

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT – JANUARY, 2014

Frog Hollow's Frames Film Project

Evaluation by:

McCreary Centre Society
3552 East Hastings Street
Vancouver, BC V5K 2A7
www.mcs.bc.ca
evaluation@mcs.bc.ca



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BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Frog Hollow's Frames Film Project is a film production and life skills program for youth ages 16 to 24 who have been affected by mental health issues and/or substance use challenges. The initiative provides opportunities for participants to learn the basics of film production, gain life-skills, and create their own short films that express their thoughts and ideas for change. The program includes film-production workshops and mentorship, and a film screening and community dialogue event at the end of each cycle.

McCreary Centre Society carried out an independent evaluation of the Frames Film Project from March, 2012 to January, 2014. During this time, there were three project cycles which lasted between three and eight months, as well as two three-day workshops that took place in the summer of 2012 and 2013. A total of 112 participants started the program and 67 completed it.

The evaluation assessed the degree to which Frames addressed stigma and increased awareness of living with mental health disorders and/or addictions; facilitated youth participants' access to needed supports and resources; increased youths' skills in a number of areas (e.g., conflict-resolution, communication, teamwork, film-making); and improved their psychosocial functioning (overall mood, hopefulness, sense of competence, community engagement).

McCreary also provided a three-hour evaluation workshop to Frog Hollow staff in February, 2013, and offered evaluation consultation on other Frog Hollow projects.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation involved a mixed-methods approach of surveys, feedback forms, and focus groups. Participation was voluntary, and data collection and reporting were confidential and anonymous so that individual participants could not be personally identified.

Surveys

Confidential surveys were developed with Frog Hollow staff. Items used successfully in other McCreary surveys were adapted for this project and new items were added, including items from the Community Action Initiative toolkit for creating a project evaluation plan, and information that Frog Hollow was interested in collecting. Surveys were distributed to youth at the start of their involvement in the project (Time 1) and at the end of their participation cycle (Time 2). The purpose was to measure changes over time using a repeated-measures design. Participants were randomly assigned a unique ID number when they completed a Time 1 survey, and were given the same ID number at Time 2, so their responses on both surveys could be statistically compared to assess changes over time.

The intake survey (Time 1) provided information on participants' experiences with bullying and discrimination, as well as substance use and mental health challenges. Items also tapped meaningful engagement in activities, community connectedness, and the various supports and services that youth accessed. Demographic items (e.g., cultural background, age, gender) were also included. A total of 51 youth completed an intake survey.

The final survey (Time 2), which youth completed at the end of their participation cycle, was similar to the intake survey. Items were also included that directly asked participants how much their involvement in Frames helped to increase their awareness and to reduce stigma; led to skill-development in various areas (conflict-resolution, leadership, communication, teamwork, project planning, project delivery, film-making); and improved their social and emotional functioning (overall mood, hopefulness, self-esteem, sense of competence, self-awareness, ability to cope with life challenges, community engagement, access to needed supports). Further, items tapped participants' overall satisfaction with the program, and asked for their feedback and suggestions. A total of 33 youth completed a final survey.

A brief survey was also developed for youth participants who took part in the three-day Frames workshops. This survey was distributed at the end of the workshop to assess how much participants gained from the experience. Ten youth completed this survey.

Feedback forms

A brief feedback form was developed for attendees of the Film Screening and Community Dialogue events which took place at the end of each participation cycle. The form asked attendees to rate their satisfaction with the event and to provide comments and feedback. A total of 18 attendees completed a feedback form at these events. Most (72%) were females and they ranged in age from 14 to 25 or older. Attendees who completed a form included project staff, other support staff, project partners, Frames participants, and other members of the community.

Focus groups and interviews

Two focus groups took place with youth participants (15 youth total), and Frog Hollow staff and project partners took part in individual interviews (3 total). Youth and staff discussed their experiences taking part in the Frames project, any impacts of the project on participants and the community, how much the project contributed to the body of knowledge on topics related to youth mental health and addictions, and lessons learned.

Logic Model



FINDINGS

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Findings in this section are based on the intake survey that 51 youth completed at the start of Cycles 1 through 3 of the Frames Film Project. The purpose of this survey was to gain a better understanding of participants' experiences and psychosocial functioning before becoming involved in Frames.

Age and Gender

Participants ranged in age from 16 to 24, and their average age was 20.2 years. Fifty-five percent were male, 35% were female, and 10% provided another response (e.g., transgender).

Cultural Diversity

Participants most commonly identified as European (36%), Aboriginal/First Nations (34%), East Asian (20%), or/and Latin American (10%).

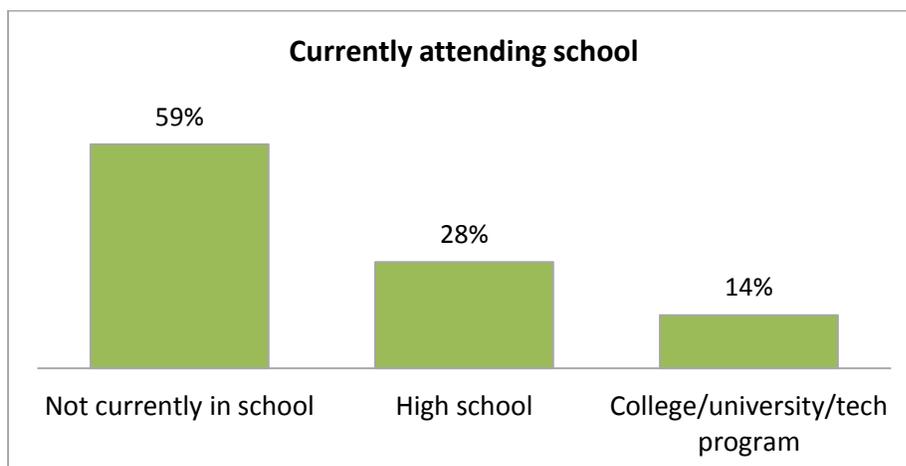
Most (92%) indicated living in Canada their entire lives, whereas the rest lived in the country between two and 10 years. The majority of youth (58%) spoke only English at home, while the others spoke another language sometimes (18%) or most of the time (24%).

Sexual Orientation

Participants most commonly identified as completely heterosexual (69%) or mostly heterosexual (11%), whereas a small minority identified as bisexual or gay/lesbian (numbers too small to report). Nine percent were questioning their sexual orientation, and the rest indicated a sexual orientation not included among the list of options (e.g., pansexual).

Work and School

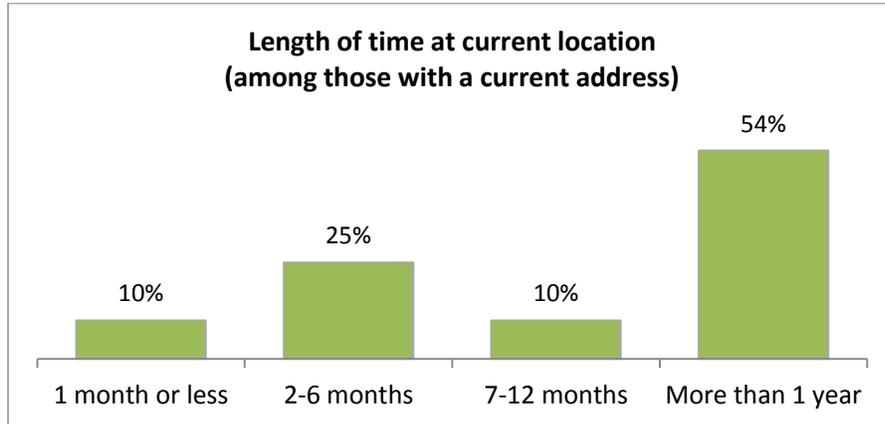
Around 42% of youth were currently attending school and 31% were employed, with similar rates for males and females.



