Canada Bridges
Mentorship Training
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A note on terminology:

Mentor: volunteer who is paired with a young person to encourage their growth and to support them

Young Leader: young adult who is a participant in the program and paired with a mentor
Background/The Need: Since 2009, Canada Bridges has worked with youth and young adults from disenfranchised communities – immigrant, refugee, Diaspora, and Indigenous – by way of our Unveiling Youth Potential program. During this time, we have been affirmed time and time again that all youth have tremendous potential, and capability to create positive change within their own lives and in their communities. However, many of the young people we work with do not have built-in supportive networks in their daily lives; they simply do not have people who demonstrate belief in them. This kind of gap is disempowering to all people, but particularly to youth as they are in a developmental stage of life during which they are exploring ideas around what it means to be alive, their own personal meaning, and understanding the nature of relationships.

Addressing the Need: Research shows that the inclusion of caring adults in the lives of youth and young adults contributes to these young people growing into healthy, resilient members of society, thereby contributing to healthy, resilient communities. Appropriate relationships between caring adults and youth, where the adult and the youth are invested on their own accord and both parties are genuinely motivated by the potential growth of the youth, have been proven to result in:

- Increased development and awareness of youth’s strengths, abilities, and leadership skills;
- Bolstered confidence in youth as they feel enabled and supported to take risks, and as they are assisted in setting and achieving goals;
- Feeling of value and reward in adults as they observe the very real differences that their presence makes in the life of a younger person. Furthermore, mentors who are open to learning from young leaders, and from the mentorship process, often experience personal transformation as well as they are challenged to a deeper exploration of themselves and their relationships.

In light of these things, Bridges has incorporated volunteer and mentorship processes into our Unveiling Youth Potential programming. We performed a scan of the landscape, in Calgary and beyond, to determine what was already in existence, what works, and what doesn’t. This resulted in us identifying a gap in offerings for the need Bridges addresses: what is needed are caring adults who will support, encourage, and mentor youth and young adults from disenfranchised communities through healthy and meaningful relationships.

“What is care? The word finds it origin in the word kara, which means to lament, to mourn, to participate in suffering, to share in pain. To care is to cry out with those who are ill, confused, lonely, isolated, and forgotten, and to recognize their pains in our own heart. To care is to enter into the world of those who are broken and powerless and to establish there a fellowship of the weak. To care is to be present to those who suffer, and to stay present, even when nothing can be done to change their situation.”

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Caring adults are an integral part of Bridges’ Unveiling Youth Potential programming; these individuals serve as trainers, facilitators, and supporters of the program. Additionally, caring adults help further the work begun with youth participants during programming, serving as a follow-up as youth take their learnings and engage with the world around them. Mentors are appropriately matched based on youth needs/priorities, interests, and skills, and mentor expertise, experience, and capacity, with special attention paid to personalities, gender, and backgrounds. Mentor/young leader partnerships set their own goals for development and for their relationship, and will be encouraged to extend their partnership for at least one year.

Caring in Diverse Circumstances: As in any relationship, you will encounter a variety of scenarios within the context of volunteering and mentoring with Bridges. There will be times when the youth we work with will ask for your advice, for your opinion, or for help in working through an issue. Sometimes these scenarios will be simple, and as such require a simple response: perhaps even a ‘yes’ or ‘no’. However at other times, these scenarios will be complex, and may require some intent listening and deep thinking. It is important to keep in mind that different scenarios require different responses, and as a caring adult, you will have to discern what the most appropriate and effective response might be.

“Simple is following a recipe to bake a cake. Anyone can follow the steps, and you have a measurable result - a yummy cake or a flop - in a short period of time. Complicated is sending a rocket to the moon. You set your long-term vision; secure funding; break down the longer term objective into bite-sized project steps; engage engineers and scientists; and step by sequential step achieve this momentous target. Complex is raising a child. There is no one way to do it. Each step has multiple effects which feed back and influence the next step or decision. What is most important is asking the right questions - rather than prescribing the right answer - and establishing resilient relationships that can withstand bumps in the road.”

