



Setting the Stage For Girls and Young Women to Succeed

Dear Owner or Manager,

You are invited to become a part of the Downtown Prince George Youth Friendly Network (YFN), a group of businesses that have committed to recognizing youth as valuable citizens who benefit when they are supported by and connected to our community. The YFN has been created and developed by youth in response to an identified need for support downtown to make the area more accessible to young people and encourage them to fully enjoy their city.

Businesses that sign on to be part of the YFN become Waypoints where youth can be sure of receiving friendly and respectful treatment, and be offered a few common courtesies that can be extremely beneficial to a young person using the downtown area.

Waypoints pledge to:

- Allow youth to wait inside the business for a ride, rest, or to warm up, without the youth making a purchase
- Allow youth to use the phone briefly, for example to call for a ride
- Provide assistance to youth (such as a glass of water or use of a bathroom, provided business and staff capacity can support this)

By agreeing to be a YFN Waypoint, you will send a message to the community that you value young Prince George citizens, and that your business is a space committed to equality for people from all walks of life. You agree to be a reliable resource to users of the program for at least one year, and are given a sticker to identify your business as a Waypoint which can be posted on a door or a window that is visible from the entry area. You will also be given a poster to display in your business which explains to users what you offer as a Waypoint and the expectations that you have of anyone who uses your services. Each YFN Waypoint is included on our map, which will guide new users to your business. If you do not want to be included on the map, you can opt out any time before July 15^h, 2014.

In the attached package is a brief history of the YFN, which will tell you how we got started, and what it means to us that Prince George businesses take the step to participate. We hope we will hear from you soon, and look forward to having you participate in our YFN.

Cheers,

Youth Friendly Network Team

Ph: 250 562 2900 (Ask for Tonianne or Ley) Email tonianne@imss.ca





Setting the Stage For Girls and Young Women to Succeed

Youth Friendly Network - Background

Setting the Stage for Girls and Young Women to Succeed is a two-year project funded by the Status of Women Canada. The project aims to become a platform for girls and young women in Prince George and surrounding areas who want to have their voices heard. Setting the Stage seeks to address specific barriers and respond to the under-representation of girls and young women in the civic, political, business and community life. The young women that are involved in the project come from diverse backgrounds, and are between the ages of 15 and 26.

In July of 2013, the young women came together to talk about their Prince George community as well as identify barriers to their active involvement in civic, political and community life. They used documentary photography to explore these barriers and their photography was put on display at the Prince George Public Library. One of the barriers identified was the lack of a downtown community spirit in which youth are encouraged to participate.

The downtown core in Prince George is a hub for business, politics, services, restaurants and community events. Yet for youth, it has a split sense of community: for some youth downtown is home, whereas for others they will only stay if there is an enticing reason. There is the additional complexity of infrequent buses with insufficient routes and the early closing hours of businesses and services that leave youth feeling isolated downtown. On top of which, the perception that youth are simply loitering and are not contributing to the downtown discourage youth from taking the initiative to come and be involved.



Since July, the youth have been connecting with businesses and the Downtown Business Improvement Association (DBIA), Community Policing and Tourism PG to develop a project that will help to enhance a positive youth-connection to downtown PG. The **Youth Friendly Network** (YFN) is the result of the youth's efforts and consists of a Waypoint sticker program and a youth-created Waypoint map highlighting the participating businesses to help youth locate the youth friendly spaces.

Additionally, YFN youth are taking initiatives to give back to the community: they are involved in the planning and execution of fun activities for youth during festivals downtown Prince George in summer 2014.





YOUTH TRUTHS: WHY THE YOUTH FRIENDLY NETWORK IS IMPORTANT

Myth: Youth that we see downtown don't want to work or be productive, and have nothing better to do than to hang out downtown and cause trouble.

Youth Truth: Young people living in northern communities face high levels of unemployment and limited social resources (Shepard, 2011). When they hang out downtown, youth are using public space to connect with each other and are creating a sense of community that they don't have to pay for.

Myth: If youth are concerned about their safety, they shouldn't be walking around alone. They could just get friends to walk with them if they need to go somewhere or get a parent to drive them.

Youth Truth: Youth cannot plan their lives and jobs around the availability of their friends or family. If they want to get to work or an after school activity, they bear the responsibility of getting to and from the location (You-Nity Talks Safety, 2014).

Myth: Every young person has a cell phone these days- they're practically glued to them! Youth don't have trouble calling for rides or other assistance.

Youth Truth: Not all youth have cell phones, and even if they have one, most cannot pay for a contract and end up on pay-as-you-go. This means if they run out of money, they run out of minutes and have no method of communication (You-Nity Talks Safety, 2014). Similarly, if a phone battery dies, youth can be left stranded.

Myth: Young people are always out wandering the streets, especially late at night. It's not the community's problem that they need to use a phone, or a washroom, especially without making a purchase! If they don't have the money to patronize businesses, they should just go home.

Youth Truth: Most young people are not able to afford cars, so if they want to go out in the evening for recreation, they may end up walking downtown as they wait for the bus. Offering common courtesies like a phone call or washroom use can make it easier for youth to make full use of their community (You-Nity Talks Safety, 2014).

