

**GROWING CHANGE:**  
**THE YOUTH FOR ECOACTION PROGRAM**

BY

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**Stephanie Fulford**

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of  
Master of Natural Resources Management

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## **Abstract**

The Youth for EcoAction (YEA) Program is a project of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Winnipeg involving youth at risk in after-school programming. The program focuses on urban agriculture and gardening projects and was developed using the circle of courage model of youth empowerment. This research used participatory methods, including participatory video to analyze the program and its benefits.

The YEA program creates positive change in the lives of participants and at a community-wide level. These benefits include skill building and job training, improved self esteem, nutrition and food security, increased environmental awareness and behaviour, and greater community strength. Youth serving agencies, community development organizations and government policy makers should look to the YEA program as a model for youth empowerment and community revitalization.

This thesis also explores benefits of participatory research, specifically participatory video, and documents the personal learnings and journey of the author from researcher to practitioner.

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## Table of Contents

<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>VII</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 BACKGROUND.....	1
1.1.1 <i>Youth for EcoAction Program</i> .....	2
1.2 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES .....	4
1.3 SIGNIFICANCE AND UTILITY OF RESEARCH .....	5
1.4 METHODS.....	6
<b>CHAPTER 2: LEARNING LINKAGES: COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY PROJECTS AND PARTICIPATORY VIDEO .....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 GROWING YOUTH, FOOD AND COMMUNITY .....	7
2.2 COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY .....	7
2.2.1 <i>Systemic Barriers to Community Food Security</i> .....	8
2.2.2 <i>Community Food Security and Household Income Level</i> .....	9
2.2.3 <i>Strategies for Building Community Food Security</i> .....	9
2.2.4 <i>The Role of Community Gardens</i> .....	11
2.2.5 <i>Community Gardens as a Catalyst for Change</i> .....	12
2.2.6 <i>Youth Gardening Programming and Community Development</i> .....	13
2.3 PARTICIPATORY VIDEO.....	14
2.3.1 <i>Participatory Video for Monitoring and Evaluation</i> .....	14
2.3.2 <i>Participatory Video as a Research Tool</i> .....	15
2.3.3 <i>Participatory Video as a Catalyst for Change</i> .....	16
2.4 SUMMARY.....	16
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODS.....</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1 APPROACH .....	18
3.2 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION.....	19
3.2.1 <i>Participant Observation/Field Notes</i> .....	19
3.2.2 <i>Interviews</i> .....	19
3.2.3 <i>Participatory Video Training and Facilitation</i> .....	20
3.3 DATA OUTCOMES.....	22
<b>CHAPTER 4: YOUTH COMMUNITY GARDENING PROGRAMMING AS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: THE YOUTH FOR ECOACTION PROGRAM .....</b>	<b>23</b>
4.1 INTRODUCTION .....	23
4.2 THE YOUTH FOR ECOACTION PROGRAM AND COMMUNITIES .....	23
4.2.1 <i>YEA Background</i> .....	25
4.2.3 <i>Member Selection</i> .....	26
4.2.4 <i>YEA Structure</i> .....	26
4.2.5 <i>Program Pedagogy</i> .....	28
4.2.6 <i>Community Demographics</i> .....	33
4.3 METHODS.....	37
4.4 RESULTS .....	37
4.4.1 <i>Impact of Community Gardening Programming on Youth Participants</i> .....	40

4.4.2 <i>Impact of Community Gardening Programming on Community</i> .....	44
4.4.3 <i>YEA Programming and the Circle of Courage</i> .....	47
4.5 CONCLUSIONS.....	49
<b>CHAPTER 5: PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH: A TWO-WAY EXCHANGE .....</b>	<b>53</b>
5.1 INTRODUCTION .....	53
5.2 PERSONAL JOURNEY.....	54
5.3 A TWO-WAY EXCHANGE.....	59
5.3.1 <i>Participatory Video</i> .....	60
5.4 CONCLUSIONS.....	64
<b>CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>LITERATURE CITED .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>APPENDIX A .....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>APPENDIX B .....</b>	<b>80</b>

## **List of Tables**

Table 1: Circle of Courage Values and Behaviours.....	31
Table 2: YEA Community Demographics, 2006.....	34
Table 3: Benefits of the YEA program to Participants and Community .....	39
Table 4: YEA Benefits as Circle of Courage Values.....	48

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

My home is located in the West End of Winnipeg, Canada, a neighbourhood of great contrasts. From my window, I can see the office towers where some of the wealthiest people in the province work, with fortunes that grew out of the productive fields of the surrounding prairies. Nearby in another direction is the University of Winnipeg, where thousands of students come and go in their quest to obtain knowledge. And surrounding me on all sides is an incredibly diverse neighbourhood, with old Portuguese couples that have lived here for 40 years, and young Ethiopian families just recently arrived in Canada. At one end of the block is a Vietnamese restaurant, at the other is an Italian deli. The neighbourhood has many Aboriginal residents, and a sizeable Filipino community. It is a vibrant, beautiful place, full of history, charm and spirit. It is also a neighbourhood dealing with high levels of poverty, substance abuse, crime and gang activity.

I have lived in the inner city of Winnipeg for the past nine years, and for the most part, the problems associated with these neighbourhoods I have experienced only peripherally. In many respects, when I walk the streets of my neighbourhood, I am walking different streets than many of the other people who live here. I am white, university educated, and have a strong support network of family and friends. I earn a liveable wage, have stable housing and good health. These characteristics place me in a position of relative advantage in our society, and as a result I experience these same streets very differently. In contrast, the places where I have felt most connected with others, and the most integrated into my community have always been in the area's community gardens.

In these informal spaces, incredible things are growing. Community gardens provide a place of gathering for an area with little green space. They provide a source of pride and accomplishment for involved residents. They offer an opportunity for conversation and friendships to grow between people who might otherwise pass each other on the street without comment. They are a source of fresh, healthy and safe food, in a neighbourhood with high levels of food insecurity. And finally, they are urban, outdoor classrooms, a space for young people who may have never visited a farm to learn about how food is grown. Having experienced all of these things first hand, I have a strong love of community gardens, and believe in their value to communities, including my own.

### **1.1.1 Youth for EcoAction Program**

The Youth for EcoAction Program (YEA) is a project of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Winnipeg (BGCW). YEA involves youth aged 9 to 18 in after-school environmental programming with a focus on urban agriculture and gardening projects in their communities. Through YEA, participants visit farms, gain experience in seed starting, transplanting and gardening, participate in food preparation and preservation workshops, and engage in numerous other educational activities. One of the major components of the YEA program is the building and maintenance of community gardens on site at the clubs.

When I first heard about YEA, I immediately wanted to become involved. I began volunteering once a week with YEA in the spring of 2007 at the Sister MacNamara club which is located within a few blocks of where I live. It was an eventful few months for

the project, with highlights including the creation of the first YEA community garden at Sister MacNamara school, a community celebration and planting day, and a weekend rural youth exchange trip to Clearwater, Manitoba. It was also an incredible learning journey for myself, and one of the most intense and challenging experiences I've had in a long time. I had spent a significant amount of time working with youth in the past, but the group from Sister MacNamara was definitely something new for me. The attitude and behaviour issues were at times overwhelming, although not unexpected given the many challenges that participants experience in other areas of their lives. In contrast to these episodes were periods of enthusiasm, hard work and dedication that were absolutely inspirational.

In the spring of 2008 I again became involved with YEA on a weekly basis, initially as a volunteer, and then later as a part-time coordinator. It was an exciting time to be more involved with the program as weekly YEA activities grew to include more clubs and a greater number of participants. The Sister MacNamara garden was expanded upon, and two large gardens were created at other club sites. I was privileged to be a part of the design and creation of these sites, and to witness their transformation from underused areas into beautiful, productive community gardens.

Through my involvement with YEA, I had directly observed many of the benefits that the program had for the involved youth and for the broader community. I wanted to evaluate and document these benefits, as well as the challenges, so that I could share this information with others. It was my hope that sharing these stories would benefit the

participants, the YEA program and other communities and organizations that are interested in undertaking similar activities.

## **1.2 Purpose and Objectives**

In my research, I worked with YEA participants, staff and project partners to explore the impact that the YEA program has on participants and the broader community. More specifically, I was interested in the learning that takes place by participants, and to what degree that learning is transformative. Transformative learning is more far reaching than day to day learning, and involves a significant amount of change in the learner. The individual engages in critical reflection, and undergoes a shift in attitudes and beliefs (Mezirow, 1997). By combining critical reflection and community action, a path can be created for communities towards positive social change (Freire, 1970). I hoped to discover if the YEA program has the potential to be a catalyst for positive change for the involved participants and their communities. Within this context, my objectives for this research were:

1. Assess the impact of the program on participants knowledge, skills, perspectives and behaviour
2. Determine the impact of the program on the communities involved
3. Identify lessons for other community food projects and youth serving agencies

### **1.3 Significance and Utility of Research**

When choosing my line of research, it was very important to me to be involved with a project that I cared about, and one that I had a strong connection to. Additionally, I wanted the research to be beneficial for those involved, and not a one-way extraction of information. These values are in line with the critical social science paradigm, and I conducted my research based on this philosophy. Critical social science researchers seek not only to gain knowledge through their findings, but also to effect positive change on society (Fay, 1987). I wanted the YEA program to benefit through this research from an evaluation of its programming, and by gaining tools for sharing success stories and informing others about the project.

A further purpose of the research was to assist participants in telling their own stories through a format that is engaging and widely accessible. Through the participatory video process, participants received training and direct experience in media production. The development of these skills and the voicing of personal stories has been shown to have an empowering effect on those involved in the participatory video process (Bery, 2003; Kindon, 2003).

This research also contributes to the literature around participatory video, in particular PV as a research tool. Although PV was first developed by Canadian Don Snowden in the 1960s, much of the documented PV work in the last 40 years has taken place in developing countries (Kindon, 2003). The research is unique in that it uses PV as a tool to explore and facilitate change in a Canadian context. This work contributes to the broader body of literature linking PV theory and practice.

## **1.4 Methods**

The research consisted of five components:

- 1) A review of literature and examples of current research and work around participatory video, community food security and youth urban agriculture projects.
- 2) Personal interviews conducted with the YEA program staff and with YEA program participants.
- 3) Participatory video facilitation, including initial training workshops and the filming and editing of videos.
- 4) Direct observation as a YEA program volunteer and during the participatory video process
- 5) An analysis of the information gathered through the above research methods.

## **Chapter 2: Learning Linkages: Community Food Security Projects and Participatory Video**

### **2.1 Growing Youth, Food and Community**

“Growing Youth, Food and Community” is the vision statement of Fort Whyte Farms, one of the partner organizations that the Youth for EcoAction program works with. It accurately summarizes what both projects are trying to accomplish, while touching on the interconnectedness of the many issues affecting inner-city youth and the broader community. Food, in particular, is something that affects all humans, and heavily influences and is influenced by the economy, the environment and society. Food also connects all humans, and has been a culturally and socially binding force for millennia (Winson, 1993). These interconnections make community food security projects an ideal forum for initiating reflection, learning and action in a broader context.

