



Welcome to the
CYMH International Symposium:
Voices of Community Collaboration on Youth Mental Health
November 17, 2023





Land Acknowledgement

On behalf of the Children and Youth Mental Health (CYMH) Project team, we respectfully acknowledge the Beaver, Cree, Dene, and Metis people as the original caretakers of these Lands and surrounding areas. We are grateful to live, learn, work, and play on Treaty 8 territory within Turtle Island and acknowledge these Lands have been home to diverse and sovereign First Nations and Inuit Nations since Time Immemorial.





Our Belief

The CYMH Project team as a group is religious and political neutral even though we have our own beliefs and values as individuals. As a group, we believe that violence in any forms against children and youth creates long lasting traumatic impacts on the physical and mental wellness of each child. As helping professions, we advocate that prevention and early intervention have better results and are more cost-effective than remedial treatments; therefore, we ask that people who share this view make your individual or collective efforts to stop violence against children and youth locally, nationally, and transnationally.



Guiding Principles



- ✓ Respect
- ✓ Value differences
- ✓ Non-Judgemental
- ✓ Support others



The CYMH Project team is
delighted to present the
following Photo Stories on Youth
Mental Health developed by
Youth in Alberta, Canada
(Nov 17, 2023)



Methods – Photo Story (a.k.a. Photovoice)

- Youth, aged 12 to 17, in 7-weeks of photo storytelling to explore issues related to mental health and well-being.
- Six photo story groups ($n=44$) were organized in collaboration with community social service partners in Calgary, Lethbridge, and Grande Prairie, Alberta between May 2021 and August 2022.



CYMH Photovoice

Youth Mental Health in Photos

Nadya D. (August 2022)



1. What does mental health and wellness mean to me?

For me, mental health is something greatly affected by individual circumstances. But similarly to physical health, personal steps can be taken to improve one's wellness. Like these flowers, environmental factors such as the sunlight have affected their ability to healthily bloom – but with persistent attention, intervention, and care, even the wilted flower could bloom despite its circumstances.



2. What are challenges to mental health and wellbeing?

For me, declining mental health is a vicious cycle. When I'm not doing well mentally, it can be challenging to even get out of bed – but ironically, my mental health often hinges on getting out and being productive. That's why I saw my messy bed as a perfect representation of the obstacles in the way of improving mental health – it's the first and sometimes the hardest threshold to cross.



3. What are strategies for supporting mental health and well-being?



As I mentioned previously, I maintain my mental health by seeking out experiences to keep myself in the present moment. Recently, that has come in the form of volunteering, which has done wonders for my well-being. Not only do I feel better by making a positive impact on my community, but opportunities like the community farm I took this photo at offer the instant mental refresher of being in nature.



4. Identifying support for youth mental health & wellbeing.

Over the summer, I've found Diversecities has been an excellent tool for free education surrounding mental health. What's more, this photovoice project has been an especially cathartic outlet for reflecting on my own mental health, and the resources I have to care for it.



5. What supports for youth mental health & wellbeing would I like to see in my community?



While I was on a walk, I noticed this faded chalk message on the pathway. Even though it was a simple sentiment, I felt a connection with the person who'd left it solely because they felt like being kind – and it reminded me of the power the support of others has. It's why I want to see more social spaces and peer support groups in my community to alleviate the feelings of isolation that enable declining mental health. Even the smallest moments of human connection can touch the hearts of others, after all.

The background is a light teal color with a decorative border of floral illustrations. The border includes a large flower in the top-left, a large flower in the top-center, a large flower in the top-right, a large flower in the bottom-left, and a large flower in the bottom-right. The central text is overlaid on this background.

Photovoice Story

*Developed by: Gibbs
July 2022*



*What does mental health and wellbeing
mean to you?*



This photo represents my mental health because i love to go dirt biking in my spare time. Dirt Biking is something i look forward to every summer and helps to release a lot of my stress. Me and my dad go together, i enjoy going with my dad because i get to spend time with him doing something that makes us both happy.



