



# INNOVATIVE PROJECT GUIDES

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A list of innovative youth projects from across the globe

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## Project Overview

Adam, Annabel, Brandon and Tatjana are four Canadian youth from across Canada with a shared passion for their community. This past summer, these four driven youth were selected by the Tamarack Institute as part of the Communities Building Youth Futures (CBYF) initiative. As a team, they worked together on numerous projects such as this one that seeks to raise awareness about innovative youth projects around the globe. The following list of innovative projects were carefully selected and researched from a much larger list. The twenty innovative projects that follow are among the most inspiring projects identified by the team.

We hope that this booklet serves its purpose as an informative resource that highlights innovative youth projects from across the globe. Together, we can all help build brighter futures.

- *Brandon, Adam, Tatjana & Annabelle*

## **Aurora Host Homes**

The Boys and Girls Club of Calgary launched the Aurora Host Homes project to provide shelter and foster care to LGBTQ2S+ youth. They believe that these youth are “overrepresented in the homeless population” and many youth “feel it is unsafe”. Fortunately, the Aurora Host Homes project strives to place LGBTQ2S+ youth with loving host parents in environments “where sexual orientation and gender identity is respected and celebrated”, with the ultimate goal of transitioning youth from adolescence to adulthood. This project is an excellent opportunity for LGBTQ2S+ youth to grow independent because it recognises that not all young members of the LGBTQ2S+ community are in happy homes. It helps foster parents take the necessary steps to rescue and care for young homeless adults who may not have had a steady start in life.

## **BeThere**

[Jack.org](http://Jack.org) is an organization that holds the mental wellness of youth as their top priority, giving young advocates from all over Canada a place to share their story and inspire others. [Jack.org](http://Jack.org) surveyed 1,200 youth Canada-wide, finding 83% of the young people surveyed stated that they supported a friend in their time of need – but only 39% of the same group of people stated they knew how to appropriately help their friend in their time of need. With this information, [Jack.org](http://Jack.org) launched BeThere, the world’s most comprehensive and engaging online resource for young people to learn how to support each other through the struggle of mental illness.

## **Career Development and Empowerment for Kayayei Girls from Northern Ghana**

Youth Initiative for Africa Development (YIFAD) is a non-governmental organization that takes an active and positive stance in addressing the social problems facing the youth in Africa. One project in particular that YIFAD has implemented is Career Development and Empowerment for Kayayei Girls from Northern Ghana. This project’s goal is to empower female head porters (Kayayei) from Northern Ghana with vocational skills such as hair dressing, sewing and catering to create a sustainable form of livelihood for the youth. Through this project, young women in Northern Ghana will be provided with an opportunity to gain financial freedom and self-empowerment. YIFAD’s project is innovative on many levels. First and foremost, it seeks to empower young Ghanaian women with valuable skills that will help them achieve financial independence. Thanks to these skills, women can therefore rely on themselves for a living and therefore preventing them from migrating to the rural south for non-existing jobs.

## **DoSomething**

[Jack.org](http://Jack.org) also launched another organization called DoSomething, which invites youth to actively make a difference within their mental health community. Some of their activities include starting an online challenge, hosting a letter-writing party, sharing positivity online, and many, many more things. They help give youth the resources to stage a mental health initiative in their community that has lasting and measurable impact. They've modelled the initiatives on the work of Jack Chapters across the country, and therefore are proven to have a good, working effect. Each initiative falls under one of 3 categories of impact: improving attitudes, increasing education, or changing systems around mental health.

## **Get A Job Program**

Project Play holds the belief that all youth, regardless of location or experience, should have access to youth-centered sports programs. Launched in 2013 by the Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program, they work to develop, apply and share knowledge with the goal of building healthy communities through sports. They take measure of the state of play at a multitude of different levels, taking exclusive data and insights from each community. Each fall, they create new ideas to push the movement forward at Project Play Summit, the annual gathering of leaders interested in youth, sports and health. Project Play has had a massive impact on numerous communities. Their work has influenced hundreds of organizations to shape their youth strategies, including (but not limited to) professional leagues, media companies, national sport governing bodies, parks and recreation departments and community sport providers.

