



# North for YOUTH

*A Summary Report*



*Investing in our youth today for a stronger, diversified tomorrow*

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# Our Story

Throughout 2013, the North Wellington Coalition for Youth Resiliency (NWCYR) conducted numerous consultations with local service providers and community members to understand the needs of local youth. Overwhelmingly, it was reported that there was a need for local youth engagement efforts in order to improve youth well-being and reduce substance misuse in Northern Wellington. In 2013 a grant application was submitted and later approved by the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) to allow this work to begin.

The original working group consisted of 15 member organizations who outlined the following priorities:

- 1) Reduce barriers and increase access to social and civic participation for youth in the towns and rural areas of Northern Wellington County.
- 2) Increase capacity among organizations in northern Wellington County to adapt, innovate, collaborate, and embrace sustainable ways of working together in order to achieve an improvement in youth resiliency.
- 3) Increase capacity of youth to advocate regarding issues and system delivery components that directly impact them.
- 4) Foster networks that strengthen the multi-sectoral coordination and collaboration around community-based asset development.



However, since the work we were setting out to do was based on a community-based asset development approach, it was critical that we speak to community members and get their feedback on the direction we should take. On February 21, 2015 a Community Forum was held to bring together community members, service providers, and relevant stakeholders. 33 individuals attended this event! Much conversation ensued about the various assets and gaps specific to youth in Minto, Mapleton and Wellington North Townships. Through these discussions, 5 priorities were identified and deemed to be the focus of the NWCYR:

- 1) Increase awareness of opportunities/programs/services through a communication plan ●
- 2) Increase collaboration and youth engagement by establishing a Youth Action Council ●
- 3) Increase accessibility of programs (cost, transportation, location) ●
- 4) Increase opportunities for community interaction (intergenerational/cross-community/inter-municipal) to nurture mutual respect and community asset development ●
- 5) Ensure momentum continues and build leadership support for initiatives by forming a "Glue Group" ●

Over the past 3 years, we have worked hard to meet these outcomes as well as others that have come up along the way. We did experience some changes in staffing and committee structure: Alison Vasey originally held the position of Community Youth Resiliency Worker and was followed by Gabriella Ieropoli in March 2016. The North Wellington Coalition for Youth Resiliency and North for Youth Community Group merged together to form North for Youth: a true community coalition made up of community members and service providers invested in positive youth development. Despite these changes, we have continued the work we set out to do and have surpassed original expectations!

# OTF Requirements

In receiving our 3 year grant from OTF, we were expected to meet specific targets. The following chart identifies both the impact indicators and our actual outcomes. Over the years, we have blended these indicators with the 5 priorities identified at our Community Forum.

Impact Indicator Type	Impact Indicator (s)	Indicator Target (s)	Targets Met and Surpassed
Result Indicator	# of unified, shared or integrated systems to better serve communities	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mapleton YAC</li><li>• Minto YAC</li><li>• WN YAC</li><li>• YAC Adult Allies</li><li>• YECOP</li><li>• Rural Youth Homelessness</li><li>• Youth Harm Reduction</li><li>• Intentional Self-Harm PAG</li><li>• Towards Common Ground</li><li>• Youth -Employer Engagement</li><li>• Happy Healthy Families</li></ul>
Outcome Indicator	# of new organizational, program or membership models that respond to community issues	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• North for Youth</li><li>• Truth About Youth Program</li></ul>



# Annual Initiatives

Over the course of the past 3 years, North for Youth has been involved in a number of initiatives throughout Minto, Mapleton and Wellington North. Below is a brief overview of some of annual initiatives we have facilitated and supported.

## Leaf Clean Up

- Fall 2016 & 2017
- Helen Edwards of the Seniors Centre for Excellence met with Gabby to see about ways of connecting youth and seniors. We came up with a leaf raking project.
- 18 students from Wellington Heights participated in 2017 and raked leaves for 21 seniors in Mount Forest.
- In 2017, we expanded the program to Arthur, Palmerston, and Drayton! Students from Norwell, Youth Options and Wellington Heights participated.



