

Sasamans Society



Painting Our Way Gathering

March 4th/5th, 2011

Maya'xala Youth Gathering

March 18th/19th, 2011

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Executive Summary

Sasamans Society is committed to helping communities create their own vision for children and family wellness plans. These plans or models will be community and culturally based. In order to accomplish this Sasamans Society's first priority is to listen to the voices of the children. This will give the society's Community Based Collaborators (CBCs) themes in which to have further discussions with the Elders, frontline workers and parents.

The first step of listening to the voices of the children was to have two gatherings for the youth, one in the south and one in the north. The gatherings were held in Campbell River and in Fort Rupert. The southern event invited 3 different communities and 2 urban Aboriginal agencies to attend. The northern event invited 6 different communities and 1 urban Aboriginal agency to attend.

The gatherings had lots of activities and presentations meant to engage, inspire, and motivate the youth. The CBCs were successful in gathering information from the attendees. However, these events did have their challenges.

Sasamans Society is charting new waters; this is a new process used in Kwa'kwa'ka'wakw Nations and with new things comes apprehension and resistance. Additionally, the Sasamans Society CBCs are new to coordinating events of this magnitude. Particularly up north, there were problems getting representation from all the communities, due to transportation and staffing issues. However, the youth who attended appreciated the gatherings and hoped that the events would happen annually.

Each community and urban Aboriginal agency is unique; therefore, a CBC will focus on gathering specifics on each community first from the youth then moving on to the adults, Elders and frontline workers. The information gathered from the Youth events will be the foundation of future discussions within the community.

Relevance of the Study

The study responds to the desire of First Nations communities to listen and develop a Child and Family resource plan/model based on the voices of their children. The first step in doing so was to host Youth Gatherings for the southern and northern communities.

Purpose

In February and March of 2011, Sasamans CBCs in partnership with community youth workers organized and implemented two Youth Gatherings. The first gathering, Painting Our Way (POW) was held in Campbell River at the Thunderbird Hall on March 4 & 5, 2011; and the second gathering, Maya`xala (respect) was held in Fort Rupert at the Kwakiutl community hall on March 18 & 19, 2011.

The purpose of the gatherings was to honour and recognize our youth and gain an insight to their needs. The information collected at the gatherings will be the guide for focus groups and/or interview topics with youth, parents, Elders and frontline workers. The voices of our children will be the foundation for the development of community and culturally based wellness strategies.



Demographics

The POW Youth Gathering was for youth ages 12-18. Youth from 3 different communities and 2 urban societies, were invited to attend. The member communities included: Wei Wai Kum First Nation, We Wai Kai First Nation, K'omoks First Nation as well as the Urban Aboriginal agencies, Laichwiltach Family Life Society and Wachiay Friendship Centre.

The following is the youth attendance for the POW gathering.

Community	Number of Youths
We Wai Kai First Nation (Cape Mudge / Quinsam)	8
Wei Wai Kum First Nation (Campbell River Indian Band)	20
K'omok First Nation	0
Wachiay Friendship Centre	8 (5boys, 3girls)
Laichwiltach Family Life Society	25
Total	61

The Maya`xala (Northern) Youth Gathering was arranged for Youth ages 12-18 from 6 different communities and 1 urban Aboriginal agency. The member communities included: Gwa`sala-`Nakwaxda`xw Nations, Kwakiutl Indian Band, Quatsino First Nation, Whe-la-la-U Area Council, Dzawadan`nuxw First Nation, and the Da`naxda`xw Awaetlala Nation; in addition to the urban agency, Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre.

The following is the youth attendance for the Maya`xala gathering.

Community	Number of Youths
Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw First Nation	24
Kwakiutl Indian Band	21
Quatsino First Nation	7
Namgis First Nation	4
Port Hardy	2
Total	58

Activities/Workshops

The north and south gatherings utilized some of the same workshops and facilitators. Both gatherings were rich with culture; they incorporated prayers,

teachings from the Elders and traditional crafts. At each of the gatherings there were a variety of different workshops meant to inspire, educate, motivate and break-down barriers for the youth. Suzette Amaya and Simon James Jr. attended both gatherings and presented similar information at the gatherings.

The following is the activities and workshops that occurred at the POW and Maya'xala Gatherings.

POW Gathering

The Painting Our Way Gathering took place at the Thunderbird Hall in Campbell River over a day and a half period. The event consisted of different workshops, crafts, a dance, recreation (games) and guest speakers.

