Thank you for your interest in hosting a study circle about the issues faced by youth aging out of foster care. We hope you find this kit useful as you learn, discuss, connect with others, and understand what you can do to support youth from care.

This guide is a tool for you to amplify your learning, your voice and your concern for youth aging out of foster care. Together, through learning, conversation and action we can make our neighbourhoods, workplaces and communities better places for all our young people.

If you live in the lower mainland, we may be able to identify young leaders and local organizations who would like to participate in a study circle with you. Please get in touch if this interests you.

**ACTION FORUM FALL 2017**

If at least 15 groups work through this process by fall 2017, Fostering Change will host an Action Forum for all participants to gather, share what they learned, and to help identify local actions they can take to **#SUPPORTTHE700**.

We look forward to hearing how your Study Circles progress, and we hope to see you all in the fall, ready to take action alongside young leaders in your community.

**GET IN TOUCH**

For more information or questions please contact fosteringchange@vancouverfoundation.ca, or call 604-688-2204

Thanks again for supporting youth aging out of foster care in your community.

This guide was developed by the University Womens Club, who have graciously made it available for others to use in their work to support young people leaving foster care.
COMING TO KNOWING

Study Circle Guide on Aging Out of Care in BC

This study circle guide has been developed as part of the Aging Out of Care in BC Study Circle Project conducted by the Canadian Federation of University Women BC Council together with First Call: BC Child & Youth Advocacy Coalition and Vancity Community Foundation with the financial assistance of the Vancouver Foundation’s Fostering Change Initiative.
ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The goals of a study circle are to facilitate dialogue, form relationships and create opportunities. This Study Circle Guide provides a process for addressing the situation of young people aging out of care in BC.

It has been developed for use by community members with a wide range of backgrounds who may wish to learn more about this issue, to find a way to expand the dialogue and action in communities throughout B.C.

Each study circle works in a collaborative manner with diverse community members who connect with local young people, either aging or aged out, local service organizations, and others with an interest in or affected by the topic. Using the comprehensive and inclusive study circle methodology, participants work together; relationships and alliances develop, ideas for action emerge and resolve is strengthened.

This guide was produced through the financial support of the Vancouver Foundation Fostering Change Initiative.

PRODUCED 2017

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Overview

In the Overview section you will find a Welcome to the start of your journey, an explanation of the Circle Concept and a brief step-by-step outline of the study circle Method from the outset of a project and on a session-by-session basis.

You will also find a story about “Coming to Knowing.” During the facilitators’ training, held prior to the study circle to prepare those members who will be facilitating the circle, and in your study circle sessions, this story can be used for centering and reflecting on the journey of young people aging out of care and transitioning to adulthood.

“Do what you can, where you are, with what you have.”
- THEODORE ROOSEVELT
Welcome

Welcome to the start of your journey to create lasting change on the issue of aging out of government care in British Columbia. It can be a beautiful adventure and a difficult one, yet the route and destination are worth it. In a study circle project there is a chance to form strong relationships, to listen deeply for new understandings, and to find a way forward to sustainable collective action. Whether you would like to create your own study circle project or you have been invited to join one, we offer this guide as an aid to navigating the route ahead.

The transition to adulthood can be a difficult passage for any young person in British Columbia, and these challenges are amplified for young people aging out of care. These young people face major life challenges with fewer supports than their peers (CFUW B.C. Council, 2016). Inclusive community dialogue can help you make a meaningful difference on this issue. Coming from a long history of community wide study circle projects, this journey explores the topic through small, democratic, peer-led discussions where all voices are heard and fresh ideas for action can emerge. (Flavin-McDonald & McCoy, 1997)

In the first section, you will find a brief overview of the circle concept and the method for both the project and of each session. In the second section, you will find the details for each session, including topics, resources, session goals and suggested questions. In the third section, you will find more detailed information about the process of the project and each session. In the fourth section are worksheets to help with planning and facilitating study circles. The definitions and sources allow anyone to clarify language and learn a bit more about the topic.
Coming to Knowing
By Johnny Tuktu

Just after I aged out at 19, one of my foster dads told me an interesting story. I was in a college course at the time, and in it I was learning about the history of my ancestors. One day, I began to tell him about all what I had learned in class and he stopped me from speaking. He told me that there is only so much that one can learn from textbooks, reports and statistics. They do not tell the whole story, he said. The experience of human beings cannot be crushed into paper and made real.

He shared with me that in order to fully understand something, or someone, one has to go on a journey of coming to knowing. Coming to knowing is the process of gathering knowledge and information about an issue or topic. Each little piece has value and helps to create the whole picture. It is not only based on what is written in books or reports, but is founded upon the lived experiences of life.

Lived experience is a vital piece when we approach any issue, yet is sometimes forgotten as we sift through reports, statistics and various different writings. My dad told me that in order to understand something, the journey to reach that understanding also has to include lived experience. By bringing together all of our experiences around youth aging out of care, we can help to create a better path for those who come after us. This is what I know to be true.
Circle Concept

Since our earliest ancestors gathered around the fire, the circle has been a powerful way of coming together as equals in a space of respectful and intentional dialogue, creating new paths for social change. The circle creates social space, which is “flowing, integrative, mental, spiritual, emotional, physical, reflective, respectful, healing, and egalitarian.” (McBride & Good, 2010)

The circle is deeply rooted in First Nations traditions such as Council, sharing circles, and talking circles, and is reflected through diverse protocols and practices. It has emerged across time and civilizations, from fueling the French Revolution (Kreye, 2014) and transforming Sweden into a “study circle democracy” (Bjerkaker, 2003), to modernizing post-war industry in Japan and America and revolutionizing the software development industry (Hindle, 2009).

Evolving from this legacy, study circles are small diverse groups of people who meet several times to talk about an important community issue. Participants engage in dialogue to share stories, thoughts, beliefs, and experiences, while taking an in depth look at research and information from various perspectives, to understand the issue on a personal, social, and academic level (Rise for Equality, 2015). Participants identify possible solutions and actions to implement in their communities. They do so through a process of learning together, listening to each other, reflecting on what they hear, sharing their own perspectives, and being willing to change their mind.
Method

In a study circle project...

Gather information
Find a core team
Create a shared vision

Identify key people
Customise outreach
Fill project roles

Share information
Host a kick-off event
Train facilitators

In each study circle session...

Plan for discussion
Select time and place
Support accessibility

Make personal contact
Give regular updates
Fill rotating roles

Focus attention
Reading and centerpiece
Check-in round
In a study circle project...

- Plan inclusively
- Support diversity
- Center lived experience

Make good decisions
Seek consensus
Support facilitators

Local Action Forum
Regional Action Forum
Network for action

In each study circle session...