## Northern Wellington Youth Connections Day

- May 4, 2017
- 150 gr.10 students from Norwell and Wellington Heights attended
- The day was meant to inspire youth, connect them with local opportunities, and offer some practical workshops such as resume writing, stress relief, and getting involved in the skilled trades or as an entrepreneur!

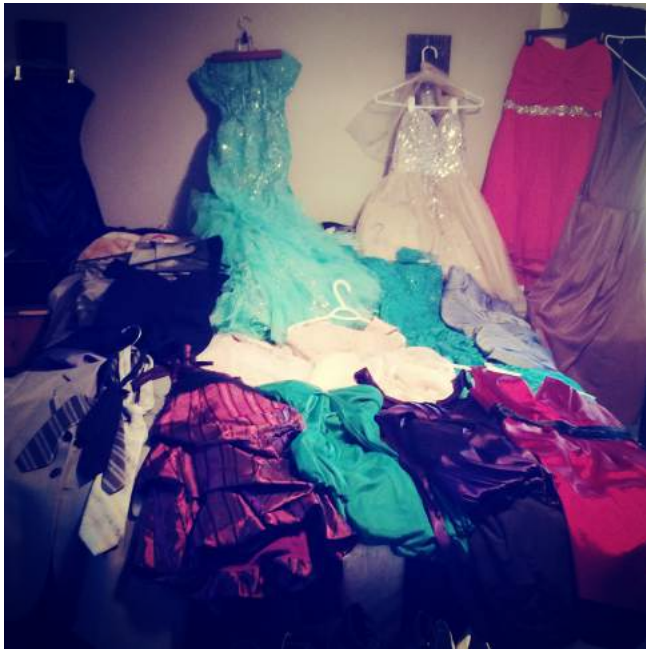


## Recruitment Fair

- March 2nd, 2017
- Together with our partners at Agilec, we organized a Recruitment Fair at WHSS
- 40 businesses and non-profits actively recruiting youth (paid or volunteer) in Mount Forest and Arthur attended
- Interviews took place on the spot! Hiring gaps were filled!

"The recruitment fair was a huge success because it offered an opportunity to build community connections between youth and local employers/non-profits.. Bringing the fair to the high school and allowing time for face-to-face meetings made it youth-friendly and engaging."

- Edit Giffen, Agilec



## Grad Attire Swap

- Spring 2017
- Graduation can be a stressful time of year for some families trying to make ends meet financially. So, Gabby put out a call for dresses, suits, and jewellery! The community generously responded and over 55 outfits were given to local youth!
- Next year, we will have a swap in order to include more people and reduce stigma

## Youth Week

- May 1-7
- Communities across Canada make a special effort to recognize the positive contributions of local youth during Youth Week
- Through our efforts we have brought attention to this week for the first time in northern Wellington!
- 50 youth attended events in 2015; 110 in 2016; and over 200 in 2017





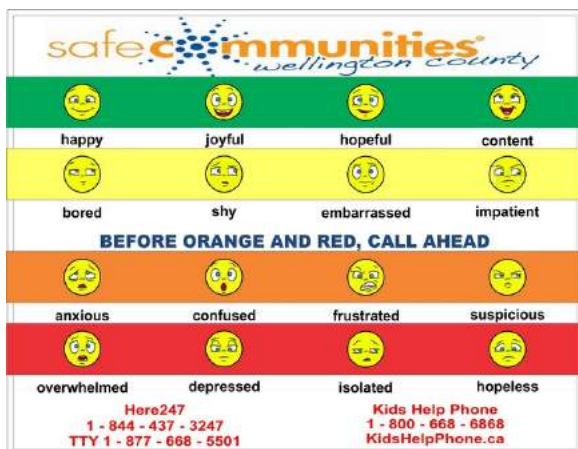
## Food Skills Workshops

- November 2016; December 2017
- 23 WHSS students enrolled in the "Raising Healthy Children" prepared lessons on Canada's Food Guide, portion size and making healthy snacks. They then went to Victoria Cross PS, delivered the lessons to all gr.1-8 classes and then they all prepared snacks together
- First time the two schools connected on a project like this
- Great leadership opportunity; hands-on application on what they are learning in school



