented in the previous section as well as the main conclusions that can be drawn from evaluating the program overall. While the purpose of this evaluation is to assess the effectiveness of the Northern Youth Abroad Canadian Placement Program, the richness of the data gathered cannot be overlooked. For example, the achievement of data-focused goals such as future school success and employment rates should not overshadow the increase in student-identified feelings of confidence and pride.

Analysis

These results have yielded a number of conclusions regarding the overall effectiveness of the Canadian Placement Program. In general, most of the feedback is extremely positive. The data demonstrates an increase in student success at high school and an increase in leadership skills, which will have a positive future impact on the engagement of northern youth after graduation.
Highlights from Pre and Post-Placement Questionnaire:

- There were changes (mostly positive) in the way the youth felt they interacted with others and the relationships they formed, how they see themselves, and their sense of community and commitment as a result of their placements.
- There was an increase from 14% to 27% of students who felt “very strongly” that the program helped them deal with new situations.
- There was an increase from 53% to 69% in the number of students who felt “strongly” or “very strongly” about forgiving themselves and overcoming obstacles, after the program compared to prior to their placement.
- There was an increase from 0% to 15% of students who felt “very strongly” about having learned observation skills after the program compared to prior to their placement.
- The participants gained the following leadership skills: communication and listening skills (37%); a positive attitude (20%); public speaking skills (20%); and confidence (17%).
- The respondents identified gaining the following skills from the program in general: work and volunteer skills (40%); independence (20%); leadership skills (13%); and confidence (10%).

“The program taught me I can do amazing things!”

Summer 2015 NYA youth participant

Highlights from the Participant Self Evaluation & Career Summary Survey:

- 79% of the students plan on graduating high school while the other 21% already have graduated.
- 90% felt that NYA has peaked their interest in post-secondary education.
- 97% felt the program made them think about their future career.
- 93% felt the program taught them how to get along with others.
- The majority of the students felt supported from all NYA staff and volunteers (i.e. host family, placement, NYA staff, placement buddy)
- 96% of the students are interested in the International Program.
- 79% felt they had changed over the summer as a result of the program.
Highlights from In-Person Interviews:

- All of the program staff interviews noted the purpose of the program is to empower youth and provide them with a positive experience given the barriers that exist in the north.
- All of the staff identified an increase in confidence as the greatest benefit to the program and the most observable change in the youth from Orientation or Re-Orientation.
- All of the staff mentioned the need for greater alumni supports to keep the program momentum going.
- 42% of the youth listed increases in independence as the greatest benefit of the program, while 32% stated it was the work experience and travelling.
- 100% of the youth interviewed heard positive feedback from their peers about the program and 98% would recommend the program to their peers.
- 45% of the youth had no issues during the placement while the majority of the remaining youth had minor issues such as homesickness.
- 65% of the youth felt the program has increased their interest in pursuing post-secondary education or training following high school.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be made from the above analysis:

- The Canadian Placement Program is currently helping many northern youth build confidence, problem-solve, and become more independent.
- The program is widely received and endorsed by northern youth and their families.
- The quantitative data lends itself toward the accomplishment of many of the goals of the program such as an increase in leadership skills and an increase in preparation and interest in post-secondary education among participating youth.
- The qualitative analysis reveals that the Canadian Placement Program is integral to the development of strong, confident, educated, and empowered northern youth.
Accomplishments & Lessons Learned

Accomplishments

NYA’s Canadian Placement Program boosts several accomplishments including increases in youth leadership and confidence, increases in preparation and interest in post-secondary institutions/training, increases in exposure to career possibilities, and opportunities to travel to southern urban centres. Information gathered based on interviews with personnel, alumni, and youth participants indicates the program is reputable, popular, and necessary to help northern youth succeed. Currently, NYA is doing an excellent job of creating and administering this program. They are a highly accountable and transparent organization that puts the needs of the youth they serve first. For these reasons, NYA’s Canadian Placement program will continue to be successful eventually leading to an increase in their long-term goal of creating an educated, engaged, and empowered youth workforce in Canada’s north.