Prayers were said at the beginning of each day and before the meals, Elders of the communities came and spoke to the youth and drummers sang traditional songs. The venue was decorated with genealogical histories, old pictures of big houses, motivational posters and during the breaks there was a PowerPoint presentation with old pictures and ancestors compiled by the Treaty office.

Colleen Stevenson, a Graphic Recorder captured dialogue, key points and themes, from the Youth Gathering. There was also a 'Parking Lot' poster for the youth to write and draw their own thoughts on.



Key Note Speaker

Suzette Amaya was the key note speaker for the event. She is an inspirational speaker; she shared her personal story from living on reserve to becoming a successful entrepreneur. She opened up to the youth about her troubles as a youth, and touched on issues such as drugs, alcohol and sexual abuse.

Suzette stressed the need for people to have goals which they can work towards in order to better their lives.

The advice she gave the youth was:

LOVE - loving yourself is essential to becoming confident.

LIFE – follow your dreams and commit to making your goals priority

LEAD – become a leader. Work on carving your own path then become a leader in your community.

Suzette also presented workshops on Aboriginal Media and Photography.

Aboriginal Media

Suzette Amaya presented a host of different music videos from Aboriginal Artists. As well as discussed other media that is targeted towards Aboriginal people such as magazines, TV stations and movies. She spoke about how working in media she can help control the image of Aboriginals. She also discussed how there are lots of opportunities in the industry

Suzette Amaya

Suzette is Kwa'kwa'ka'wakw, Cree, Nisga'a and Coast Salish. She was born and raised in East Vancouver and moved to Tsulquate Reserve in 1987. Suzette is a multi-faceted individual; she graduated with a Diploma in Criminology and an Associates of Arts Degree. Since then, Suzette has worked as a Support Worker, a radio host and producer; owner and photographer of SAMAYA Entertainment, Coordinator/Publicist for Aboriginal Events, Producer and Manager for Aboriginal Musicians, a cast member in a reality show, and a workshop facilitator. Suzette is also a 2007 /2008 Alumni for the National Aboriginal Role Models with the National Aboriginal Health Organization.



and how the industry can help break down barriers.

Photography

Suzette spoke to the youth about her experiences as a photographer. She then let the youth to go around, inside and outside of the Hall to take pictures.

Youth 4 Diversity

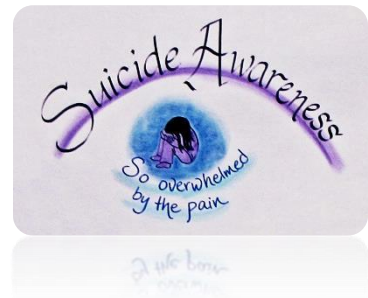
Stereotypes are prevalent in our society. Every person can have stereotypes associated to them. Discrimination is so ingrained within our society that many people don't realize that it is discrimination. Understanding how it feels to be discriminated against also allows us to be empathetic towards others. Without stereotypes we would all have the freedom to be who we are.



Some activities that Youth 4 Diversity did with the students were to brainstorm stereotypes or labels that the youth has heard in school and what the youth would prefer to hear. See Appendix 1 for the raw data collected from the youth.

Suicide Awareness

Allan Campbell, Alberta Billy, Samantha Wells facilitated this workshop which addressed the myths about suicide, answered basic questions about cause and effect and taught about how to respond to someone you think may be at risk of suicide. This workshop was closed to just the youth and a chaperone, so that they could express themselves freely.



Raven Tales

Simon James Jr.'s key message during his workshop was "How animation can be used to bring forth our culture to the world and how an aboriginal person can use culture to benefit themselves in today's world." He showed clips of his animation Raven Tales.

Adventure Dynamics

Andrea Alfred Smith facilitated the Adventure Dynamics workshop. It was full of questions and small challenges for the youth. The activities consisted of recognizing goals, getting the youth to get to know one another and motivation.

Make a wish, the youth were asked what their goals are and to write their goal on a yellow star shaped piece of paper.

The areas which the students commented were money, owning things such as a car or house, careers and secondary education.

People Bingo, the youth were given a bingo sheet with experiences in the boxes. They were to walk around the room and find people that have had the experiences on the bingo sheet. The goal was to make a line on the document using other participants' names.

Finishing Strong

Andrea Alfred Smith's key message was that it was never too late to persevere and do something great, to "finish strong".

She presented a video on people who have faced turmoil in their lives and instead of taking the easy way out they challenged themselves and ended up reaching their goals. The youth were then asked what the resonating words were from the video clip and then were asked to create a personal action plan.