- Create agreements
- Uphold agreements
- Maintain a safe space

Group wisdom
Discussion styles
Use dialogue tools

Summarize themes
Acknowledge lessons
Check-out round
The Storyteller
By Antonia Michaelis

My child, I know you’re not a child
But I still see you running wild
Between those flowering trees.
Your sparkling dreams, your silver laugh
Your wishes to the stars above
Are just my memories.

And in your eyes the ocean
And in your eyes the sea
The waters frozen over
With your longing to be free.

Yesterday you’d awoken
To a world incredibly old.
This is the age you are broken
Or turned into gold.

You had to kill this child, I know.
To break the arrows and the bow
To shed your skin and change.
The trees are flowering no more
There’s blood upon the tiled floor
This place is dark and strange.

I see you standing in the storm
Holding the curse of youth
Each of you with your story
Each of you with your truth.
Some words will never be spoken
Some stories will never be told.

This is the age you are broken
Or turned into gold.
I didn’t say the world was good.
I hoped by now you understood
Why I could never lie.
I didn’t promise you a thing.
Don’t ask my wintervoice for spring
Just spread your wings and fly.
Though in the hidden garden
Down by the green green lane
The plant of love grows next to
The tree of hate and pain.

So take my tears as a token.
They’ll keep you warm in the cold.
This is the age you are broken
Or turned into gold.

You’ve lived too long among us
To leave without a trace
You’ve lived too short to understand
A thing about this place.

Some of you just sit there smoking
And some are already sold.
This is the age you are broken
Or turned into gold.
This is the age you are broken
Or turned into gold.
Sessions

Study circles bring together different kinds of people, opening up new ways for people to relate to one another and to the world around them. Learning how to listen actively and to connect with different kinds of people are keys to participation in a diverse society.

“Those who suffer do not want pity. They want love and respect.”
- THICH NHAT HANH

The six study circle sessions and the final action forum session in the Guide are designed around these diverse voices coming together over a period of time as they learn about the issues facing young people aging out of care and get to know one another.

In this section is a description of the Goals, Suggested Questions for Discussion and Resources available for each session. This section describes each session through:

**Session 1: Transition to Adulthood**
**Session 2: Aging Out of Care**
**Session 3: Perspectives on Aging Out**
**Session 4: Spotlight on Education**
**Session 5: Provincial Opportunities**
**Session 6: Community Opportunity**

The “Canoe Skipper” is included here for use during the session.
Session 1: Transition to Adulthood

Goals

To become grounded in circle process and set group agreements

To reflect on personal experience transitioning to adulthood

To examine the context of those transitioning to adulthood in B.C. today

Suggested Questions for Discussion

1. What are your strongest memories about being young?

2. How have your experiences growing up shaped you in your personal transition to adulthood?

3. What does being an “adult” mean to you? What do you feel makes a good transition?

4. In what ways do you feel the experience of young people transitioning to adulthood today is different than it has been in previous generations?
Learning Materials

Growing Up in B.C.
How are youth doing in British Columbia? What do they think about health, money, bullying, and other issues they face? The Representative's Office has released a new infographic that provides a snapshot of children and youth.

https://goo.gl/GNiZ6Y
(Representative for Children and Youth of B.C., 2016) [Infographic]

Generation Squeeze: Fast Facts
As younger Canadians try to make a life for themselves, they are increasingly squeezed by stagnant incomes and difficulty finding good jobs, high costs for things like housing and child care, too little time at home and mounting.

https://goo.gl/SFvhXc
(Kershaw & Swanson, 2015) [Summary]

Gen Squeeze: Paul Kershaw
Paul Kershaw leads the Gen Squeeze campaign. He is a farmer morning and night. By day, he is a University of BC professor, public speaker, volunteer and regular media contributor. Kershaw is one of Canada’s top thinkers about family policy with Canadian Family magazine describing him as “the ‘Generation Squeeze’ guru.”

https://goo.gl/oPUEhS
(TEDxPowellRiver, 2013) [Video]
Session 2: Aging Out of Care

Goals

To understand the unique experience of young people aging out of foster care

To reflect on our own direct and indirect connections to aging out

To get a sense of what it feels like to age out of foster care

Suggested Questions for Discussion

1. What is your personal connection (direct or indirect) to foster care and the process of aging out? How do these experiences shape your personal perspective on the issue?

2. What stands out most about aging out of care and in what ways is this different from the experience of other young people?

3. Is there anything about the situation that surprises you? How do you think you would feel if you were a young person in care about to have your 19th birthday?
Learning Materials

Youth Transition Survey 2016
B.C. parents provide exceptional support for their own children aged 19–28. Becoming independent is recognized as a gradual process. This includes providing financial support, as well as important social and emotional support.
https://goo.gl/djKVXw
(Fostering Change, 2016) [Report]

Advice to Teen Foster Kids
Advice from a YouTuber about the things she wishes she knew when she turned 18 and aged out of the foster care system.
https://goo.gl/4zZ6F4
(StephiRaye, 2016) [Video]

Guide to Surviving the Holidays
Despite media messages to the contrary, holiday times can be pretty tough. Many of us are alone, or have really complicated, challenging family/friend relationships to face. THEN, on top of that, there’s so much pressure to have SO MUCH FUN, be involved in all of the social gatherings, buy ALL THE GIFTS EVERRRR, make delicious home-cooked meals, have the best-family-ever-OMG, and have time off to relax.
https://goo.gl/7FMabw
(Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2010) [Website]
Session 3: Perspectives on Aging Out

Goals

To explore the meaning of aging out for those directly affected

To look at the experiences and diversity of those aging out

To think about factors that can affect the quality of experience when aging out

Suggested Questions for Discussion

1. What do you know personally about aging out in your community or the province? Where does this knowing come from – Life experience? Media? Academics?

2. What do you think are the main issues, problems, and challenges that young people aging out are facing? Why do these challenges exist?

3. Where do you think your own perception of youth in care comes from? Which factors and forces do you think have influenced your opinion(s)?
Learning Materials

**Youth Speak 2016**
The Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks (FBCYICN) have conducted Youth Speaks since 2000. They are a process to check in and listen to young people in and from care (aged 14 to 24) and their issues, experiences and ideas.

https://goo.gl/YA1YFo
(Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks, 2016) [Report]

**Packing & Unpacking Realities**
Violet-Rose Pharaoh, founder of The Garbage Bag Challenge, on “Packing and Unpacking the Realities of Foster Care”.
#five14Talks
https://goo.gl/qgp1vH
(Children’s Aid Society, 2016)[Video]

**AgedOut.com**
AgedOut.com is for young adults who were in government care in BC. It’s an up-to-date warehouse of information on resources and services available to young adults and a learning tool to help people feel empowered as they leave care.

https://goo.gl/2uUVuU
(Adoptive Families Association of B.C., 2014) [Website]
Session 4: Spotlight on Education

Goals

To think about the education experiences of those aging out

To look at what approaches have been most effective when working with these young people

To reflect on where these supports could be expanded or improved

Suggested Questions for Discussion

1. When you think about the education experience of those aging out, what are you troubled with? What do you feel good about? What gives you hope about the situation?

