



AN INTRODUCTION TO YOUTH COUNCILS



WHAT IS A YOUTH COUNCIL?

You, the young people of Nishnawbe Aski Nation can make a difference in your community, but first you must be organized and prepared for action. An effective way to accomplish this is through a youth council (YC).

A YC is a practical way in which you can have a meaningful role in helping solve community problems. Types of youth councils include:

- First Nation/Community Youth Councils
- Regional Youth Councils
- High School Youth Councils
- Urban Youth Councils
- College or University Native Student Associations
- Church sponsored Youth Group
- Girl Power Youth Groups, or
- An Independent Youth Group.

Keep in mind that youth councils are just as diverse as NAN communities are. Each YC maintains its own identity and it built upon the needs and values of that particular community. For instance one YC might focus more on recreation while another focuses more on education.

By being involved with a YC, you and your peers can use your combined talents and energy to address major concerns facing you today. You design and promote your own programs to fit your needs. During the Portrait of a Generation NAN youth survey we asked over 500 young people like you what they think are the top three issues facing them. They said drug abuse, alcohol abuse and suicide. What can your youth council do to address issues like this?

As a young person who is involved with a youth council you will learn to accept responsibility. You will grow through achievement and in the knowledge that you are making a real contribution to your community and to Nishnawbe Aski Nation.



WHAT DOES A YOUTH COUNCIL DO?

Each YC determines its activities based on its own needs. Needs may be identified through discussions with members, interviews, surveys and other types of research. Once needs are determined, youth councils develop their own action plan to implement their activities.

As an affiliate of the NAN Decade Youth Council, youth councils are expected to conduct activities in community service, cultural heritage, environment, healthy lifestyles, recreation and youth leadership.

For instance, your YC may:

- Volunteer to help the elderly or handicapped,
- Present workshops on leadership, peer pressure and school participation,
- Establish youth funds or scholarships,
- Participate in peer helping,
- Sponsor youth camps and conferences,
- Start your own business, ie. Café or breakfast program
- Sponsor food and clothing drives,
- Sponsor health forums and health career day,
- Raise money for needy families,
- Purchase Christmas toys for less fortunate children,
- Sponsor community trash clean up days,
- Participate in beading, cooking or art classes,
- Sponsor drug and alcohol-free dances or skate-a-thons,
- Raise money for a drop-in centre or recreation centre,
- Participate in outdoor wilderness camps,
- Organize field trips or travel clubs,
- Raise money for a new daycare or playground for children,
- Sponsor baseball or hockey tournaments,
- Organize Christmas parties,
- Establish community youth awards program.



BENEFITS OF JOINING A YOUTH COUNCIL

The benefits you gain from participating in a youth council depend on what each member puts into the council. If you make the most of your opportunities, you will:

- ° learn how to work with other young people,
- ° build strong and lasting friendships,

- develop greater self-esteem and self-confidence,
- develop communication skills,
- develop leadership skills,
- develop organizational skills,
- gain self-worth and inner-strength to battle negative peer pressure,
- develop winning attitudes,
- learn how to take responsibility for your actions,
- contribute to making a difference in your community and in NAN