## Safe TALK Workshop

- April 20, 2017
- A 3 hour workshop to prepare individuals to be a suicide-alert helper
- 11 individuals attended the workshop in Harriston; 4 participants were youth



## Teen Video Contest: Distract Driving

- February-April 2017
- 15-19% of all fatal crashes involving a teen driver are due to distracted driving
- We teamed up with Safe Communities to host a youth video contest in order to increase awareness of this prominent issue
- 22 videos were submitted



# Ongoing Initiatives

In addition to specific annual events, North for Youth has been actively engaged and involved in a number of ongoing engagement efforts.

## Youth Action Councils

A Youth Action Council is a youth-driven, grassroots initiative made up of local youth volunteers. Members have an opportunity to create change in their community and make a difference in the issues that affect youth.

37 Youth  
Members  
7 Adult Allies  
3,000 volunteer  
hours

## Mapleton

To establish a positive youth presence in Mapleton, that shapes the growth and future of our community through meaningful, youth participation

Projects: Youth of the Year, Chalk Fest, Minute to Win It Pizza Party, Norwell Self-Care Kits, Community Christmas Party

## Minto

The Minto Youth Action Council is working towards creating a positive environment for youth in our community to be empowered, use their voices and create meaningful change.

## Wellington North

To establish more opportunities for youth involvement in Wellington North so as to create a safe and empowering community that reflects a positive perception of youth!

Projects: YAC-tivities, Yoga & Martial Arts in the Park, Outdoor Movie Night, Human Trafficking Workshop, WHSS Self-Care kits, Haunted Trail.

Projects: Youth Dances, Amazing Race, Outdoor Movie Nights, MYAC Bursary, YOUth Should Know Community Boards.



# What does MYAC mean to you?

## A Personal Letter

When I first heard of the Minto Youth Action Council, I was unsure what to think. Walking into the building, I was a little bit intimidated. But I know now that I really shouldn't have been. From the beginning, being in MYAC was such a welcoming experience. We could make the program whatever we thought was the best fit for the youth in our town.

With the support that MYAC, and our adult allies, provided, we were able to bring our ideas for the town to life, whether it was to creating youth dances, and outdoor movies to bringing the youth together and giving them a safe place to engage with others in their town, or providing workshops that help sharpen the skills youth feel they need more practice with.

In the past year as a member of the council, I feel that I have personally grown as a leader in my town. Our meetings have helped me feel more confident in many ways. I now find it easy to suggest ideas because I know everyone will be supportive and help to make my ideas better. I feel comfortable working in large or small groups, and being a leader and a follower. Going to MYAC events has helped my leadership skills as it helped me think on my feet, and talk in front of crowds.

However, not only have my leadership skills improved in the typical way, they have in more unconventional ways as well. I feel more connected to my town, and all the people in it. I feel as though I can make an impact on my town, that my voice is heard, and that it has been for as long as I've been a part of MYAC and before then too.

This program brings forward thoughts and ideas that may never have been heard without MYAC, it shows kids that their opinion matters too, and that we don't have to wait until we are older, we can take action now.

Erin Raftis  
MYAC Member



# Truth About Youth Program

- *“Teenagers and alternative education students, especially, have a reputation of being bad people and the truth is we are good people capable of doing good things in our community” - Program Participant*
- Target populations: at-risk youth and seniors
- To date, students enrolled in the alternative education program at WHSS and Youth Options have worked on the following community betterment projects: leaf raking, painting playgrounds, yard work at churches, tree planting, building raised flower beds and an accessible ramp!



