

ABORIGINAL CENTERED COMMUNITY EXPERT TRAINING: A SOLOS PILOT

ACCET FINAL REPORT ON ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

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1.1: Introduction

SOLOS ABORIGINAL CENTERED COMMUNITY EXPERT TRAINING (ACCET)

The ACCET program is based on the “train the trainer” model of professional development to encourage service delivery to communities. The model focuses on bringing together key service-providers to local training events, training them intensively on areas of Internet safety, and encouraging them to educate their colleagues and clients – to enhance their roles as knowledge-holders in their communities.¹ Using an open architecture format, SOLOS has developed and delivered three two-day trainings for professionals who work with youth in geographically diverse areas of Canada. Through intensive community relevant training and networking, SOLOS aim was to develop community expertise on awareness, prevention and responses to online child sexual exploitation and to encourage knowledge transfer throughout trainees’ communities. This model purposefully avoids implementing rigid top-down training and highlights sustainable post-training partnerships and collaborations among service-providing organizations and with SOLOS.

¹ For more on the train the trainer model, see for example: Pancucci, S. (2007). Train the Trainer: The bricks in the learning community scaffold of professional development. *International Journal of Social Sciences* 2(1).

1.2 Brief Summary of the ACCET Aims

The primary objective of the project was **to develop and deliver an awareness and training program on child sexual exploitation online.**

It was hoped that community experts participating in the ACCET program would:

- Be better equipped to deal with the local manifestations of incidences of online exploitation and
- Have the advantage of already being entrenched in the local culture and community, *thus*
- Foster and improve existing relationships with other professionals and youth populations.

By providing participants with supplemental information and support through electronic upgrades and online contact, it was hoped that community experts would:

- Be constantly updated with new trends and emerging trends, and
- Become key information sharers in their communities resulting in more effective and efficient prevention of and response to local incidents of online exploitation.

1.3 Background

In 2007 SOLOS prepared a document titled “Bridging the Gap: Best Practices and Policies to Address the Online High-Risk Activities of Youth in BC” with funding from The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General of British Columbia. The 128 page report suggests that a policy strategy to combat online sexual exploitation of youth should be based on a human services approach, favour cooperation and coordination amongst industry, government, NGOs and the public, and have a strong focus on education, awareness, research and training.

After conducting a thorough environmental scan of other jurisdictional approaches in the UK, EU and United States, SOLOS concluded that responses need to be delivered in recognition of the specific context and unique problems faced by individual youth, and suggested that the diverse economical, social and environmental communities youth come from necessitate culturally sensitive awareness, education and outreach programs.

Finally, SOLOS stressed that updates and upgrades to Canadian strategies must be iterative, ongoing and built into a long-term strategy to address the constantly evolving technological climate. To this end, SOLOS proposed the Community Expert Training Program (CET) rolled out in three sequential phases highlighting training of experts within their communities during 2008-2009. Based on the success of the CET program, SOLOS developed the ACCET program reviewed in this report.

1.4 Project Description

Goals

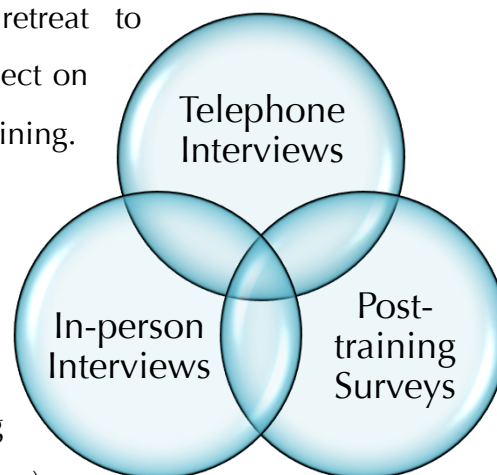
- To create a safe Canada for children, youth and their communities
- To provide community relevant awareness, prevention and response material to practitioners
- To equip professionals serving high-risk youth with tools to cope with the complications technology creates for youth, families and education.
- To apply existing innovations in new areas
- To build community capacity focused on efficiency and sustainability
- To provide a strength-based approach to learning focusing on and advancing existing community expertise
- To build on an investment in training over the long term

Objectives

- Train front line professionals in smaller BC communities
- Deliverable topics: “Understanding Online Technologies”, “Understanding Children and Youth”, “High-Risk Activities of Children and Youth Online”, “Legal Considerations” and, “Professional Online Ethics”
- Introduce participants to websites and online services accessed by youth and children in their communities
- Instruct participants on using and monitoring social networking sites
- Provide participants with key research articles to aid their practice
- Provide participants with information on collecting evidence to support investigations of internet crimes (such as screen captures and email headers)
- Participants leave training with specific, measureable, attainable, realistic and time-specific goals for themselves for implementing their training into their communities
- Provide ongoing resource support to participants

2.1 Evaluation Research Design and Methods

- Data was collected in each of the developmental, implementation and post-training stages to facilitate evaluation of the ACCET program.
- Methods included follow-up questionnaires completed by each participant and follow-up interviews conducted with agency facilitators and the SOLOS Executive Director.
- Both the community/agency facilitator and SOLOS Executive Director were contacted approximately one to two weeks after the retreat to participate in interviews. They were asked to reflect on the successes and areas of improvement for the training.