~ Excerpt from "Unveiling the Breath" by Donna Kennedy-Glans ~
“Youth is not a time of life—it is a state of mind. It is not a matter of red cheeks, red lips and supple knees. It is a temper of the will; a quality of the imagination; a vigor of the emotions; it is a freshness of the deep springs of life. Youth means a temperamental predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over a life of ease. This often exists in a man of fifty, more than in a boy of twenty. Nobody grows old by merely living a number of years; people grow old by deserting their ideals.

Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul. Worry, doubt, self-distrust, fear and despair—these are the long, long years that bow the head and turn the growing spirit back to dust.

Whether seventy or sixteen, there is in every being’s heart a love of wonder; the sweet amazement at the stars and starlike things and thoughts; the undaunted challenge of events, the unfailing childlike appetite for what comes next, and the joy in the game of life.

You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt; as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fear, as young as your hope, as old as your despair.

In the central place of your heart there is a wireless station. So long as it receives messages of beauty, hope, cheer, grandeur, courage, and power from the earth, from men and from the Infinite—so long are you young. When the wires are all down and the central places of your heart are covered with the snows of pessimism and the ice of cynicism, then are you grown old, indeed!” ~ Samuel Ullman (1890 - 1924)
Caring Adults - Goals

First and foremost, it’s important to note that this is not a program; it is a process. A ‘program’ indicates that there is some sort of end, which is not the case here. Rather, we are inviting people to participate in a process that will hopefully forever extend the boundaries of their compassion through engaging in meaningful - and sometimes challenging - relationships.

Of the caring adults who give their time and energy to volunteer and mentor with Bridges, we hope that we will collectively grow in our capacity to think, care, learn, and act more deeply and broadly, and in more adaptive ways, through the process of genuinely caring for other individuals. Practically, this looks like:

- development of more adaptive communication skills (being truly present in conversation with others, deep listening, asking thought-provoking and meaningful questions);
- greater ability to identify gaps/barriers in others’ understanding/perception, and help make connections to resources that will bridge these gaps;
- greater ability to identify (name), affirm, and nourish the skillfulness and giftedness in others, and themselves;
- increased comfort level in unfamiliar relational settings (able to be more flexible and take risks in relationships, able to identify the need for and set appropriate boundaries);
- ability to engage in and/or create experiences and environments in which young adults can positively change (getting to know the young person’s interests, deeply considering their skills and talents and pointing out/encouraging them in these areas, engaging in their ‘world’ and inviting them into their own);
- further the work begun in youth participants during UYP programming (goals are detailed in next section).
Unveiling Youth Potential - The Program

Unveiling Youth Potential (UYP) is a youth empowerment program aimed at realizing the potential of youth and young adults by supporting their leadership roles in building strong, resilient communities. This program was developed out of our beliefs that: positive social change is necessary for the world to progress in a way that is healthy and vibrant; and that youth and young adults represent the group that offers the greatest hope for this change as they go beyond societal, cultural, governmental and institutional barriers to enliven the wisdom of communities around the world. Furthermore, we believe that youth and young adults desire positive social change and need to engage in such activities.

The following components are integrated throughout UYP programming:

- Wisdom Stories (pseudo-biographies that reveal insight into each youth’s identity and purpose);
- Community Mapping (the lens is turned outwards to examine each youth’s community, and explore available resources/assets and potential liabilities);
- Change Leadership (practical equipping of how to lead change in each youth’s community); and
- Social Entrepreneurship (designing initiatives, and plans for project management, that will contribute to positive community change).

Goals for youth participants of Bridges’ Unveiling Youth Potential programming: to see youth become more and more empowered through furthering the capacity building and leadership development work begun during UYP leadership training workshops. Practically, this looks like:

- stronger personal leadership abilities (increased confidence, improved knowledge of self, greater belief in one’s potential);
- more developed community leadership abilities (more inclusive/tolerant social skills, greater understanding of one’s place in their community);
- change leadership abilities (greater recognition of one’s agency, increased awareness of accessible community assets).