Note. Percentages exceed 100% due to rounding.

Living Situation

Most youth (60%) had not moved in the past six months. Those who did move most commonly reported doing so between one and three times. Virtually all youth indicated having a current address, and they most commonly reported living at their current location for more than a year.

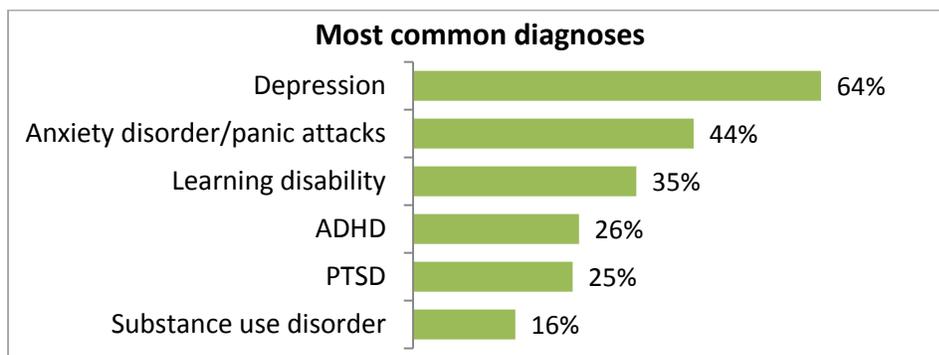


Note: Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding.

Twenty-nine percent of participants had been in government care (group home or foster home) at some point in their lives, with 13% having had this experience in the past year. Around 1 in 4 (24%) had been on a Youth Agreement at some point, with 9% having been on one in the past year.

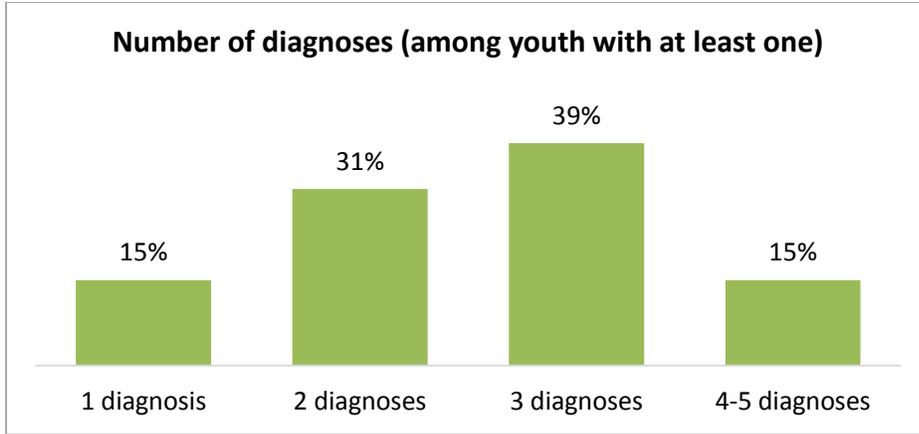
Physical and Mental Health

When asked about mental health conditions or disabilities they had been diagnosed with, 77% indicated having at least one diagnosis. The most common were depression or/and anxiety. Rates of the various diagnoses were comparable among males and females, with the exception of anxiety disorder (69% of females vs. 23% of males).



Note: Youth could mark more than one diagnosis.

Youth who had a diagnosis reported between one and five diagnoses, and they most commonly indicated having three. There were no differences between males and females in number of diagnoses.



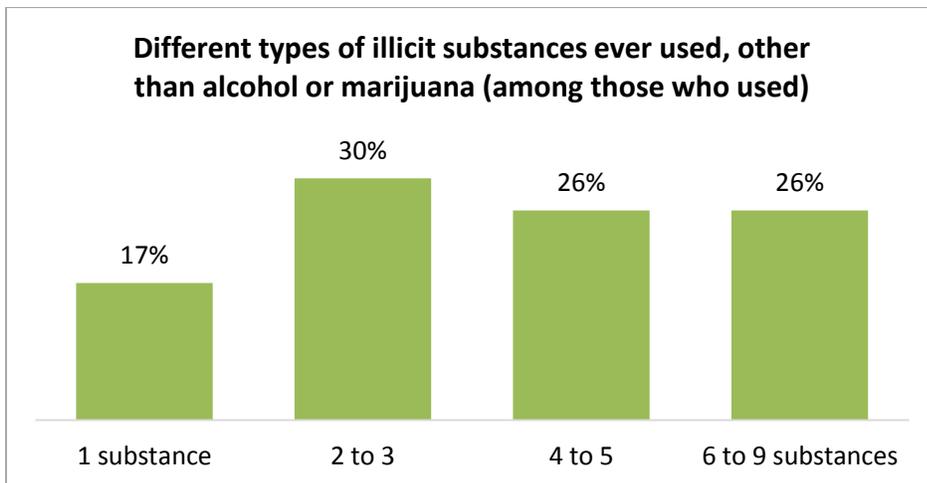
Fifty percent of youth reported having a mental health condition that prevented them from taking part in activities their peers engaged in (i.e., a limiting condition). Participants also had limiting learning disabilities (28%), long-term illnesses (10%), or/and physical disabilities (10%). Among those with a limiting condition, 38% had two or more, with similar rates for males and females. Fifty-six percent of participants with a limiting condition reported that their condition was visible to others at least sometimes.

Substance Use

Most participants (88%) reported drinking alcohol at some point, and 58% of these youth had drunk in the past month. Forty-two percent had engaged in binge drinking in the past month, defined in the survey as having five or more drinks of alcohol in a row.

In addition, the majority of participants (79%) had ever used marijuana, with 43% of these youth having used in the past month.

Forty-five percent had used other illicit substances at some point, including mushrooms (38%), cocaine (33%), ecstasy (31%), prescription pills without a doctor’s consent (25%), inhalants (19%), hallucinogens (19%), or/and speed (13%). Youth who used substances other than alcohol or marijuana reported using between one and nine different drugs at some point in their lives. Virtually none reported using these substances in the past month.

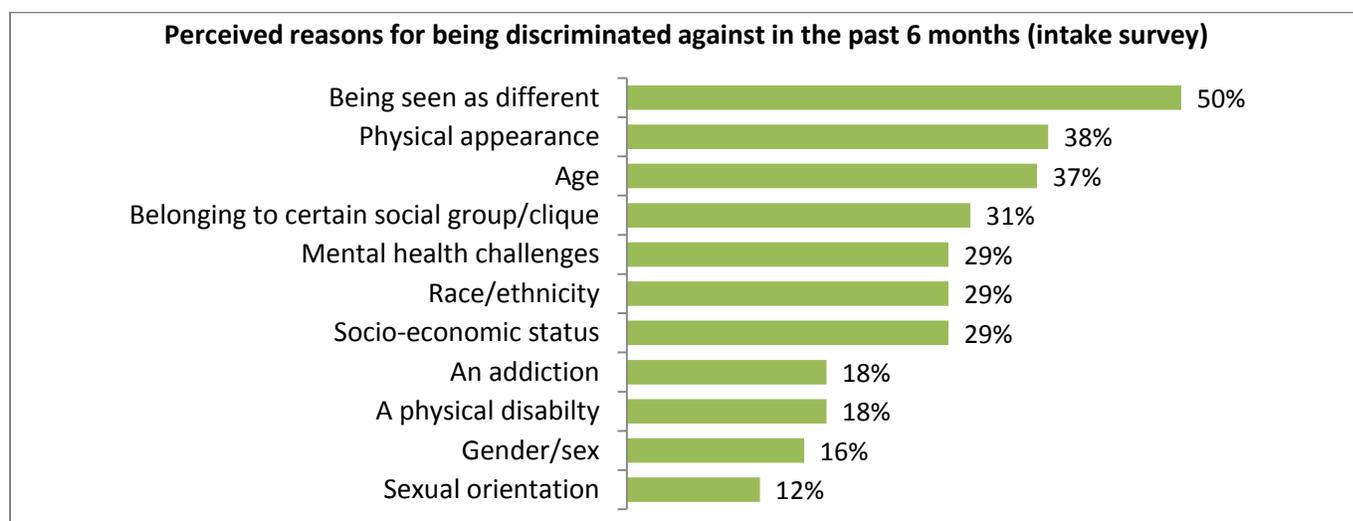


Bullying and Discrimination

The majority of youth (79%) had been bullied in the six months before starting Frames. Most (74%) had been teased, 55% had been socially excluded, 28% physically assaulted, and 30% cyber-bullied. Further, youth who were bullied commonly reported that these experiences happened more than once in the past six months. Rates were similar for males and females.