### **2.2 Community Food Security**

“Community food security (CFS) is defined as a situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice” (Hamm and Bellows, 2003, p. 35)

The concept of Community Food Security evolved through various organizations working on food security from different angles and perspectives. CFS recognizes that people are food insecure due to many factors which often stem from systemic problems. To address this, the CFS approach takes a holistic look at our current food system and at the societal conditions which are at the root of the issue. An essential component of the holistic approach is addressing food security at the community level, as opposed to a household or individual level. By doing so, CFS advocates are able to work for long-

term, sustainable change for all citizens (Levkoe, 2006; McCullum et al., 2005; Pothukuchi and Siedenburg, 2002).

### **2.2.1 Systemic Barriers to Community Food Security**

While each community that faces food insecurity deals with its own unique concerns, many of the problems that urban Canadian communities face are similar. These common issues stem in large part from the increasing commodification and corporatization of food (Levkoe, 2006; Riches, 1999). Worldwide there has been a shift from local production and distribution of food to a global system dominated by transnational agriculture and food corporations. This shift has created a food system that is profit driven, and has resulted in widespread unsustainable and unjust practices (Levkoe, 2006). Many of these harmful practices are at the production end of the system, with large-scale, intensive agriculture being the system norm. This form of agriculture has had negative impacts on the environment and on the small farmer, who has a hard time competing within the new, massive, 'efficient' system (Kneen, 1989).

The negative impacts have also been seen at the 'consumer' end of the spectrum. The driving force for transnational corporations is not about providing communities with adequate fresh and nutritional food, even those involved in the agriculture and food industry. To increase profit shares, food is processed, preserved, and packaged, then heavily promoted by advertising campaigns. This, in combination with the urbanization of the Canadian population, has resulted in eaters being increasingly distanced from the processes surrounding the food that they depend upon (Kneen, 1989). The vast majority

of citizens have little control over their own food supply, and are dependent upon being able to purchase what they need. For those on a limited budget, the little control that they have may at times be non-existent.

### **2.2.2 Community Food Security and Household Income Level**

In Canada, food security is closely tied to household income. Approximately 9.2% of Canadians live in households that are food insecure. That number jumps to 35.8% for households in the two lowest income categories (Health Canada, 2007). Simply put, in a food system that is tied to purchasing power, those with the lowest incomes are most likely to be food insecure. At a community level, this has special significance for neighbourhoods with a high percentage of low income households. For example, in the Central Park neighbourhood of Winnipeg (one of the areas that YEA operates out of) 68% of households fall under the Statistics Canada low-income cut off level (Statistics Canada, 2006). The low-income cut-off roughly corresponds to the two lowest income categories in Health Canada's 2004 study. From these numbers it can be estimated that approximately 1 in 4 households in the Central Park community are food insecure.

### **2.2.3 Strategies for Building Community Food Security**

The issues affecting food availability, affordability, accessibility and quality are broad and systemic (McCullum et al., 2005). To address these issues, a multitude of groups are working from different angles to improve community food security. These projects and policy changes include short and long-term strategies. Since food security is so closely linked to household income level, poverty reduction strategies, including minimum wage

increases, healthy social assistance rates and affordable housing, are integral components of the community food security approach. At first glance, poverty reduction strategies might seem to fall outside of the community food security framework. To look at the issue holistically requires CFS advocates to include and address all factors that play a role (Hamm and Bellows, 2003; Power, 1999).

In addition to improving community member's ability to participate in the current food system as 'consumers', community food security advocates are also engaged in community based educational programs. These include workshops on preparing healthy, affordable meals, and stimulating discussion around food and community food issues. Raising awareness around our unsustainable and unjust food system and working towards creating a more local, safe and affordable food system is an important long-term strategy of the community food security approach (McCullum et al., 2005).

The overarching strategy for improving community food security is to create a shift towards a food system that citizens have more control over. A major component of this strategy for urban communities is to increase the amount of food production in or close to urban centres. To achieve this, CFS advocates are working on improving relevant land-use and food policies, as well as improving infrastructure and building stronger food networks. Examples include creating support for urban farmer's markets, promoting community shared agriculture programs, and improving linkages between urban and rural communities (McCullum et al., 2005). The most direct method for urban communities to gain control over their food supply is to increase the amount of food grown by

community members. Support for gardening and community gardens in particular has been growing in North American cities, and policy makers have begun to recognize their potential for providing low-cost, safe and healthy food (Lawson, 2004).

#### **2.2.4 The Role of Community Gardens**

A community garden is an allotment of land gardened by a collection of individuals or by a group together. Community gardens are in both urban and suburban areas, and have a long history in North American cities. Community gardens are most often overseen by a neighbourhood association, a church group, a municipal authority, or another organization, but may also be self-organized by the gardeners themselves. In terms of food security, community gardens have been shown to lower household food budgets, resulting in a direct positive impact on individual food security (Patel, 1991). Community gardens also provide a source of fresh, safe, locally produced food, benefiting the gardeners themselves and the broader community, as gardeners often share their produce with friends, neighbours and food relief programs (Patel, 1991). The secondary benefits of community gardening can be equally impressive. Not only do community gardeners decrease the amount they spend on food, but community gardeners tend to have a healthier diet than their non-gardening counterparts due to increased consumption of fruits and vegetables. Gardening is also an important source of physical activity, a key contributing factor to overall health (Twiss et al., 2003; Wakefield et al., 2007). Community gardening has also been shown to have a positive influence on mental health due to the social and relaxing nature of the activity (Levkoe, 2006; Wakefield et al., 2007). This benefit also extends to the community as a whole by providing valuable

greenspace. Greenspaces benefit communities through providing communal gathering spaces, locations for children to play and explore, and through improving the local natural environment (Wakefield et al., 2007). Unfortunately, lack of greenspace is a common concern for many North American inner-city neighbourhoods.

### **2.2.5 Community Gardens as a Catalyst for Change**

In addition to the direct benefits that community gardens provide for a community, there is evidence that community gardens also contribute to broader, long-term positive change. Community gardens can stimulate neighbourhood revitalization through the creation of beautiful, welcoming spaces (Brown and Carter, 2003). These spaces also act to build social networks through their use as community gathering spaces. Improving social networks and connections plays an important role in the strengthening of communities (Wakefield et al., 2007). There is also evidence that community gardens have contributed to transformative learning in individuals and stimulated involvement in further projects and activism related to food and community development (Levkoe, 2006).

Community gardens act as living, outdoor classrooms for gardeners, residents and neighbourhood children. Many children growing up in the inner-city have spent little time outside of urban environments. Community gardens provide a space to interact with nature, and to learn the processes of the natural world firsthand. Digging in the soil, examining bugs and observing plants growing can be an important first step towards a better appreciation of nature (Wakefield et al., 2007). Experiencing and enjoying nature

is considered a key influencing factor for individuals in adopting environmental behaviour (Chawla, 1998).

Participation in community garden projects has been shown to act as a stepping stone for further involvement in food security issues and community development. By producing their own food, community garden members are learning valuable skills and reconnecting with the source of their food. This can stimulate critical thinking and discussion around the problems associated with our current food system. For some, this has led to initiating educational campaigns, participating in civic lobbying and working on additional projects to promote community food security. Others have been inspired by the collective nature of community garden work and by experiencing success and positive change through the gardens. This in turn has led gardeners to take on other projects, and become more involved in contributing to a stronger local community (Levkoe, 2006).

### **2.2.6 Youth Gardening Programming and Community Development**

The value of community-based educational and recreational programming for youth has been well-documented (Torjman, 2004, Zimmerman et al., 2010). Benefits to youth can include improved self-esteem, improved academic performance skills development, increased employability and other positive effects (Hoffman et al., 2007). At the community level community recreation can lead to reduced vandalism, lower unemployment, improved social solidarity and improved collective health and well-being (Briand et al., 2011). Youth gardening programs are increasingly popular (Benveniste et

al., 2008) but the community and individual benefits of youth gardening programming hasn't been as well documented as other community recreation programs.

### **2.3 Participatory Video**

Participatory video is a methodology used to facilitate the creation of a video by a community or group of people. PV is defined primarily by the process involved, and is not restricted to a particular style or subject matter. To varying degrees, PV takes a 'hands off' approach on the part of the facilitator or researcher, whose main involvement is the training and support of the PV participants. The final product is created by the participants, who use PV to explore and communicate their own experiences (White, 2003).

#### **2.3.1 Participatory Video for Monitoring and Evaluation**

PV has been successfully used as a tool for monitoring and evaluating community projects and initiatives (Lunch, 2007; Nemes et al., 2007). One of the key strengths of PV for this purpose is the medium employed. The use of video allows for the participants themselves to share their own views, evaluation and experiences with the project. Literacy levels and language are not a barrier, as writing is not required and translations and subtitles can be included if necessary (Lunch, 2007). Video is also more accessible for reviewing than traditional reporting methods. Funding agencies and decision makers are often inundated with written reports, and video can be a welcomed change, making it a powerful tool (Nemes et al., 2007). Fellow community members can also easily review a final product in video format, which allows for further project

feedback in the evaluation process (Kindon, 2003; Lunch, 2007). Being a participatory process, significant levels of reflection and self evaluation takes place, and a different depth and quality of analysis can occur in comparison with conventional monitoring and evaluation techniques by outsiders (Lunch, 2007; Nemes et al., 2007).

### **2.3.2 Participatory Video as a Research Tool**

Participatory video is considered an effective tool for participatory research (Kindon, 2003; Pink, 2001). The structure of the PV process provides for an inherently collaborative experience, and has the potential to challenge conventional researcher/participant power dynamics. According to Sara Kindon, PV can result in research that is “‘looking alongside’ rather than ‘looking at’ research subjects” (2003, 143). In terms of qualitative methods, video allows the researcher to include visual information that may not be self-evident in purely verbal or written formats (Kindon, 2003; Lunch, 2007; Pink, 2001). Body language, gestures and movements convey valuable information, and are best captured using visual tools. PV also has potential drawbacks for the research process. Some people may not be comfortable using video technology or being interviewed on camera, limiting participation in the process, while the time required for successful PV research can also be a barrier (Kindon, 2003; Nemes at al., 2007). For some projects these concerns may prohibit the application of PV as a research tool.