See Appendix 2 for the Raw Data collected from the youth during the finishing Strong workshop.

Andrea Alfred Smith

Andrea was born and raised in Alert Bay, B.C. She is a member of the 'Namgis First Nation and can trace her ancestry to many tribes in the Kwa'kwa'ka'wakw Nation.

Andrea has a diverse educational background that includes:

- A Master's Degree in Leadership & Training
- A Bachelor's Degree in Recreation Management
- A Diploma in Recreation Administration
- Certificates in Indigenous Corporate Relations, Canadian Outdoor Leadership Training, Coaching,
- And is a Certified Ocean & Flat Water Kayak Instructor, as well as an Assistant Sea Kayak Guide.

Andrea has more than 20 years in recreation, human services and community development. Currently, Andrea runs a consulting company, Your Dreams In Motion, which offers educational workshops, solution focused life coaching, keynote speaking, coordinating and leading events, and traditional retreats.

Andrea is an energetic facilitator who was able to capture the attention of the youth and get them to participate in her workshop.

Hollywood Dance

There was a dance held on the Friday evening. There was a red carpet and costumes for the youth to dress up in.

The youth really enjoyed themselves and were able to take home photographs from the event the following day.

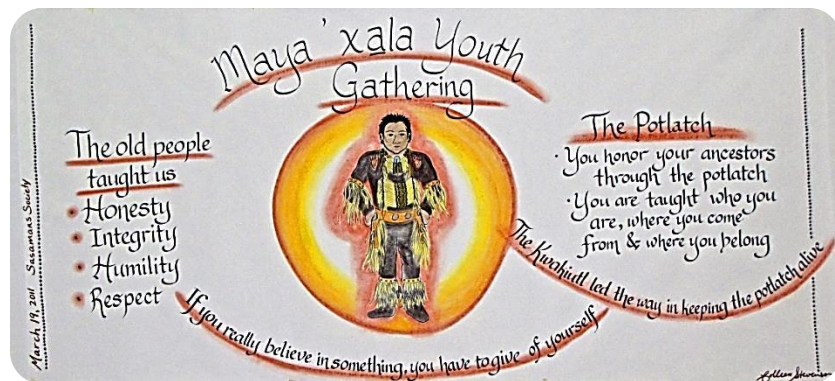


Arts and Crafts

The youth were invited to participate in several different arts and crafts which were occurring at the same time. The arts and crafts were: Cedar Bark weaving, painting paddles, Aboriginal doll making and beading. The youth really enjoyed this part of the day and intently worked on their crafts.

Maya`xala Youth Gathering

The Maya`xala Youth Gathering took place in the Fort Rupert Community Hall, located in Port Hardy, BC. The event opened with a speech from Pearl Hunt explaining the purpose of Sasamans and the vision and mission of the society. Suzette Amaya was the M.C., and Chief George Hunt welcomed presenters and participants. The participants were divided into two groups to partake in two workshops; one on 'AIDS/HIV' that given by Tsakis Health Workers and one on 'Filming/Entertainment Industry' that was given by Simon James.



Raven Tales

Simon James Jr. did a similar presentation at the POW conference; however, this time he showed the youth never before seen footage from one of his new animations. The youth were very excited about it.

Suicide Awareness

The same team of facilitators that conducted the HIV workshop spoke to the youth regarding suicide awareness. Students were given 3 cards each with different things written on them about suicide. They were asked to put them on the appropriate sheets. The sheets were:

- Facts on suicide
- Students who are at high risk
- Suicide myths
- Warning signs of suicide

Once all of the cards were up they were read out and verified that they were on the correct sheet. Then Youth were asked to design a character that is high risk. They were asked “What to do if you suspect someone to be high risk?” Through discussion and with the help of the facilitators the youth learned that you should:

- Ask “Are you planning to kill yourself?”
- Then ask “why” and listen to them about their problems
- Do you have a plan, when are you planning on doing it?
- If they have a plan (short-term) then call a professional

The participants were asked to identify their support system, by writing down the names of people they trust. These would be the people they would go to if they felt suicidal. The youth seemed engaged and interested in participating.

Simon Daniel James Jr .

Simon Daniel James, also known as Winadzi, is a member of the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation, and is an internationally renowned artist in many mediums. Simon has been a carver for over 25 years and also graduated from the Vancouver Film School in 1998. Winadzi is credited as a creator of the “Raven Tales” series and has spent several years promoting it all over the world.