One aspect of the program, and NYA’s organization as a whole, that should not be overlooked is its foundational principle of utilizing a strengths-based, youth-focused approach in its programming. NYA does a wonderful job of ensuring they are not using a deficit model to determine the needs of the youth or the north. As one staff member/volunteer noted in an interview, “the program focuses on offering an experience to Northern youth. We are not taking youth to change them because we think there is something wrong with them. We give them the tools they need to have the best possible experience. The youth have their own challenges and if they want to address those challenges we will give them the tools during and after to do so.” NYA is able to ensure they are offering an authentic experience to youth, all the while acknowledging and honouring their unique personalities, family situations, and cultural backgrounds. In this way, NYA is addressing several barriers youth face in the north, however they are doing it in a meaningful and empowering way that is consistent with Indspire principles.

Perhaps two of the most telling pieces of evidence of the success of the program were given directly by the youth themselves. One participant stated, “I had an amazing experience. I learned more about myself and what I’m capable of,” while another said, “I can help my community more. I can do more than I thought in the NT. I always wanted to do more and now I know that I can. I thought this program was just sending us out to work, but it taught us to be leaders.” Clearly the students are aware of the how this program will impact their future and they are confident in their abilities as future leaders in the north.

Lessons Learned

Several lessons have been learned since the inception of the Canadian Placement Program including:

- Staff collaboration and communication is essential;
- Youth strengths and needs must be central to the placement;
- Evaluation must be continuous and consistent;
- Training and professional development is important;
- Consultation with parents and students is foundational;
Learning must be project-based, hands-on, and experiential; and
Alumni support and involvement is necessary to continue momentum.

Limitations

There are a few limitations that have been encountered since the implementation of the Canadian Placement Program. One issue is with regards to transitioning youth back to the north following the completion of the program. It can be just as shocking and difficult to return to their previous personal and family situations, as it was to leave it. Many youth struggle with returning to family situations that are not positive, or admit to being lost with many new leadership skills and a new sense of confidence, but no direction or outlet for these skills. There have been limited supports in place in the past for alumni, however, NYA has recognized this issue and is attempting to increase alumni support and programming. For example, the International Program allows alumni additional travel and work experiences and there are also many volunteer and mentorship opportunities available.

Another issue is with regards to the lack of financial resources available from both provincial and federal governments. Secure, long-term funding would mean that the program could expand to include a larger geographical area and/or accept and place more youth each summer. Given all that is known about the needs of northern youth and best practices in engagement and education, it would be beneficial to have greater funding options. A lack of financial resources has prevented NYA from employing full-time, fully-trained staff. According to one staff member/volunteer, “currently, NYA relies on a huge network of volunteers and their interpretation of what we are trying to do and that’s a challenge. Having more staff might help. Having experienced permanent staff will always provide greater stability.”

Next Steps

Focus on the Future

The evaluative process yielded several next steps in order for NYA to move forward and continue to achieve success with the Canadian Placement program, and as an organization in general. Through greater capacity building, program development, youth transitions, and evaluation, the Canadian Placement program and NYA will continue to grow.

Building Capacity

In order for NYA to grow and strengthen, it must build capacity. The staff acknowledges that this is an essential piece of program delivery. However, it is also one of the most challenging aspects as it requires considerable time and resources to build and sustain relationships, encourage investment, and ensure integrity. The current Executive Director and full-time staff have made it a priority to establish relationships with community members, NYA program alumni, volunteers, teachers, and funders to achieve better outcomes for their students.
Program Development

Time and again, NYA staff called for greater program development to assist in effective delivery of the Canadian Placement Program. The NYA staff noted two areas where greater programming is needed: 1) alumni supports and 2) the International Program. Creating a program to support alumni who have completed the Canadian Placement Program would be beneficial, as it would allow them to effectively utilize their newly developed skills and interests. Programming could include assisting alumni to engage in mentorship, volunteerism, employment, and cultural activities either within NYA or within other northern community organizations. Further programming is also needed to expand and strengthen the International Program so that it can become a viable option for youth after the Canadian Placement Program. In order to build this programming, greater capacity is needed in addition to greater resources.