Participants also reported teasing (33%), excluding others (23%), and cyber-bullying others (13%) in the last six months. Youth who were victims of bullying were also more likely to be perpetrators than those who were not victims.

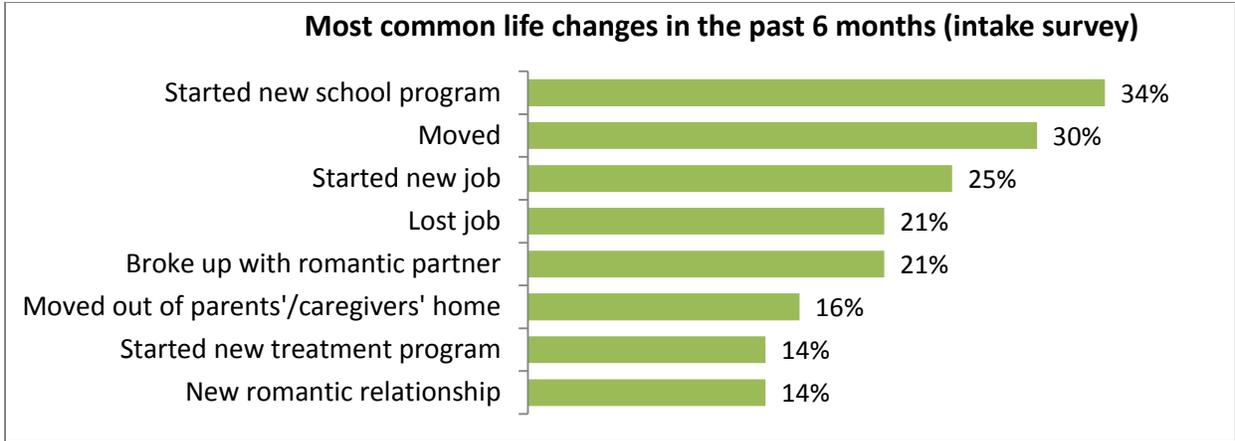
In addition, participants indicated reasons they thought they had been discriminated against or treated unfairly in the past six months. The most commonly perceived reasons were being seen as different, their physical appearance, or/and their age. Twenty-nine percent identified discrimination because of a mental health challenge they had, and 18% reported discrimination due to an addiction (or because people thought they had an addiction).



Also, some youth reported discriminating against others in the past six months, most commonly on the basis of the social group or clique the person belonged to (19%), a perceived addiction they had (17%), or/and their age (15%).

Major Life Changes

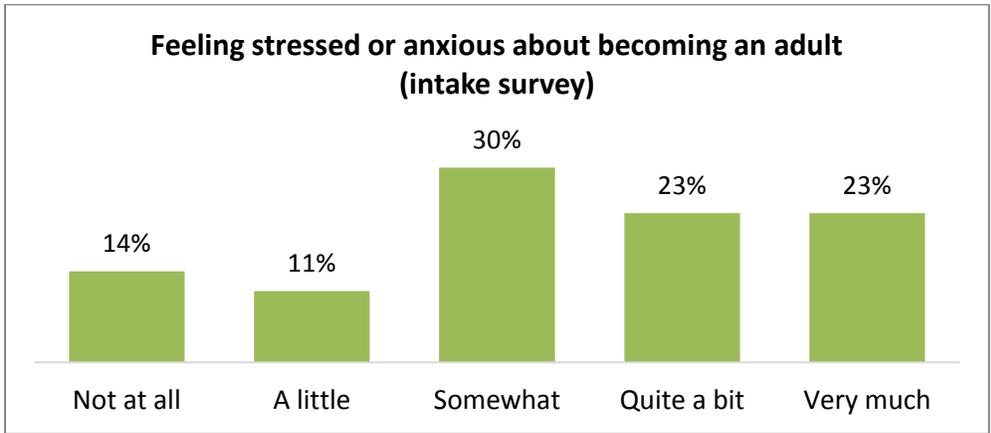
Most youth (75%) reported major changes in their lives in the six months before starting Frames. The most common included starting a new school program and moving from one living accommodation to another. There were no gender differences in rates of experiencing these changes.



Note: Participants could choose more than one response.

Transitioning to Adulthood

Most participants (76%) indicated feeling at least somewhat stressed about becoming an adult. When asked what becoming an adult meant to them, many expressed mixed feelings about transitioning to adulthood. For example, they listed positive aspects such as growth, exciting experiences, and being treated as an equal. However, they also identified negative aspects such as experiencing more stress that comes with increased responsibilities, and receiving less support from others.



FRAMES FILM PROJECT

Program Overview

“This program helped me out of a tough time.”

Youth participants, staff, and project partners described the Frames Film Project as a program for young people, ages 16 to 24, with mental health and/or substance use challenges. Participants not only created films but also learned life skills (e.g., employability skills, conflict resolution), both indirectly through the process of film making and directly through skills workshops.

Staff added that youth in the program met once a week, and participants voiced appreciation about meeting and getting to know new people through the program. Staff said that the program helped to foster participants’ self-confidence and that those involved in the program became a “big creative family” that supported one another in a safe environment. Additionally, youth said that the informal and relaxed atmosphere helped participants to feel more at ease.

Participants felt that the Frames Film Project was different from other programs they had taken part in. For example, some said that their involvement in Frames was their first exposure to film production, while those who had been in other film programs said that Frames gave them more creative control and freedom to express themselves than other programs they had been involved in.

Participant Recruitment

“I want to have a voice through film.”

Project partners felt that Frames staff were successful at recruiting very diverse groups of youth, both in terms of their experiences with mental health and/or substance use challenges as well as their cultural backgrounds and mix of ages. Participants said they embraced the diversity within the group and accepted one another for who they were.

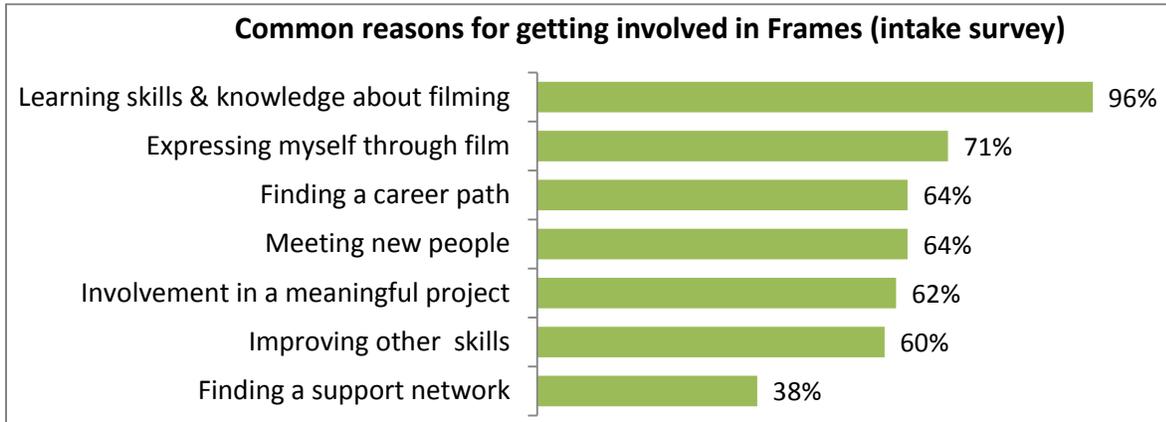
In terms of strategies for recruiting participants, staff said that it was effective to talk to groups of youth whenever possible. Recruitment avenues included youth group meetings (e.g., at Directions and Gab Youth); word of mouth from youth who had been in the program; through counsellors on Frog Hollow’s advisory committee; and through other organizations that had somewhat similar programs. These other organizations also provided Frames staff with advice and support, and Frames staff tried reciprocating whenever possible.