### **2.3.3 Participatory Video as a Catalyst for Change**

There are numerous documented examples where involvement in a PV project has been an empowering and transformative experience for participants (Kindon, 2003; Nemes et al., 2007; Pink 2001; White, 2003). At the most basic level, PV can change how participants view and experience media. With new knowledge and experience with the production of images, a different level of understanding is gained in how media images are constructed (Kindon, 2003). Creating and reviewing images, sharing them with others and communicating personal stories and experiences can be a powerful multi-directional communicative process. Some PV participants have stated that the experience was the first time that they felt they had a ‘voice’, and was an empowering experience (Kindon, 2003). This process also encourages self-reflection, especially as participants examine their own relationships and experiences, and review how others perceive them through the final product (White, 2003). This can lead to ‘conscientization’, Paulo Freire’s theory involving ‘action-reflection-action’. Individuals and communities that have experienced ‘conscientization’ are more likely to analyze their situation critically and take action on the oppression they experience (Freire, 1970).

### **2.4 Summary**

One of the major crises facing our world today is local and global food insecurity. Being a complex issue, there are wide variety of contributing factors, and just as many negative consequences. The positive side of this is that when we work on building community food security, we are also working on building a more just and sustainable society. Being involved in community food security projects provides many opportunities for learning and reflection, allowing for empowering and transformative experiences. Similar opportunities also exist for individuals and communities involved in participatory video.

Although generally the primary goal of community food security projects and participatory video is not to stimulate learning, reflection, or motivation for further action, there are many examples of this having occurred, to the benefit of the individual, the community and the broader society.

## **Chapter 3: Methods**

### **3.1 Approach**

The research used qualitative methodology and involved two separate stages. As one of the secondary motives of the research was to provide an alternative method of evaluation for the YEA program, I felt it was important for the research to offer the Boys and Girls Club an evaluation process that offered a different perspective than the evaluation methods normally used. Program evaluation and reporting can be a time-consuming process, and due to requirements for funders, non-profits are often limited to evaluating their programs based on set ‘indicators’. These statistics are meant to evaluate and communicate the success and achievements of their projects. Unfortunately, these numbers can’t always accurately portray the importance of the work that takes place. While indicators such as “number of participants” or “number of volunteer hours contributed” might be accurate, they don’t tell the stories and experiences of the involved participants and the community.

As qualitative methodology is concerned with providing a “detailed descriptions of social practices in an attempt to understand how the participants experience and explain their own world” (Jackson, 1999, p.16), it was my hope that by using qualitative methods, and more specifically participatory video methodology, I would be able to provide a unique evaluation of the program that captured and communicated information thoroughly.

### **3.2 Methods of Data Collection**

Data was collected using three techniques; participant observation, interviews and participatory video.

#### **3.2.1 Participant Observation/Field Notes**

Participant observation is a process where the researcher tries as much as possible to adopt the lifestyle of the people being studied to gain better insight into their lives and experiences. Although there was little I could do to make myself more like a participant in the program, there were steps that I could and did take to be less of an ‘outsider’ in the research process. I was previously involved with the YEA program for two years, and had met many of the participants involved. I was also involved with YEA through the summer of 2009 outside of the interviewing and participatory video process. Many informal but important conversations took place while weeding tomatoes and watering plants! I reflected on my past experience with the YEA program and during my ongoing volunteer time and documented my observations through the use of field notes.

Before my formal research began in 2009 I reviewed the relevant formal ethics form (Appendix B) with youth interns and club staff. I ensured they were clear on their rights as a participant and the goals of my research, before signing.

#### **3.2.2 Interviews**

The interviewing process occurred in two stages. The first stage of interviews involved seven of the eight 2009 interns (the eighth intern was unavailable on the day of the interviews). Participants were asked to reflect on the YEA program and its role in their lives. All interviews were semi-structured to provide a clear set of questions that was repeated for all participants (Appendix A), while still allowing for a more natural and

flowing style of conversation and for the exploration of new information and ideas presented by the participants. Interviews were recorded for later review and analysis using either a small audio-only recorder, or a video camera, dependent upon the preference and comfort of the participant.

The second round of interviews involved three BGCW staff, two club managers and the YEA program coordinator. The staff were interviewed and asked to reflect on the YEA program and changes that they had observed in the community and the lives of the participants.

### **3.2.3 Participatory Video Training and Facilitation**

The participatory video process was the most challenging and rewarding aspect of the research. Much of the success of the process depended on the skills of myself and my co-facilitator, but also on the interest and enthusiasm for the process on the part of the participants. The PV process offered time and space for participants to reflect and through their videos explore their own questions and answers related to the research topic. The PV process provided its own information, but also influenced the later interviews by initiating and stimulating reflection on the YEA program amongst the participants.

The PV process started with the initial training of the participants in a group setting by an outside facilitator and myself. The workshops were held over two afternoons, and were designed to provide introductory level understanding of video equipment, experience in interviewing their peers, and basic understanding of the stages of video production. The

sessions were loosely adapted from InSight's PV handbook (Lunch, 2006), with an emphasis on hands-on activities, games, and peer-to-peer instruction where possible. The goal of the training was to introduce video as a fun, accessible and non-threatening medium that the youth felt comfortable engaging with.

Filming took place at three community garden sites, with a different video being produced by different participants at each site. Participants were given broad topic questions to choose from as themes for their videos which allowed for creativity and self-direction while still providing insight to the research objectives. The first location had one youth working on her own, while the other two sites each had two participants paired together. Participants had access to a range of equipment for filming, from cheaper handheld cameras to more professional video and audio equipment. Although I was on site to support participants and answer questions, all decision making and actual filming was undertaken by the participants themselves. Due to time constraints and in an attempt to keep the process manageable for participants, filming at each site was confined to half a day.

At the end of the filming sessions, I edited the footage using basic editing software. Although participants were not directly involved in the editing, they were given the opportunity to review draft versions at several stages and to suggest changes. Finished versions of the videos were reviewed and approved by the participants, who had final say over the videos.

The first public screening of the videos took place at the end-of-season wind-up for the internship program. Interns, their families, staff and volunteers were gathered for a garden feast and the presentation of certificates of achievement for the youth. At the end of the evening everyone at the event gathered to watch the videos on a large screen.

All aspects of the PV process were documented using field notes, and further information was gathered from reviewing both the final videos and the unused footage filmed by participants.

### **3.3 Data Outcomes**

The data outcomes of the research were qualitative and gathered from field notes, the interviews of program leaders and participants and from the edited and unedited video footage. Themes were explored and identified, and key impacts highlighted. These impacts were analyzed at an individual and community level, and were also used to determine if the YEA program aligned with the Circle of Courage model for youth development.

## **Chapter 4: Youth Community Gardening Programming as Community Development: The Youth for EcoAction Program**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Can a community garden provide more than just vegetables? The Youth for EcoAction Program, an after-school gardening program, endeavours to grow not just food, but also youth and communities through its work. This paper analyzes the Youth for EcoAction Program (YEA) for its role in community development, considering the impacts on the participants and the broader community. YEA focuses on youth programming that benefits at-risk youth and low-income communities. "Community" is a geographical term that considers infrastructure, expertise and services available in that locale, as well as vulnerabilities. Statistics Canada data is used in this paper to show the social and economic barriers experienced by the communities involved in YEA programming.

YEA is an example of “participatory, bottom-up approach to development” (Markey, Pierce, Vodden, & Roseland, 2005, p. 2) with an emphasis on youth capacity building around a circle of courage model, as well as community enhancement.

### **4.2 The Youth for EcoAction Program and Communities**

The Youth for EcoAction Program (YEA) is a project of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Winnipeg. The Boys and Girls Clubs of Winnipeg is a community-based, youth serving agency with over 35 years of operation in Winnipeg. The mission of the Boys and Girls Club is to provide safe, supportive places where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships and develop confidence and skills for life (BGCW Annual Report. 2010).

The Boys and Girls Clubs run 10 youth drop-in centres in Winnipeg with youth development programs that offer employment preparation, leadership development, sports, recreation, computers, arts and cultural activities. The clubs are located in marginalized neighbourhoods reaching high-need families who are struggling with issues of poverty, employment, housing, crime, cultural adjustment, and other issues.

Participation is free for all activities, with over 3500 children and youth engaging in Boys and Girls Clubs activities and programs each year. Approximately 65% of members are Aboriginal youth and 25% are newcomers to Canada (BGCW Annual Report. 2010).

The Youth for EcoAction Project is an enhanced program of the Boys and Girls Clubs. The project involves youth members aged 9 to 18 in after-school environmental programming with a focus on urban agriculture and gardening projects. Through YEA, participants visit farms, gain experience in seed starting, transplanting and gardening, participate in food preparation and preservation workshops and engage in other environmental learning activities. One of the major components of the YEA program is the building and maintenance of community gardens in the YEA neighbourhoods, combined with a summer internship program for older participants.

The majority of the YEA programming is based out of four clubs, all of which are in marginalized communities. Like all of the areas that Boys and Girls Clubs operate out of, these communities struggle with cultural, crime and transportation barriers that affect the health and well-being of the families and youth who live there.

#### **4.2.1 YEA Background**

The Youth For Eco-Action program began in the summer of 2004 as a small pilot project.

The aim of the project was to expose youth to issues of agriculture, environment and sustainability through enjoyable experiential learning activities. Topics included urban greening, urban agriculture, food security, local food systems, ecological sustainability, community-based economic development and youth leadership. Activities included hands-on workshops and field trips to Manitoba farms and Winnipeg urban gardens.

In 2005, YEA established partnerships with inner-city schools and Winnipeg-based environmental and urban agriculture projects and organizations. By partnering with EarthShare Farm, Marymount School, RB Russell School, Gordon Bell School, and FortWhyte Alive, the Boys and Girls Club was able to expand the YEA program.

Programming activities grew to include more skill-building and training opportunities, and added entrepreneurial activities. Between 2005 and 2007, participants engaged in vegetable production, vermicomposting, aquaponics, and beekeeping operations through FortWhyte; built raised bed gardens and a greenhouse at EarthShare headquarters; volunteered as camp leaders with FortWhyte's Agriculture Adventures Camp; participated in market vegetable sales and attended conferences and training opportunities.

In 2007, YEA designed and built their first community garden, located at the Sister MacNamara site. Participants were involved in all stages of the planning, design and creation of the garden, including prepping the site, building beds and hauling soil. The opening of the garden was a ceremony attended by over two hundred community

members. The event included a garden tour, planting and a celebration. YEA participants assisted younger children at the event in planting tomatoes, peppers, squash, and broccoli. This event was the beginning of the main community-based component of the YEA program.

Throughout the development of the project, Heifer International had been an important partner. In 2007 intensive planning meetings were held with Heifer International and Boys and Girls Club staff, which led to the creation of the full-scale YEA project. In 2008, with Heifer International as a major funder, the project grew into a multi-club, multi-garden, year-round program with summer employment opportunities for youth.