Transitions & Interventions

This program will only be as successful as its most vulnerable youth. Those who experienced learning difficulties, have experienced childhood trauma, and/or had challenges being successful throughout the program may require additional supports. While it is often challenging to assist the youth who struggle the most, it is essential if real changes are going to occur. By offering greater supports to youth who have identified concerns or have encountered problems, NYA ensures they are strengthening both the program and the youth it serves. Many of the youth may need additional debriefing supports, additional opportunities to reconnect and problem solve with host families, and chances to learn essential skills that were not acquired during the placement (i.e. public speaking skills).

On-Going Evaluation

A large part of the current success of the program thus far has been the continuous and purposeful evaluation of the program. Since its infancy, NYA personnel have been gathering data from staff members/volunteers, youth, host families, work placements, alumni, and community members. Through their Orientation and Re-Orientation processes NYA has been collaborating with youth to ensure the program is meeting their needs and is successfully carrying out its initiatives.

While this report is a formal evaluation of the program, it relied heavily on the data already collected and analyzed by the NYA staff. It is of the utmost importance that NYA continues to seek the input of students, staff, host families, and parents in order to expose barriers and improve what already works. A close examination of the numbers is also essential including credit attendance, high school graduation rates, post-secondary institution enrolment rates, and frequency of volunteerism and leadership. This will allow NYA a greater sense of the long-term impacts the program is having in the community.
Interactive Tools

The following web links could be useful and may provide Indspire with additional information:

1. The Northern Youth Abroad Website
   http://nya.ca

2. This website showcases the Northern Youth Abroad blog with options to subscribe and provides archived blogs dating back to 2007.
   http://northernyouthabroad.typepad.com
References


Consent & Information Forms

Indspire - Informed Consent Form

Northern Youth Abroad Program

Evaluation Research
Indspire (Lead Researcher Dr. Carrie Bourassa, Infinity Consulting)
2932 St. James Cres., Regina, SK, S4V 2Z1
P: 306-535-6855

Letter of Invitation to participate in the Evaluation Research Project of Indspire-Northern Youth Abroad Program and consent form.

To
Ms. Rebecca Bisson
Executive Director
Northern Youth Abroad
Phone: (613) 232-9989
E-mail: Rebecca@nya.ca

Dear Ms. Bisson:

My name is Carrie Bourassa and I am the Lead Researcher for the evaluation research project wherein I will be researching, with you, on your Northern Youth Abroad Program using a Logic Model and Evaluation Framework planned for this project. Along with this model, is the application of the Indigenous foundational principles developed by Indspire.

I am inviting you and your Northern Youth Abroad Program personnel to participate in this evaluation research project (either in an individual or group setting). The purpose of the study is to evaluate the Northern Youth Abroad initiative for determining its suitability for Indspire’s Nurturing Capacity program. Participation is completely voluntary and your decision to participate or not participate will in no way affect your existing relationships, work situation or provision of services.

This study is part of a joint research project between Northern Youth Abroad and Indspire. This research may also involve graduate students (or student researchers) who will work on the project in their fulfilment of their degree requirements and may be funded by the Research Contractor, Dr. Carrie Bourassa. This opportunity helps build student’s research capacity.