Staff and youth explained that a counsellor or adult mentor had to provide a reference for youth who were interested in taking part in the program. Staff said that the person providing the reference often had useful suggestions and strategies on how to work effectively with the young person, which the youth themselves may have been unable to articulate. This individual was also available to assist the program coordinator in supporting a given participant in emergency situations.

Some youth talked about how the intake process was intimidating because of the reference they had to get, as well as the interview. They felt it would be a barrier to someone who did not have an adult support, or who was shy or inexperienced with interviews. Other youth, however, felt that these components were important for ensuring that participants were genuinely interested

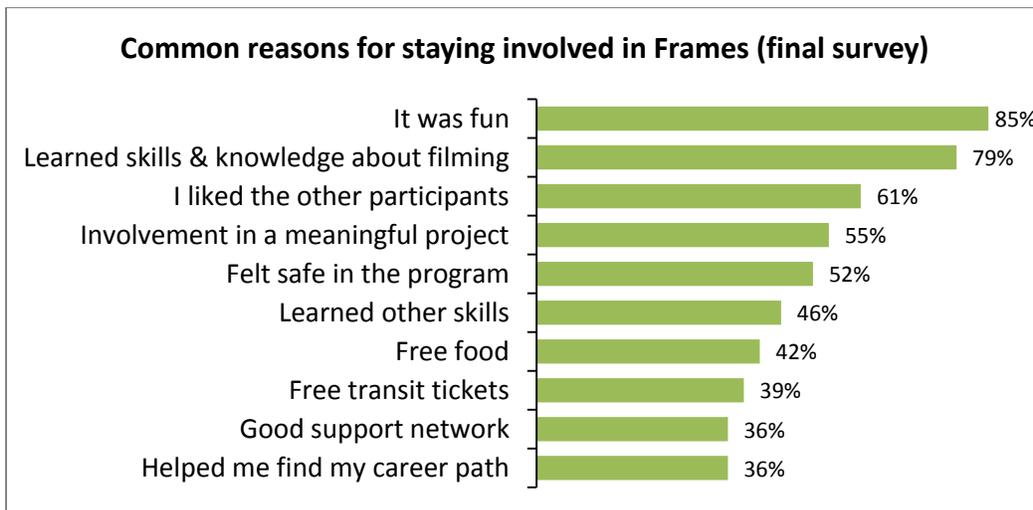
in the program. They added that interview skills were important to practice because they would be needed to secure employment in the future.

Participants said that young people may have initially been motivated to take part in Frames because of the HD camera that each participant received. Many felt that receiving the camera was an important incentive for young people who did not know what to expect from the program or who were apprehensive about taking part.



Staying Engaged

Participants agreed that although receiving the cameras may have been a good motivation for getting involved in the program, it was not the reason they stayed involved. One stated that “it’s the experience that’s the greatest part.” Youth who completed a final survey most commonly reported staying involved in the program because it was fun and because they learned skills and knowledge about filming.



Staff highlighted the importance of recognizing the contributions and personal achievements of each participant. For example, staying engaged in Frames for two months was the longest that some participants had ever committed to a program, which was important to acknowledge.

Addressing Mental Health and Substance Use Challenges

“I was having problems coping with substances. Frames is not a temporary solution, it created stability in my life.”

Youth said that mental health and substance use challenges were addressed through the program. Most participants felt that Frames gave them the space to directly discuss their own challenges during check-ins, but they did not feel forced into talking about them. Some remarked that they had initially felt uncomfortable talking about mental health and substance use issues because of the stigma associated with these topics, but that over the course of their involvement in the program they became increasingly comfortable talking about these issues.

Youth also pointed out that participants who felt uncomfortable talking directly about their mental health or substance use challenges were able to express their feelings and thoughts in an indirect and non-threatening way through the process of creating their films. Some also commented that taking part in Frames three hours every week was a good distraction from their day-to-day struggles.

Project Partners

Staff explained that Frog Hollow’s Advisory Committee has many partners who were instrumental in getting the Frames program started (e.g., Vancouver Coastal Health, Nexus, Gab Youth, Vancouver School Board). Other partners involved in Frames have included Directions and Reel Youth, as well as Intersections Media and Kaleidoscope which run similar programs to Frames and have provided the program with support and referrals.

Killarney Secondary School was also a partner in the last year, and Frames was granted access to film throughout the school thanks to a film-making and drama teacher there. The films shot at the school were later shared with 100 Grade 8 students.

Frog Hollow staff felt that their project partners have been very helpful and supportive. Even when partner agencies have run programs similar to Frames, there has been support and collaboration rather than competition.

Frog Hollow staff and project partners agreed that working in partnership “builds community” and is mutually beneficial. Frog Hollow staff added that another advantage of partnering with other agencies is that participants can continue working with those organizations after the Frames program has ended.

Project partners who were involved in the evaluation felt very satisfied with their partnership with Frames. They said that it enabled them to work with amazing young people and to have a positive effect on their lives. They voiced interest in maintaining their partnership with Frames.

CHANGES OVER TIME

“My life has changed to be way more productive and exciting.”

Participants completed similar surveys at intake into the program (Time 1) and at the end of the program (Time 2). Repeated measures analyses were carried out to assess if there were any changes over time in participants’ thoughts, feelings, psychosocial functioning and behaviours.

These analyses only included youth who completed both surveys. Due to a relatively small number (16 participants) who completed both surveys and were assigned ID numbers that could be tracked over time, many of the repeated-measures results were not statistically significant due to insufficient statistical power. When Time 1 and Time 2 comparisons are reported, the results reflect statistically significant differences.

Youth were also asked directly at Time 2 how much they felt their involvement in Frames contributed to changes in various areas of their lives. These analyses included all youth who completed a Time 2 survey (and not only those who completed both surveys).

Improved Knowledge and Skills

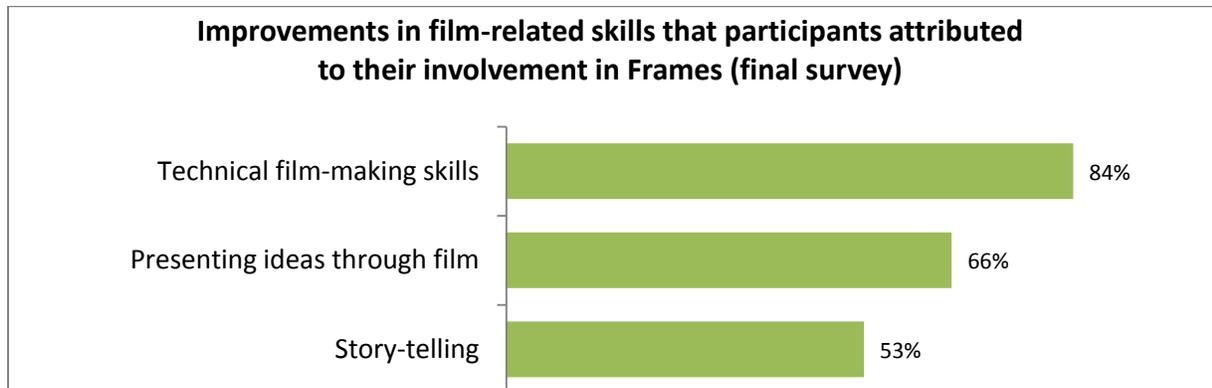
The majority of youth who completed a final survey (97%), as well as focus group participants, reported gaining valuable skills and knowledge through their involvement in Frames.

