

# The New Brunswick Youth In Care Network



1st annual New Brunswick Children and Youth in Care Day: A celebration to remember; a day to never forget!

The Fall months of 2014 were some of the busiest for the NBYICN. We organized and attended launches, led province-wide events, and shared our stories and expertise with new audiences! Read on to find out about our work over the last few months, and some of the AMAZING events that we've got lined up for 2015. (We are going to be really busy this year too!)

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The NBYICN is a project developed by Partners For Youth Inc. and funded in part by the Province of New Brunswick.



## A word from our coordinators

**Happy new year everyone!** While we welcome 2015 with great excitement, we must first extend our deepest thanks and sincerest gratitude to EVERYONE who made our 2014 events possible. Without the tireless dedication of our NBYICN leaders, Partners For Youth Inc. staff, community organizations, and the Government of New Brunswick, our work simply could not be possible. So for all your support—we thank you!

We could not be more excited about the events that we have coming up in 2015. In addition to some awesome creative arts programming, we will also be delivering our RoadMap Program in January, February, March and April. A Career Development and Financial Literacy Program designed specifically by, and for youth in and/or leaving custody in New Brunswick. Read on to find out more!



Valérie & Robyn

## And from one of our leaders!



Danica

“My name is Danica Atkinson and I am 20 years old. I am going to NBCC to become a personal support worker. I live in a wonderful foster home. My life sounds good doesn't it? Your right, it does, but it never was when I was little.

For as long as I can remember I always seen guys in and out of my mothers life. I never knew my real dad—until I was 14 years old. I have watched guys beat my mom and sometimes me and my siblings. I was an alcoholic and I done drugs, but I got clean when I had my wonderful daughter, and then I finished school.

I joined the network in 2013 to help other youth like me, and raise awareness. I am passionate about making sure youth in care are heard like any other youth. I feel that everyone has the right to speak their mind, even if no one likes what they are saying. We all have the right to be heard, and to make a change in the world. We speak out so that what happened to us won't happen to any other kids in care.

Some people have had a good time in care and I am lucky to be one of them kids, but other kids aren't so lucky and had a really bad time in the system. We need to be able to change this, and I am going to do whatever I can to change it! When I joined the NBYICN, I was able to make a difference; raising awareness about kids needing love and a *forever home*.”

## Fall 2014 in review-

### The Child in Care Program Symposium



Six members of our leadership team had the opportunity to participate in a province wide training session for social workers and other Social Development staff. We had the opportunity to discuss permanency and speak about the many ways that social workers and other professionals can support youth in care to find permanency—whether it is legal, physical or relational. It was a really important and meaningful opportunity for all involved.

### Foster Family Appreciation Banquet

A new opportunity was presented to the NBYICN this Fall— we spoke at the Foster Family Appreciation Banquet in Saint John! Foster families are such important supports to many of us at the NBYICN, and we wanted to be able to share our stories, thanks and gratitude with these families. We hope to be invited back to share our stories again!



### New Brunswick Adoption Foundation Video



We partnered with the New Brunswick Adoption Foundation to produce a short video about adoption and our experiences aging out of the care system. It was certainly a new experience for us! It was an opportunity for us to share our message with a larger audience. We hope that this video will be shared widely on social media, but also with prospective adoptive and foster parents through New Brunswick's PRIDE training program.

## Fall 2014 in review-

On October 29th, Partners For Youth Inc. hosted the second provincial Youth Engagement Summit in Fredericton. We hosted youth from all over the province to talk about important issues facing our communities today and in the near future. The NBYICN was on hand to help run the show! NBYICN leaders were fundamental to this event— both in the planning, and on the day of. It was an overwhelming success— just another indication of what youth in care can do when we are given genuine leadership roles in our communities.

## Youth Engagement Summit



## NB Adoption Foundation Conference



New Brunswick Adoption Foundation  
Fondation du Nouveau-Brunswick pour l'adoption

On November 1st, members of the NBYICN travelled to the New Brunswick Adoption Foundation's annual conference. We were invited to support Dr. Diane Benoit M.D. (from the Toronto Hospital for Sick Children) to talk about attachment— or as we like to call it- relationship building. We shared our experiences with adoptive parents and families, as well as other professionals— talking about some of the challenges that we faced forming relationships during (and after) our journeys through care, and highlighting the importance of compassion, patience, and building trust.

## Urgency for Permanency Conference

On November 5th, 2 members of the NBYICN journeyed to Ottawa to take part in a national discussion on permanency hosted by the Adoption Council of Canada. The event brought together stakeholders from across Canada to consider how to focus public and political attention on the needs of children and youth for permanency. The day's discussions articulated plans for overcoming barriers to permanency for children and youth in Canada's child welfare system. NBYICN leaders Tia and Alisha facilitated discussions, shared their expertise, and made recommendations for advancing this important issue. It certainly was a powerful day!



## New Brunswick Children and Youth in Care Day!

On November 29th 2014, Minister Cathy Rogers issued an official declaration, making November 29th Children and Youth in Care Day in New Brunswick. The declaration, signed at the Government House with the blessing of the Lieutenant-Governor Jocelyne Roy-Vienneau, makes New Brunswick one of only a few provinces in Canada to take this important step.