## Youth Engagement Community of Practice (YECOP)

- Purpose: To better collaborate and engage with colleagues, who work within Wellington County, with youth ages 12-24, using youth engagement strategies and methods.
- 4 meetings/year focused on networking and information sharing (ex. working with LGBTQ+ youth, mediation and conflict resolution with youth)
- Monthly YOUTh Should Know E-newsletter that includes information on events, initiatives, resources, and professional development opportunities available in Wellington County

**38** active members

**29** organizations represented

# Community Outreach Efforts

Meeting face-to-face with different groups of youth, organizations, and community groups has been a critical component of the CYRW role in order to best identify youth needs and community assets. The following is a list of some of the different groups we have connected with over the years to help us plan events, initiatives, and advise us on the direction of different projects (ex. how to create youth-friendly services).

- Youth Job Connection Program- Agilec
- Young and Parenting Program- CRC
- Social Equity & Civics Class at Wellington Heights Secondary School
- Interact Club at Norwell District Secondary School
- Youth Options
- Palmerston Public with Mayor Bridge
- Victoria Cross with Mayor Lennox
- Wellington North & Minto Safe Communities Committees
- Drayton Youth Centre
- The Upper Deck
- Minto Chamber BBQ
- Interviews with 88.7 The River, Mount Forest Mirror, The Confederate, Drayton Community News, Wellington Advertiser





# Research Projects

## 1) Rural Transportation Options

- North for Youth partnered with the UofG Research Shop
- Research purpose: Identify realistic options for addressing transportation barriers in rural communities

## 3) Youth Harm Reduction- Rural Wellington Focus

- The Youth Harm Reduction Committee partnered with the UofG Community Engaged Scholarship Institute
- Research purpose: Identify the unique needs of RURAL youth regarding substance misuse as well as identifying barriers to service
- One-on-one interviews were conducted with rural service providers AND youth focus groups were held with youth with lived experience

## 2) Program Sustainability Practices

- North for Youth partnered with the UofG Research Shop
- Research purpose: identify recommendations for sustainability planning and ways of involving youth in this process

## 4) Rural Youth Homelessness- Wellington County focus

- The Rural Youth Homelessness Committee partnered with the UofG Research Shop
- Research purpose: Identify best practices for addressing youth homelessness in rural communities
- The committee also conducted focus groups with youth with lived experience who are from Wellington County

NEW

# Youth Recognition Efforts

Each of the Youth Action Councils are finding creative ways of recognizing and acknowledging youth leaders in the community. In doing so, they are helping to increase awareness of the positive contributions that youth make to their community.