#### **4.2.3 Member Selection**

Participants for the program are selected from members of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Winnipeg. Club staff and the YEA coordinator recommend members based on suitability. Members are recommended according to how much they would benefit from the education and training offered by the program. Potential participants must also demonstrate an interest and commitment to the program, and are required to complete an application form to be selected. The program aims for gender equity and cultural diversity, which are factors that influence the selection of participants.

#### **4.2.4 YEA Structure**

The YEA program runs different programming based on the season, the club site, and the age of the participants involved.

### **After School Club Programs**

Weekly sessions offered after school at Boys and Girls Club and partnering school sites run from October to June. Sessions are garden and food focused, with additional activities included related to general environmental awareness. Programming for youth age 15+ feature field trips and workshops to Fort Whyte Farms, with leadership development and training of future interns being a focus. Older youth are also invited to volunteer during separate programming that focuses on younger participants. These younger groups have different age ranges and activities at each site. At one site, the YEA group works with 6 to 11 year olds that engage in activities such as seed starting, painting raised beds and vermicomposting. At another club location, the YEA group works with teens 12+, and includes a cooking club, field trips and gardening programming.

### **Spring Cleanup, Planting and Planning**

From May until early July, YEA work focuses on the community gardens, working with Clubs and schools. During this time existing gardens are prepared for the growing season, and development of any new garden infrastructure occurs. The YEA coordinator works with partnering groups and volunteers, and creates management plans for each site. Part of this process involves hosting community planting parties and fundraising events, which aid in the recruitment of new volunteers, project partners and funders. This season is also the preparation time for the summer internship program, which includes identifying potential summer interns through an application and interview process.

### **Summer Employment and Internship Program**

During July and August, youth leaders who were identified through the school-year programs are hired full time. This is an intensive program for older youth, and features additional horticultural training, food justice workshops, and special events. The youth interns are partnered with garden mentors to help maintain the BGCW community garden sites. Throughout the summer the youth gain employment experience and are challenged to develop their leadership and communication skills.

### **Fall Clean-up**

September to October is a transitional period where YEA works with clubs and schools to harvest and clean up garden spaces. Large volunteer groups and community members assist with clean up and harvesting activities.

#### **4.2.5 Program Pedagogy**

The YEA program was heavily influenced by the Circle of Courage youth empowerment model. This model grew from an anthropological comparison of Western and Native American child rearing, with ties to positive psychology theory (Brendtro et al., 2005).

The basic premise of the Circle of Courage philosophy is that all children have four basic needs for positive development. These needs are described as: 1) belonging, 2) mastery, 3) independence and 4) generosity (Brendtro et al., 2005).

*Belonging* describes the need of youth to feel that they are respected and that they are connected to something larger than themselves (Brendtro et al., 2005). Youth desire to feel comfortable with and appreciated by the people in their life that they regularly come

in contact with. Youth who have a sense of belonging may demonstrate more caring, friendly and cooperative behaviour than their peers. A sense of belonging can also extend to nature, and an appreciation for the interconnectedness of our environment.

*Mastery* describes the need for youth to feel a sense of accomplishment or achievement in their environment. In the Circle of Courage model mastery emphasizes reaching personal goals and personal bests, and is not competitive in nature (Brendtro et al., 2005). It also recognizes that mastery can occur in multiple ways, and is not limited to success in school. Youth who experience success gain confidence in their abilities, and will show greater persistence in future efforts. They are also more likely to pursue new learning opportunities, and can be more self-directed and more willing to risk failure.

*Independence* describes the need of youth to feel like they have power over themselves and in their lives (Brendtro et al., 2005). Independence in relation to self involves taking responsibility for personal choices and actions. Independence in relation to one's life and environment involves youth being able to advocate for themselves, being able to set their own goals, and being able to make decisions and problem solve around personal issues. Youth who have a feeling of independence are generally more confident, more self-disciplined and show greater leadership.

*Generosity* describes the need of youth to feel that they are making positive contributions to the lives of others (Brendtro et al., 2005). Youth gain feelings of self-worth and self-esteem through demonstrating generosity. Youth who experience generosity are more

likely to have healthy relationships, stronger support networks and a greater sense of purpose.

The Circle of Courage theory believes that these four basic needs are often unmet in modern Western society, resulting in ‘broken circles’ (Brendtro et al., 2005). A ‘broken circle’ is created by an environment that doesn’t foster belonging, mastery, independence and generosity, resulting in social, psychological and learning problems in youth. These problems are manifested in behaviour that is harmful to the self and society (Table 1).

**Table 1: Circle of Courage Values and Behaviours\***

Circle of Courage Values	Manifested Behaviours		
	Absent	Normal	Distorted
<b>Belonging</b>	Unattached Guarded Rejected Lonely Aloof Isolated Distrustful	Attached Loving Friendly Intimate Gregarious Cooperative Trusting	Gang Loyalty Craves Attention Craves Acceptance Promiscuous Clinging Cult Vulnerable Overly Dependent
<b>Mastery</b>	Nonachiever Failure Oriented Avoids Risks Fears Challenges Unmotivated Gives Up Easily Inadequate	Achiever Successful Creative Problem-Solver Motivated Persistent Competent	Overachiever Arrogant Risk Seeker Cheater Workaholic Perseverative Delinquent Skill
<b>Independence</b>	Submissive Lacks Confidence Inferiority Irresponsible Helplessness Undisciplined Easily Led	Autonomous Confident Assertive Responsible Inner Control Self-Discipline Leadership	Dictatorial Reckless/Macho Bullies Others Sexual Prowess Manipulative Rebellious Defies Authority
<b>Generosity</b>	Selfish Affectionless Narcissistic Disloyal Hardened Anti-Social Exploitative	Altruistic Caring Sharing Loyal Empathic Pro-Social Supportive	Noblesse Oblige Overinvolved Plays Martyr Co-Dependency Overinvolvement Servitude Bondage

\*Modified from Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern, 1991

While many conventional approaches to working with youth at risk focus on eliminating negative behaviours, the Circle of Courage model focuses on strategies that enhance belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. The benefit of this approach is that these are values that youth are attracted to and embrace. Youth naturally desire to belong, to master skills, to become more independent and to contribute to others

(Brendtro et al., 1991). YEA staff used the Circle of Courage model to design a program that fostered these four values.

The YEA program uses a variety of strategies to create positive change in youth using the Circle of Courage model. Belonging is an all-encompassing goal for the program, and staff always attempt to make the youth feel welcome and respected. Belonging is incorporated into YEA activities by encouraging dialogue, engaging the youth in planning sessions, incorporating peer tutoring, having regular team-building exercises and celebrating achievements. YEA members are also required to sign agreements to join the program, and are given matching YEA t-shirts to work in.

The need for mastery was planned for by designing the program to be educational and skill-building. Participants learn about and engage in horticultural activities, thereby building skills and knowledge around gardening. Programming also focuses on field trips, training opportunities and education on environmental and food justice issues, all of which contribute to mastery for participants.

Independence is fostered through leadership training and encouraging responsibility. The program also offers a direct opportunity for participants to gain employment and develop job skills through the internship program. Efforts are made to help all members of working age find employment through workshops on resume writing, offering assistance in applying for their social insurance number, providing references for potential employers, and by encouraging participants to pursue opportunities.

Generosity was a natural fit for the YEA program, as the program also incorporated the ‘passing on the gift’ approach of project partner Heifer International. For all project partners, Heifer International plans for a means of ‘passing on the gift’ so that recipients in turn become donors. With the YEA program, this is worked into programming by building compost bins and raised garden beds for other organizations and donating plants and produce grown by YEA members. Generosity was also practiced in the program through caring for the community gardens, cleaning up litter in the community, and fostering a respect for the environment.

#### **4.2.6 Community Demographics**

The four clubs involved in the internship component of the YEA program are Freighthouse, Sister MacNamara, Gilbert Park and Norquay. These clubs are each based out of lower-income neighbourhoods, experiencing a variety of social, economic and physical barriers (Table 2).

**Table 2: YEA Community Demographics, 2006\***

Statistic/Community	Gilbert Park (Burrows Keewatin)	Freighthouse (Centennial)	Sister MacNamara (Central Park)	Norquay (North Point Douglas)	City of Winnipeg
Median household income	\$35,807	\$15,206	\$18,473	\$22,826	\$49,790
Percent of households falling below low-income cut-off levels	44.0%	66.9%	68.0%	56.1%	20.2%
Percent of population that identify as Aboriginal	29.2%	44.7%	21.5%	34.2%	10.2%
Percent of population belonging to a non-Aboriginal visible minority group	22.1%	29.0%	53.7%	8.8%	16.3%
Percent of population who are recent immigrants	3.8%	4.9%	24.5%	3.4%	3.9%
Percent of population (15 years and over) with less than a high school diploma or equivalent level of formal education	43.0%	52.9%	32.8%	50.7%	23.1%
Unemployment rate (15 years and over)	6.2%	14.2%	13.7%	10.5%	5.2%
Percent living in rental housing	65.7%	79.1%	89.2%	58.4%	34.9%
Population density (per km <sup>2</sup> )	4030	4177	15277	1943	1844

\* Values obtained from the 2006 Census (Statistics Canada, 2006).

### **Household Income and Food Security**

The median household incomes of the four communities range from \$15,206 to \$35,807.

These statistics are all markedly lower than the median household income of Winnipeg as a whole, at \$49,790. With low median incomes, the incidence of households living below low-income cutoff levels in all four communities is significantly higher than

Winnipeg's city-wide rate of 20.2%. Approximately half of the households in the Burrows Keewatin (Gilbert Park) and North Point Douglas (Norquay) communities fall below low-income cutoff levels, while over two thirds of the households in the Centennial (Freighthouse) and Central Park (Sister MacNamara) communities are characterized as low-income (Statistics Canada, 2006).

In Canada, food security is closely tied to household income. Approximately 9.2% of Canadians live in households that are food insecure. That number jumps to 35.8% for households in the two lowest income categories (Health Canada, 2007). Simply put, in a food system that is tied to purchasing power, those with the lowest incomes are most likely to be food insecure. At a community level, this has special significance for neighbourhoods with a high percentage of low income households. For example, in the Central Park neighbourhood, 68% of households are under the Statistics Canada low-income cut off level (Statistics Canada, 2006). The low-income cut-off roughly corresponds to the two lowest income categories in Health Canada's 2004 study. Based on these values, approximately one in four households in the Central Park community are expected to be food insecure.

### **Aboriginal and Newcomer Populations**

Aboriginal and immigrant communities in inner-city Winnipeg have lower success in formal education systems, greater food-related health concerns including Type II diabetes, and face increased social barriers due to systemic racism and discrimination. As such, youth from these communities are at greater risk than Winnipeg youth as a whole.

The four YEA communities each have different demographics, but all have higher populations of Aboriginal and/or immigrant populations than city-wide.