## **Family Reconnect Program in Toronto**

The Family Reconnect Program was founded in 2001 when the staff at Eva's Place emergency shelter which is a youth emergency homeless shelter recognized how often youth wanted to reconnect with their families. This program offers family and individual counselling to at-risk and homeless youth and their families. This program is unique because it recognizes the importance of family support for youth and it attempts to foster and maintain healthy, supportive relationships between youth and their families. Family and individual counselling is offered to youth between 16-24 years old and who have insecure housing. The objective of this program is to reconnect youth to their families, in hopes that youth can return home or move to community housing with family support and involvement. In situations where reconnecting a youth to their family is not possible, the program will provide emotional support,

grief and loss counselling as well as life and coping skills. This program is innovative because it recognizes the importance of family to youth whether or not they have a connection or supports from their families. This program allows caregivers to reconnect with their loved ones and develop a healthy relationship. Thus, this program can be therapeutic for both the caregivers and the youth; while also recognizing the grief associated with losing a parental figure even if they are still alive.

### **Indigenous Youth Futures Partnership**

Launched by Carleton University, this northern Ontario partnership helps young Indigenous students learn valuable leadership skills. The program promises to “build on each community’s strengths, act on their priorities, and facilitate the mobilization of resources” for brighter, stronger, and tighter communities in the future. The Indigenous Youth Futures Partnership is innovative in the way that they believe that Indigenous young adults are the key turning points for their community to change for brighter horizons.

### **Job Ahoi!**

Based out of Dornbirn, Austria, the “Job Ahoi!” project is implemented by the Open Youth Work Dornbirn Association in Austria. The project is geared towards unemployed youth with an objective of teaching young people technical and social skills as well as offering help with professional development and job searching. Examples of help provided include practicing interviews and telephone conversations, coaching and job application assistance. Job Ahoi! is an innovative project because of its unique approach to unemployment, that is, it seeks to encourage youth to adopt new perspectives after periods of unemployment while working towards gaining qualifications for future employment.

### **Kiwanis Builders Club**

Kiwanis Builders Club is not only a part of the larger Kiwanis International Office, but also a club division that focusses on building personal and moral character, and leadership and servant skills to serve their communities. Kiwanis has over 1,600 Builders Clubs all over the world, helping kids use their potential to work with their communities and school systems.

## **Nestle Needs YOUth**

Established in 2013, Nestle needs YOUth is a global youth initiative that seeks to equip youth with the necessary skills to thrive in the future workforce. Premised on the belief that communities cannot thrive if they fail to offer a bright future for younger generations, this initiative supports youth with skill development to maximize their potential as they enter the workforce. Some of the ways that Nestle has accomplished these goals has been through apprenticeships, traineeships, and job opportunities to young people around the world. In addition, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Nestle needs YOUth began rolling out online training for youth to help them be successful in today's economy. Nestle needs YOUth is an innovative youth initiative due to its globally oriented structure, therefore maximizing its reach to youth across the world. As a matter of fact, since 2013, this initiative has provided more than 25,000 job opportunities annually for young people under the age of 30. Moreover, this program has provided training sessions to more than 1 million youth worldwide.

## **Ontario Indigenous Youth Partnership Project**

The Ontario Indigenous Youth Partnership Project (OIYPP) is an initiative that seeks to create a community of celebrated Indigenous youth leading work in their communities. OIYPP aims to achieve this goal in a number of ways, such as providing direct financial, mentorship and capacity support to Indigenous youth to explore and execute their own ideas as well as building reciprocal relationships between Indigenous youth and a community of support including individuals, organizations and funders. In addition to providing Indigenous youth with grants for their ideas, OIYPP provides Indigenous youth with mentors, skills training and networking opportunities. The OIYPP is innovative because it provides Indigenous youth with a platform for implementing their desired community-oriented goals. In addition, it provides youth with financial support to help make their goal a reality.

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annual gathering of leaders interested in youth, sports and health. Project Play has had a massive impact on numerous communities. Their work has influenced hundreds of organizations to shape their youth strategies, including (but not limited to) professional leagues, media companies, national sport governing bodies, parks and recreation departments and community sport providers.

### **Promoting Life Skills in Aboriginal Youth**

Right to Play is an international non-profit organization that seeks to empower vulnerable children around the world. Promoting Life Skills in Aboriginal Youth (PLAY) is one of their programs that is geared towards Indigenous youth in Canada. PLAY partners with 85 Indigenous communities across Canada and hires locally trained youth mentors that deliver weekly programs that promote healthy living, healthy relationships, education and employment skills. By hiring locally trained youth, PLAY provides direct leadership roles for Indigenous youth who then become involved in their communities and therefore building brighter futures. For this reason, PLAY is regarded as an innovative initiative that seeks to reconcile and bridge the gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth.

### **Service Learning and Leadership Training**

Multiplying Good is a service-based organization that succeeds through the work philosophy of helping others in need. Through their training program, Service Learning and Leadership Training, they lay the foundations for young adults in middle school and high school to learn leadership skills and launch their own campaign within their community. This project has great potential because they operate on help-based co-operation between trainers and trainees. According to their website, 8,500 participants trained with them in the last year and about “85% of program participants said they grew as a leader”.