“I am glad to see everyone here, especially since last year there were a few attempted suicides and one succeeded.” -Youth Attendee

AIDS/HIV Workshop

There were approximately 4 adults and 13 youth (11 female and 2 male) who partook in the 'AIDS/HIV' workshop. The workshop was informative and engaging for both adults and youth alike.

The session began with a card activity, in which each participant was given a card with information on it about AIDS/HIV, each participant then needed to place it on the appropriate paper that read, *'agree, disagree or don't know'*.

Once everyone was finished each card was read out and the group was asked if it belonged where it was posted. The participants were very knowledgeable regarding AIDS/HIV.

Then there was a circle activity where statements were made and the participants had to decide whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements; if the participants disagreed with a statement they were asked to move to the left, and if they agreed they were asked to move to the right. Once everyone made their choice the correct answers were read out.

There was then a change of Character activity, everyone created a character and just found out they tested positive for HIV. Participants were randomly chosen to share their character and how HIV changed their lives.

Participants mentioned that every time they attend workshops they became more aware of the disease.

The group discussed how today's language differs from previous generations and the participants were given an opportunity to vocalize some words that they know that describe sex.



They had a condom activity where participants were divided into two groups and they were each given a condom. The participants were to relay to the opposite side of the room and put the condom on a banana properly. If there were any defects or not done right then they were to go to back of line to redo the relay. The Key messages of the workshop were: How to prevent HIV, Education, Breaking the myths of HIV.



Culture and Tradition

Ross Hunt, a hereditary chief in Kwakiutl, opened the second day of the event. He spoke of the olden days and how tradition played a major part in his people's lives. They used to live their lives by practicing honesty, integrity, humility and respect. He also educated the youth that before 1952 it was against the law for Natives to get together for Potlatching (means "to give" a Chinook word) and that the Kwakiutl lead the people in not giving up Potlatching. He spoke of the first movie filmed in BC was the "Land of the War Canoes" which was filmed about Kwakiutl Nation. He spoke about how every 6 years you can get another name at the big house and that "If you really believe in something you give something".



Arts and Crafts

There were presentations, by Anthony Hunt and Henry Hunt. Anthony Hunt did a Cedar weaving workshop, about 20 youth attended it. They were very attentive during this workshop and all completed a cedar bracelet at the end of the workshop.

Henry Hunt was displaying a carving that he was working on and answered youth questions regarding it.



Live, Love, Lead

Suzette Amaya did her “Live, Love, Lead” presentation in which she explained the importance of loving yourself, loving others, and living the best life by living by example and the importance in being a leader in our Aboriginal Communities. She showed examples of successful artists and the achievements that they made throughout their life, regardless of the hardships that they have endured throughout their life. The youth really enjoyed her workshop, and were very attentive throughout the duration of her presentation. They asked questions about how she met Joey Stylez (an aboriginal musician) and also asked if she would be back again with him and more of her artists for a big concert.

Crazy Challenges

There was a host of different activities for the youth. They had competitions for stacking cans to using your face muscles to move an Oreo from your forehead to your mouth. All the youth seemed excited in the challenges.

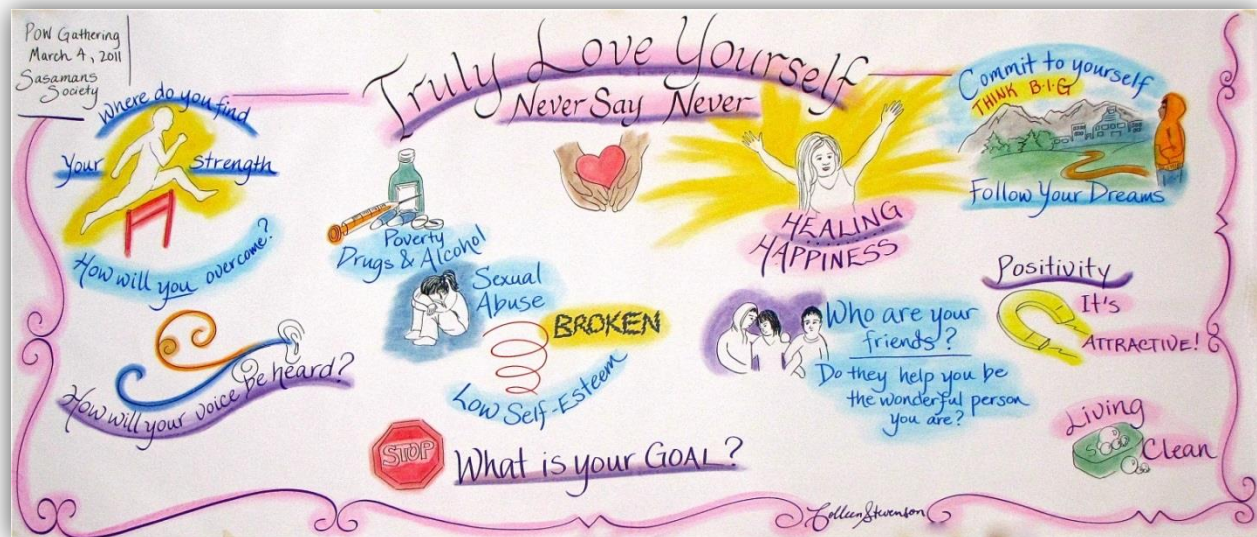
“The thing I like best about the Gathering is the people coming together learning about our culture and doing (traditional) crafts.”
-Anonymous Youth