2. What additional challenges might come up for marginalized young people? (e.g.: immigrant/refugee, LGBTQ etc.)

3. What principles or ideas would be useful when supporting young people in transition?
Learning Materials

**We All Have a Role: School**
Youth in care who felt that teachers cared about them were more likely to report good or excellent mental health. These students were also less likely to report extreme stress, and were more likely to envision a positive future.

https://goo.gl/EMKn8K
(McCreary Centre Society, 2015) [Poster]

**Fostering Success: Education**
Educational attainment is associated with almost all markers of health, well-being and social inclusion. As well, education is increasingly recognized for its role in positive connections and a sense of belonging with peers, school, adults, and community.

*Read summary only*

https://goo.gl/fOK659
(Rutman & Hubberstey, 2016) [Summary]

**Tuition Waiver Program**
With the financial support from Vancouver Island University’s new program, Youth in Care Tuition Waiver Program, students can easily access their education to help reach their career goals.

https://goo.gl/Na687N
(Shaw TV Nanaimo, 2014) [Video]
Session 5: Provincial Opportunities

Goals

To examine the connections between current challenges and long term social outcomes

To reflect on our personal and collective hopes for young people aging out

To think about how we can change course provincially to improve the situation

Suggested Questions for Discussion

1. What would it look like to have a province that better deals with young people aging out and transitioning to adulthood? What would need to happen to make these changes?

2. What do you think are the main issues, challenges that those aging out in our province are facing? Why do these challenges exist?

3. Do you think our community is different from the rest of the province in its approach to supporting those aging out?
Learning Materials

Stand with Youth In and From Care
Are you a foster parent, social worker, youth worker, service provider, friend or someone who is striving to be an ally to young people in and from government care?
https://goo.gl/bG2qST
(Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, 2014) [Video]

On Their Own
“This is a difficult period for any youth as they transition from being dependent to independence... for youth leaving government care, it can be a devastating time unless they are provided with proper support.”
https://goo.gl/HjFFA2
(Representative for Children and Youth of B.C., 2014) [Media Release]

Opportunities in Transition
The report demonstrates significant annual costs – up to $268 million – are associated with the adverse experiences many youth aging out of foster care at 19 encounter, while a much lower level of investment - $57 million per year – would be required to improve outcomes and reduce costs.
*Download summary only* https://goo.gl/LZP0q6
(Shaffer, Anderson, & Nelson, 2016) [Summary]
Session 6: Community Opportunities

Goals

To think about how our community views and cares for those aging out

To seek out new ways for adults and young people to build on and strengthen relationships in community

To share ideas for personal and collective action

Suggested Questions for Discussion

- What stood out most from the sessions? Is there anything you want to explore further about the issue?

- Are there people in the community who are not in this discussion who would identify other problems or concerns?

- What next steps do you want to take? What motivates you the most to take these steps? What stands in the way of you to taking action?
Learning Materials

**Build A Network**
Everyone needs people who help them in their journey aging out of foster care. Check out how these former foster youth created their support network.

(AgedOut.Com, 2016) [Video]

**Supporting Wellness through Transitions**
During the development of the learning agenda for Fostering Change, mental health was identified as one of the critical challenges for service providers. While acknowledging that there are many system challenges, and that the lack of availability for clinical services is a huge challenge (especially for those over 19), it is clear that there is a lot of expertise already residing among those who do this work every day.

https://goo.gl/0Bu4mh
(Fostering Change, 2015) [Summary]

**Community Conversations**
We’re inviting you and your community into a conversation that engages youth, caring adults, supportive organizations and engaged leaders in the development of a plan for what needs to change in order to improve the policies, practices and community connections that impact young people transitioning from foster care to adulthood.

https://goo.gl/GHzy6k
(Fostering Change, 2015) [Workbook]
Canoe Skipper
By Johnny Tuktu

To take the lead on organizing or facilitating a study circle, you need to be like a canoe skipper. A canoe skipper steers the canoe while it is in motion, but does not choose the final destination. That is chosen by those who are paddling in the canoe, or has been chosen before the canoe left the beach. The canoe skipper is there to steer the canoe through currents or rough waters and to encourage the paddlers along their journey. A canoe skipper sits in the back of the canoe and pays attention to all paddlers, and can support and encourage any paddlers who are struggling. Canoe skippers not only steer the canoe but also paddle themselves during times when the seas or weather is rough. They keep all paddlers in time with one another and also make sure that when paddlers switch from side to side, that they do this in sync to avoid tipping the canoe.
Process

The circle goes through stages before, during, and after each session to ensure a safe and constructive environment for dialogue, from setting the Intention for the session and inviting members into the circle through the complete process of the dialogue and closing the circle at each session and at the end, the project as a whole.

These stages are described in this section and include:

- **INTENTION**
- **INVITATION**
- **OPENING**
- **AGREEMENT**
- **DIALOGUE**
- **CLOSING**

The Poem, “To Be of Use”, is included for use during sessions.

“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; Courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.”

- SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL
Intention

The starting point of any journey is the decision that there is somewhere to go. The intention to go forward is formed by a person or group who feels motivated to initiate change on an issue. Before a study circle project begins this intention directs what the topic will be and what kinds of people might be involved, as well as how, where, and when the study circle project could be held. This is a complex process where each decision has an effect on another. The intention is returned to throughout the project as changes happen. Similarly, before each study circle session the facilitator forms an intention to host a space where all can participate. They reflect on what has happened so far and make a plan for how to navigate the waters ahead.

Once formed clearly, intention becomes an ever evolving map of the chosen destination and the possible paths toward it.

A typical study circle:

- Contains 8-12 participants
- The session is conducted by a community facilitator
- Lasts about 2-3 hours
- Centered around dialogue, not debate
- Based on lived experience and knowledge
- Consensus on each issue is not necessary
- Friendly and spontaneous environment
- Personal opinion is given importance
- Everyone has an equal opportunity to speak

(Rise for Equality, 2015)
In a study circle project...