- The process evaluation considered:
 - Experiences of participants
 - Training program management (including facilitation and culturally appropriate delivery)
 - Best practices
 - Promising practices
 - Ineffective practices and
 - Recommendations for improvement
- SOLOS was able to use each report to improve the curriculum in a graduated fashion and the final evaluation was sent to the granting agency to document SOLOS' activities and use of funding. The lessons learned will improve and strengthen the ACCET program as a whole so it can be delivered more widely to BC communities. An abridged format of the evaluation can also be used to inform communities of the ACCET program.

2.2 Measureable Outcomes

ANTICIPATED RESULTS

Specific Reach Human service professionals, social workers, youth workers, family counselors, school administrators, school liaison officers, probation officers, restorative justice practitioners, victim services and mental health workers.

Knowledge & Awareness Reach Youth, children, families, schools and communities supported by the front line workers involved in the training

Measureable Outcomes

1. Children, youth and families in targeted communities will have access to professional assistance regarding online sexual exploitation
2. Increased knowledge and awareness of child sexual exploitation and of internet safety practices
3. Increased collaboration between social service providers
4. The development of community specific curriculums with philosophies that can be adapted for other communities and provinces.

3.1 ACCET: A Closer Look

PARTICIPANT AND TRAINING DESCRIPTION:

The two-day training events took place at:

- **ACCET 1:** The Urban Native Youth Association (UNYA), in Vancouver, BC (www.unya.com) on January 8th & 13th, 2010.
- **ACCET 2:** Adams Lake, Kamloops, BC (<http://www.namgis.bc.ca/>) on February 24th & 26th, 2010.
- **ACCET 3:** Namgis First Nation/ Namgis Health Center, Alert Bay, BC (<http://www.adamslakeband.org/>) on March 17th & 18th, 2010.

Together, ACCET 1, 2, and 3 reached a total of 27 practitioners in the above communities including:

- Several Youth Workers from UNYA, and the Neskonlith Indian Band; two First Nations support workers and one family and youth support worker from the Namgis Indian Band
- One youth/community prevention worker
- One clinical coordinator/counselor
- One outreach administrative assistant
- One school administrator, several education and youth programs coordinators, one education and youth programs coordinator, one school support staff worker and two school counselors
- Several health workers
- One police officer and one victim service worker

PRE-TRAINING ENGAGEMENT:

ACCET participants were provided with six academic articles. These articles were posted in an online forum so that participants could forward them to interested colleagues. Content discussed youth online culture, social networking, effective youth engagement, myths and truths about online predators, age of consent information and cybergangs. After ACCET 1, SOLOS revised this component by providing one-page summaries of each article for easier consumption based on ACCET 1 participant feedback.

The SOLOS Executive Director connected with one or two key community members to begin building a local relationship before beginning each community training session. During ACCET 1, it was found that while development of this relationship was found to be a good practice, it could be improved with more time spent before hand by the Executive Director in the training community. To respond to this, more time was spent before the training meeting with community members during ACCET 2 and 3. ACCET 2 training occurred on two days with a one-day break in between, allowing time to be spent with community representatives on the day off to improve and develop content and to respond to day1 questions and comments. The projected benefit of this interaction was increased familiarity and trust between participants and SOLOS. During ACCET 3, time was spent on two days prior to training meeting with staff at the host organization and adapting community-specific content.

3.2 Participants' Evaluation of CET

Project Outcome 1: Children, youth and families in targeted communities will have access to professional assistance regarding online sexual exploitation.

“[after the training] you get to walk away with stuff that you want to share”
(ACCET 1 participant).

Participants demonstrated positive indicators of outcome 1. All participants are already connected to youth and families in their communities as a function of their profession. Thus the aim here was to equip already accessible professionals with additional knowledge and awareness. The positive indicators of this outcome included:

- All participants rated the retreat as very, highly or extremely educational.
- All participants suggested that the information given at the retreat was very relevant; several noted that it fit well within a variety of practice settings, particularly frontline youth work.
- Participants trained as experts made plans to share information with students, youths, parents/caregivers, family and friends to raise awareness and knowledge. Specifically, participants made plans to distribute what they had learned by adding educational postings to Facebook pages for others to see, and by creating brochures, newsletters and pamphlets for community distribution.
- Participants trained as experts planned to begin discussing privacy, confidentiality and anonymity in the online environment with youth and volunteers.