WHAT IS INVOLVED?
Depending on the stage of the evaluation research process, the following will take place:

- Individuals (including parents and students) who could be interviewed will be identified and names provided to the researcher for interviewing purposes
- Collection of relevant demographic data
- Observation of Northern Youth Abroad program and activities
• Teleconference meeting with Ms. Rebecca Bisson, Executive Director to discuss the process
• Interviews with Northern Youth Abroad Program staff, students (former and present), parents, Elders (if applicable) and administrators to document their experience and hear their perceptions of Northern Youth Abroad Program model.
• Determine the types of collection of various data related to student use of the centre.
• Documentation of specific strategies used for student supports.
• Collect data that shows increase in attendance due to the program and/or increased graduation rates or student performance (to be provided by Northern Youth Abroad administration).
• Document how, if any, the Northern Youth Abroad reflects the seven foundational guiding principles Indigenous for educational practice.

There will be no remuneration for participating in this research. You will have the opportunity to review the draft report with comments prior to final publication and submission to Indspire to ensure it accurately reflects your feedback.

**POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS**
The direct benefits of participating in this study include:

- The ability to voice concerns and hopes about the Northern Youth Abroad program and the learning that may come from gaining new insights and perspectives;
- The sharing of resources on challenges, solutions and positive outcomes; and
- The opportunity to have your voice heard, your opinions valued and respected.

For the larger scientific community and the community at large, this research may offer insights into the types of programming needed to address the needs of Indigenous students.

**Minimal risks**
There also may be minimal risks associated with participation as some individuals could experience psychological risks or social risks related to voicing their opinion in a group setting. Care will be exercised if there are issues that need follow up. If deemed necessary, individuals will be provided with names of people who could most appropriately sort through any issues.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**
In the research gathering session, all the information you provide will be considered confidential. Prior to starting the session you will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement to indicate that you will respect the confidentiality of the interviewed discussion.

In written reports of this research and oral presentations, excerpts from the research may be discussed but no names will be associated with any quotes. This helps us to represent your voice and opinion without compromising your confidentiality. The audiotapes will only be used for the purpose of creating written records and will not be associated with your name. These audiotapes/computer video files will be kept in locked filing cabinets/ secure...
password protected computers and will only be viewed by the researchers and research assistants who have signed confidentiality agreements.

Data collected during this study will be kept for five years and stored in locked filing cabinets. All data will be confidentially shredded or destroyed after seven years unless phases of the research are still occurring. Only the researchers and research assistants will have access to the data. All individuals who have access to the data will sign confidentiality agreements.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**
Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. It is very important to us that you decide whether or not you would like to share your thoughts with us.

**PUBLICATION OF RESULTS**
Results of this study may be published in professional journals, presented at conferences and on Indspire’s website. Feedback about this study will be mailed to you if you choose to provide your address. The results will be available September 30, 2015. If you have any questions at any point during the study, of after the study please contact (Angie Krenn at Indspire by phone (519) 445-1132 or via email akrenn@indspire.ca

**CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE**
If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Carrie Bourassa at 306-535-6855 or infinityconsulting@sasktel.net. This proposal for the planned study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Indspire Ethics Committee. If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office (contact: Angie Krenn at Indspire by phone (519) 445-1132 or via email akrenn@indspire.ca).

Thank you for your valuable insight in this research.
INDIVIDUAL CONSENT FORM
(Please print or write legibly)

Name, and role in the Northern Youth Abroad program of the individual _____________________________________________________
Personnel
Student
Community Member
Elder/Knowledge Keeper

☐ INDIVIDUAL CONSENT
I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the aforementioned information.
I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted regarding the research and understand I may ask questions in the future.
NAME: ________________________________ SIGNATURE: ________________________________ DATE: _________________

SECTION C: GROUP CONSENT
(Please print or write legibly)

☐ GROUP CONSENT
I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the aforementioned information.
I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted regarding the research and understand I may ask questions in the future.
NAME: ________________________________ SIGNATURE: ________________________________ DATE: _________________

SECTION D: CONTACT INFORMATION
Please provide your contact information if you would like to be contacted to review your transcript and/or receive a copy of the research results.
EMAIL ADDRESS: ________________________________
PHONE NUMBER: ________________________________