To begin, someone needs to decide to initiate movement toward forming this project. It means doing some preparation both to understand the situation and to gather people who could join a first meeting. Before calling these people together it is important to look at the issue in detail. This includes finding out if there is any recent research or if there are resources specific to your community. Also, there may be people working on this issue already who could get involved early on. It can be wise to decide in advance whether you intend to have a single study circle, or a community wide project. This is clarified once a core team has been found. In the initial gathering those present will need to take some time to get to know each other, to build a common understanding, and to make decisions about how to proceed. Out of this meeting emerges a shared vision of the purpose and structure of the study circle project. It can be helpful to use the study circle process when seeking consensus at this stage.

In a study circle session...

Once the project is in motion, facilitators need to take time before each session to clarify intention. This shapes what course the discussion will follow and makes sure that each person is able to participate. When planning dialogue, there is value in looking backward to reflect on what has come up in discussions so far, as well as looking forward to what themes may emerge in the upcoming session. With this awareness, facilitators may alter the session goals, materials, or questions to ensure a meaningful conversation. To support access, careful selection of the time and location is vital. Some things to consider include making sure that the session does not conflict with school or work hours, that it is accessible by transit, and that there are food and rides or bus tickets available if needed. The best way to decide these things is asking all those involved what works for them and shaping the plan around their feedback.
Invitation

With a vision of your possible journey, the next thing needed is fellow travellers who will paddle together toward this destination. Those who have formed the intention now reach out to the community and invite those with an interest in creating change. In the early planning of a study circle project, the invitation goes out to anyone who may want to take on a role within the study circle. This process of invitation takes time and consideration, as it could possibly throw a group off course if new participants joined after the study circles begin. When sessions are in process, the invitation becomes an ongoing process of tending to the current study circle participants and making sure that all feel invited and welcome to participate in dialogue. In this way, the invitation determines both who will join you at the beginning, as well as who will travel all the way along.

To support full participation:

A study circle that includes people of all ages helps everyone look at a situation with fresh eyes. To support their involvement:

- If young people are not speaking up, divide participants into pairs
- Redirect the conversation if the study circle turns into a question and answer session between adult participants and young “experts” about youth issues.
- Try to have several people in each age group in every circle.

Study circles sometimes include public officials, who can provide a different perspective or expertise. To ensure people feel comfortable:

- Provide ample time to set context, create agreements, and affirm confidentiality.
- Make sure the public officials know what a study circle is, and what to expect from it.
- Remind participants that all voices are equal in dialogue.

(Rise for Equality, 2015)
In a study circle project...

Invitation into the project starts with organisers engaging those they know personally, or who are involved with a relevant organisation. It is important to bring in people with diverse backgrounds and experiences. There are a variety of roles these people can choose to fill depending on their preference. To identify people who might want to be involved, organisers look both to those who have direct knowledge of the issue and to those who are unfamiliar with it. Interested community members could be found through local networks, schools, nonprofits, clubs, and advocacy groups. Each of these people could get involved as an organiser, facilitator, or participant. It supports peer leadership and equality in the project when each role is available to all.

A participant engages in conversation, develops relationships, and comes up with ideas for action during study circle sessions. They read the selected material and seek to deepen their understanding of the topic through the dialogue process.

A facilitator works to support dialogue before, during and after each session using the process described in this guide. This role can be filled by two co-facilitators, such as an adult and a young adult as co-facilitators, or the role can rotate among all involved who have been trained in the process of preparation for the study circle.

An organiser participates regularly in an organising circle and uses the process in this guide to make consensus-based decisions to shape the study circle project’s direction.

In a study circle session...

While typically no new people are brought onboard after study circle sessions have begun, the process of invitation continues throughout. The facilitators offer regular updates and make personal contact with each participant between sessions. They remain aware of any sensitive topics which may have came up at the previous session and they ask if there is anything the participants need to be comfortable with in starting the next one. During each session there are roles which can be rotated. If there is more than one person who is trained as a facilitator, this role can be rotated between them. The other typical roles are guardian and scribe.

A guardian tends to the mood and energy levels of the group, calling for a pause, a moment of silence, or a break as needed.

A scribe creates a record of the wisdom shared by the group, including ideas and lessons learned, to provide to the facilitator and participants after the session.
Opening

Now it is time to leave the shore and begin your journey. To signal a shift from planning to movement in the opening activities, the facilitator allows attention to be drawn to a shared purpose and way of being together. When organizing the study circle, the opening is often a training offered to those who have expressed interest in being involved with or facilitating a study circle. It is a chance to have a collective conversation around the meaning of dialogue, consensus, and the study circle process. During a study circle session, the opening is more formal and includes a reading, a centerpiece, and a group check-in round. Symbolic of the session topic, the reading allows for a moment of quiet listening, the centerpiece offers a space for eyes and energy to rest, and the check-in question allows for each participant to speak their voice into the circle.

The opening activities at each level affirm the intention and invitations set before, while preparing you for the journey ahead.

Possible check-in questions (Fenton, 2014)

· What’s up for you, in your life right now?
· What’s one thing that brings you energy and joy today?
· What kind of a day have you had so far today?
· What are you seeking to learn and contribute?
· What would it take for you to be fully present in this room?
· Given our work so far, what do you feel best about?
· Share a one or two word intention you hold for today’s meeting.
· What is something you came across recently that inspired you?
In a study circle project...

Whether the study circle project is large or small, all those who are interested need to be brought together early on for a launch event and a training. These events should usually be done separately and they take both time and thought. The launch event is an opportunity to share information about the issue and to let people know how they could get involved in the project. To make this easier, it helps to keep the facts straightforward and to allow people to sign up on the spot. Facilitator training can be offered to anyone who would like to learn the process, allowing all involved in the study circle to share power. The training should include the skills and process offered in this guide, as well as the time to practice being in dialogue. In this way the project opening will set the tone for the entire journey.

In a study circle session...

At the time of the session, opening activities help those in the circle to be present and they draw attention toward shared intention. These activities may include a centerpiece, the reading of a poem, quote or song, and a check-in round where each person has a chance to speak briefly. To signal the start of the session, the guardian may ring a bell or simply call for a moment of silence. The facilitator first welcomes participants and states the intention, then describes the centerpiece placed in the middle of the circle which symbolizes this purpose. It could be as simple as a candle or small object, or it could be as complex as a mosaic. It could be selected by the facilitator in advance, or it could be made up of items brought by participants. Next, the facilitator reads a short poem, quote or song related to the discussion while participants take a moment to listen. After this reading, a check-out round offers each participant a chance to share a few words about why they are there and what they hope for in the discussion. While in the first session this is usually a ‘getting to know you’ type question, as the study circle progresses the facilitator may vary the questions from playful to serious. If the facilitator is not sure what to select for opening activities the participants may have some ideas. The thing is asking all those involved what works for them and shaping the plan around their feedback.
Agreements

Once in motion, the way the paddlers work together in cooperation and trust becomes a shared power which moves all forward. Agreements are the collective rules created together, as a way to ensure that each person feels safe to participate fully in the process. In the project as a whole, agreements are set early between organisers and others involved. Emerging from intention and invitation, these agreements create a space where all who are affected by and interested in the project can be supported in the work ahead. In each session as well, participants create agreements to reflect their unique needs and hopes within the study circle. They are clear, simple and agreed to by everyone present. It takes time to establish these agreements at the beginning, and they are revisited at the start of each session and in times of challenge and conflict.