### **The Connections Program**

This unique program is designed for student who find it difficult to obtain success in a traditional school setting. The program provides appropriate educational support for those whose situations prevent them from thriving in school. Students in this program are taught effective coping skills and behavioral strategies to help them both inside and outside of the classroom. This program is designed to teach at-risk students in need of intensive behavioural support to improve academically in core subject areas needed to graduate like

English, Math, Social Studies and Science. There is an emphasis in this program to collaborate with other teachers and child-care workers and it also supports the integration of students into regular classroom settings. This program is so innovative because it allows students who are at-risk of dropping out have a chance at succeeding in school, while providing them the tools and supports they need to thrive in their interpersonal relationships in the professional and casual setting. This program is a middle-ground between mainstream schooling and alternative schooling; thus, allowing students to graduate at their own pace and have the choice to sit in a traditional classroom or do it online.

### **The Power Source Program**

The Power Source Program is a preventative and rehabilitative program designed for highly at-risk youth. This program will help youth become resilient, while building skills to aid them in both their social and emotional development. Further, this program aids youth in developing a healthy self-concept and a positive outlook for their futures. This program also helps youth enter the workforce by increasing their interpersonal skills as well as acquire social and emotional skills. In addition, this program also teaches youth how to maintain healthy relationships, learn healthy coping mechanisms and build skills to both tolerate and manage distressing emotions. This program is innovative because it allows a space for youth to develop social and emotional skills which are critical in fostering healthy relationships, a healthy job and without connections to others, how can these youth thrive?

### **The Village Transitional Housing Program**

The Village Transitional Housing Project provides safe, affordable housing to youth who are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless between the ages 16-18. Youth may live at the Village for up to two years and are able to stay there if they abide by certain conditions. For example, they must see a Youth Support Worker, abide by the house rules, and attend their Youth Support Program; which is designed to teach youth the basic life skills like cooking, budgeting, cleaning and other skills imperative for self-reliance. The Youth Support Program compiled with a safe, secure environment both gives youth access to a variety of different resources as well as offers them skills to help guide them on the road to their independence. This program is so innovative because it addresses the youth with their immediate needs (housing, food, safety) while also allowing them a space to grow and develop with the support that they need to become independent, pro-social young adults.



## **YMCA Employment Services**

YMCA Employment Services believes that everyone, regardless of age, gender, background and financial ability should have access to employment. They believe strongly in assisting youth in need, offering immense support that you'd be hard-pressed to find anywhere else. YMCA Employment Services respond to the needs of unemployed Canadians, especially youth, by providing employment programs, helping to address some of the barriers when it comes to entering the job market. They offer employment programs such as employment resource centers, job search, skills development workshops, placement opportunities, entrepreneurship supports, mentorship, one-on-one support, apprenticeship and much more.

## **Youth Keep Working**

The Youth Keep Working program is a 16-week aid training program that prepares youth for the workplace by teaching them essential work skills as well as hands on experience. Its designed for youth ages 15-30 not attending school and are unemployed. This program allows youth to be paid minimum-wage for 30 hours a week, while they learn the skills necessary to enter the workforce. In addition, this program allows youth to be taught in a hands-on learning environment, while getting paid at the same time. This program will help youth identify what work interests them as well as get a chance to learn about themselves along the way. Further, this program will help youth raise their confidence in their abilities, while also being able to get support securing their next job. This is an innovative project, because its targeted for youth who are neither in school or employed and offers them the opportunity to obtain essential working skills while getting paid for it at the same time; which will only enables their confidence, skills and attitude towards joining the work force.

## **Youth to Postsecondary**

In 2015, Seneca College launched the Youth to Postsecondary (Y2P) education project as a free-of-charge program to help students' academic progression. Specific to the Jane and Finch neighbourhood in Toronto, Ontario, Y2P offers youth the educational opportunity to reach their fullest potential. Seneca College has determined that many students in the Jane and Finch area are living in low-income families, and oftentimes English is their second language. They recognize the financial difficulties of those struggling in this neighbourhood, and so Y2P "helps to offset these costs" for full-time study and reduce the annual Canadian high school drop out rate of 40,000.

As a team, we hope that these innovative projects inspire, motivate and encourage youth from all walks of life to get involved. While the goal of this booklet is to raise awareness, we hope that the reader takes it upon themselves to continue our vision. Through these efforts, we can ensure that youth will have brighter futures. Thank-you!

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