Outcomes

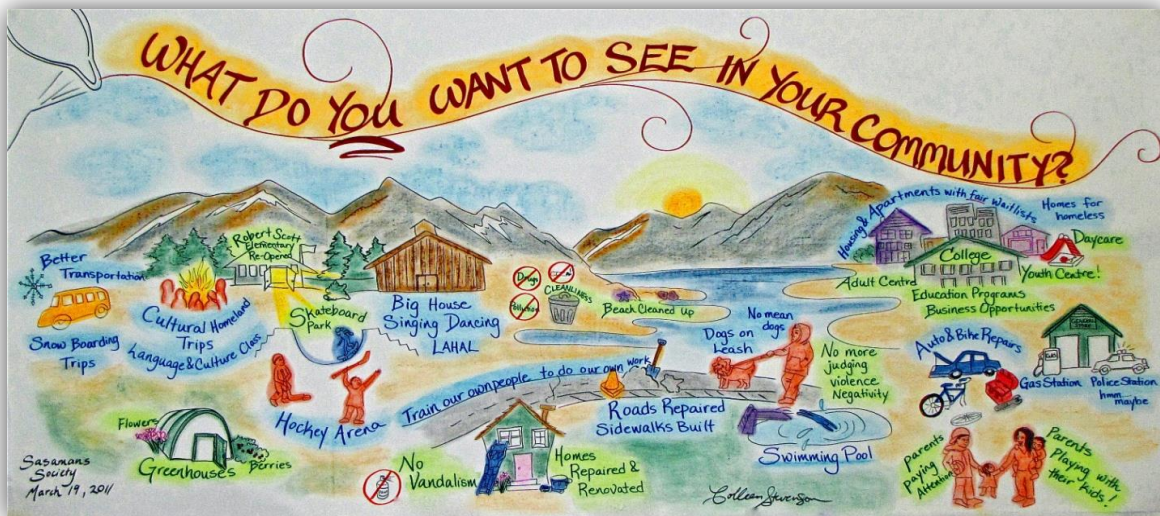
During the POW and Maya'xala Youth Gatherings the World Café facilitation technique was used. There were tables set up with drawing paper for the youth to write, draw or doodle their ideas. Youth were then split up, approximately 4-7 youth at each table. During the POW gathering, each table was free to come up with their own discussion topics. The purpose was to grasp what was most important to the youth. However, this process did not elicit as much information as hoped. Therefore, when the youth gathering occurred in Fort Rupert the facilitators helped guide the youth to discussions around their communities and what their needs are for child and family wellness.

These murals are a reflection of what the youth were discussing during the world café portion of the gathering.

At the POW gathering the youth were asked to come up with their own topics for discussion during the World Cafe. The topics they chose were Music, Respect, Parks and Recreation, Finishing Strong / Dreams & wishes / Cultural Identity in community, Learning, and who is your Idol? Why? At first glance of the topics, it may not seem that there is pertinent information; however, after analysing what was said and written down at the tables there are some key themes that can be used for further discussions with the youth. From this analysis, the key themes were values, community engagement, traditions and support (mental and emotional).



At the Maya'xala Conference, during the World Cafe exercise the youth were asked a few questions. These questions were: what do you want to see in your community? What do you want changed in your community? What do you want gone from your community? What would you like to learn? From the answers to these questions it can be seen that there are some issues in the Northern communities, with drugs, alcohol and theft.