As a strong way of working together, agreements allow for swift and steady travel in any kind of weather.

Advice on self-care from a mountain climber...

Self Awareness: What are your current needs? Are they being met? What would you need to do to meet those needs? How do your needs impact the group?

Self Care: Now that you know what your needs are, how do you actually follow through and see that they’re met?

Brain: Keep a positive mindset and watch your triggers.

Ears: Listen to your body, it knows what you need most!

Arms: It’s ok, you are not a superhero, at least by day...

Heart: Keep some energy for yourself.

Stomach: Eat and drink regularly. It helps a lot.

Legs: Slow down. This is a journey, not a race.

(Eagen, 2014)
In a study circle project...

The agreements set by organisers in the first meeting create a structure of collaboration and shared responsibility within the project. These agreements can be simple, and should focus on creating a space where all feel welcomed while at the same time centering lived experience. The project must be inclusive from the very start. Simple things, like respecting chosen pronouns and self-identification or finding locations which are accessible to all community members, allow organisers to remove barriers, minimize harm, and offer supports for all. This is helped by principles and practices of the circle, such as rotating leadership, sharing responsibility, and relying on the whole, as well as speaking with intention, listening with attention, and tending to the well being of all present (Peer Spirit, 2010). Along the way, there is an opportunity to draw on the wisdom of lived experience and to amplify the voices of those who are often left out of decision making around things that affect their lives. Adult allies have an important role in this. This means supporting, encouraging and honouring the voice of young people as they build their decision making skills; and often simply sitting in silence and listening with heart open.

In a study circle session...

Once the study circle session is in progress, those who are present need time to form agreements about how they will work together in the coming dialogue. In the first session, agreements are formed where all are included by invitation to make suggestions by going around the circle, with one person speaking at a time in turn. Participants share what they need to feel safe, listened to, and valued in the dialogue, and what they can offer to make sure others feel safe as well. Everyone can be included in responding to a difficult question by “going around the circle” so everyone has a chance to speak uninterrupted, or pass if they wish. This is a “round”. In following sessions, agreements are briefly reviewed and affirmed by all present. These agreements will be unique to each study circle, though if participants don’t think of it themselves the facilitator may suggest some, such as confidentiality, listening, and mutual support, as well as the establishment of a guardian and scribe (Peer Spirit, 2010). These agreements will help steer the way when things get difficult. With any dialogue, disagreement and resolution can offer a way to learn and grow together. If conflict becomes unproductive, then it is time to return to the agreements and add to or change them as needed. As the study circle progresses the facilitator may vary the questions from playful to serious.
Dialogue

After all the preparation it is the actual journey itself, that time between leaving one shore and arriving at the next, that you remember and learn from most. Dialogue is the true work of the study circle, a shared conversation where all involved have a chance to learn and grow together. Before the study circle sessions begin, dialogue allows organisers to make decisions grounded in collective wisdom. It helps make sure the project is inclusive, egalitarian, and centred in consensus.

During each study circle session, rounds of dialogue allow participants to delve deeply into the topic. It is when relationships are formed, understanding is expanded, and ideas for creating change begin to come to the surface.

In this way the shifting landscapes, the sun and wind, each distant mountain, rippling wave and passing seagull leaves an imprint on our memory and offers a new way of looking at the world and each other.

Dialogue vs. Debate

(Dialogue vs. Debate, Everyday Democracy, 2015)

In debate, one searches for differences. In dialogue, one searches for agreements.

Debate affirms a participant’s own point of view. Dialogue can change a participant’s point of view.

In debate, one searches for weaknesses. In dialogue, one searches for strengths.

Debate assumes that there is a right answer. Dialogue assumes that everyone is part of the answer.

In debate, winning is the goal. In dialogue, finding common ground is the goal.
In a study circle project...

In the context of the project, dialogue helps the organising circle make good decisions along the way. It helps draw on the diverse perspectives and knowledges of those involved in the project. In shaping the project, organisers look to reach a consensus where all present have had a chance to speak and can agree with the outcome of the decision. This involves listening to each other deeply, seeking out shared understanding and emerging ideas, and finding a new way forward that works for all. To support study circles as the project proceeds, organisers stay in touch with facilitators to offer advice and resources and to receive feedback and new ideas. This two-way communication allows all involved in the project to work together toward a common goal.

In a study circle session...

Taking up the longest amount of time in a session, dialogue involves a conversation around the questions offered by the facilitator to reflect the topic, goals and materials. Each participant has a chance to speak freely at least once and breaks are taken between each question. For a significant conversation to occur, dialogue questions are discussed 'round robin' style. This usually starts with a volunteer, after which the discussion proceeds around the circle and each participant speaks to the question without interruption. There can be one or more rounds, as time allows. ‘Popcorn’ style discussion, where participants respond in any order, is generally avoided as it may not allow all voices to be heard. However, at times it can be useful as a way to add energy, to brainstorm new ideas, or to reach a decision quickly.

There are other tools that facilitators can use to support these group conversations. If a participant offers a short response the facilitator can ask a follow up question to find out more, or if a participant offers a long response the facilitator may offer a brief summary to move the conversation along. Silence may also be used, either to reflect on a point that has just been raised, to calm the energy down in the circle, or to honour the presence of someone who is there but chooses not to speak. As in the other parts of this process, the way of using dialogue will vary in each study circle. Nonetheless, it is the part that will be remembered and learned from most when the journey comes to an end.
Closing

After paddling together through the waters - rough and serene, beautiful and dangerous, exciting and exhausting - the final destination comes into sight on the horizon. Finally, sitting on the shore there is a chance to take a deep breath and prepare for what may come. Closing activities create a space to celebrate what has been overcome, to acknowledge any sadness at the study circle coming to an end, and to inspire participants to go on to create change. In the project itself, this is facilitated through a local action forum and potentially a regional or provincial action forum. This is a time to look at the ideas you all have come up with so far, to clarify those ideas and to plan your journey going forward. Likewise, at the end of each study circle session there is a need for closure. This can be fulfilled through a moment of reflection on the dialogue and a group check out round where all of you speak to what you will leave behind and what you will carry forward after the session.