“It [the training] blew my mind! It wasn’t what I expected, it was more. tonnes of great information...” (ACCET 2 participant).

Projected Outcome 2: Increased knowledge and awareness of child sexual exploitation and of Internet safety practices.

While all participants stated that they feel MORE equipped post retreat to deal with issues of online safety than prior to the retreat, an important finding is that there existed a diversity of competency and awareness levels among the 27 participants.

For example, several participants indicated that they did not feel safe, confident or equipped to deal with online safety prior to the training. Those participants stated that they felt more confident in their ability to make decisions online and to pass on safety information after the training. Some others felt unaware to the safety risks and threats prior to the training.

- Post-training surveys for those who had little prior knowledge, indicated that ACCET provided an increased capacity and a “starting point” to gather more expertise.
- One participant who identified being moderately equipped prior to the training felt more well-informed after the training.
- After the training, the concern level was heightened among participants, however, this was coupled with interest in learning more and a feeling that they were equipped with knowledge to spread though their community.

“We are in a rural setting that are naïve about the positive and negative use of the internet. Education is important for skills and knowledge and safety.” (ACCET 3 participant).

- Participants who rated their pre-retreat knowledge as high, found that they would be more able to disseminate knowledge in their community, and that they understood youth issues online to a greater degree. Surveys showed that those with knowledge prior to the retreat were able to identify gaps in their knowledge and to recognize risks that they were not aware of and felt more motivated to consider safety concerns.

This indicated that although several levels of capacity existed, the training was able to increase knowledge and confidence for all levels.

“It is needed as there are no other agencies providing this work, which is critical for the Aboriginal community” (ACCET 1 participant).

All participants reported that they would recommend the training to their peers, indicating a high level of satisfaction with the training. Participant suggestions included that the training be given to all band members in their community and across BC, other provinces and all schools.

Participants felt that the most useful information was that surrounding anonymity, privacy and effective communication with youth online (including how to start a dialogue with youth online). The links to helpful websites were also found to be useful, as were specific mention of online predators. Other participants felt that the most useful information included links to informative websites, as well as content discussing youth work online from a policy perspective. Others found specific information on the extent of content youth and children have access to online including negative consequences, specifically limits to privacy, to be very valuable. Participants indicated that the most important pieces of information included: a general awareness around internet use, benefits, challenges and risks; the utility of discussing internet use with youth; limited privacy online; their unique roles as community resource people to be able to pass on information and; that positive uses of internet activity exist.

Projected Outcome 3: Increased collaboration between social service providers.

Participants demonstrated positive indicators of outcome 3. Specifically, participants trained as experts planned to take action on three levels:

1. Becoming more informed as individuals and family members to:

- Seek, develop and distribute more resources and information.
- Develop workshops to deliver continuously throughout the community with the help of a youth facilitator.
- Engage in informal hands-on learning with their own families, teachers and students about the Internet and risky online materials.

“...I am really glad I participated. There is a generational gap and I am happy to be slowly closing that gap” (ACCET 3 participant)

2. Sharing information and building relationships as community resource professionals to:

- Network with other youth serving professionals in their community
- Network with others in their communities including seniors.
- Share Internet safety education with clients and colleagues through workshops, pamphlets and discussions.
- Post “rules of use” by computers that community youth have access to (and use contracts).
- Distribute handouts to youth and community members.
- Share Internet safety education with clients and colleagues through grandparents’ circles, girls’ groups, and directly to families.

3. Developing new policies for professional practice to:

- Use new knowledge to inform and re-write agency internet-related policies and procedures.
- Renew staff training manuals to reflect internet-safety and awareness messages learned at the ACCET program.
- Look into current organizational policies and procedures for connecting with youth online including documenting texts, chats and emails.

“...Thank-you! This program needs to be shared with all Aboriginal agencies ASAP”

(ACCET 1 participant)

Projected Outcome 4: The development of community specific curriculums with philosophies that can be adapted for other communities and provinces

Seven topics were developed: understanding online technologies, understanding children and youth, high-risk activities online, legal considerations, therapeutic considerations, professional online ethics, strategic responses and, building community/agency specific plans. Based on community revisions and participant feedback, curriculum was revised to focus on six topics: understanding online technologies, understanding children and youth, high-risk activities online, personal online safety, legal considerations, youth work online and three beginning steps for practice.

The content was delivered using a combination of dynamic multi-media shows, mind mapping and dialogue. Day 1 was oriented around delivering content while Day 2 saw participants applying their new knowledge to their specific communities. Each day incorporated de-brief sessions to encourage feedback, elicit questions and think critically about the information.