### **Education and Employment**

Education and employment levels are both below city-wide averages for all four communities. In 2006, the unemployment rate for Winnipeg was 5.2% versus 14.2% in the Centennial neighbourhood. These figures are for residents aged 15 and over who are actively seeking work. As an added economic barrier, the formal education levels of residents in these four communities is significantly lower than city-wide levels. Across Winnipeg, approximately one in four residents over the age of 15 have less than a high school diploma or equivalent. In the Centennial and North Point Douglas neighbourhoods, this number jumps to one in two. In comparison, in North River Heights, a more affluent Winnipeg neighbourhood, fewer than one in ten residents have less than a high school education. When looking at community-wide social and economic capacity, the discrepancy between neighbourhoods, and the barriers that the studied communities face is clear.

### **Home Ownership and Population Density**

All four communities have lower home ownership rates and higher population densities than the city of Winnipeg average. High rental rates indicate that residents are unlikely to have private outdoor space such as a backyard, or if they do have access to a yard, don't necessarily have access to a garden or the permission or incentive to build one. This

combined with a high population density with a low amount of greenspace makes community garden programming especially valuable.

### **4.3 Methods**

Data was gathered using participant observation between 2008 and 2010, semi-structured interviews in the summer of 2009 and participatory video research also conducted during the summer of 2009. Interviews were conducted with seven youth interns, and three BGCW staff. The participatory video process involved two days of workshops and training, and three half-day filming sessions with 5 youth interns.

Themes were explored and identified, and key impacts highlighted. Benefits of the program that were identified were categorized into two frames of reference, benefits to the YEA participants and benefits to the community as a whole. These benefits were further broken down and assigned a designation based on whether they were unanimously reported amongst all participants and staff (strong positive), or whether they were multiple accounts, but without consensus (weak positive). These benefits were further analysed to determine if YEA programming developed the values of the circle of courage model in youth.

### **4.4 Results**

The results of the research showed that the YEA program had a wide variety of positive benefits which were seen at both the individual and community level. This is consistent with benefits seen from other community youth recreation programs, which have been shown to have impacts at multiple levels, individual, family and community (Briand et

al., 2011). The impact of the benefits were most profound at the participant level, as shown in Table 3. The benefits of the program are loosely categorized into five areas: skill building and job training; self esteem; nutrition and food security; environmental awareness and behaviour; and community building.

**Table 3: Benefits of the YEA program to Participants and Community**

<b>Reported Benefits of the YEA Program</b>	<b>Effect on Youth Participants</b>	<b>Effect on Community</b>
<b>Skill Building and Job Training</b>		
Gardening skills	√	+
Job training	√	+
Communication Skills	√	n/a
Leadership Development	√	+
<b>Self Esteem</b>		
Individual sense of pride/accomplishment	√	n/a
Increased Community Pride	√	+
<b>Nutrition and Food Security</b>		
Healthier Eating	+	+
Food System Knowledge	√	+
Food Security	+	+
<b>Environmental Awareness and Behaviour</b>		
Environmental Awareness	√	+
Environmental Behaviour	√	+
<b>Community Building</b>		
Community Building	√	√

√ = reported unanimously

+ = multiple positive responses

#### **4.4.1 Impact of Community Gardening Programming on Youth Participants**

Although responses varied, the YEA program was shown to have a number of positive impacts on youth. These can be broadly categorized into skill building and job training, improved self esteem, improved nutrition and food security, greater environmental awareness and behaviour changes, and a change in attitude towards their community.

##### **Skill Building and Job Training**

The YEA program was reported by all staff and interns interviewed as having successfully developed a wide variety of gardening and landscaping skills. Interns reported experience in seed starting, weeding, watering, and more complex gardening concepts such as companion planting and traditional medicines. All participants also mentioned building compost bins and raised garden beds as a new experience.

The possibility of future employment due to increased horticultural knowledge has been put forth as a benefit of youth community gardening programs (Cammack et al., 2002).

While this is a possibility for participants in the YEA program, it is worth noting that five of the seven interns interviewed indicated that they had already put these skills to use outside of the YEA program, helping out family members, teaching younger children, and in the case of one participant, growing his own food at home.

Staff members also highlighted the benefit to participants due to gaining general job training and work experience through the program:

“They’re out there, and they’re sweating and they’re there every day and doing it without constant supervision which is amazing at their age. The work skills are so important, because that’s going to equip them to get jobs in the future which is a huge thing for our youth.” – BGCW club manager

Job experience was also brought up by participants as a benefit of the program. One intern, when asked if the program had made any change in his life responded:

“Yes. It’s good job experience. Actually, I didn’t want this job. My Mom forced me, and that changed my life... I’m really glad that my mom forced me! “

These responses demonstrate the importance of building job skills and gaining employment experience for the youth in these communities.

### **Self Esteem**

All participants indicated that they felt proud of their work and of the community gardens. One participant shared that:

“I feel proud, because not only am I doing it for myself, but I’m helping out them, I’m helping out my community by building gardens so that everyone can survive and provide for each other”.

This youth indicated a strong sense of individual pride and accomplishment directly gained as a result of the program.

It is difficult to separate the origin of positive change in a young person’s life when there are multiple influences such as school, friends, family members, media and participation in sports and other community programming. Despite this, staff members interviewed all felt that the YEA program had a definite positive effect on participants’ leadership development, communication skills and self-esteem. One club manager shared his observations about a specific participant:

“He was one of the most sheepish guys... he was never one to approach someone in a higher position, you would have to approach him, but now these days you can see him walking out there, and he’s approaching you and he’s willing to communicate... with knowing him for the past two years I’ve seen such a

development in him... he's flourished in the last year, his confidence levels are up, and he's more vocal as a person. So I really think that the program has taught him a lot of responsibility and those interpersonal skills that are needed in life, and I can definitely attribute that to the YEA program."

The increase in confidence witnessed in this participant was attributed largely to his involvement with the YEA program. This demonstrates a significant benefit as a result of the YEA program at the individual level.

### **Nutrition and Food Security**

Intern responses to questions around food consumption and values were mixed. All interns indicated that they knew more about how food was produced, with some sharing knowledge of organic and local production, there was no clear consensus on changes in diet, such as eating more fruits and vegetables. One intern stated "As long as it's food, it's food to me.", indicating that he didn't care about what he was eating or where it came from. In contrast, another intern said that he was eating more fruits and vegetables, and eating healthier overall since joining the YEA program. From these responses, it is difficult to get a sense of what the impact of the YEA program is on the eating habits of participants, which is a common challenge for youth gardening programs (Robinson-O'Brien et al., 2009). All interns definitely demonstrated an increase in food awareness, speaking of organic foods, growing gardens without chemicals, local food vs. food from the supermarket, and global food production, so it is possible that this knowledge has had or will have an impact on their food choices. These changes may be most profound in the future, as the interns gain more control over their food purchases and meals made in the home. Studies have shown that the largest influence on people's diets is the 'nutritional gatekeeper' of the household, the person who is most responsible for purchasing

groceries or otherwise obtaining food (Wansink, 2006). This is a role that many of the interns may transition into, but likely aren't currently filling at their age.

### **Environmental Awareness and Behaviour**

All interns reported greater environmental awareness, raising topics including composting, recycling, littering and the use of chemicals in food production. When asked if the YEA program had changed how they thought about the environment, one intern responded:

“Lately I haven't been throwing my trash on the ground like I always used to, now I'm thinking more about the environment.”

This response indicates that not only are participant's attitudes changing as a result of the program, but also behaviour.

Another intern stated that he believed that it was important to take care of the environment because of how much we needed it to grow our food. Staff reported that this same intern took the initiative to instruct younger kids about what waste could be composted when he saw them throwing organics in the trash. While not all participants demonstrated this level of environmental commitment, all participants did indicate that the environment was important to them.

### **Community Building**

As a result of their involvement in the program and the community gardens, all interns reported a different attitude towards their communities. One intern when speaking of the gardens stated that:

“People can realize that something that used to look all crummy can look so beautiful and that they can admire it. It’s nice to have something gorgeous in their community”

This quote captures how the intern felt the program was transforming the community, and its wider impact on community members. Another intern shared that his own perspective on his community had significantly changed:

“I used to think that Gilbert Park wasn’t a nice place before, until YEA came, and Gilbert Park got more nice, and the environment got more prettier and nice”

These responses indicate a strong positive change in attitudes towards their community.

#### **4.4.2 Impact of Community Gardening Programming on Community**

When analyzing the data, similar themes emerged in benefits to the community from YEA in relation to benefits to the individuals. Although many of these community effects were not to the same degree as the impact on the individual interns, they were notable and in some cases equally significant.

#### **Skill Building and Job Training**

Benefits to the community were received in three ways, direct skill development and work experience for the youth involved, skill transfer from the interns to other community members, and the impact of the program on non-YEA Boys and Girls Club members. All interns in the program gained skills and job experience, which in itself is a positive development for the community as a whole. Many of the interns reported using the skills learned through YEA to help others in their community, often family members, and also mentioned teaching younger children about plants and gardening. Younger children were also engaged in different ways, with both club managers reporting a shift in

the attitudes of many of the Boys and Girls Club youth. A staff member described witnessing this shift over the course of the summer:

“... a lot of it is YEA, because that was such a visual example for the kids that ‘hey, these kids volunteered and now they’ve got a job, right?’ So they can see them working all summer, and getting rewards for their work. So now I get questions every day ‘Can I volunteer at the club?’, ‘Can I volunteer?’”

This demonstrates a significant cultural shift in non-YEA members as a result of the YEA program.

### **Nutrition and Food Security**

Community level nutrition changes were most evident with neighbourhood children and with the youngest members of the Boys and Girls Clubs. Staff indicated a greater willingness amongst the children to eat vegetables during snacktimes as a result of trying things from the garden:

“A lot of kids have turned into vegetable eaters now, which is great. They have expectations that we’re going to have carrots or we’re going to have beans every once in awhile. It wasn’t always a regular thing, but now even if it doesn’t come from the garden they know that we need these vegetables and we need to be eating these things.”

A willingness to try new foods and to eat healthy snacks is a significant nutritional change for club members. Staff also indicated that neighbourhood youth were learning about how food was grown as a result of the community gardens:

“They know that it can be grown right in your own backyard, or your front yard or in the community garden itself and they just love to see that development of a YEA member bringing it in, and they’ll say ‘where did you get that from?’ and they say ‘it’s from the garden’ and they’ll say ‘Really?’, ‘Yeah, we just pulled it out’. And it’s great, they know that food is not just from Safeway”

Increasing the knowledge of how food is grown, and generating excitement around gardening can result in a long term benefit for the children in the community. The presence of community gardens in the neighbourhood also means that more food is being produced locally, improving Community Food Security. It is a relatively small proportion of the food needs of the community at the moment, but it is built infrastructure, and skill development and knowledge sharing that will also have longer-term impacts.