Mount Forest Chamber Excellence Awards

Young Citizen Award

Wellington North Youth Action Council



Youth of the Year  
Mapleton Youth Action Council

Youth Week Acknowledgements  
North for Youth



MYAC Bursary  
Minto Youth Action  
Council



# "It takes a VILLAGE"

Northern Wellington Youth  
Connections Day

YOUth Should Know E-  
newsletter

Mapleton  
Youth Action Council

H.O.P.E

Toward Common Ground

Truth About Youth Program

Pride & Prejudice

Youth Drop-In Clinic

WN Showcase

Minto  
Youth Action Council

North for Youth

Norwell LINK Days

Wellington County

Food Skills Workshops

Youth Engagement Community of Practice

Grad Attire Swap

YouthTALK Conference

Teen Distracted Driving  
Video Contest

Rural Volunteer Engagement

YACTivities

Happy Healthy Families

Outdoor Movie Nights

Youth Harm Reduction

Youth Forum

Drayton Farm Show

Amazing Race

Recruitment Fair

Wellington North  
Youth Action Council

Help, Hope, and Cope

Rural Youth Homelessness

Safe Communities ; Intentional Self-  
Harm

Minto Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

North for Youth Month

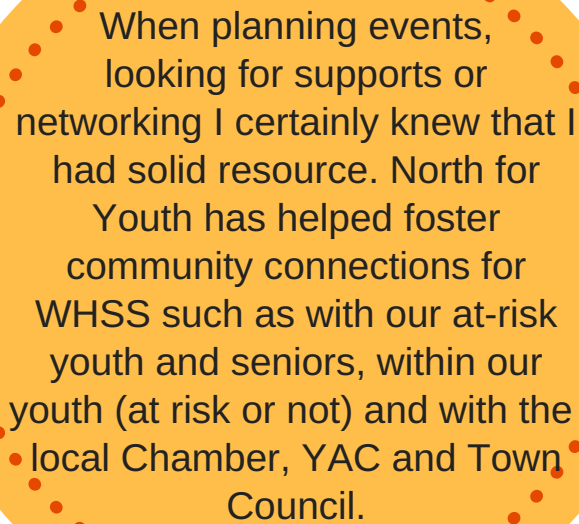
Youth Employer Engagement

Youth Skills Training Program

Creating Inclusive Spaces

Safe Communities Day

# How a CYRW supports communities



When planning events, looking for supports or networking I certainly knew that I had solid resource. North for Youth has helped foster community connections for WHSS such as with our at-risk youth and seniors, within our youth (at risk or not) and with the local Chamber, YAC and Town Council.

- Billie Gitter, UGDSB

While working as an Independent Facilitator with Facilitation Wellington Dufferin, I had the opportunity to work with a young person who, prior to becoming involved with North for Youth, had very little connection to other young people, or to community.

I watched as this young person grew more confident and began to form relationships; leading to a greater sense of purpose and excitement about being involved in community events, planning, and committees. Gabby accepted this young person without reservations, labels, or judgement, and helped MYAC create a space that was not only inclusive, but stronger and richer. Youth initiatives such as those that are being done every single day through North for Youth programming are what lay the groundwork for strong, resilient, and diverse communities now and for future generations.

- Kim Kool, FWD

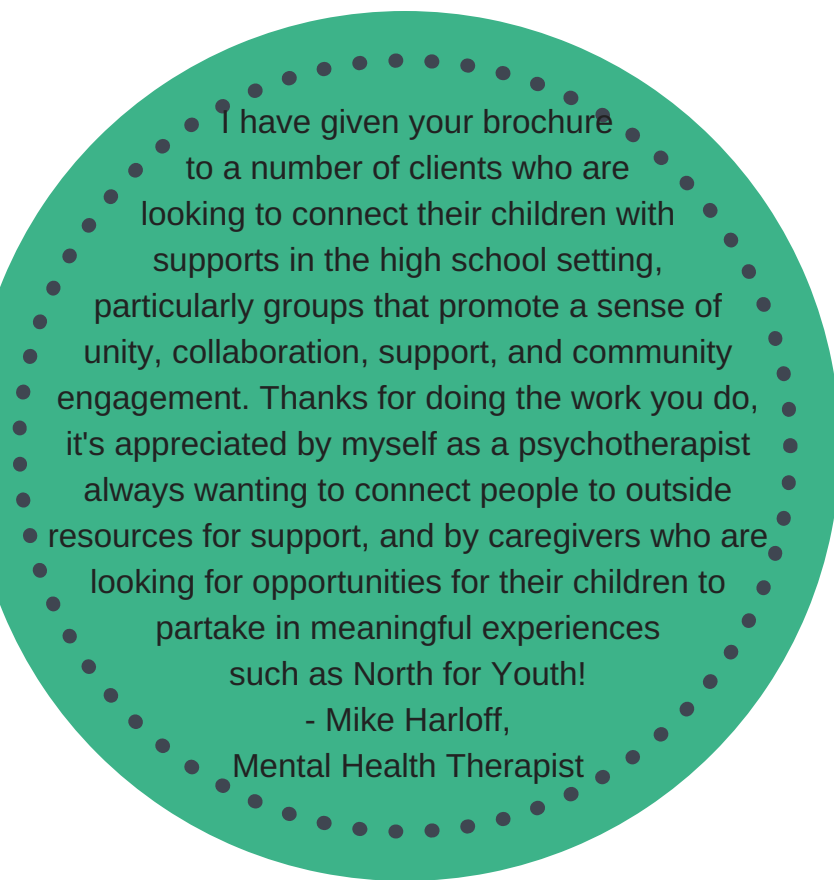
Two of the most frequent complaints I hear about living in rural communities is that there's nothing for youth to do and that there's not enough people volunteering to get things done. To be honest, in my various roles running youth productions for the local community theatre, as a member of the town's Cultural Round Table, and, now, as an Adult Ally for the Minto Youth Action Council, I've always wondered why these two complaints didn't cancel each other out more often.