*What are some challenges to
mental health and wellbeing?*



A challenge to my mental health would be my dirtbike being crashed. When something you love is ruined, it can cause a lot of stress and overwhelming feelings that aren't positive towards mental health.



*What helps create/support positive
mental health?*



Finding new hobbies can be a great support to your health. I took this picture because i love to go kayaking. Kayaking is very relaxing and i get to enjoy it with my entire family. We all find it as a great way to relax and spend time away from school and work.

A support to my mental health is dirt biking, i used a perspective technique to show my passion for it. dirt biking fills me with adrenaline and makes me excited because it's so fun, which is positive towards mental health.





Photovoice
Project

Developed by: Milly N.
August 2022



#1

What does Mental Health
and Wellness mean to you?

Week 1

To me, Mental health and Wellness is like the weather. It goes through different phases, and sometimes changes unexpectedly. Sometimes I'll be feeling at my best, content and happy, like a nice sunny day, and other times, feelings of loneliness and negativity strike, similar to a storm.



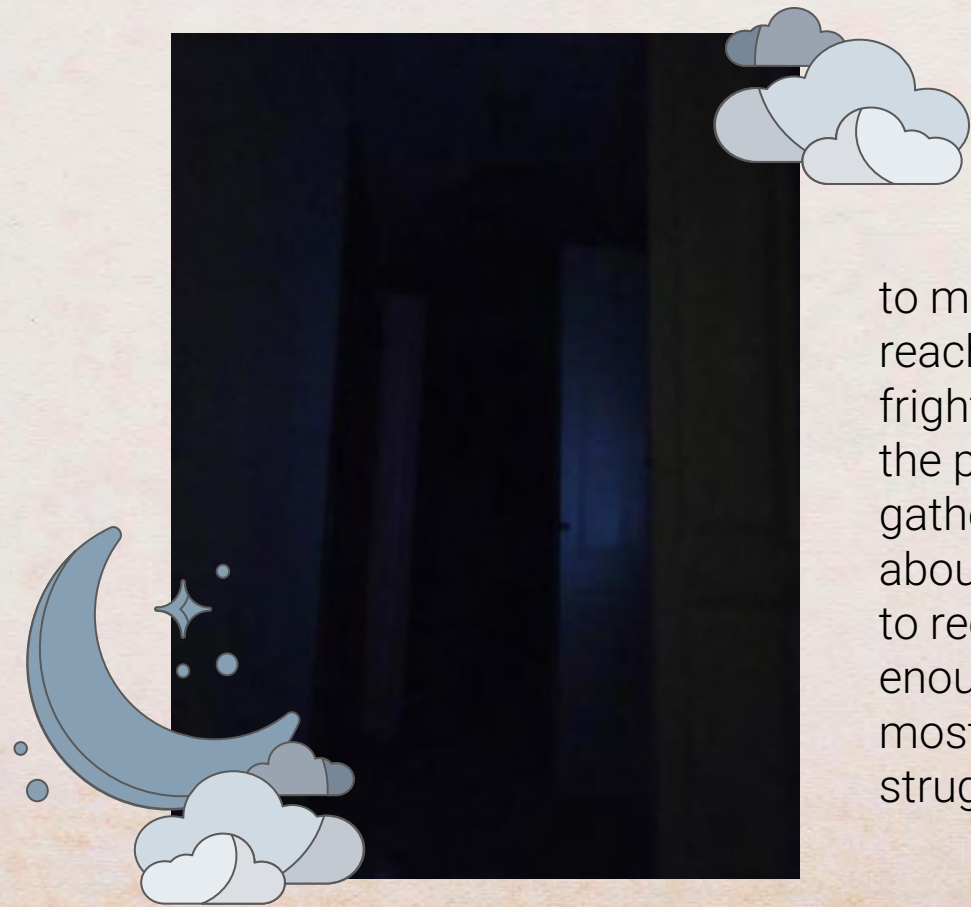


What are the challenges to mental health and wellbeing?

Week 2

Electronics and the internet is something I find myself spending too much time on everyday. It's a very big challenge to control my electronic time, and it's definitely a barrier keeping me from spending more time doing more productive and fulfilling things.





