



Connecting
the
Dots



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Port Alberni
Mental health for all



Looking back at Connecting the Dots: Port Alberni

A four-year innovative urban Aboriginal youth mental health project

2014

Objectives of Connecting the Dots

Connecting the Dots was an innovative project which sought to promote the mental health of urban Aboriginal youth and families by mobilizing the community to address risk and protective factors influencing mental health.

The project had three overall goals:



To improve urban
Aboriginal mental health



To adapt the Communities
That Care model to the
urban Aboriginal context



To initiate and sustain a long term
partnership between the Canadian
Mental Health Association and
Aboriginal Friendship Centres

The numbers

774
target
population

966
service
providers

361
general
public

Key Port Alberni risk and protective factors

Key risk factors

- Low parental involvement
- Low emotional attachment to parents or caregivers
- High level of family disruption
- Exposure to violence and conflict in the family
- Involvement with drugs and alcohol
- Poor academic performance
- Social rejection
- Anti-social beliefs and attitudes
- Diminished economic opportunities

Key protective factors

- Family attachment
- Opportunity and reward for prosocial involvement
- Belief in moral order

Port Alberni partners

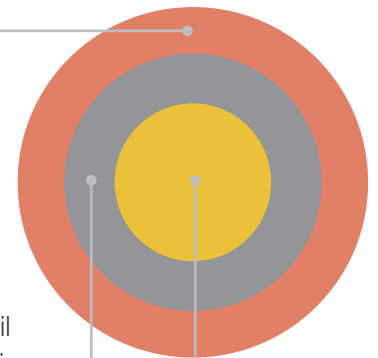
Partners

Ts'ishaa7ath First Nations;
Alberni Community and
Women's Services Society;
Ministry of Children and
Family Development; Port
Alberni Shelter; Ministry
of Social Development;
Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council
USMA Family and Child Services

Community Advisory Board, Community Elders

Connecting the Dots core team

Shelley Poole, Connecting the Dots Coordinator;
Darlene Leonew, Cultural Advisor; Cyndi Stevens,
Executive Director, Port Alberni Friendship Center;
Bob Hargreaves, Executive Director, CMHA Port
Alberni Branch



Key Port Alberni interventions

- Youth and Elders Gatherings
- Cultural camps
- Switchback
- Sports camps

Key Port Alberni findings

Youth and Elders gatherings

“The good feeling of positivity in storytelling and community involvement.” —Elder

“Hearing the Elders share their stories.”
—Youth

Switchback

“There were moments where we went back and noticed my personal success and I believe this workshop will help me get more personal success.”



Cultural camps

“The Cultural Camp was a good experience. I liked listening to the Elders in the morning, listening to their stories and their drumming and singing. Listening to the Elders words of wisdom put a warm feeling to my heart. Although their drumming and singing almost put me to sleep, it's not because I was bored, I was relaxed and enjoyed their voices and the beat of their drums echoing in the trees. Children, youth, teenagers even adults need to sit and listen more often to what their Elders have to say and teach.”

“Cultural Camp was an extraordinary experience for me. It taught me a lot about respecting others and just listening to what anybody has to say. Keeping your ears and heart open. To understand what others are feeling and to just have some fun every once in a while because time is very precious. I really enjoyed the Camp. I wish we could've stayed longer but that's just my opinion, maybe it's just because I missed camping, but it was lots of fun.”



Lessons learned

- Activities should include the whole family
- Building trust and relationships is essential and takes time
- Community engagement and key leader champions are very important for success
- Cultural competency of all stakeholders is vital



Art by Aboriginal artist Jamin Zuroski, representing culturally relevant adaptations for Communities That Care

Cultural adaptations

- Followed cultural protocol, respected wisdom and followed teachings of Elders
- Included whole community, including Elders, families, adults, youth and children
- Adapted youth survey to be culturally relevant
- Use of meaningful language
- Followed Tribal Best Practices

Cost of project in Port Alberni

over \$400,000

www.cmha.bc.ca/connectingthedots