### **Environmental Awareness and Behaviour**

Staff reported changes in community environmental behaviour as a result of the YEA program due to the public presence of the community gardens and the composting bins. Youth participants also remarked that people were taking care of the area better, stating that:

“The community is a lot cleaner after we started cleaning it – people have been cleaning up after themselves “

This observation indicates a change in community attitudes towards greenspaces and the community as a whole.

### **Community Building**

The most noticeable impact on the community was the positive response to the community gardens and changes in attitudes towards youth due to the work of the YEA interns. All youth and staff members reported positive interactions with community members. One participant stated that:

“Some people come by and stop and say ‘wow you guys are doing a great job, keep it up’ and make nice comments.”

This comment was echoed by a BGCW staff member:

“We’ve heard all kinds of comments from other neighbouring organizations as well as community members saying that they’re just shocked that a few short years ago how it was a decrepit place that was unsafe and there was junk in there, and how it’s just turned into this beautiful landscape and they’re just totally in awe and impressed with what it’s done for the community... there’s been a really positive community response. Everybody seems to take ownership of it.”

This positive community response included interest from teachers in utilizing the garden spaces for classroom lessons on plants and vegetables. The gardens also attracted interest from community members and agencies requesting space at the sites. As highly visible evidence of the work that the Boys and Girls Clubs of Winnipeg engaged in, the gardens also brought positive attention and publicity to the agency as a whole. Increased support for an important community youth serving agency can only result in a benefit to the community as a whole.

#### **4.4.3 YEA Programming and the Circle of Courage**

After analysing the data and documenting the benefits of the program to participants and the community, I wanted to compare the benefits to the original program goals in relation to the Circle of Courage model. Table 4 lists each of the benefit areas of the program, and the Circle of Courage value that they express. Some benefits overlap into multiple value areas.

**Table 4: YEA Benefits as Circle of Courage Values**

Reported Benefits of the YEA Program	Circle of Courage Values			
	Belonging	Mastery	Independence	Generosity
Gardening skills		√		
Job training		√	√	
Communication Skills			√	
Leadership Development			√	
Individual sense of pride/accomplishment		√		
Increased Community Pride	√			√
Healthier Eating			√	
Food System Knowledge	√	√		
Food Security			√	
Environmental Awareness	√	√		
Environmental Behaviour	√		√	
Community Building	√			√

I found that YEA was successful at nurturing all four value areas through different aspects of its programming. Some areas were easier to identify than others, gardening skills, for example clearly demonstrated mastery, as did the sense of pride and accomplishment that participants gained from their work. Other benefits were more complex, such as changes in behaviour towards the environment. My first instinct was to categorize environmental behaviour under the value of generosity, but found that it actually fit better under belonging. This is inline with discussion around traditional

Aboriginal perspectives of belonging in circle of courage literature:

“The sense of belonging extended to nature as well. Animals, plants, people, and streams all were interdependent. From childhood, children were taught through stories that if this harmony was upset, tragedies could result. All are related, and one’s actions impinge on the natural environment. Maintaining balance ecological relationships is a way of ensuring balance in one’s own life.”  
(Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern, 2001, p. 6)

This perspective was echoed by one of the participants during an interview session. When asked if the YEA program had changed how he thinks about the environment, he responded positively and talked about what was needed to grow food, and how we depend on a healthy environment for our food. This demonstrates an interconnected perspective towards the environment, as opposed to the environment being a separate ‘other’, a wild thing that happens beyond city limits. Under this worldview, environmental behaviour demonstrates a sense of belonging and responsibility, which is also connected to the value of independence.

It was interesting to reflect on interconnectedness while analysing the program through the circle of courage lens, as the concept behind the four values is that all four values are linked, and together form the whole circle of courage. Certainly all four values are overlapping in the YEA program, which as a whole is working to build a complete circle of courage for youth participants.

#### **4.5 Conclusions**

For lower-income neighbourhoods experiencing social, economic and physical barriers, youth gardening programming can be an effective strategy for community development and youth empowerment. Using the circle of courage model, the YEA program was able to create positive change in the lives of participants. Youth experienced benefits in the areas of skill building and job training; self esteem; nutrition and food security; environmental awareness and behaviour; and community building. These benefits were also felt at a broader community level, and will continue to be felt in the coming years.

Working on a relatively small budget, the Boys and Girls Clubs have achieved significant impacts in the lives of youth and the community as a whole. The program has trained and employed youth, improved community greenspaces, created gardening infrastructure, and improved community food security. These are remarkable achievements, and are worth replicating in other communities.

For organizations looking to the YEA program as a model to replicate, four best practices of the YEA program should be considered:

- 1) The circle of courage model is the basis of the YEA program and influenced all aspects of programming. The circle of courage model should be reviewed in the planning stages of a youth gardening program. The model would also be applicable for non-gardening youth programming.
- 2) The graduated stages of the programming, with different activities and involvement for different age groups is a strength of the YEA program. By having different levels of programming, there is room for growth for individual participants, and goals for them to work towards. This strategy also allows for the older participants to teach and act as mentors and role models for the younger members.
- 3) The YEA program is based around community gardens and activities within the home communities of the involved participants. The program features field trips and workshops outside of the communities, but the majority of programming takes place in the inner-city. This has resulted in benefits to

the communities, as well as to the participants, who feel proud of their contributions to their own communities. Some youth gardening program models in North America focus on bringing participants to suburban, peri-urban and rural locations to engage in horticultural activities. That the YEA program is based out of the inner-city is a strength of the program.

- 4) The YEA program is a collaborative effort between community organizations, environmental organizations, local schools and community volunteers and mentors. This collaborative approach has allowed for a wealth of experience, knowledge and skills to be contributed to the program. This approach enhances the program, and allows for a variety of participants and staff members to be involved, as not everyone is required to be an expert in all areas.

The major barriers to successfully running a similar youth gardening program are staffing concerns and funding. The YEA program was lucky to have a ‘champion’ of the program, who went to great efforts to develop the program and bring together interested individuals and organizations. Having an individual, or a group of individuals who are passionate, dedicated and skilled in program development is key to getting a similar program running successfully.

Adequate multi-year funding is necessary for a program to build on successes from year to year and for stability in the program. Although input costs for the program are relatively low, funding is required to cover a coordinator’s salary, and for summer

intern wages. These costs can be more than matched in value for the program by in-kind contributions and volunteer labour, but for a successful program, cash funding sources are required. Obtaining sufficient, sustainable funding can be a major barrier to the implementation of the YEA model of youth gardening programming.

## **Chapter 5: Participatory Research: A Two-Way Exchange**

### **5.1 Introduction**

When I was completing my undergraduate degree, I had the opportunity to spend six months in a developing country volunteering for a community-based development project. I lived in a beautiful village and worked on a sustainable agriculture demonstration farm, through which I met wonderful people, learned another language and gained a greater understanding of the issues surrounding poverty and globalization. It was an incredible learning experience that I was extremely lucky to have. There were of course long days, challenging moments, lots of sweat and a few tears, but in the end I knew without a doubt that I had gained far more than I had ever contributed to the project or to the community. It was a humbling realization.

When choosing my area of study for my Master's program this past experience was definitely heavy on my mind. I predicted that no matter what research project I took on, the value I personally received from it would be greater than the value of the research itself. Looking back, I believe I was correct in this prediction. As a result of my involvement in the YEA program I have experienced personal growth, learned new skills and benefited academically and in my career. It is difficult to properly convey how much my life has been shaped through this experience. I am extremely grateful for having had the opportunity to learn and grow alongside the youth and staff of the YEA program over the past few years. I am also grateful that I can feel confident saying that others did

benefit through my research, and that I was successful in giving something back to the participants and the program.

This chapter explores my experience with participatory video and participatory research. It discusses the potential value this type of research holds for youth serving agencies and community development organizations. It also describes my personal journey from student to practitioner and the lessons I learned in the process. Finally, this chapter documents how these learnings currently influence my own work as a practitioner in the field of community development.

## **5.2 Personal Journey**

A large reason that my involvement with YEA had such a profound impact on me was the length of time that I was involved in the program. I first volunteered for YEA in 2007, participating in weekly sessions, generally involving field trips to Fort Whyte, an environmental organization in suburban Winnipeg. These trips involved horticultural workshops, gardening activities and other food and nature based programming. It was an intense experience for an outsider to join in on, a packed van of youth, arguing about which radio station should be played, joking around with each other, sometimes making fun of each other, sometimes complaining, sometimes challenging, but always, always, being very loud! I'm naturally a fairly quiet person, and it had been years since I'd experienced having my appearance made fun of by high school girls, so this was definitely a bit trying for me. By the time we would get to Fort Whyte it was often an

effort to get the group settled back down and focused on the work. Some weeks were better than others.

From a youth programming perspective, this was a real learning experience for me. I did have previous experience working with pre-school through to college-aged youth, in a variety of settings. Never before though had I been exposed to the level of behaviour and attitude problems that challenged the YEA program. There were individual participants that seemed to make it clear through their behaviour and attitudes that they didn't want to be involved, or didn't belong in the program, despite numerous conversations about respect, expectations and responsibilities. The YEA program coordinator though was a true teacher in patience and compassion. Because he knew these youth individually, and in some cases knew them for years, he was aware of how vital this program was to each of them. As an example, there was one participant in particular that I saw consistently acting out, complaining about programming and in general being especially difficult. What the program coordinator saw though was that the YEA program was one of the only things in her life that she was committed to and attended regularly. He knew how important the program was to her, despite her behaviour, and was able to act as a role model, mentor and support. There were many other examples of participants that had trouble engaging with the program, and inevitably these participants were some of the ones who benefitted from the program the most.

Through my involvement with the program, and through learning from the program coordinator's example, I too began to shift my thinking and gain a better understanding of

the youth and their experiences. There are two moments that contributed to this that stand out in my mind from that summer. The first took place during a community planting and celebration. I was working alongside a participant who had consistently had a negative attitude during programming. On this occasion however, I observed her taking time and showing patience and care when instructing a young child in how to transplant a plant, a skill that she had learned through YEA. This participant stuck with YEA, and in later years was hired on at Fort Whyte, and gained a reputation as a reliable and hard worker. During the same summer, I joined YEA staff and participants on a rural weekend exchange trip. The weekend involved tours of farms, cooking classes, nature walks, but also just a lot of relaxed time spent outside. It was during this relaxed time one evening that I was sitting with a participant who was a refugee from Sudan. He had been in Winnipeg for a couple of years, and this was his first experience leaving the city and spending time in the country. He spoke of how nice it was to see the stars, how quiet it was, and how it reminded him of his home before coming to Canada. It really struck me how much he had been through, and how much he had adapted to, to be able to fit into inner-city Winnipeg life.