Moving forward, the end of one journey becomes the start of the next.

Outcomes

Short Term
· Communities have an increased awareness of the situation locally and provincially
· Participants have an in depth understanding of root causes and unique challenges
· Action forum has identified individual, community and government level actions

Long Term
· Communities actively engage young people aging out of care in decision-making
· Meaningful relationships have been built between adults and young people
· Action networks have started for local and provincial collaboration on social issues
In the study circle project...
The closing activities of the project ensure that the relationships and understanding formed throughout the study circle sessions are transformed into action in the community. These activities are typically an action forum, one for each study circle as well as a regional action forum if it is a community-wide project, and an ongoing network of action. The action forum includes only those who are already involved in the project. It involves taking a look at all the ideas that have come up so far, thinking about what is possible, and setting priorities for action. It is helpful if specific people agree to take the lead on a particular action idea. A network of action needs to follow the simple rule of 'whatever works'. Those who have been involved in the project may have different communication needs, and a conversation about this at the action forum can help move ideas forward. If there are existing resources, potential sources of funding, or opportunities for publicity available, organisers should attempt to make these available to participants at this time.

This is a time to celebrate the journey which has been completed, to address both the grief of what is over and the hope for what is to come, and to create a shared vision for the route ahead.

In a study circle session...
Being in circle is a deep and intense experience, a different way of being from the rest of the world. Similar to the end of the project, each session requires some time for resolving what has come up in the dialogue as well as preparing to go forward. To support this transition, the facilitator takes a moment to summarize the themes of the conversation and to reflect on any lessons learned, while participants will listen silently. This summary could also be offered by the circle scribe. Next, participants have a chance to speak to what they have decided to leave behind because of the dialogue, and what they will carry forward after. It is a chance to make a commitment among peers toward a way of being going forward, and to ensure that the new knowledge, connections, and inspiration which emerge from the dialogue are brought out into the world, in the circle, or to honour the presence of someone who is there but chooses not to speak. As in the other parts of this process, the way of using dialogue will vary in each study circle. Nonetheless, it is the part that will be remembered and learned from most when the journey comes to an end.
To be of Use
by Marge Piercy

The people I love best
Jump into work head first
Without dallying in the shallows
And swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
The black sleek heads of seals
Bouncing like half submerged balls

I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
Who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
Who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
Who do what has to be done, again and again.

I want to be with people who submerge
In the task, who go into the fields to harvest
And work in a row and pass the bags along,
Who are not parlor generals and field deserters
But move in a common rhythm
When the food must come in or the fire be put out.

The work of the world is as common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
Has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.

Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums,
But you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
And a person for work that is real.
Worksheets

This section provides Worksheets to help with planning and facilitating the project as a whole and each individual session. The section includes Worksheets on:

- Project Planning
- Note-Taking
- Session Agenda
- Action Forum Agenda

“Man’s mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions.”

- Oliver Wendell Holmes
## Project Planning

This worksheet is meant as a general guide to help kick off planning for a local study circle project. The planning process takes time, careful thought, and collaboration.

### Challenge

What challenges currently exist for those aging out in your community?

### Community

What supports currently exist for those aging out in your community?

### Vision

What could be improved through the project?

### Content

What content could be added, removed, or changed from the session materials?

Are there materials that are local or recently released?

### Structure

Who needs to be involved in the project to ensure diversity?

Where could the study circle be held to ensure all can access it?

How many sessions could be held, and how often?

What time could sessions be held to ensure all participants can attend?

### To Do

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.
# Note-Taking

When taking notes, keep it brief. Capture big ideas and group wisdom. Never write down names, personal stories, or identifying information about participants or others.

## NEW UNDERSTANDINGS...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of Consensus</th>
<th>Areas of Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

## GOING FORWARD...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of Consensus</th>
<th>Areas of Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Session Agenda

While the topic for each session changes, the structure usually remains the same. Below is a general session outline to help you plan each session. Adapt it as needed along the way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC:</th>
<th>DATE:</th>
<th>LOCATION:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACILITATOR(S):</th>
<th>SCRIBE:</th>
<th>GUARDIAN:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

**OPENING ACTIVITIES (15 MINUTES)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>READING</th>
<th>CENTERPIECE</th>
<th>CHECK-IN QUESTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What poem or quote could be read at the beginning as a reminder of the session’s purpose? e.g. “Evolution” poem, page: 42</td>
<td>What item(s) could be placed in the centre of the circle as a reminder of the session’s purpose? e.g. A small plant representing growth</td>
<td>What question could be offered to allow participants to share their voice and get comfortable with each other? e.g. “How are you arriving?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DIALOGUE ROUNDS (UP TO 30 MINUTES EACH WITH BREAK BETWEEN EACH ROUND)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 1 QUESTION</th>
<th>ROUND 2 QUESTION</th>
<th>OPTIONAL ROUND 3 QUESTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What question most needs to be talked about in this session?</td>
<td>What question could deepen the discussion in this session?</td>
<td>What question could be helpful if there is enough time in the session?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CLOSING ACTIVITY (15 MINUTES)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHECK-OUT QUESTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What question could be offered to help reflect and move forward? e.g. “What is one thing you think, feel or will do after this session?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Action Forum Agenda

The final stage of a study circle project, the action forum, is an opportunity to move from ideas to action. The following is a suggested starting point to support group decision making.

**FACILITATOR(S):**

**SCRIBE:**

**LOCATION:**

---

**OPENING ACTIVITIES (15 MINUTES)**

**READING**

What poem or quote could be read at the beginning as a reminder of the purpose of the action forum? e.g. “To Be of Use” poem

**CENTERPIECE**

What item(s) could be placed in the centre of the circle as a reminder of the purpose of the action forum? e.g. A small plant representing growth

**CHECK-IN QUESTION**

What question could be offered to help participants share their voice in the work ahead? e.g. “Given our dialogue so far, what is inspiring to you?”

---

**DIALOGUE ROUNDS (UP TO 30 MINUTES EACH WITH BREAK BETWEEN EACH ROUND)**

**ROUND 1 QUESTION**

What question could be offered to reflect on the most important ideas?

**ROUND 2 QUESTION**

What question could be offered to reflect on the most realistic ideas?

---

**OPTIONAL VOTING**

**DECISION MAKING ACTIVITY**

What activity could be used to help participants select what ideas they will take action on? e.g. Sign name on flipchart next to chosen idea

---

**CLOSING ACTIVITY (15 MINUTES)**

**CHECK-OUT QUESTION**

What question could be offered to ignite action? e.g. “What’s next?”
Evolution
by Tammy Merrill

We are all changing each and every day
Whether it is with the things we do or what we say.