One of the biggest challenges to mental health is the uncertainty of reaching out for help. This frightening hallway is symbolic of the path many have to go through to gather enough courage to open up about their issues and walk the road to recovery. Sometimes being brave enough to start the process is the most difficult part, and many struggle to take that step.

#3

What are the strategies
for supporting positive
mental health and
wellbeing?






Week 3

One of the most important strategies for staying happy and healthy is frequently going outside, enjoying nature and spending time under the sun. Isolating yourself, alone, at home, is detrimental to our mental states, and is a common pitfall many fall into.

Getting enough sleep is essential to keeping a stable and healthy mental state. Making sure I go to sleep at appropriate times, and having the self control to wake up in the mornings even when I could stay in bed for longer, is one of my core strategies to staying happy.





#4

Identify community support that could support
child and youth Mental Health and Wellbeing

Week 4



Schools are one of the most important areas to youth and children, somewhere they will spend most of their childhood at. Thankfully, schools also offer mental health support and is somewhere children with mental issues can reach out and look for help at.





#5

What would you like to see
in your community to
support Mental Health for
children and youth?

Week 5

I think having more organizations dedicated to mental health, education, and communication, would be extremely beneficial to our communities. One of the great examples of this is Diversecities, which provides support, resources and a safe space for communities.





Another wonderful addition to many communities would be gardens. They provide a beautiful atmosphere to enjoy nature in, and is a great place to socialize and spend time at. Having more areas where friends and family can meet is crucial to the mental health of the community involved. This encourages everyone to spend more time outside, either admiring the flowers, or tending to them, leading to healthier lifestyles.

Photo Storytelling

Perspectives on Youth Mental Health

Created by: K.
May 2022

identity

My cat is important to me.
Both my cat and I are lazy.



What helps
create positive
mental health?

Family is an
important piece of
my life



Challenges to mental health

Anxiety is a challenge for me.

When I did online and far from school, I began to have more anxiety.

Anxiety feels like pressure building up, something like running water.



Supports for mental wellbeing

Reading and
music help me
relax

-K.



Mental Health

There are some things that I feel would be important for me to increase my mental health:

Sleep, less stress and more time to spend on myself. The stress involves assignments and tests, and personal stress at home. It does not feel like I can spend enough time relaxing and doing things that I like.

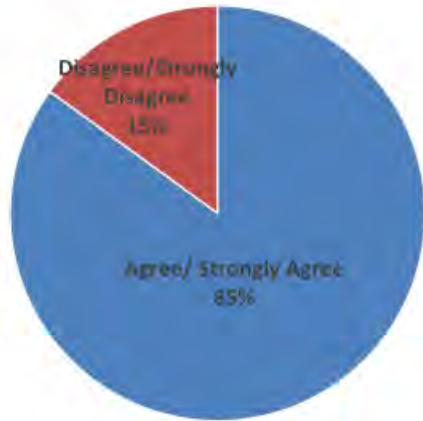


What is the impact of photo storytelling on youth mental health?

*“I learned how much a single photo can
relate to a person's mental health.”
(Youth 003)*

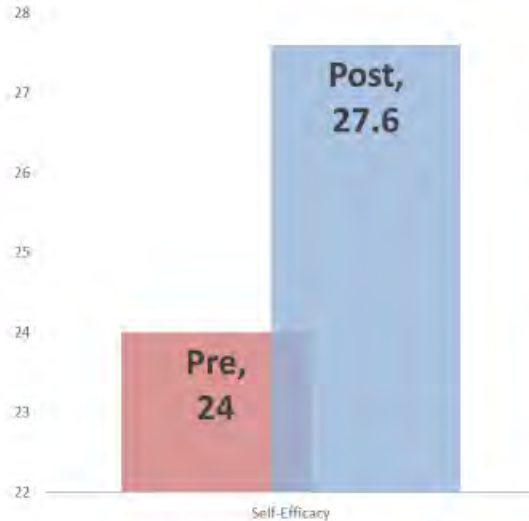
Overall Positive Impact for Youth

YOUTH FELT THEIR VOICE WAS HEARD



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IMPROVED SELF-EFFICACY AMONG YOUTH



