

ABORIGINAL GIRLS GROUPS IN

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Groups for Aboriginal Girls and Young Women in
Schools and Community

A Partnership Project

Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society, School District No. 73,
Aboriginal Education Council, Thompson Rivers University
Kamloops, British Columbia

The Model – A Brief Overview

Who: The program serves Aboriginal girls ages 8 - 18 who are living in urban or rural communities in the Interior of BC.

What: The curriculum is a school based or community based, train the trainer model.

Central to the group is shared decision-making and involving girls in the planning of each group. Each group begins with a meeting with girls in the school or community where the group will take place. Girls will take ownership of the group through a process whereby their voice and ideas are central in developing the name of the group, he

Key Components

These are some of the key components of a successful Aboriginal girls group.

- Girls, older girl role models, aunties, adult supporters and Elders through Grandmother's council and community relationships
- Funding (food, art supplies, honoraria, travel activity expenses)
- Space (classroom or community room)
- Facilitated by Aboriginal Counsellors, Aboriginal Education Workers, community professionals together with volunteers, practicum students from education or social work and human service programs from local university
- Circles and other cultural practices and protocols from community
- Activity resources that provide healthy expression
- Community awareness and networking
- Collaborative process: share decision making and planning via the medicine wheel
- Evaluation*

**The Kamloops B.C. Girls' Groups have participated in an evaluation through the Canadian Women's Foundation. Year 2 results can be found in Appendix A.*

Girls Group participating in community Santa Claus parade

Girls Groups: Setting up for Success in Schools

Five Critical Stakeholders

When planning the implementation of Girls' Groups in elementary and/or secondary schools support is needed from five critical groups. These groups include community, administration, staff (teachers and support staff), parents, and students. In the following outline the process we used to implement the groups and the structure of the groups is detailed. In this outline the methods we used to garner the necessary support from the different critical groups is described.

Community

Engage the stakeholders: As a community, Kamloops citizens had spent many hours discussing the problems facing our under-supported youth. We formed broad based committees that engaged community and worked together to develop programs that met the needs of our Aboriginal youth. These steps were crucial to the success of our program. Strong partnerships were formed between staff from the School of Social Work, Thompson Rivers University, the Kamloops Aboriginal Friendship Society, the Aboriginal Education Council and the School District. These consultations and discussions culminated, as described in the article written by student Charlotte Overvold, in

- b. The groups require a **room** that can allow for **private discussions**, is **comfortable** and can support craft activities and eating of snacks. It is a bonus when group art work can be left on the walls.
- c. The groups run **once a week (same space, day and time)** and range from **45 minutes to 1 hour 30 minutes**,
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Key Lesson Strategies

A. Medicine wheel

- i. Mental - Identity, goal setting expressing all of who they are as Aboriginal girls
- ii. Spiritual -Circle check-ins, talking circle, Elders
- iii. Emotional - Art, writing, dance, music that allows expression of feelings and emotions
- iv. Physical - Encourage physical movement through activities such as self-defense, yoga, basketball, dance

B. Talking Circles

C. Writing

D. Artistic Expression

E. Role Modelling

F. Speakers

G. Field trips – nature, outdoor

H. Other key tools: brainstorming, questioning

I. Review Vocabulary that may be unfamiliar, particularly for younger students

Session 3: Creating Safety in the Circle

Purpose: To make the group as welcoming and non-threatening as possible. Together with the girls, develop a list of safety rules and guidelines for the group.

Age: All girls

Time: 1 hour

Materials:

- Large paper
- Magazines
- Paints
- Felt Pens
- Scissors
- Glitter
- Glue

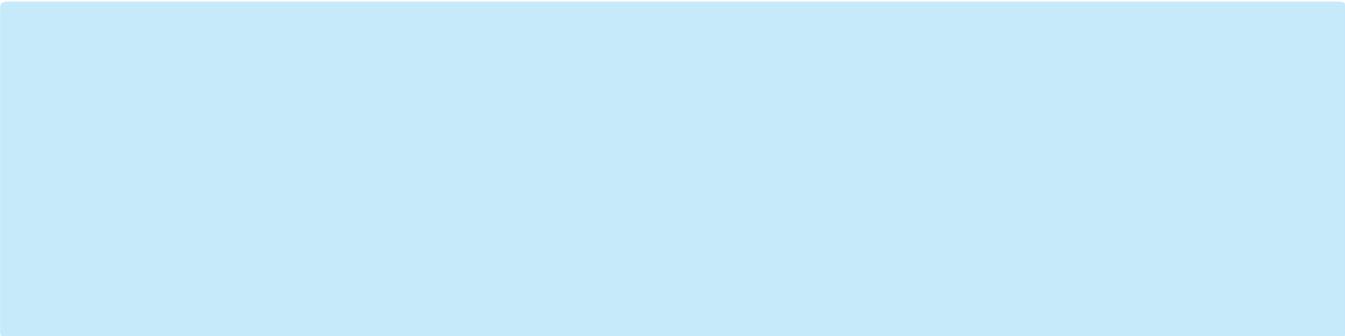
Procedure:

1. Check In: Sharing rock or talking stick is passed around the circle. Each girl briefly shares 1 thing that makes them feel safe, and anything else including current feelings or experiences, or how their day or week has been.
2. Introduce and welcome any new group members.
3. Develop Group Rules: Discuss each girl's needs in order to feel as safe and as comfortable as is possible in this group experience.
4. Brainstorm guidelines for group rules. Have the girls create a visual representation of the rules – collage a poster, or paint/draw a poster together that can be displayed in the classroom.
5. Symbol of Safety: Introduce this

Session 4: Seven Sacred Teachings and Creating Safety in the Circle

Purpose: To identify the Seven Sacred Teachings and how they relate to creating a safe and welcoming group environment.

Age:



Session 25: Relationship with Learning and School

Purpose: To examine more closely how participants respond to experiences of learning, and to explore their relationships to school and promote positive learning.

Age: All ages

Time: 45 min – 1 hour

Materials:

- Art materials

Procedure:

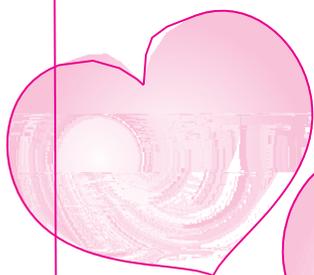
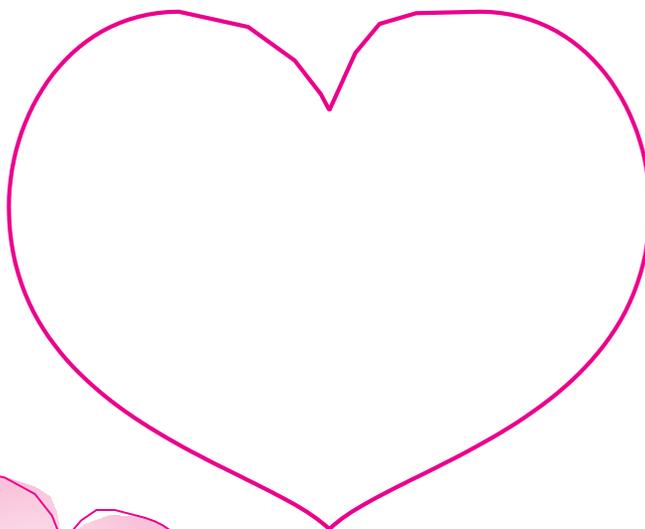
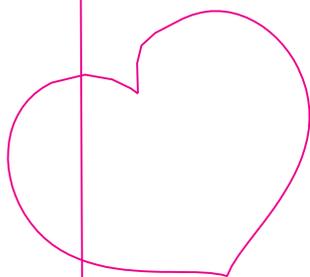
1. As a large group brainstorm the ways in which we learn (prompt

Let Me Introduce Myself...

1. The music that I like the best is:
2. The way that I dress could be described as:
3. I like to spend my free time:
4. My favorite food is:
5. The languages I speak are:
6. I am really good at:
7. My family is made up of:
8. The things I like about my culture/gender are:
9. The things I don't like about my culture/gender are?
10. I have lived in this community for:
11. I worry about:
12. Is there an adult in your life who you feel is your ally? Someone who supports you? If yes, how?
13. I feel most powerful when:
14. I feel safe to tell my secrets to _____ because:
15. A person I admire is _____ because:
16. When I see myself, I see.....
17. The thing I like the best about myself is:
18. The thing I most want to change about myself is:
19. The thing I want most for myself:
20. I dream that one day, I will:

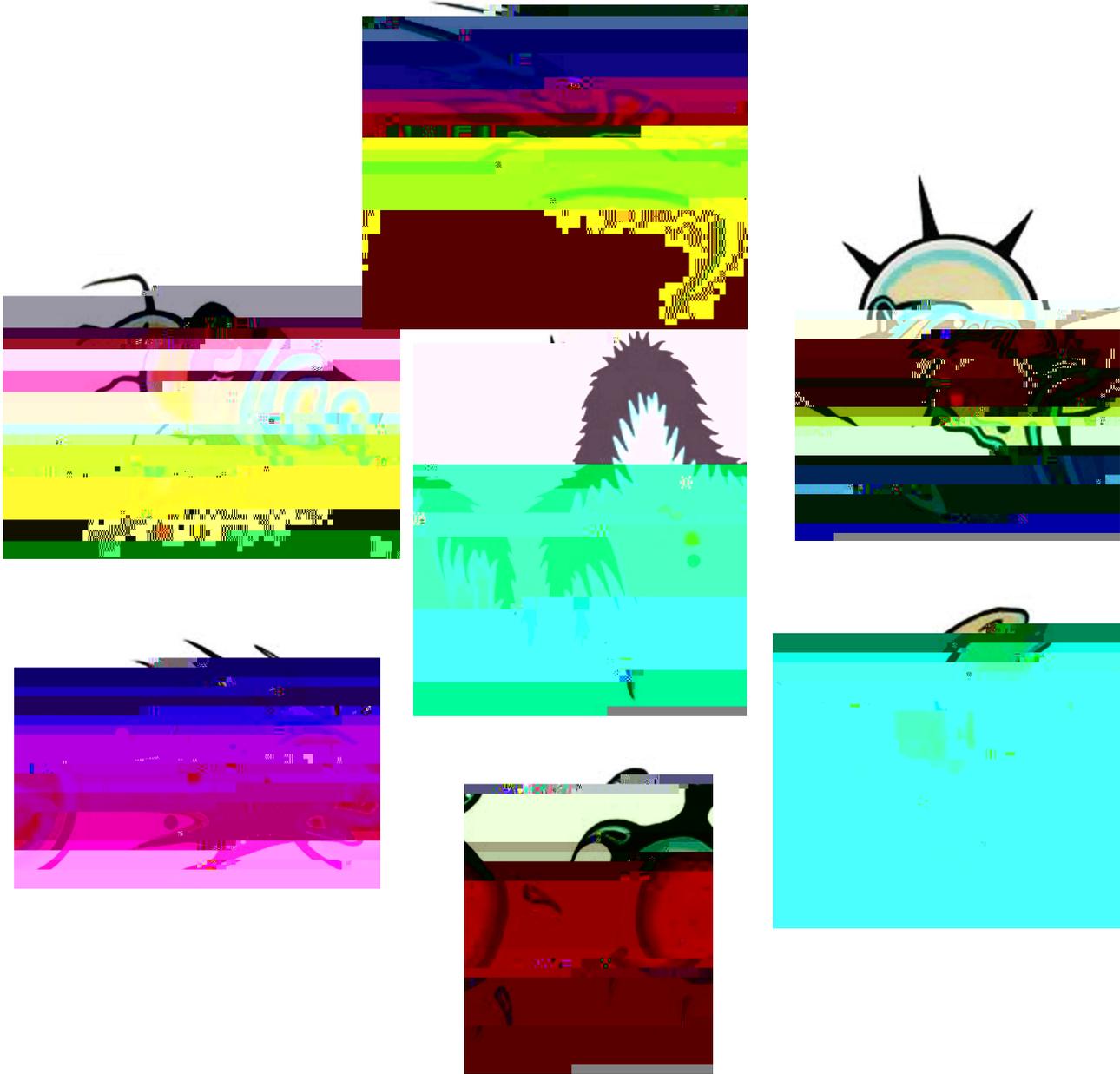
10 Things I LOVE About Me...

In the big heart, draw yourself. In each of the little hearts, draw or write about something you love about yourself.



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

SEVEN SACRED TEACHINGS



The Medicine Wheel

Quotes From Girls

"I have higher self-esteem now and now I don't really care what people think of me and before I did."

"When I first did the program I was shy and kind of shy about my feelings and then in the middle I stopped being so shy and started talking about my feelings a bit and near the end I talk a lot about my feelings."

"I used to be so shy and now I'm quite confident in myself, like I can stand up and say if someone is saying one thing about somebody and I'm totally confident with disagreeing with them and standing up for what I want to say about it. I used to be really shy ... but ... they've really helped me just realize who I am..."

"Because now I feel more confident. Like whenever we have a test, I'm not nervous or scared because I know I'm going to get a good mark..."

"It gives me a positive look on things instead of focusing on the negative..."

"Sometimes I wouldn't want to go to school, but now I do because of them... I would ignore the people that would bother me... and they taught me all that stuff, so then I'll just walk past them and ignore [them] and walk away and don't even bother to look at them."

"I'm feeling better knowing that I have people to support me and help me with school work and knowing that I can go to them for help."

"We get to learn new things about our self and others. We know more of our culture when we leave. We feel safe in girls group... I have learned so many things in Girls Group."

"I've learned culture things like medicine wheel... Girls group made me learn about what was going on in life..."

"I learned how to make dream catchers and what they represent. Learning about the talking stick..."

"The group helped me to get to know people here. [My friend who came to group with me] ... are better friends [now]."

"I actually developed a better friendship with some of my friends in that group. I always have people to turn to now. It just makes me happier than I was before."

"I am in grade 8. I'm obviously the youngest grade in there so there's ... older girls in there, but I feel ... when we're in a group together I can talk to them if I need to. They're there ... I do feel like included and feel [a sense of] belonging."

"I feel like] I belong more because I got to know people more and know that they really do care about me."