The ACCET curriculum was designed with flexibility in mind. During ACCET 1, SOLOS adapted curriculum before the training event and also after the first day of training in consultation with a community facilitator. In between day 1 and day 2 of ACCET2, seven hours were spent with community facilitators to further develop content tailored to the needs of participants as expressed during day 1.

This consultation process bridges local expertise with SOLOS expertise and was found to increase relevance and appropriateness of training and also strengthen the relationship and build trust between SOLOS and participants. The strengths of the community specific, adaptable curriculum was exceptionally noticed during ACCET2 when content went under significant revision after Day1 based on community needs and desires, particularly since this group was not as familiar in the online settings as previous groups. During ACCET3, time was imbedded prior to beginning the community training to review and adapt content with a community member.

“To be honest this is hands down the most interesting and intriguing training workshops I have ever done” (ACCET 1 participant)

While flexibility instead of rigidity results in more complex program delivery and also necessitates that only a SOLOS trainer can offer ACCET programs, the resulting knowledge is potentially more accessible and useful to specific communities. The partnership developed with the co-facilitators was instrumental in developing content and developing cultural and community awareness including local traditions and meanings. Further, because of the sensitive nature of training content (sexually exploited youth), sensitivity needs to be exercised in responding to the possibility of triggering effects to participants. The end result was “co-creating community training in first nations communities” recognizing the dual role of trainer and consultant of the SOLOS executive director.

3.1 Challenges and Areas to Enhance

CONTENT-BASED SUGGESTIONS

While most participants did not identify anything that was *missing* from ACCET content, several participants provided valuable feedback to enhance the training.

- One participant suggested that more content on specific counseling situations; another suggested that more information about online dating would be useful; several participants suggested that online gaming addiction would be an appropriate topic to incorporate.
 - Participants in ACCET 1 suggested that more handouts with training information including links to important websites would assist them in sharing knowledge after the training.
 - This was addressed in ACCET 2 & 3 by revising the participant handbook with a list of links corresponding with presentation topics (final version of the handbook to accompany this report).
 - One participant found that the legal awareness section could be improved to provide hypothetical examples and associated good practice responses by practitioners.
 - One participant suggested collaborating with community youth and inviting them to the training session. However, another participant was cognizant of the confidentiality issues surrounding practitioners making examples of their clients' activities. Because of this issue, the nature of the training would have to change should community youth be present. This could be put in place with having youth be present on one of two days.
- ★ **Future trainings should operate in awareness of these views, as they may be appropriate in other community settings or in the development of an advanced stage two training seminar.**

MULTI-LEVEL PARTICIPATION

As stated previously, attention was paid to the diversity in levels of awareness and competencies, and participants agreed that different levels found the training useful. However, delivering the content proved to be difficult from the point of view of SOLOS' Executive Director amid these issues.

- ★ **Future training sessions should assess knowledge and experience levels *prior* to training to more effectively to build-in multi-level and peer-to-peer learning.**

CHALLENGES TRANSFERRING PHILOSOPHY INTO PRACTICE

Although the philosophy behind the ACCET program is to have participants transfer knowledge to their community, post-training interviews indicated that encouraging participants to anticipate concrete ways they would accomplish this goal was challenging. To address this concern, SOLOS encouraged participants in ACCET 2 & 3 to create “3 beginning steps” for themselves at the end of the training. Creating the steps should allow participants to reflect on the training and consider timely, community-appropriate ways of sharing new knowledge and improving frontline practice.

In some cases establishing beginning steps at the end of the training proved to be promising in identifying specific ways to improve practice based on what had been learned. These steps not only displayed that participants were thinking about improving knowledge sharing in their communities and with the youth they work with, but also in relation to their *own* online behaviour and that of their families. In several instances participants expressed interest in producing resources and workshops, but also in changing practice and relationships in an ongoing way – by continuing to share knowledge and build personal capacity for online safety. Many participants also acknowledged a continuing relationship to be established with SOLOS in order to stay up to date on new information.

- ★ **Future training sessions should prioritize post-retreat knowledge transfer throughout.**

3.1 Conclusions & Implications

Participant satisfaction was an overwhelming success for the first ACCET program. Several participants also found that SOLOS' approach to training was culturally sensitive and relevant and would be a benefit to other Aboriginal communities. Because the curriculum is flexible given specific community need, variations in technological skill level and priorities of participants, SOLOS was able to adapt the training complexity and topics to best suit the needs of the community.

In the end, the ACCET program reached its anticipated professional audience, resulting in access to information and awareness cascading from professionals to youth, children, families, schools and communities of trainees. Participants demonstrated increased knowledge on a variety of levels, despite their varying competencies; they discussed specific ways they might increase collaboration with their peers and communities to keep children and youth safe online. Finally, an effective and flexible curriculum has been developed and adapted for each training community, with content and philosophies that can be tailored successfully for other Canadian communities.