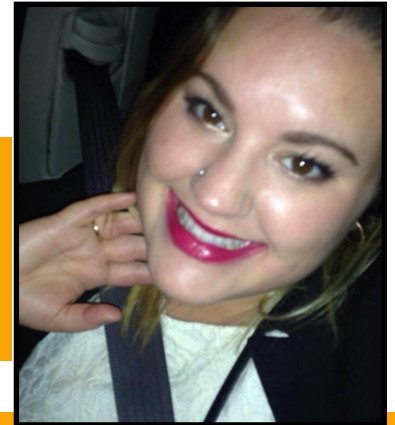
This declaration is the result of years of hard work undertaken by the NBYICN leadership group. In November 2012, the NBYICN organized the first ever New Brunswick Youth in Care Hearings at the provincial legislature. The hearings gave six young people the chance to talk about their experiences in the care system to a room filled with elected officials, top civil servants, and a group of their peers. Following this event, the NBYICN published a report that listed a series of recommendations for those provincial government on how they could provide better support to youth in care. One of those recommendations was to set aside one day to be an annual day to celebrate children and youth in care in New Brunswick.

Those of us at the NBYICN could not be prouder. The strength and initiative displayed by the NBYICN members throughout this process has been nothing short of inspiring. Stand tall– we deserve to!



## The NBYICN and Youth in Care Canada

In September 2014, the NBYICN was asked to select leadership team members to sit on the new Youth in Care Canada governing board. One of our long-time members, Alisha, was chosen to take part! On October 13th, youth in care from across Canada voted Alisha onto the board in a national e-AGM.



Guest writer: NBYICN leader Alisha

This December I was lucky enough to be a part of the first board meeting as a board member of Youth In Care Canada (YICC). It was amazing to see how many people were working hard to keep this network alive and striving to make life better for young people around Canada. YICC board members come from all different parts of Canada, with different backgrounds, and unique skills, but we all had the same goal – to improve the lives of youth from care across Canada!

I wanted to be a board member because I know how important it is to have the information that will help young people in their journey through care. I spent a lot of time when I graduated high school wondering where all the other foster kids were. What challenges are they facing? What supports do they have? Was there a network of people who would understand what I was going through?

I have seen the benefits of the NBYICN and how it has helped young people in New Brunswick (NB), and even those who have moved to NB. But what about the people who do not know we exist? Getting involved with the YICC network allows me to put NB on the map and get our information out there!

The biggest reason I got involved with YICC was to work to ensure that all provinces have the same resources for education-to push for a standard for Canada to follow, and to fight for the right to an equal opportunity, regardless of what province you live in.

The board is made up of a great group of people who are very motivated and have all experienced something that pushes their passion for change in the systems we have today. I only see great things coming from the Board of Youth in Care Canada. Keep your eyes open for great things to come !!

For more information on Youth in Care Canada and their work-



Follow them — @NYICN



Like them on Facebook — Youth in Care Canada

## Updating The RoadMap Program

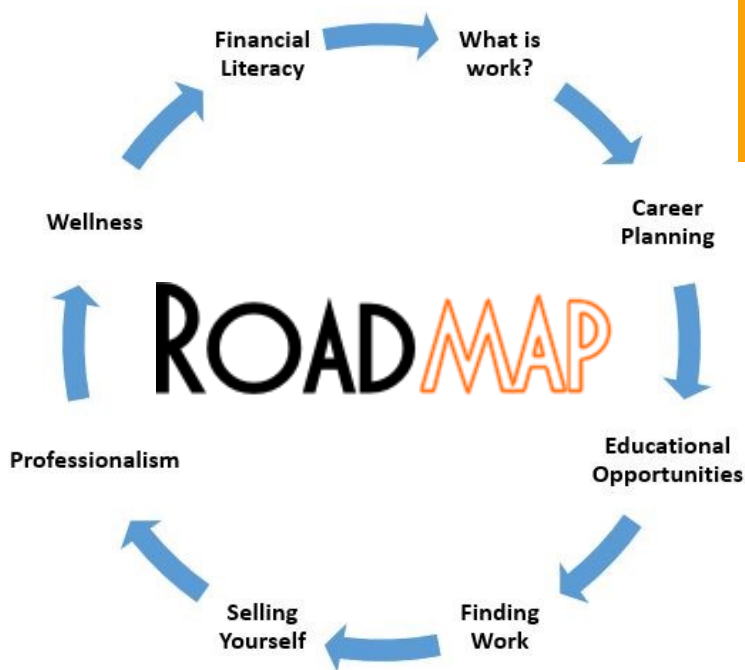
The RoadMap Program is one of Partners For Youth Inc.'s most important projects. Since 2008, this program has been delivered throughout New Brunswick– in both Francophone and Anglophone communities. It engages youth participants in personal development activities related to a number of important financial concepts, such as budgeting, money management, and making sound financial investments.

