

A Narrative Exploration of Aboriginal Youth Involved in a Youth-driven Program

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The aim of this qualitative study is to explore how Aboriginal youth both act and perceive themselves as agents of change in relation to having participated in programs that promote their engagement and strive to contribute to a greater social change movement. The study explores the following research question: “What narratives emerge, and are co-constructed, when exploring the experience of Aboriginal youth who engage in youth development programs aimed at fostering youth engagement?” Inspired by a Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) framework, this study embraces the strength of youth by conducting research with, as opposed to on, youth. Through narrative methodology, in-depth interviews were first conducted to explore how Aboriginal youth (a) become engaged in programs that promote youth engagement, (b) experience the process of their engagement in such programs, and (c) perceive the impact of their engagement on their personal development and their community. Participants were Aboriginal youth from the Canadian arctic (Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut) aged 18-24 who had participated in a Motivate Canada program called ACTIVATE that fosters youth engagement. Using ‘The Listening Guide’ as a tool for analysis, narratives were co-constructed to reflect each participant's experience. Documents, such as community profiles and archives, were used to assist in further contextualizing participant stories. Preliminary results are presented in the form of case studies, and implications for practice and future research considered.