It's a part of growth that we all go through
It happens each day with the more we do

The progress is non-stop and part of our expansion
It could be with our mind or being rich enough to buy a mansion

We are all moving at our own pace
Even if most of the time life feels like a race

The transformation can be gradual or fast
The point is looking forward and not in the past

As we grow each day we will see
There is no limit to what we can be

Growing is developing and finding a solution
And always know we are the force of our own evolution
Definitions

ABORIGINAL “In this report, we use the term Aboriginal to include those youth who self-identified as First Nations, Inuit and Métis people, including individuals with Indian Status, without status, on-reserve, off-reserve and those who do not have a specific band membership but who have Aboriginal Ancestry” (Saewyc, 2008)

ADULT ALLY “Adult allies have an important role to play in providing guidance and in helping to create opportunities for success for young people. Their role is to support and encourage youth as they build their decision-making skills...An adult ally is approachable, supportive, and advocates for youth. Their role is to act as a connector, and to mirror the strengths of young people. An adult ally is not prescriptive, manipulative or judgmental, and they are inclusive of all youth” (McCreary Centre Society, 2013)

AGING OUT “The child welfare system severs its formal role as ‘parent’ as soon as a young person reaches the age of majority, which in BC is age 19. As such, these young people face an additional transition — from being in the care of the child welfare system to “aging out” of care. Moreover, government’s role as parent comes to an end with sharp finality, regardless of the youth’s readiness, experiences and financial, emotional, and practical support needs...for youth leaving care, entry into adulthood is more akin to an “expulsion” than a transition.” (Rutman, Hubberstay, & Feduniw, 2007)

AGREEMENTS WITH YOUNG ADULTS Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) is a new $5-million program supporting young people aged 19 to 24 transitioning out of care and into adulthood. AYA provides financial assistance and support services to: Finish high school; Learn job and life skills; Attend college or university; Complete a rehabilitation program. Financial assistance includes: Living expenses, Child care, Tuition fees, Health care (Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks, 2016)

CARING GAP The Transitions Survey shows that BC residents view the transition of a youth from government care differently than they view the transition of their own child from home. Despite knowing the kinds of support that are needed by young adults (their own kids) to help them live independently, BC residents are reluctant to endorse solutions that would provide the same kinds of support to young people transitioning out of government care. (Fostering Change, 2016)

COMING TO KNOWING “Mechanisms by which Indigenous Knowledges are transferred, such as “coming-to-know,” learning through culture, and two-eyed seeing are included in descriptions of learning in Indigenous contexts. ‘Coming-to-know’ reflects the idea that understanding is a journey, a process, a quest for knowledge and understanding and that there are responsibilities attached to the application and sharing of this deep knowledge.” (Sutherland & Swayze, 2012)

COMMUNITY LIVING BC (CLBC) A provincial crown agency, mandated under the Community Living Authority Act, that funds supports and services through service agencies for adults with developmental disabilities and their families in British Columbia. (Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks, 2016)

CONTINUING CUSTODY ORDER (CCO) “When an order is made placing a child in a continuing custody of a director, the director becomes the sole personal guardian of the child and may consent to the child’s adoption” (Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks, 2016)

CONNECTEDNESS A network for youth that builds a sense of belonging and support in their families, schools, and communities. “There is an emerging body of long-term developmental research that is linking the ability of youth to develop resilience in the face of trauma and stress to their environments – the caring adults, families, schools, and communities that can provide a safety net and web of connection” (Fostering Change, 2015)

CULTURAL CONNECTEDNESS “This idea refers to the ways people feel a part of their cultural traditions, identify with their heritage and have access to traditional knowledge and practices” (Saewyc, 2008)

DEBATE “Debate is oppositional: two sides oppose each other and attempt to prove each other wrong” (Everyday Democracy, 2015)

DELEGATED ABORIGINAL AGENCY “An Aboriginal agency and their employees, that undertake administration of all or parts of the Child, Family and Community Service Act through delegation agreements, assigned by the Provincial Director of Child Protection (the Director). The amount of responsibility undertaken by each agency is the result of negotiations between the ministry and the Aboriginal community served by the agency, and the level of delegation provided by the Director” (Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks, 2016)

DIALOGUE “Dialogue is collaborative: two or more sides work together toward common understanding” (Youth Issues, Youth Voices, p 29)

DISCRIMINATION “When someone’s behavior towards another person is based on stereotypes or prejudices, the result is discrimination. In other words, discrimination involves putting prejudice into action. Discrimination...means practices or attitudes that have...the effect of limiting an individual’s or group’s right to the opportunities generally available because of attributed rather than actual characteristics” (Hales, 2010)

DISABILITY “A physical, mental or learning condition that limits a person’s movements, senses, or activities.” (Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks, 2016)

ELDER “Any person recognized by the Aboriginal community as having knowledge and understanding of the traditional culture.” (Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks, 2016)
**Facilitator** Facilitators set intention, form questions, and extend invitations before the circle. They create a welcoming space and set the centerpiece for the circle. They help share wisdom gathered by the circle with organizers and the wider community. They open and close the circle. They generally do not share their own perspectives or knowledge, and instead they tend to the circle to ensure all voices are included.

**Family Bubble** “The default mode of thinking in which events within the family (including child rearing and child neglect/abuse) take place in a sphere that is separate and different from the public sphere. It means that even thinking about the interaction between child rearing and public policy is difficult for people”...“this family-centric thinking seeks to blame or find individual cause rather than tracking to larger systemic issues” (Fostering Change, 2015)

**Former Youth-in-Care** A young person who is no longer living under the care of the ministry. (Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks, 2016)

**Guardian** The guardian watches the mood and energy levels of participants and signals the group to pause for a moment if needed.

**In Care** “For the purpose of this report this term refers to those who have experienced foster homes, group-homes, residential mental health and addiction facilities, custody centres, out of care options or have been on youth or independent living agreements.” (Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks, 2016)

**Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)** “A BC Provincial ministry that provides complementary services to families and can include services delivered through: Early Years Services; Services for Children and Youth with Special Needs; Child and Youth Mental Health Services; Child Safety, Family Support and Children in Care Services; Adoption Services and Youth Justice Services.” (Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks, 2016)

**Organizer** Someone involved in coordinating a study circle project from start to finish.

**Participants** Participants engage in dialogue, develop relationships, and come up with new ideas for action through a series of six dialogue sessions and an action forum. They read selected materials on a topic, reflect on different perspectives, and learn collectively through the circle discussion. They share their own perspectives during each meeting, and seek a deep and respectful understanding of the experiences shared by other participants.