In 2013, Partners For Youth Inc. began revising our long-term RoadMap Program to concentrate more specifically on the needs of youth in custody. This updated version maintains its unique emphasis on financial literacy, but has expanded its reach to focus more concretely on career development. Uniquely developed for youth in care and youth leaving custody, it will teach participants about such essential career development skills and concepts as employability skills, post-secondary education, job searching, job profiling, interview skills, professionalism, and resume and cover letter writing.

The ultimate goal of the RoadMap Program is to provide youth with the information and skills necessary to further their education, and find meaningful employment. Funding for this project is provided by the Government of Canada's Youth Justice Renewal Fund, the Counselling Foundation of Canada, and the R. Howard Webster Foundation.

So from January to April 2015, Partners for Youth Inc. staff will be travelling to the New Brunswick Youth Centre and Portage Atlantic to deliver the RoadMap Program to youth in open and closed custody.

Partners For Youth Inc. staff  
Robyn and Tom are on the Road  
this Winter!



## Policy Development

**January and February 2015 marked an important step for the NBYICN— an invitation to work with the Department of Social Development to review their Practice Standards for different programs. We used our lived experience and expertise to help social workers, policymakers, and other professionals to make program changes that would benefit children and youth in care.**

“Youth engagement is a core best practice for working with children and youth.”

*- Youth Engagement: Empowering Youth Voices to Improve Services, Programs and Policy*

### Family Group Conference

The NBYICN was presented with the opportunity to work with the Department of Social Development to expand their Family Group Conference Program to the Child in Care Program. NBYICN leaders were heavily involved in this process to ensure that this process addressed the needs of youth in care in NB. Opportunities to advise working group members on permanency, training, and service delivery marked new steps towards collaboration with the NBYICN.

### Child in Care Standards

In their formal response to *A Long Road Home*, the Government of New Brunswick mandated that the NBYICN be consulted during their review of the Child in Care Practice Standards. NBYICN leaders were consulted to ensure that these standards meet the needs of youth in care in NB. It was an opportunity for us to ensure that many of our 14 recommendations were considered and adopted by the Department of Social Development. It was likewise an opportunity for NBYICN leaders to change aspects of the system that they are passionate about, including group homes, home visits, and the rights of children and youth in care.



## What's coming up...

We're always brainstorming new ideas for projects to bring in new members and broaden our horizons. Here are some of the things that are coming up. Invitations to participate will be sent out via email, Facebook and Twitter as the dates approach. For more information, or to join our Email List, contact our coordinator at [rlippett@partnersforyouth.ca](mailto:rlippett@partnersforyouth.ca).

### Art Attack

Developed by our network leaders, Art Attack is a painting workshop for small groups (4-8 people) that takes place over a 2-3 hour time span. Participants are led through a series of painting exercises, co-led by network leaders and our coordinator. We'll be hosting a series of Art Attack workshops in the Spring and Summer months. These workshops allow youth in care to connect with one another, form friendships, and develop their creative sides.

### Rock Climbing

The NBYICN has been invited to use the University of New Brunswick's climbing wall in Fredericton. With a little help from some expert climbers at Partners for Youth Inc. — the NBYICN is going to learn the essentials of rock climbing. We'll have the opportunity to hang out with some cool folks, listen to good music, and learn to the basics of rock-climbing!

### Cooking Classes

Know any youth in care who want (or need) to learn how to cook? Get in touch!

The NBYICN is hosting cooking classes! Partners for Youth Inc. staff will be delivering full-day cooking classes designed to teach youth transitioning out of care how to make delicious, healthy food! They are guaranteed to learn lots of kitchen tips and tricks, plus they'll get to eat what they make!

This program is open to youth in care ages 17-26 and is offered in partnership with the Children's Aid Foundation, and Sobey's Cooking Towards Independence Program.

Vegan? Coeliac? Nut allergies? Let us know early and we can cater to all allergy types and food preferences!

**We are always looking for youth who want to join our leadership team!**

## Get involved!

Our network is always looking for new members. If you know someone from care, contact us to find out how to get involved. Our goal is to establish a presence throughout the province, but we can't do it without your help! Contact our network coordinator at [rlippett@partnersforyouth.ca](mailto:rlippett@partnersforyouth.ca).

## Provincial Summit for New Brunswick Youth in Care

### Partners For Youth Inc. is excited to announce the confirmation of funding for a 2015 Provincial Summit for New Brunswick Youth in Care!

In November 2014, Partners For Youth Inc. received funding from the T. R. Meighen Family Foundation to host a provincial Summit for New Brunswick's Youth in Care. This exciting opportunity will present youth in care throughout New Brunswick with the opportunity to voice their needs and concerns, as well as to address some of our remaining recommendations from the *A Long Road Home* report.

We are preparing to enter into an extensive planning process with our NBYICN members and leaders. This event is the first of its kind in New Brunswick, and in Canada as well— so we want to make sure that we get it right. We'll be out on the road consulting groups of current and former youth in care from all over New Brunswick— we want to make sure that the voices of such a diverse group of youth are represented at this Summit.

## We want your help.

Are you a current or former youth in care who would be interested in taking part in our planning process? Do you know any current or former youth in care who would enjoy participating? Get in touch with our coordinator! Reach out and share your opinions, needs and feedback!!!