Film-related skills

“Every avenue of film was taught; I feel like I got a lot of education.”

Participants discussed acquiring knowledge of the film industry and learning technical skills through Frames. Staff and project partners elaborated that youth gained technical skills in writing, directing, shooting, editing and sound, as well as skills in storytelling and distributing short films.

Staff said that they assigned each youth a professional role based on his or her strengths and interests, including director, make-up artist, and other film crew roles. Youth then did on-line research about the different duties connected to their role, so they would know what their responsibilities were.



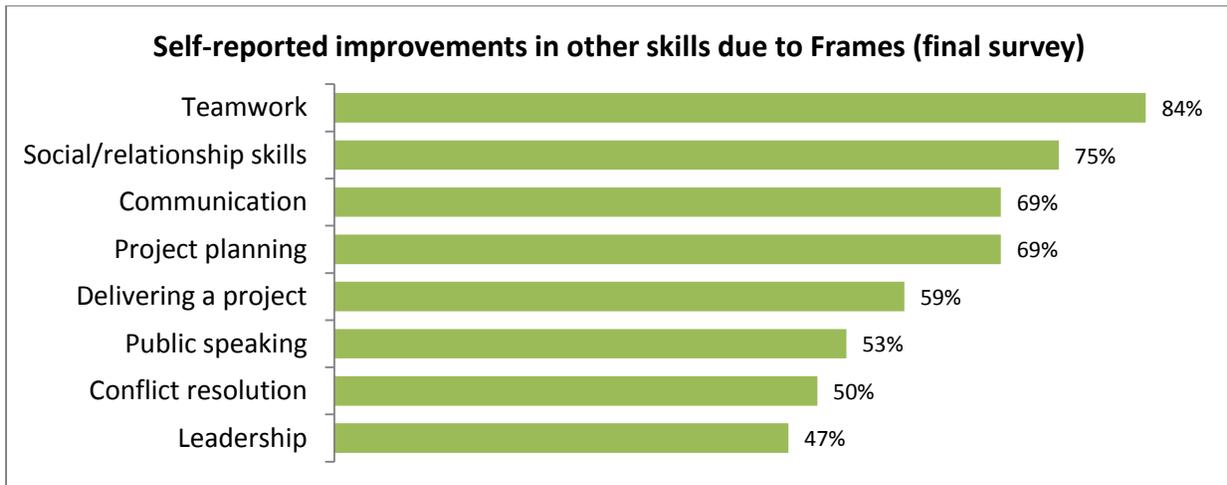
Other skills

“Frames taught me more about teamwork than anything else.”

Youth, staff and project partners also reported improvements in participants’ social/relationship skills and their skills in communication, conflict-resolution, teamwork, project-planning, goal-setting, and public speaking. Many youth who took part in the three-day workshops also felt they gained skills and knowledge in these areas.

A number of participants felt that the ‘compliment circle’ was an activity that contributed to team-building and improved teamwork. They explained that participants and facilitators shared something they liked or appreciated about someone else in the group, and everyone had something complimentary said about them. They added that the activity helped to foster healthy communication among participants.

Youth also said that their participation in Frames taught them the importance of humour to lighten the mood, as well as the importance of adaptability, flexibility and patience.



Knowledge and attitudes around mental health and addictions

“Before Frames, I never realized the story of the struggles other people had to go through.”

Youth said that Frames helped to improve their knowledge and attitudes around mental health and addiction issues. They added that guest speakers were invited to talk about discrimination and stigma, which helped to increase participants’ awareness of these issues.

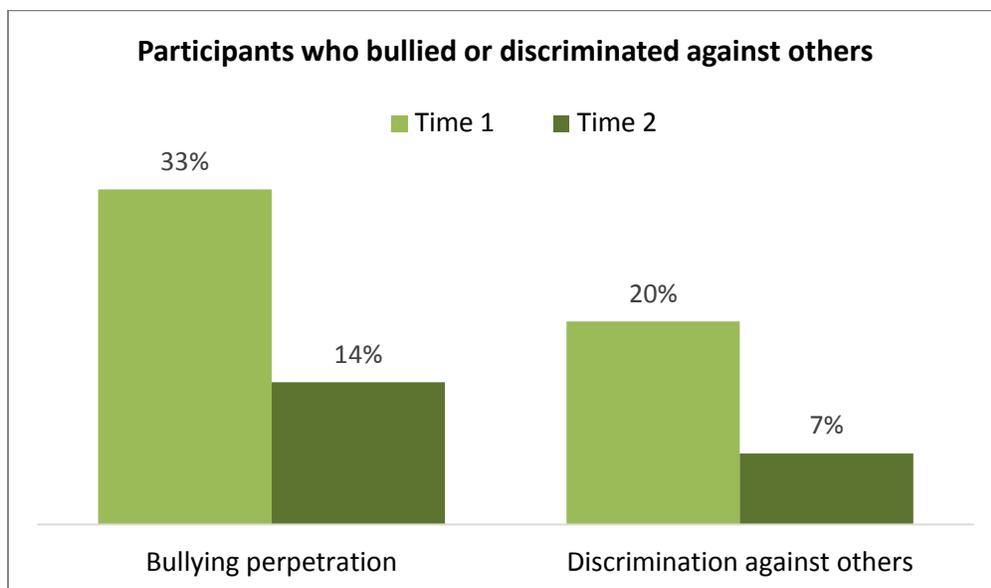
Some participants elaborated that their involvement in Frames gave them a better understanding of how these challenges can affect people in different ways. As a result, they were less judgmental and had greater sympathy toward others with mental health and substance use challenges. They were also better able to communicate with these individuals because of their greater understanding.

Others commented that involvement in the program helped them to better understand and accept their own challenges.

Around half of youth who completed a final survey (47%) indicated that they learned skills through Frames that will help them increase others' awareness of mental health problems and addictions.

Reduced Discrimination and Bullying Behaviours

In addition to improvements in attitudes, evaluation results indicated improved behaviours. Specifically, participants were less likely to report bullying and discriminating against others at the end of the program than at the start.



Mental Health

“Frames changed me to be more sociable and trust people. I had a lot of anxiety before, and now I feel way less anxious.”

Most participants reported at least a little improvement in their overall mood (94%) because of their involvement in Frames. Staff and project partners agreed that Frames contributed to improvements in participants' emotional and social functioning. They noted that youth who did not initially talk during the sessions became more talkative and sociable over time, and seemed to feel more comfortable and content. Some youth said that their experience in the program helped them to overcome their shyness and to develop trust in people.

Another comment from staff and project partners was that participants “went from a fearful and ashamed place...to a place of empowerment and strength.” Similarly, participants expressed pride in what Frames had helped them to accomplish.

Most participants also reported on the final survey that their involvement in Frames improved their self-awareness (94%) and their ability to cope with life challenges (84%).

Self-confidence and sense of competence

“I have a lot of self-confidence due to opportunities I've had at Frames.”

“I actually saw what I was capable of doing.”