Now, having worked with Gabby Ieropoli, I realize that that's because we didn't have a Community Youth Resiliency Worker before. In Minto, Gabby has played a vital motivating role in galvanizing all the various groups and people interested in making the town more accessible and friendly for youth to actually take action on the issue. The Youth Action Council which has now been formed is a vital part of bringing more youth oriented events to the area, but is, perhaps even more importantly, a way to bridge the gap between the youth who want to be involved and the community groups who are looking for that involvement and buy-in from the youth.

In my experience, it isn't so much that rural communities lack the interest or desire to engage with the younger generation, or that the younger generation isn't willing to be engaged, it's more that the two groups don't communicate effectively with each other. Gabby, in her role as Youth Resiliency Worker, has been able to fill in that gap and create those connections, and is the reason we have an active and growing Youth Action Council in Minto. But even beyond that, Gabby provides our Youth Action Council with connections to other groups outside of Minto, including nearby YAC's that we have been able to partner with for specific events, but also organizations that are interested in sponsoring those events. The biggest impact of the Community Youth Resiliency Worker has been in bringing widely spread interests and resources together, and in a lot of ways, bringing that sense of community to any number of youth who used to think that their home town had nothing to offer them.

- Megan Raftis, Community Champion





I am particularly inspired by how Gabby facilitated the youth projects where they helped seniors with things such as yard work and building an accessible deck. This not only showed value to the seniors but really instilled self-worth in the youth. Many area seniors and municipal leaders have spoken to me about the value she brings in her leadership of the youth in bringining out their abilities to contribute to the community, build self-esteem and gain construcive experience for future jobs

- Teri White, Office of John Nater, MP  
Perth-Wellington

The CYRW has been responsible for spearheading and maintaining many wonderful initiatives in Wellington County. Through the dedicated work of the CYRW and North for Youth we have experienced the following benefits:

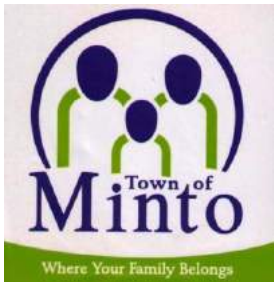
- 1) Increased opportunities to participate in numerous no cost or low cost youth focused training
  - 2) Increased number of community events providing 2nd Chance the opportunity to share resources with youth and the public
  - 3) Up to date, relevant information on youth via the creation of the "YOUth Should Know" newsletter to share with shared with staff and clients
  - 4) Consistent, productive networking at the Wellington County Youth Engagement Community of Practice committee (developed and organized by the CYRW)
  - 5) Increased collaboration and positive "vibe" between service providers, municipalities, community members and youth
- Michelle Dally, 2nd Chance



# Thank you!

Thank you to all of our amazing community partners who are helping us to achieve our mandate:

*TOGETHER with our community partners, we are helping to build communities where youth have ample opportunities and options to pursue personal, educational, vocational, social and health-related goals that will form a foundation for a HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE.*



Mount Forest  
Family Health Team



Homewood  
Health Centre



Association canadienne  
pour la santé mentale  
Waterloo Wellington  
Dufferin

Agilec™



Upper Grand

Family Health Team



Ontario  
Trillium  
Foundation

An agency of the Government of Ontario.



Fondation  
Trillium  
de l'Ontario

Relève du gouvernement de l'Ontario.