I feel very lucky that I had the opportunity to get to know these youth, and honoured that they shared with me their stories. I gained a greater appreciation for the privilege in my own life, and a greater understanding of the struggles that youth experience when dealing with poverty, racism, and violence on a daily basis, many of whom are youth that live in my own West End neighbourhood. I don't think that any of my fundamental beliefs or values changed as a result of my involvement with YEA, but I believe that my grasp of

the issues is more complete. I read articles in the newspaper about youth crime with a slightly different lens. I hear about government cutbacks to social programs and understand the impact a bit more directly. Above all, I understand how vital youth recreational programming is, and I am convinced of the benefit that it has for individuals and for communities.

In the spring of 2008, I continued to volunteer weekly with YEA, and was later hired on a short contract to assist in the coordination of the program. At this point I was obviously benefiting financially, but I was also continuously provided with new opportunities to learn and experience personal growth. One of the projects that I got to be involved in was the development of community gardens at two of the club sites. It was incredibly rewarding to be a part of the design process, to consult with and learn from community elders, and to see firsthand the transformation of an abandoned plot of land into a beautiful community greenspace.

Things were not without setbacks however, but this too, turned into a personal learning opportunity. At the Gilbert Park site, we had spent over a month with the participants planning the site, starting seedlings, shovelling soil, and slowly turning the site into a garden. The participants had put a lot of hard work and energy into the site, the culmination of which was a community planting day. It was a chaotic and messy day, but also a fun and exciting one involving participants, their families and other neighbourhood youth. By the end of the afternoon we had the entire garden planted. Less than a week later however, when we came back for our weekly programming the sight we saw was

less than inspiring. Plants had been pulled out, garden beds had been kicked and run through, in short, the garden looked completely destroyed. The prevailing theory was that a group of kids had decided to play a game of tag in the garden! We as staff were upset and discouraged, and at a loss as to how to proceed with programming and what we should say to the participants. Luckily, the participants were wiser than us. When we sat down with them to talk about what had happened, and how they felt about it, they were much more positive, and not nearly as phased by the destruction as we were. One participant shrugged and said simply “We’ll just plant it again”. Which was exactly what we did. This time the site was more or less respected, and the plants mostly survived through the summer with a good harvest in the fall. The resilience that the participants showed, their willingness to just carry on and not get discouraged was inspiring, and was definitely a lesson that I have strived to carry with me into other areas of my life.

In 2009, my role with YEA shifted into that of an instructor and researcher. I continued to occasionally volunteer with the program, engaging in participant observation, learning more about the program and it’s activities. I also co-facilitated video workshops, and later mentored the interns in the creation of their videos. I enjoyed getting to know the interns better, some of which by this point I had known for several years. I also enjoyed gaining experience in participatory video, which was my first practical experience in the field. I learned a lot through the summer, and was able to build upon these learnings in 2010 when I was contracted to conduct a second round of participatory video workshops and production.

I had anticipated that my research and involvement with YEA would lead towards a degree, but I hadn't imagined at the time that it would also so directly influence my career. In 2011 I was hired on by the West Broadway Development Corporation, an inner-city, non-profit organization, to deliver programming and coordinate the community gardens in the neighbourhood. Through my involvement with YEA I had gained direct experience with inner-city community gardens, community consultations, garden design and planning, garden education and working with youth. These experiences definitely played a large part in being selected to fill the position. My experiences with YEA also currently play a large part in how I carry out my duties in the job. I have seen firsthand the power that community gardens and garden programming can have, and believe in their ability to create positive change in a community. I am thankful that I am again in a role that allows me to act on those beliefs, and to work towards improving the lives of the community members that I support.

### **5.3 A Two-Way Exchange**

I am grateful that I was able to be involved with YEA over the course of four years. It was satisfying to watch both the program and the participants grow, and I am glad that I can say that my involvement played a part in that. I'm not sure how much my day-to-day involvement in the program made a difference, though I can hope that I was able to act as a positive role model for participants at times. At the very least, I hope that I was able to support other staff in their duties as they mentored participants. I know that I was able to bring some gardening experience and knowledge to the program, and offered feedback on programming and garden design. These contributions however pale in comparison to

what I personally gained through my involvement with YEA, so I am glad to say that I did make significant positive contributions elsewhere through the participatory video workshops and filming. The process and the resulting videos from 2009 and 2010 benefited both the individuals and the program as a whole.

### **5.3.1 Participatory Video**

As a part of my research, I worked with a co-facilitator to deliver a series of short workshops designed to introduce the interns to video. After receiving basic training, the interns were given the opportunity to make short videos about their experiences with YEA and the community gardens. Training involved two days of workshops in a group setting, which were followed by half-day filming sessions with five of the youth interns. At the end of the filming sessions, I edited the footage using basic editing software. Although participants were not directly involved in the editing, they were given the opportunity to review draft versions at several stages and to suggest changes. Finished versions of the videos were reviewed and approved by the participants, who had final say over the videos. I repeated this process on contract in 2010 with another co-facilitator, who also took part in the editing. Efforts from 2010 resulted in three more videos produced by seven interns.

### **Impact of Participatory Video on Youth Interns**

Through involvement in the PV process, youth gained basic skills in video production and were introduced to different ideas about media and how it is produced. It was satisfying to watch participants quickly progress in their level of comfort using the

equipment. Initially the interns were hesitant while handling the video equipment, but before long were instructing one another in the basic operation of the cameras. By the end of the training sessions, all participants showed confidence in using the equipment. It was also rewarding to know that the participants were enjoying themselves while learning. At the end of the first day of training, participants said that the sessions were the best part of their day, and that they were looking forward to the next workshops.

One of my goals of using participatory video in my research was to create a venue for the interns to share their perspectives and stories outside of the structure of an interview. This was useful for the research as a valuable source of information, but also useful as a way of allowing the interns to have their voice heard. The videos were posted on the internet and screened at public events. At each screening, the youth introduced their own videos, providing opportunities for them to work on public speaking skills. BGCW staff members indicated that the videos and their work in general were well-received by audiences, and that the youth consistently received positive feedback during these events.

I am glad that the PV process was a positive experience for youth that they enjoyed. That they were able to learn while having fun, and produce videos which shared their opinions and perspectives with a wider audience was a satisfying end result for my research experience.

## **Impact of Participatory Video on the YEA Program**

For the program as a whole, the videos provided valuable feedback and offered a unique way to share information about the program with partners. This benefit was experienced during the very first public screening at the end of season wind-up event. The videos were well received with the audience laughing and cheering and delivering a hearty round of applause. A volunteer who had been involved with the program throughout the summer shared how much she enjoyed watching the videos. Although she had been working one-on-one with a participant in one of the videos, the volunteer stated that it was the first time that she had heard the participant express how much she valued the garden and her time spent in the program. In her video, the participant said:

“My favourite thing would have to be, oh I guess just being able to be in the garden. It’s nice and calming. It’s a nice atmosphere”

This was important feedback for the volunteer, and helped to reaffirm her commitment to the program and gave weight to the importance of her contribution. This was a common reaction for both volunteers and staff of the program, who appreciated the unique insight into the thoughts and experiences of the youth, which weren’t shared by participants to the same degree during day-to-day activities.

The videos also offered an easy way to share information about the program with other organizations and funding partners. On two occasions, this led to multi-year funding opportunities for the program. Because the videos were so easy to share and view, interested partners could quickly and easily get a sense of what the program was about. That the youth themselves were acting as ambassadors for the program, speaking of their

own experiences, was especially powerful. The videos were able to tell a story, instead of offering only statistics. The youth put a face to the project and the images of the gardens conveyed a powerful message of the value of the program and what work was being done in the communities. In this way, the videos were an extra resource for the program, different from the existing promotional materials. By using them in this manner, staff reported that the program was able to secure two new funders for the project. For me this was a huge success, and a benefit that would not have occurred had I limited myself to more traditional research tools.

In addition to attracting new funders, the videos were also useful for reporting to existing project partners. Reporting methods are often confined to written reports with a heavy emphasis on quantitative values such as number of participants, number of volunteer hours contributed or number of jobs created. Although these quantitative values do convey important information, they require focused attention from the reader, and don't always capture the full picture. By having the videos in addition to the more traditional reporting methods, extra information and a more complete story was shared. For one of the major project funding partners, Heifer International, the videos themselves helped to satisfy project requirements. Heifer International as an organization places a heavy emphasis on participant training, program evaluation and sharing of lessons learned. The videos were able to help the program meet the project goals in all of these areas, benefiting the project as a whole.

One of the more interesting benefits of the videos came as a result of being able to repeat the process for two years in a row. One of the interns was involved in the videos both in 2009 and 2010, so when viewing the videos, you could see changes in the participant over time. In both videos, the intern gives a tour of the garden, in slightly different styles. The main difference between the videos is the confidence that the intern shows. In the second video, the intern is noticeably more confident in front of the camera, and much more confident in his knowledge of the garden, the plants and the program activities. Greater self-confidence in general also comes through, and was commented on by several program staff and project partners who viewed the videos. Without having the videos produced over two years, evidence of this transformation would have been lost. Even if program staff had clearly noticed and remarked upon the change in the intern, it would have been difficult to accurately convey this information to others.

#### **5.4 Conclusions**

I am grateful for the many personal benefits I received through my involvement with the YEA program. I gained skills, job experience, was rewarded financially and academically, and had the opportunity to meet some incredible people. I also appreciated that this wasn't a one-way transfer, but rather an exchange where the people and program that I worked with also gained from my involvement and research. Through participatory video specifically, I was able to offer a unique learning experience for the youth involved, and a powerful evaluation, reporting and sharing tool for the program as a whole.

Using PV resulted in benefits to the participants involved and the program as a whole. It was also useful as a research tool. The YEA PV process required three afternoons of group programming time, and an additional half-day session per filming group. Additional time was required for the facilitator to review and consult with the participants regarding draft versions of the videos. This time schedule worked well for the needs of the YEA program, it didn't require a large time investment from the program and participants, but was lengthy enough to allow for learning and the production of short and simple, yet meaningful videos. A longer training and filming process could have allowed participants to be more in-depth with the planning and filming of their videos, and more hands-on with the editing portion of the production. This potential benefit however would be balanced by the greater time investment required from the program, participants and facilitator, and the financial costs associated with a lengthier process.

Given the many potential benefits of PV, community programs and researchers should consider the use of PV in their projects. It is possible to deliver a participatory video program at relatively low cost and requiring only a short time commitment. All equipment used during the YEA training and filming was provided by the facilitators, but could also be rented through video arts organization. It would also be feasible to purchase lower-end cameras and audio equipment for under \$500 Canadian. The main barrier to replication of the process for an organization would be finding a facilitator with the skills and knowledge to successfully run the program. However anyone with a proficiency in video and sufficient experience working with youth could deliver this program. By studying and adapting participatory video resources such as Insight's PV

Handbook (2006), the right person could successfully facilitate a PV process for an interested organization.

## **Chapter 6: Discussion**

The results of this research have multiple implications for youth serving agencies and community development practitioners. The findings also have relevance for researchers and government policy makers.