Most youth (97%) indicated on the final survey that their involvement in Frames helped to improve their self-confidence at least a little. Further, repeated-measures analyses showed an improvement in self-confidence from Time 1 to Time 2.

Similarly, focus group participants said that their involvement in the program helped to increase their self-confidence. They felt supported to step outside their comfort zone to try new experiences in a safe environment. Staff and project partners also pointed out that participants engaged in less “negative self-talk” over the course of their involvement in the program. They said that other participants in the group would address and challenge their peers’ negative self-talk and would turn it into positive statements, which helped to increase their self-esteem.

Most participants (93%) also reported on the final survey that their involvement in Frames helped to improve their sense of competence at least a little (with 67% reporting ‘quite a bit’ or ‘very much’ improvement). Repeated measures analyses also indicated an improvement in sense of competence over time.

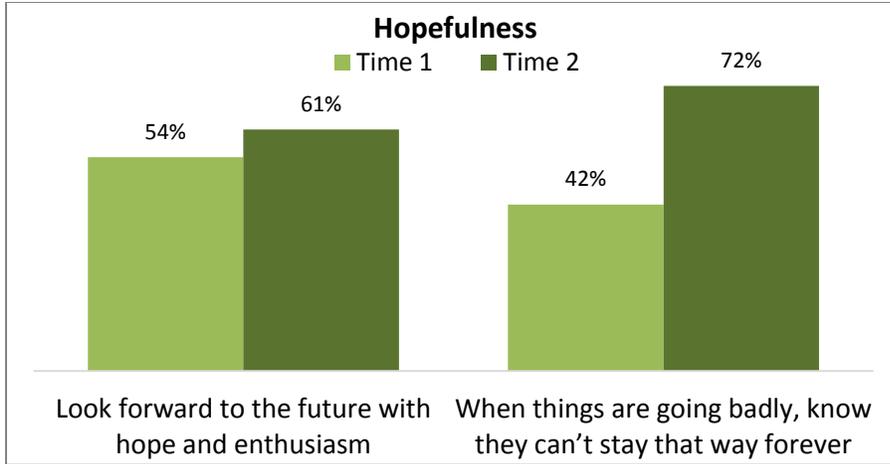


Sixty-seven percent of youth who completed a final survey felt there was something they were really good at (with similar rates at intake). When asked to identify the areas they excelled in, the majority listed the arts including film-making, acting, writing, drawing, photography and music.

Hopefulness

“Frames helped open new career doors by providing skills and showing what is possible.”

Eighty-seven percent of youth indicated on the final survey that taking part in Frames helped to improve their hope for their future. Repeated-measures analyses also indicated improved hopefulness from Time 1 to Time 2.

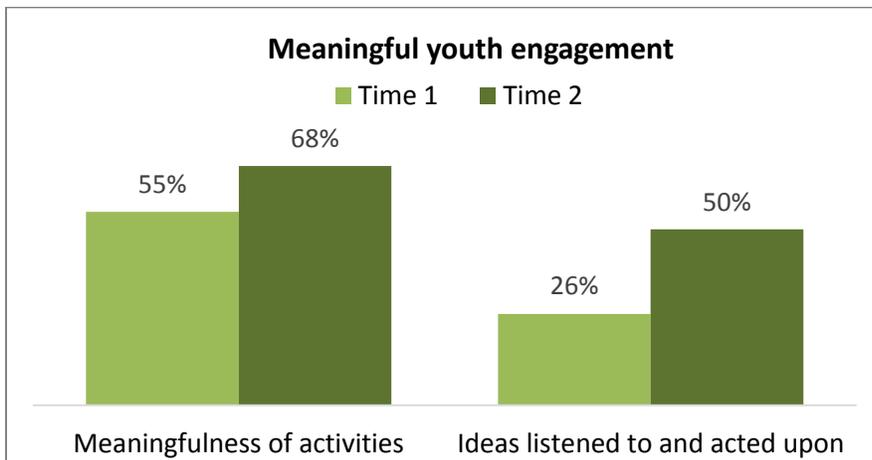


When asked on the final survey where they saw themselves in five years, youth commonly envisioned positive circumstances, including having a job (60%), being in school (50%), being engaged in the community (40%), having a home of their own (23%), and having graduated from school (23%). Virtually none expected bleaker circumstances, such as living on the street, being in prison or not being alive. Thirty percent indicated not knowing where they saw themselves in five years' time.

Also, 1 in 3 youth who completed a final survey indicated that their involvement in Frames reduced their anxiety about becoming an adult 'quite a bit' or 'very much.' Ninety percent indicated that taking part in Frames reduced this anxiety at least a little. Focus group participants explained that they saw people who were successful in the film industry which gave them hope and ideas about their future careers, and demonstrated that they could pursue a career they were passionate about.

Meaningful Engagement in Activities

Youth participants were more likely to report at the end of Frames than at the beginning that the activities they were engaged in were meaningful, and that their ideas were listened to and acted upon in these activities. This finding suggests that participants felt more meaningfully engaged in activities connected to Frames than in activities they had taken part in before starting the program.



Community Connectedness

“This program felt like a community.” “Frames got us out in the community.”

Participants spoke of feeling more connected to their community through their involvement in Frames. Some referred to the Frames program as their community and said that they became very close with one another while working together and supporting each other. Staff added that they had not anticipated how close the participants would become, and the group developed a sense of family.

Other youth talked about their positive experiences reaching out to the wider community through the Crazy 8s film festival and an opportunity to connect with people working in the film industry. They added that Frames provided them with invaluable networking opportunities.

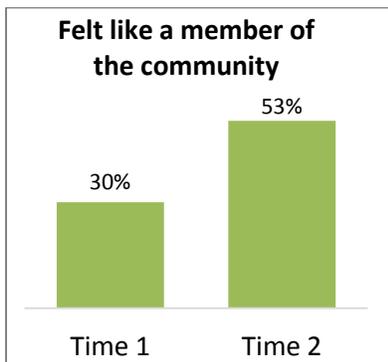
Staff noted that the field trips and film research often took participants to different parts of the community, which made them feel more connected. For example, participants working on the documentary “Where we sleep” had to visit SROs in the Downtown Eastside which staff felt was an eye-opening experience for them. Similarly, a youth stated that “it was a chance to connect with people from the Downtown Eastside community. It felt like it was a huge bridge for them and me.” Staff added that the participants’ award-winning short film “What is a home” was about the community coming together.

Youth, staff and project partners also felt that the Frames film screenings and community dialogues helped youth to feel more connected to the larger community.

Project partners also said that the program allowed youth to step beyond their current challenges, look at them from an outsider’s perspective, and learn to communicate their stories to others. This process helped to make them feel more included and connected.

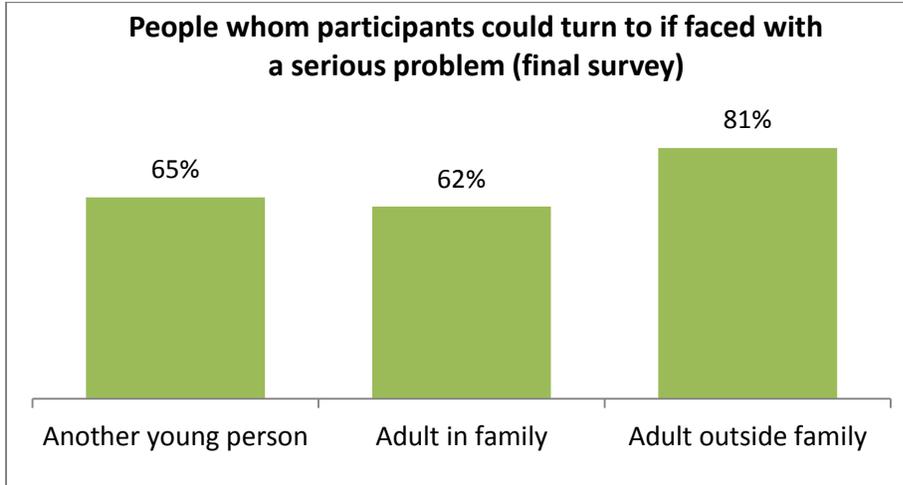
Staff had suggestions for how the program could help participants to feel even more connected to their community. For example, more guest speakers and people talking about the challenges they had overcome, as well as more field trips, could help in this regard. They also felt that more people attending the film screenings, and more politicians taking an interest, would help participants to feel a greater sense of community connectedness.