**Placement** “Where MCFD decides a youth in care should live. This could include a foster home, group home or out of care option.” (Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks, 2016)

**Scribe** The scribe records group wisdom and provides notes to the facilitators after each meeting.

**Study Circle** “A Study Circle is a group of people who agree to meet together several times to address a social or political issue in a democratic and collaborative way. Complex issues are broken down into manageable subdivisions, and controversial topics are dealt with in depth. Reading material serves to stimulate the discussion and provides a common reference point. While consensus is not necessary, participants generally find common ground and often develop action steps for change.” (Campbell S., 1996)

**Temporary Custody Agreement (TCO)** An order made placing a child to a specified period in the custody of a director or another person, and includes any extension of or change to that order. (Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks, 2016)

**Two-Spirit** “This is a term adopted by First Nations and American Indian gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender groups in the 1990’s. For some First Nations people, the Two-Spirit identity is one that is given by an Elder, and has spiritual connotations and specific community roles; for others, it is a term a person chooses to indicate they have an identity similar to gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people in other cultures” (Saewyc, 2008)

**Transition to Adulthood** “The transition to adulthood is a complex process in which youth who have been dependent on parents throughout childhood start taking definitive steps to achieve measures of financial, residential, and emotional independence, and to take on more adult roles as citizen, spouse, parent, and worker. This transition can be a period of growth and accomplishment, especially when youth have the resources they need to navigate this process, such as community connections and a stable family that can provide guidance and financial assistance if needed, and access to education and experiences that provide a foundation for learning, life skills, and credentials.” (Jr., 2010)

**Young People** “For the purpose of this report, this term refers to anyone between the ages of 14 and 24 who are in or from care.” (Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks, 2016)

**Young Adults** “For the purpose of this report, this term refers to anyone between the ages of 19 and 24 who have aged out of care.” (Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks, 2016)

**Youth** “For the purpose of this report this term refers to anyone between the ages of 14 and 18 who are in or from care.” (Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks, 2016)

**Youth Agreements** “A legal agreement between youth aged 16 and over and MCFD. The purpose of the agreement is to help youth gain independence, return to school, and/or gain work experience and life skills.” (Federation of B.C. Youth in Care Networks, 2016)
Sources


CFUW B.C. Council. (2016). Policy and Background on Aging Out of Foster Care in B.C. Retrieved from https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B5tL4Q5tFV_1R3IweWFFTlJZLWc/view?usp=sharing


McCreary Centre Society. (2015). We all have a role: Building social capital among youth in care. Vancouver: McCreary Society. Retrieved from http://www.mcs.bc.ca/pdf/We_All_Have_A_Role.pdf


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Acknowledgements

Emerging from a six month study circle project, this guide has been an effort to share the process we have used and the knowledge we have gained through our experience along the way. Originating with the Vancouver Foundation Youth Homelessness Initiative, and adapted to address the issue of aging out of care in B.C., this guide draws on a legacy of collective knowledge. This includes a long history of people coming together in a circle, certain practices learned from First Nations ways of being and knowing, and the process of being in circle which was modelled on the PeerSpirit Circle Way, the Everyday Democracy Community Wide Study Circle Dialogue, and Art of Hosting facilitation methods.

The creation of this guide involved reflecting on and learning from lived experience, both that which was brought into the project and that which was gained along the way. The lived experience of both Johnny Tuktu, the Project Assistant, and Rachel Malek, the Project Coordinator and Principal Author of this guide, played a central role in creating space for engaging young people. Having been involved in the youth in care movement and in CFUW BC Council advocacy since long before the project’s start, Rachel’s unfailing commitment was vital. Carrying extensive personal, professional and academic knowledge in this area, Johnny acted as a strong steward of the circle approach, providing advice and insight in key areas such as the name, the metaphor, and the questions for discussion.

Supporting this work and guiding the process as a whole, the Process Circle came together early on and their collective wisdom made this guide possible. They offered broad experience in dialogue, policy work, research, and direct care. It was made up of four members of the Canadian Federation of University Women, Patricia Grohne, Pat Patton, Marg Huber, and Audrey Hobbs Johnson, who also represented CFUW BC Council. Process Circle members immersed themselves in the journey, devoting countless hours and going above and beyond to ensure all levels moved in harmony.

We are very grateful to the young people that were involved in the project, and recognize how much courage it must have taken for them to do so. Their heightened awareness encouraged compassion and created an environment of creativity and enthusiasm. In addition the willingness of all participants to both listen and share in dialogue, as well as the commitment of each facilitator to the process, was priceless. We also thank the four CFUW clubs who took on this project with kindness and an abundance of community connections and for the hours and expertise spent with their respective partners and communities and their feedback to the original draft study guide document used in the study circles.

Our sincere thanks go as well to Kris Archie and the Fostering Change Initiative of the Vancouver Foundation, without whose guidance and financial assistance this project would not have taken place. Last but not least, we would like to thank Adrienne Montani and First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition for their generous support and commitment in time and energy, and to the Vancity Community Foundation for their help with the administration of our funds.

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ABOUT THE PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS AND FUNDERS

**The BC Council of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW BC Council)** is a voluntary, self-funded, non-profit organization with 23 clubs across the province, which is affiliated with the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) and Graduate Women International (GWI). Their mandate is to promote education and lifelong learning, to encourage the participation of members in their communities and to enhance the status of women and girls. Much of the funding for this project came from the CFUW members’ in-kind contributions. The oversight committee for this project, called the Process Circle, was made up of four CFUW members together with the Project Coordinator and Project Assistant.

**First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition** is a nonpartisan coalition of over 95 provincial and regional organizations who have united their voices to make sure BC’s children and youth have the rights, opportunities and resources required to thrive through public education, community mobilization and public policy advocacy.

**Vancouver Foundation Fostering Change Initiative** is an initiative of the Vancouver Foundation to improve policy, practice and community connections for young people transitioning from foster care to adulthood. The Fostering Change Initiative is working in collaboration with a growing set of partners to achieve its goal – which is that every young person leaving foster care has the opportunities and support needed to thrive as adults. The Vancouver Foundation works in collaboration with community partners to set meaningful goals and plan actions to achieve them.

**Vancity Community Foundation** is a public charity that aims to be a catalyst for positive change, by collaborating at the community level. Using community economic development strategies, partnerships and advocacy, they enable community change, capacity building and wellbeing.

“Daring greatly means the courage to be vulnerable. It means to show up and be seen. To ask for what you need. To talk about how you’re feeling. To have the hard conversations.”

- BRENÉ BROWN