The YEA program successfully provides significant positive benefits in multiple areas at individual and community-wide levels. Whether viewed as a program geared towards youth-at-risk, or a program designed for community development, the YEA model offers a strategy for building strengths in communities facing multiple barriers. Few programs can offer such wide-spread benefits. The YEA program provides a replicable example of youth-gardening programming that should be considered by youth serving agencies and community development organizations when planning future activities.

Given the success of the YEA program, it would also be useful for youth serving agencies and community development organizations to explore the circle of courage model of youth empowerment. The YEA program was heavily influence by the circle of courage model in its program design. This model is based on universal values, and can be applied to any program seeking to build strengths in youth.

The research as a whole benefited from the PV process, as did the participants and the YEA program. Given the results of the process and the potential benefits of using PV, future researchers should consider its applicability for their projects. Likewise, organizations should consider the use of PV for programming and evaluation purposes.

Through working with at-risk youth, the YEA program creates meaningful change in the lives of participants and in the communities that it operates in. YEA is a bottom-up approach to community development and youth empowerment that can work successfully using limited resources. If local governments made funding after-school youth programming a priority, and specifically youth gardening programming, lower-income communities could experience profound changes at a relatively low-cost to citizens.

In April, 2011, community organizations in the Spence neighbourhood of Winnipeg organized a forum on inner-city crime. The forum was held during a federal election campaign and featured a panel of political candidates as well as representatives from community organizations. Approximately 50 community members were in attendance. During a break community members were invited to take part in a crime budget voting exercise. Each community member received a small amount of stickers representing \$100,000 that could be spent on responses to crime, and placed them in spending categories that they prioritized. The categories receiving the least amount of votes were 'Hiring more Police' (average salary for a Winnipeg Police Officer is \$56,105 so for \$112,000, two new police officers could be hired), and 'Incarceration' (average cost to incarcerate one person for one year is \$100,000). 'Hiring more police' and 'Incarceration' received five and two votes respectively. In contrast 'Community programming for at risk youth' received 38 votes (The John Howard Society of Manitoba, 2011). Residents of the Spence neighbourhood, one of the areas that the YEA

program operates out of, clearly expressed their preference for youth programming as a strategy to address crime.

With \$100,000 in funding, the amount it costs to incarcerate a youth for one year, organizations like the Boys and Girls Clubs of Winnipeg can run programming that reaches dozens of at-risk youth and their families. When those programs incorporate circle of courage values and community gardening components, the effects spread into multiple aspects of the participant's lives, and ripple outward into the broader community.

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## Appendix A



UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Graduate Studies

### Study Participant Consent Form

#### Learning for Change: The Youth for EcoAction Program

Hello,

My name is Stephanie Fulford and I am a Masters Student with the Natural Resources Institute at the University of Manitoba. You are being asked to take part in an evaluation of the Youth for EcoAction (YEA) program discussing your experiences with the program. Participation is strictly voluntary, no personal information is required and any input will be used for research and program evaluation purposes only. There is no negative consequence of not participating and refusal to answer questions or withdrawal from participation entirely can be done without further consequence or prejudice to the participant. This research will be part of my masters thesis.

Before you give your consent to be a subject, it is important that you understand what your participation could involve. Please ask questions if there is anything that you do not understand. If you are under 18 years of age, please note that your parents or guardians consent will also be needed for your participation.

**PURPOSE:** The goal of this project is to evaluate the learning that takes place through the Youth for EcoAction Program. Primary objectives for this project include:

1. Determine what knowledge and skills participants gain in respect to food security and the environment;
2. Determine if the YEA program stimulates an examination of the root causes of these issues;
3. Determine if participant perspectives and behaviour change as a result of the YEA program;
4. Explore the community based aspect of the program and its leadership components
5. Communicate the results to other organizations working with urban youth.

**STUDY PROCEDURES:** If you choose to volunteer for this study, data will be used from your participation in all or some of the following:

- Participation in one 20 – 40 minute interview, recorded by video or mp3 audio recorder with your consent

- Attendance at 2 sessions demonstrating Participatory Video techniques. The participatory video workshops are designed to provide introductory video filming and editing skills.
- Participation in the directing, filming and editing of a 2 – 5 minute video discussing what the YEA program means to you

**BENEFITS and COMPENSATION:** All research activities are part of regular YEA programming, and there will be no compensation provided above regular YEA honorariums.

Sharing your responses from the individual interview will provide you with an opportunity to share your thoughts on how the YEA program can improve.

A written summary of study results will be provided, on request.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Your name will not be published and interview responses will remain confidential.

Your image and/or voice may be identifiable in the videotaped footage, and will only be shared with your consent after viewing any edited videos.

**FEEDBACK:** Participants and their parent/guardian in this study will have the opportunity to review all videos before they are released. A time will be arranged with each participant in order to ensure that you have an opportunity to review your section on the tape. Upon completion of the research, you will be invited to attend a screening of the videos created, and a facilitated discussion of the themes and results of the research.

**WHO TO CONTACT:** If you have any questions about this study, contact Stephanie Fulford, at (204) 477-1614 or [sfulford@hotmail.com](mailto:sfulford@hotmail.com) or her thesis research supervisor, Shirley Thompson at (204) 474-7170 or [thompso4@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:thompso4@cc.umanitoba.ca). In addition, if you have any questions as to your rights as a research subject, please contact the Human Ethics Secretariat of the University of Manitoba at (204) 474 7122.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION/WITHDRAWAL:** Your participation in this research study is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate or may choose to leave any question unanswered.

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**CONSENT:** I have read all of the pages of this consent form and have been given an opportunity to ask questions about this study. Answers to such questions (if any) were satisfactory. I freely and without reservation give my consent to serve as a participant in this study.

By signing this form, I have not given up any of my legal rights as a research participant.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**VIDEO CONSENT:** I consent to the inclusion of my image in any videos created as a part of this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I would like to receive a copy of the final report.

**PARENTAL/GUARDIAN CONSENT:** I have read all of the pages of this consent form and have been given an opportunity to ask questions about this study. Answers to such questions (if any) were satisfactory. I freely and without reservation give my consent for my son or daughter to serve as a participant in this study.

By signing this form, I have not given up any of my legal rights, or the rights of my child as a research participant.

Name of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**VIDEO CONSENT:** I consent to the inclusion of my son or daughter's image in any videos created as a part of this study.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I would like to receive a copy of the final report.

**This study has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board of the  
University of Manitoba**



### **Learning for Change: The Youth for EcoAction Program**

Hello,

My name is Stephanie Fulford and I am a Masters Student with the Natural Resources Institute at the University of Manitoba. You are being asked to take part in an evaluation of the Youth for EcoAction (YEA) program discussing your experiences and the experiences of the youth participants with the program. Participation is strictly voluntary, no personal information is required and any input will be used for research and program evaluation purposes only. There is no negative consequence of not participating and refusal to answer questions or withdrawal from participation entirely can be done without further consequence or prejudice to the participant. This research will be part of my masters thesis.

Before you give your consent to be interviewed, it is important that you understand what your participation could involve. Please ask questions if there is anything that you do not understand.

**PURPOSE:** The goal of this project is to evaluate the learning that takes place through the Youth for EcoAction Program. Primary objectives for this project include:

1. Determine what knowledge and skills participants gain in respect to food security and the environment;
2. Determine if the YEA program stimulates an examination of the root causes of these issues;
3. Determine if participant perspectives and behaviour change as a result of the YEA program;
4. Explore the community based aspect of the program and its leadership components
5. Communicate the results to other organizations working with urban youth.

**STUDY PROCEDURES:** If you choose to volunteer for this study, you may be asked to participate in one 20 – 40 minute interview, recorded by video or mp3 audio recorder with your consent.

**BENEFITS and COMPENSATION:** Your responses to the interview will provide you with an opportunity to share your thoughts on how the YEA program can improve and contribute to the overall study.

No financial compensation will be provided for your participation.

A written summary of study results will be provided, on request.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Your name will not be published and interview responses will remain confidential. If you choose not to be recorded during the interview, a summary of your responses will be transcribed. You may choose at anytime to have the video or audio recorder turned off for all or a portion of your interview, and it will not in any way impact your rights as a research participant.

Your image and/or voice may be identifiable in the videotaped footage, and will only be shared with your consent after viewing any edited videos.

**FEEDBACK:** Participants in this study will have the opportunity to review all videos before they are released. A time will be arranged with each participant in order to ensure that you have an opportunity to review your section on the tape.

**WHO TO CONTACT:** If you have any questions about this study, contact Stephanie Fulford, at (204) 477-1614 or [sfulford@hotmail.com](mailto:sfulford@hotmail.com) or her thesis research supervisor, Shirley Thompson at (204) 474-7170 or [thomps4@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:thomps4@cc.umanitoba.ca). In addition, if you have any questions as to your rights as a research subject, please contact the Human Ethics Secretariat of the University of Manitoba at (204) 474 7122.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION/WITHDRAWAL:** Your participation in this research study is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate or may choose to leave any question unanswered.

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**CONSENT:** I have read all of the pages of this consent form and have been given an opportunity to ask questions about this study. Answers to such questions (if any) were satisfactory. I freely and without reservation give my consent to serve as a participant in this study.

By signing this form, I have not given up any of my legal rights as a research participant.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**VIDEO CONSENT:** I consent to the inclusion of my image in any videos created as a part of this study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I would like to receive a copy of the final report.

**This study has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board of the  
University of Manitoba**

## Appendix B

### Program leader questions:

1. Can you describe for me what the YEA program is and how you're involved?
2. What does the YEA program aim to achieve?
3. What's great about this program?
4. What feedback have you received from the community?
5. What do participants get most excited about?
6. What skills have participants gained?
7. Have you seen positive change in the lives of participants as a result of this program?
8. Have participants values changed as a result of YEA?
9. Do you have any specific examples or stories of participants that have experienced significant change?
10. What was \_\_\_\_\_ like when they first participated in the program?
11. What changes have you noticed through his/her involvement?
12. What challenges have there been for the program?
13. What challenges have individual participants experienced to staying involved with the program?

14. How has this program changed you?

**Participant Questions:**

1. How long have you been involved with YEA?
2. Why did you become involved with YEA?
3. What new things have you experienced?
4. What skills have you learned?
5. Do you use these skills outside of the YEA program?
6. Would you say that YEA has changed how you think about food?
7. Has YEA changed how you think about the environment?
8. Has YEA changed how you think about your neighbourhood and community?
9. What did the garden space look like before?
10. Do you think the garden makes a difference in the community?
11. Do you feel proud of the garden? Do you like to spend time in the garden?
12. Do you think the YEA program is important? Why?
13. Do you think it makes a change in people's lives?
14. What do you like most about YEA?
15. What would you like to change about YEA?