Most participants who completed a final survey felt that taking part in Frames helped to improve their connection to their community (77%) and involvement in their community (78%) at least a little. Repeated-measures analyses also showed a greater sense of belonging to the community over time.



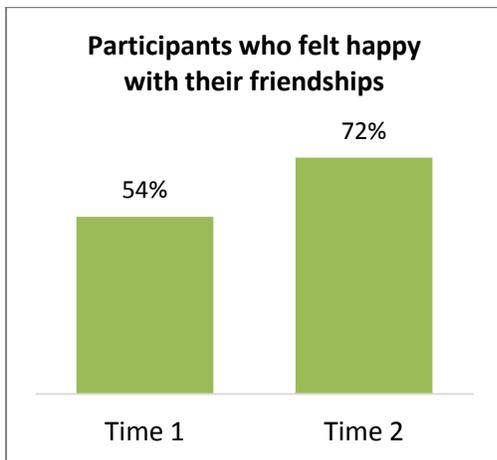
Supports and Services

Most participants felt they had people they could turn to if faced with a serious problem, with similar rates at both time-points. Males were more likely than females to indicate having an adult in their family they could turn to (91% of males vs. 46% of females; Time 2).



The majority also reported having people they could do enjoyable activities with (76% at Time 2), having at least one close friend (72%), having people who would listen and understand them if they needed to talk (72%), and having supportive family or friends available in crisis situations (67%). These rates were similar at both time-points.

However, participants were more likely at Time 2 than at Time 1 to report feeling happy with their friendships. This finding was consistent with participants’ comments that their involvement in Frames enabled them to make new friends whom they enjoyed working with and spending time with.



On the final survey, youth listed a variety of people whom they asked for help since starting Frames. The most common were a relative (75%), friend (74%), counselor (52%), youth worker (44%), doctor or nurse (33%), and/or social worker (32%). There were no differences between

male and female participants. Those who approached people for help generally found the support helpful.

Youth also reported accessing a number of community services or resources since starting Frames. They most commonly accessed job training/employment services (54%), medical services (36%), drop-in centres (35%), mental health counselling (32%), and arts programs (28%). The majority of youth who accessed these services found them helpful.

Focus group participants said that Frames helped youth to access any needed supports and services in the community. They also said that the program helped them to gain a broader understanding of community resources available to young people. They appreciated the mental health and substance use resources that were given to them.

Staff pointed out that youth who took part in Frames had typically been referred by other services. However, their involvement in Frames may have inspired them to reconnect with and make effective use of those services.

Staff added that the Frames meetings took place at the Drive Youth Employment Services where there were counsellors available as well as employment support and workshops which youth could access. In addition, staff felt that the program's field trips increased participants' awareness of and access to services in the community.

When asked on the final survey about supports or services that would currently be helpful to them, participants identified access to affordable education and housing; job training and other employment services; and emotional support.

IMPACTS ON THE LARGER COMMUNITY

Youth, staff and project partners said that the Frames Film Project not only helped participants to address their own feelings around mental health and substance use challenges, but also helped to reduce stigma and increase awareness in the community.

They explained that many of the films created through Frames addressed issues of living with substance use and mental health challenges, and told the stories in intimate ways from the youth's perspectives. Staff added that not only the content of the films helped viewers to develop a greater understanding and awareness of substance use and mental health challenges, but that when they realized the films were made by youth facing this stigma it helped to further break down their stereotypes.

Evaluation participants said that showcasing the films at a film-screening and community dialogue at the end of each cycle contributed to addressing stigma and increasing awareness. Further, the films have been shared online, and staff noted that the number of views of their YouTube videos has continued to grow which they felt was a powerful way to create impact. Youth added that they created films that have been used as public service announcements (drug addiction, bullying, compassion and homelessness), and a number of their films have been entered into film contests.

Youth participants expressed pride in their work, and many talked about the importance of helping people through their art. Project partners added that other youth with mental health or substance use challenges who view the films can come to realize that they are not alone and that talking about these issues can be helpful.

Staff and youth hoped that continuing to share the films would perpetuate the dialogue around stigma and discrimination and would contribute to improving people's attitudes toward those with mental health and addiction challenges.

Film Screenings and Community Dialogues

"I will think about mental health issues differently." – Film screening attendee

Frames held Film Screenings and Community Dialogues at the end of each project cycle. Attendees rated the event overall as excellent (78%) or good (22%), with none providing lower ratings of fair or poor.

The majority indicated that attending the event was a worthwhile experience for them (94%), they learned something new (78%), they met new people (78%), and they would attend this type of event again in the future (89%). Most attendees also reported that the event helped to reduce stigma associated with mental health and substance use challenges (78%) and that it inspired them to become more involved in their community (72%).

When asked what they liked most about the event, attendees commented about enjoying the films and the dialogue that followed. They also liked hearing from the youth participants about their roles in the production and what they gained from the program. Some also expressed appreciation that the event was youth-focused and gave participants a voice.

When asked for any suggestions to improve the event, some attendees were interested in hearing even more from youth participants about their experiences, and suggested having a

more direct Question and Answer period at the end. Others wanted more films to be screened and hoped that even more community members would attend future events.

When asked specifically what they learned at the event, responses included learning the importance of supporting young people and about the positive impact the support can have; a greater understanding that addictions are often closely connected to mental health challenges; that creative expression can be a good way to deal with mental health and substance use challenges; and that people should be “kinder, more tolerant, and more patient with each other.”

Some commented that they will now think about mental health issues differently, be less judgmental and more accepting of others, and talk about the issues because of what they had learned at the event.

Comments from attendees:

“I wish I had a lot of money to fund programs like these. If I could I would. I hope more programs like this will be available in the future, so our young people can shine.”

“The product was great and the team was inspirational. Look forward to more screenings.”

“I really appreciate this type of programming, and hope it sticks around.”

“Definitely worth funding and supporting.”

“I'm really impressed with what I saw today and hope the program continues so more youth can have the opportunity to participate and continue to learn more about who they are. Creativity is so important!”

MORE FEEDBACK ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Youth in the focus groups expressed great satisfaction with their involvement in Frames. Similarly, most participants who completed a final survey were very satisfied (53%) or satisfied (28%) with Frames overall, while 16% reported neutral feelings about the program and virtually none were dissatisfied. As well, almost all youth who took part in a three-day film workshop were satisfied or very satisfied with it.

Some youth referred to the program as “an oasis in the desert” that they looked forward to going to each week. Staff and project partners valued the consistency that the program provided to participants. They felt that the opportunities for youth to get to know one another, create long-lasting friendships, and to feel a sense of belonging were important aspects of the program. Youth also voiced appreciation for the responsibility they were given to create their films and for the freedom to follow their creative passions.

Youth thought that the manual the program coordinator had created for them was very helpful because it contained useful documents with directors’ cuts, educational websites, and other resources. In addition, they appreciated the food that the program offered.

Participants said that the program was well-facilitated and managed. Some felt that initially the facilitators were overly directive and did not provide enough positive feedback but that the facilitation improved over time. Some youth suggested that a facilitator with a counselling background might have an easier time understanding participants’ struggles and effectively communicating with them. However, a few participants voiced appreciation for how a particular staff member was able to hear their ideas and understand their needs.