$t_{(19)} = -2.62a, p = .008$
pre-test ($M=24.0; SD=4.66$)
post-test ($M=27.6, SD=3.15$)

Increased understanding on mental health

"I know more about my mental health and have a better understanding"

Enjoyed the social connection and sharing with other youth

"Working with other people of my age"

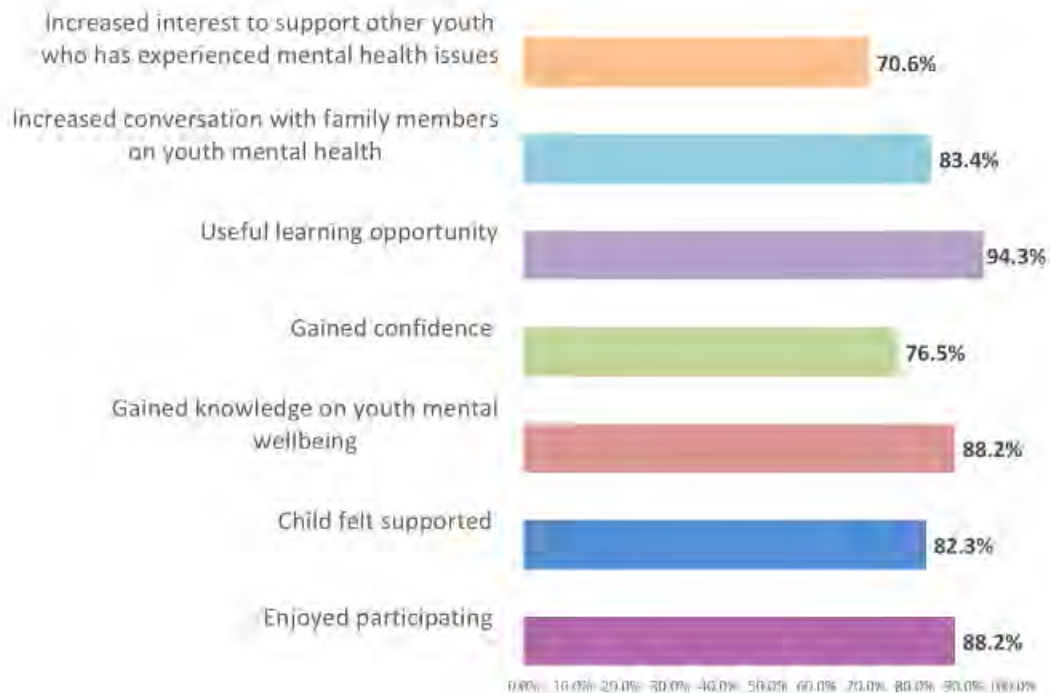
Enhanced knowledge to develop strategies to address personal mental health

"I learned how to manage my mental health and seek help when I need to."

Enjoyed the engagement and empowerment through the group

"I had a good opportunity to be involved in the group because everyone get chances to share."

Parents Observed Positive Impact



Biggest impact on child

- Discussion on mental health
- became more open to talk about mental health,
- learned more about mental health,
- acceptance of different perspective,
- sharing of opinions,
- expressing oneself,
- more confidence,
- the listening and respect,
- framework on wellbeing

New skills the child developed

- Ability to reach out and talk about mental health,
- photography,
- communication skills,
- more confidence,
- understanding on mental health,
- participating online group activities,
- interest in mental health

Conclusion



- Overall this project demonstrated that photovoice groups can be helpful for the prevention and intervention of mental health issues among youth.
- Photovoice can be a powerful way to engage young people and support them in change.
- Youth found engagement and discussion with peers to be particularly beneficial to their mental health suggesting that more time for dialogue in future photovoice groups should be incorporated.

A black and white photograph of two hands shaking, symbolizing agreement or gratitude. The hands are positioned in the center of the frame, with the right hand wearing a watch. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

Thank You

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