The intention is not to segregate the northern and southern First Nation communities. However, there are some key differences between the areas. These differences have been described from the CBCs and are also evident in the discussions the youth had during the conferences. This summary is subjective; each community is different even within the northern communities and the southern communities.

- The southern communities are urban communities, close to city centres. The northern communities are more secluded or rural.
- The communities in the south seem to have more economic development. Northern communities have been affected by the economic turndown in the area. Less money seems to be invested in housing, renovations and community infrastructure.
- It appears from information gathered at the youth gathering that the youth in the North are more affected from the drug and alcohol issues in their communities.

Comments were made by the youth that they have little faith for programs that are government funded. There were comments made that there are programs that begin and that the youth enjoyed and they just get dropped because of funding issues. It is also evident that the youth programs are often the first programs to be dropped when funding is limited.

There was information gathered that in the North there are youth that are displeased by their leaders. They suggested that they start their own Chief and Council.

During the POW conference there was more collection of information from the youth because the facilitators kept the notes that the youth were involved in.

Research Evaluation

The Community Based Collaborators (CBCs) are new to event planning. Therefore, they experienced a large learning curve. Here is a brief summary of the CBCs reflections of the events.

- The youth were upbeat, happy and participated
- More time and money put into the events
- The CBCs felt that they were not properly introduced to the communities at the beginning
- Volunteers were amazing and lots showed up
- 3 people showed up that were potential threats to the youth (northern gathering)
- Coordinators were able to adapt quickly to changes and stay professional
- More note takers at all of the workshops in order to collect more quotes and information from the youth

Recommendations for future dialogue

It is recommended that there is further gathering of information in the way of focus groups with youth. This will give the Community Based Collaborators a chance to clarify what the key themes are for the youth.

The following are recommended questions to start focus group conversations with the youth.

- Can you tell me about your community?
- What do you like about your community?
- What would you change in your community?
- What is not happening in your community?
- What do you feel your community needs to become a more healthy community?
- What supports do you need to reach your goals and aspirations?
- Do you feel that you are cultural? If yes, what do you do to stay cultural? If no, how do you feel you could get more culturally involved?
- Do you feel that you have support? Do you feel you could use more support? What would that look like?

Appendix 1: Youth 4 Diversity Workshop

Youth 4 Diversity Workshop			
Stereotypes (heard in school)	Discrimination	Personalities	What you wish you heard?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stupid • Bitch • Whore • Dyke • Preps • Hockey jocks • Whore\ • Door knob • Fag • Skids • Gay • Homo • Slut • Fatty • 2 faced people • Dumb • Hoes • Retard queers • Stupid bitch • Chugs • C word 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting each other • Understanding • Racism • labelling • “Jerk” • “that’s so gay” • You don’t dress properly • Bullying • 100% awesome • Create the positive not the negative • Talk • Get away from discrimination • Group work in workshops we’re respectful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The youth conference is alright so far • Strength • Smiles • Fun • Beautiful; • Wonderful • Energetic • Great • Happy • Personality • Gorgeous • Kind • Awesome • Interesting • Cute • Photogenic • How to make a perfect picture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gorgeous • Wonderful • Nice • Pretty • Babe • I love you • Awesome • Hello you are amazing • Smile more • Beautiful not sexy or hot • I love you • Oh hot damn • Hot • You are so beautiful • You’re the best • I love you • Kind • What’s up sexy • Amazing • Fantastic • I love you • Pretty • You’re good looking • Sweet • You’re a strong person • Cool • Awesome • Beautiful • You’re great • I love you • Amazing • Pretty • Great • Smarty pants • Support

Appendix 2: Finishing Strong Workshop

Finishing Strong Workshop	
Goals	Perseverance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To inspire you • Accept other for their differences • To be the best you can be • To never let anyone else define your limits • To treat other as equals • Everyone hates mistakes but how you deal with them is most important • To stand up to change\to love yourself for who you are • That everyone is special in their own way • I feel better because I learned more about photography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finishing strong • Always trying your hardest • Love yourself as much as you love others • Never give up • Never say never • Fun • Striving for success • Take proper care of yourself • Don't let others bring you down • Help people connect • Learn new things • Learn how successful my cousin is • Learn about video productions • Making goals • Confidentiality • Good feeling/bad feelings • It was fun • Keep yourself inspired

This report was compiled in collaboration with Sasamans Society



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The community work was funded by Ministry of Children & Families