When asked what they liked most about Frames, youth who completed a final survey identified a number of aspects, including gaining knowledge and skills in a fun and relaxed environment; check-ins and getting to know one another; feeling a sense of belonging and community; feeling accepted; the facilitators; access to various resources and opportunities; meeting and working with people in the film industry; and creating films.

When asked what they liked least about the program, some focus group participants felt that the initial group of 30 participants was too large. They said that the beginning sessions felt disorganized with youth coming and going, until the core group of 10 regular participants was established. Program staff explained that in later cycles, a large number of participants was brought in at the start because there had been high attrition rates in earlier cycles, and the expectation was that a number of participants would drop out over time. One comment from project partners was that more facilitator training in engaging a diverse group of youth might have helped to reduce the drop-out rate.

Some youth commented that meeting in a bigger space would have been beneficial. Others would have liked to gain experience with a wider range of film-making roles. A few youth said they would have liked more workshops to cover other topics, such as storyboarding, stop motion, editing, and acting. However, others pointed out that it would have been unfeasible to learn all the film-related roles and skills, and that the focus of Frames was appropriate given the time limitations.

All focus group participants and 97% of those who completed a final survey indicated that they would recommend the program to their peers. Many explained that anyone interested in film-

making would enjoy Frames, and that the program gave them access to filming resources that would otherwise be inaccessible to many youth.

Similarly, youth in the three-day workshops indicated that they would recommend involvement to others. They also reported that they would take part in a similar three-day workshop in the future (89%), or in a similar but longer initiative (100%).

Next Steps

“I didn’t know film would suit my life so well. I now have a skill set from this program to be a film maker.”

When asked what they will do with what they learned through Frames, common responses included applying to film programs or other school programs and applying for jobs in the film industry. Many planned to continue making films, and listed reasons such as to be engaged in a personally meaningful activity, to raise awareness about important issues, and to connect with others who have experienced mental health or addiction challenges.

Youth participants were interested in staying involved in the project once their cycle was over. They liked the idea of staying involved as alumni who could demonstrate the importance of the program. Some also appreciated the opportunity to mentor and support new program participants. Staff added that the best way to learn a skill was to teach it to someone else.

A few youth expressed sadness that their program cycle was ending. However, they felt excited that it was not the end but only the beginning of their film journey, and were looking forward to pursuing their film paths.

Lessons Learned

Frog Hollow staff said that running Frames was more time-consuming than had been anticipated. They highlighted the importance of having someone available for technical assistance (e.g., repairing equipment, purchasing new software), which reduced the workload for program facilitators. They also acknowledged the importance of having the right mix of staff, including some with counselling skills and others with technical expertise.

Staff had learned from previous cycles that it was important to distribute the cameras at the very start of the program to engage participants at the outset and to increase their enthusiasm about taking part. They explained that although the program was comprised of both life-skills training and film, youth learned life-skills partly through creating films and that first teaching life-skills before delving into film was not an effective way of keeping youth engaged.

Staff said that stable, long-term funding was paramount. They felt that programs take time to run smoothly and that Frames was finally running smoothly but that their funding was coming to an end. Staff felt that longer-term funding would enable more young people to benefit from the program.

Staff said they will soon be working on a toolkit for other agencies. They noted that not all agencies have the equipment and expertise needed to successfully run a film program. Therefore, the emphasis of the toolkit will be on how to mentor youth in telling their stories and on teaching story-telling skills and techniques.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Frames Film Project was comprised of a diverse group of participants, including diversity in age, cultural background, languages spoken at home, government care experience, and mental health conditions. Evaluation findings suggested that youth accepted one another and embraced the diversity within the group.

Results also indicated that Frames targeted the intended group of high-risk youth. Most had at least one mental health diagnosis, and many had more than one. A number of youth had also used various illicit substances, and 16% had been diagnosed with a substance use disorder. Further, participants experienced relatively high rates of bullying victimization and discrimination in the past six months, with 29% identifying discrimination because of a mental health challenge, and 18% due to an addiction (or perceived addiction).

Youth participants were meaningfully engaged in Frames, as suggested by higher ratings at the end of the program than at the start of feeling that the activities they took part in were meaningful and that their ideas were listened to and acted upon in these activities. Youth voiced appreciation for the freedom they were given to follow their creative passions, which likely contributed to feeling meaningfully engaged in the program. This meaningful engagement probably made it easier for participants to learn a variety of skills through the program.

At intake, common reasons for wanting to get involved included gaining film-making skills and finding a career path. Most youth indeed reported at the end of their involvement that they had gained film-making skills, and several were inspired to pursue a career in the film industry because of the skills and knowledge they had acquired through Frames.

Youth gained skills in areas beyond film, including communication, conflict-resolution, teamwork, project-planning, goal-setting and public speaking. Most also reported a greater ability to cope with life challenges because of their involvement in Frames. Similarly, they felt that their experience in Frames taught them the importance of humour, flexibility and patience, which can be effective coping strategies.

Participants also reported improved mood, self-confidence, sense of competence, and hope for their future because of their involvement in Frames. As well, a number of participants felt that taking part in Frames helped to reduce their anxiety about becoming an adult.

Meeting new people was another reason identified at intake for wanting to get involved in Frames. Youth reported at the end of their participation cycle that they appreciated the opportunity to meet and develop friendships with others. Further, youth felt more satisfied with their friendships at the end of the program than at the start. Taken together, findings indicated that the program was effective at improving participants' peer support networks, sense of connection to others, and feelings of belonging in the community.

Youth reported accessing a number of community services while involved in Frames, such as job training, medical services, drop-in centres, and mental health counselling. Participants said that Frames helped them to access needed supports and services, and to gain a better understanding of community resources available to young people.

Youth said that the Frames Film Project addressed mental health and substance use challenges in a non-threatening way, both directly as well as indirectly through creating their films. Youth felt that Frames helped to improve their knowledge and attitudes around mental health and addiction issues, and reported having greater understanding and acceptance of others' challenges as well as their own. Further, evaluation results indicated improvements not only in participants' attitudes but also in their behaviours. Specifically, youth were less likely to bully or discriminate against others at the end of the program than at the start.

Frames appeared to have positive effects not only on youth participants but also on the larger community. Staff, project partners and youth who took part in the evaluation explained that Frames helped to reduce stigma and increase awareness in the community. They said that this occurred through showcasing the films at the Film Screenings and Community Dialogues at the end of each participation cycle; sharing them online (e.g., YouTube); and entering them into film contests. They hoped that the dialogue around stigma and discrimination would be maintained as a result of the films, and lead to improving people's attitudes around mental health challenges and addictions.

Staff and youth talked about a high attrition rate among participants, but most participants (60%) did complete the program. A limitation of the evaluation was that it did not include the perspectives of those who left the program early.

The mixed-methods approach used in this evaluation was an effective way of collecting quantitative survey data as well as qualitative information. A limitation of the repeated-measures survey design (tracking youth over time) was the relatively small number of youth who completed both surveys. This likely contributed to insufficient statistical power to detect significant differences over time. However, the repeated-measures analyses did highlight some noteworthy changes over time. Further, direct questions on the final survey about changes in youths' lives because of their involvement in Frames was another way of assessing improvements that could be attributed to the program. The qualitative information complemented the quantitative data to provide a more complete story.

In sum, evaluation findings indicated that the Frames Film Project met its goals of improving participants' skills in various areas; improving their social and emotional functioning; facilitating participants' access to needed supports and services; and addressing stigma and increasing awareness of living with mental health disorders and addictions. Staff identified lessons learned and highlighted the importance of continued funding so that more young people could benefit from the program.