Myth: If youth are bothered when they are walking downtown, they just need to be more assertive! Look the people who are bothering you in the eye tell them to leave you alone, and they will.

Youth Truth: While this may work for an adult, confronting a harasser is much less effective for a youth and may make the situation worse. Many youth have tried a confident, assertive approach to harassers, and found it unsuccessful (You-Nity Talks Safety, 2014).





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Guidelines for Waypoints

Welcoming Users

When businesses sign on to the Youth Friendly Network (YFN), they are showing a positive investment in youth and their community. Youth have created the YFN program and it is youth who will access the Waypoints' services. This is an exciting new partnership between young people and the downtown business community, and to ensure that both the youth and businesses are able to comfortably use the program, we have provided a few guidelines for implementation below.

1. Welcome young people with a smile and a word of greeting. Youth often feel out of place in a business they don't normally frequent, or may even feel that they are unwanted.
Going out of your way to show that you are happy to see them helps youth gain comfort in your business.
2. Take the initiative to ask the youth who enter if they are using the business as a Waypoint, and if not, explain the YFN program.
It's not only businesses who are new to this! It will take a while for the word to spread.
3. Spread the word to other businesses about your experience as a YFN Waypoint, and encourage them to get involved.
Creating new YFN Waypoints allows both youth and businesses to give back to the community. Businesses get new youth patrons, and the YFN creators see their network grow!
4. Be kind and patient with the youth using the program. It may take a while for youth to get comfortable speaking up and asking for help, even if your poster is clearly visible.
It takes a lot as a youth to have the confidence that comes easy to an adult. Treating youth with respect and not condescension allows them to find their footing on the YFN program and gain ownership over their use of it.

Problematic Users

While the expectations of Waypoint users are clear and easy to follow, it is possible that a youth having a bad day, or one who does not understand the program, may make mistakes when trying to access Waypoint services. If a potential Waypoint User does not follow the expectations for youth (see poster), or violates the reasonable expectations that the business has of appropriate behaviour from its patrons, businesses are advised to proceed as follows:

1. Inform the youth that their behaviour is violating the expectations of the YFN program, and that they will not be offered the YFN services if the behaviour continues.
(Example: a youth is talking loudly to a store's customers, and staff informs the youth that this is disrespectful to the customers. If the youth quiets down, they would be allowed to continue waiting for a ride- if not, the youth must leave).
If the user begins to comply, or returns to the Waypoint at another time and is complying with expectations, the Waypoint will once again offer them the YFN services.





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2. If the same YFN user is consistently noncompliant and becomes a nuisance to staff, the Waypoint can suspend the user's access to the YFN services and treat them as they would any patron who behaved inappropriately.
3. If the matter is still not resolved, we recommend that you file a feedback form by following the Google docs link in the 'General Information' section of the Youth Friendly Network Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Youth-Friendly-Network/630459723713628>

Leaving the program

Although businesses commit to being Waypoints for at least a year, it is possible to leave the program earlier for one of two reasons: the business chooses to opt out for some reason, or the YFN team has removed from the program. The YFN team reserves the right to remove a business from the program; this right may be exercised at the discretion of the team and is based on feedback from youth about the business.

If the business chooses to opt out of the program, they can fill in the Feedback Form and let us know the reason behind opting out. A member of the YFN team may follow up with the business to look into other options before officially opting out.

In case the YFN team, upon receiving complaints about the business, decides to remove a business from the program, the business would be contacted and asked to take down the YFN sticker and poster.

In order to maintain the reputation and confidentiality of the businesses, the YFN will only post a standardized message on the Facebook page stating that the business is no longer a part of the program. Messages and comments on the Facebook page will also be monitored by the YFN team to ensure that the feedback is posted in a respectful manner.

We encourage businesses to use the Feedback form on a regular basis so that the program can be improved with time. Providing positive and negative feedback will give us a better idea of what works and what doesn't work in the program. Lastly, we appreciate the businesses that choose to become Waypoints in the YFN Program and welcome them to a team that is committed the betterment of the Prince George community.





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Youth Friendly Network Waypoint Agreement

Your business, _____ has been invited to be a part of the Downtown Prince George Youth Friendly Network (YFN), a group of businesses that have committed to recognizing youth as valuable citizens who benefit when they are supported by and connected to our community. The YFN has been created and developed by youth in response to an identified need for support downtown to make the area more accessible to young people and encourage them to fully enjoy their city.

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I, _____, Manager / Owner (circle one) of _____ understand the above information and choose to make my business a Waypoint on the Youth Friendly Network (YFN) for a minimum of one year from the date below. I also understand that the Youth Friendly Network reserves the right to remove my business as a Waypoint if at any time the business or staff is unable or unwilling to comply with the expectations above.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I want to opt out of inclusion on the YFN map:

Reason: _____

YFN Representative Name: _____

Signature: _____

Thank you, on behalf of the Youth Friendly Network Team, for choosing to contribute to the community engagement with youth in Prince George. A copy of this agreement will be delivered to you within a week. For more information about Setting the Stage initiatives get in touch with Project Coordinator Tonianne Mynen at tonianne@imss.ca or call 250 562 2900 or on Facebook: Youth Friendly Network.

