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2011 GIRL POWER SUMMER CAMPS

The Regional Multicultural Youth Council (RMYC) introduced REV Girl Style in Thunder Bay in 1998, and started running Girl Power Camps Program in Northwestern Ontario during the summer months. Pauline Fogarty the RMYC President at the time started REV to empower young women to follow their passions and realize their dreams. As givers of life and future child-bearers, providing opportunities for young women to get the right information to make wise choices, and to have positive peer support for their well-being as a investment in future good mothers and stronger families.

Pauline went on to win the Lieutenant Governor's Award in 2000, and the Governor General's Person's Case Youth Award in 2009 for her work with Girl Power program. Since then program has been adopted by the City of Thunder Bay Parks and Recreation, Thunder Bay Boys and Girls Club, and Nishnawbe Aski Nation.

This summer, Stephanie Kawei, the RMYC's Girl Power Program Co-ordinator organized summer camps for young women 7 to 17 years old in July and August. The aim was to bring the girls to learn, share experiences and socialize while having fun. However, due to a lack of funding the Girl Power Summer Camps ran only on Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School offered space to organize our activities. .

YES Employment Services provided us with a team of students to organize activities. We signed up participants when the RMYC organized community barbecues in neighbourhoods to consult with residents on their priorities and engage them to deal with the problems they face. The camps featured workshops, presentations, demonstrations, sports and games. Popular topics covered were self-esteem, body image, self-confidence, self-control, peer pressure, healthy lifestyles, and feminism. Other issues such as internet safety, bullying, discrimination, alcohol, drug and substance abuse, violence, teen sexuality, relationships, education, careers, the environment and so forth are discussed based on interest by the participants.

The camps were youth-run, but professionals, social service workers and other resource people were invited as needed. The girls made their own lunch and snacks as part of learning how to prepare healthy meals. We used the school grounds and the gym depending on the weather for physical exercise to encourage fitness.

The summer camps were also training for the team leaders so that they can organize Girl Power chapters when schools reopen. The RMYC started Girl Power Groups in schools in 2006. Creating peer leaders to replace students who graduate is important for the continuity of the program. With the number of students from different schools I was working with this summer, we hope to have a successful Girl Power program in schools this fall.

We are grateful to YES Employment Services, Urban Aboriginal Strategy, Indian Youth Friendship Society, Ontario Native Women's Association, and Net Newsledger/Junot Café, Mandarin Restaurant, Take a Hike/Diane Petryna, and Sharon Wingfield for their contributions that enabled us to provide snacks, refreshments and transportation for the girls.

Anyone interested to learn more about the Revolution Girl Style Program or Girl Power Summer Camps can call the RMYC at 622-4666, contact us via e-mail at manwoyc@tbaytel.net, or drop by the Multicultural Youth Centre at 511 E. Victoria Avenue, Thunder Bay, Ontario.