These goals align with Bridges’ primary organizational mission, which is to build the capacity of people to care for themselves and their communities.
UYP Concepts

Wisdom Stories
Wisdom Stories describe a person’s life purpose and meaning; they define one’s passions, desires, values, and motivations. Participants of Bridges’ UYP program explore self-awareness through specific activities that turn the focus inward and to the past. Questions that are asked during Wisdom Stories training include:

- Why do you care about the things you care about?
- What is it inside of you that motivates you to respond to things you care about?
- Why do you want to inspire change in your community?

This process is a self-reflective journey that involves the creation of timelines, sharing of memories, and writing exercises that lead to the development of one’s Wisdom Story. These stories are recorded in a number of ways throughout, and at the close of UYP training, including: video recording, creating a scrapbook, compiling a collection of songs to tell one’s story, writing a poem or song, choreographing a dance, or creating a painting, drawing, sculpture, or graphic design. Participants are then invited to share their Wisdom Stories with the group, if they choose (this is encouraged, but absolutely not required).

Wisdom Stories are an important part of UYP training; we have found that guided exploration of one’s life experiences and how these do or do not define one’s present or future is an empowering process that allows program participants to not only see who they are, but also bring to light their potential and capacity for growth.

Community Mapping
Community Mapping is a tool used in Bridges’ UYP program to help participants map out and better understand the current reality of their community, organizing its various components (community assets and liabilities), and observing any patterns or interconnections. Community Mapping also provides space for youth to identify their place within their community, and better understand themselves within the context of the systems and relationships that comprise communities. Community Mapping helps to illustrate the fact that realizing one’s potential is not only about better understanding one’s self, but also about understanding one’s self as a unique community member – one who is affected by community, but who can also influence community. An individual’s personal story cannot be fully understood without understanding the story of the community of which they are a part.

The Community Mapping portion of the UYP program is taught using Mind Mapping, a tool that visually depicts information and interconnections. Participants are guided through an exploration of what – and who – makes up a community they belong to. These maps then help inform participants’ ideas for positive community change, and help them identify alternate routes when roadblocks are encountered.

Change Leadership
Change Leadership is about how every individual youth or young adult (and human in general!) has within them the potential to drive change in their own communities and in the
broader community spaces they share. When youth come to recognize their potential and their capacity to be catalysts of change, leaders of change, or to even acknowledge places where change may be needed, is where the work towards healthier and more resilient communities happens.

This component of the UYP training is based on Gentle Action, a theory proposed by renowned physicist and author (and good friend of Bridges), Dr. David F. Peat. Gentle Action challenges our core assumption that we need to be powerful, wealthy, or adult to improve things in our own lives, and in the lives of those around us. Gentle Action offers a way of fostering change that is based on the science of chaos or complexity theory: as we come to understand how change happens in complex systems, we see that it arises continually from within, through the intricate inter-weavings of many small events.

During the UYP program, participants are guided through a number of experiential activities that get them thinking differently about themselves and their communities. They learn to observe and navigate various community systems such that they might inspire positive change from within.

Social Entrepreneurship
Social entrepreneurs are self-motivated individuals who take on some kind of socially-minded venture. Just as entrepreneurs change the face of business, social entrepreneurs act as the change agents for society, seizing opportunities to drive innovation and progress. Social entrepreneurs range in scope: from people who simply choose to be kinder towards others, to individuals who decide to start up a community organization, to people who champion international fair trade business. Successful social entrepreneurship is not measured in amount of money made or number of people affected, but rather, in ability to compassionately care for others.

This concept is included in the Unveiling Youth Potential (UYP) program as it is the culmination of all program components. Participants combine their understanding of who they are (Wisdom Stories) with what they know about their community needs and priorities (Community Mapping), and explore ideas around what they could do to inspire positive change (Change Leadership) within their communities. Through engaging exercises, including the designing and writing of an actual social entrepreneurship project plan, individuals come to understand more deeply their own potential to be innovative and inspiring change-makers, and learn practical tools around how to do so.
Being Truly Present

“The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence.”
~Thich Nhat Hanh

What if that’s true? That ‘the most precious gift we can offer others is our presence’? And how we would behave if we really believed that? How would we perceive the world around us if we really believed that? What if, instead of waking up this morning and thinking I really need to finish that spreadsheet today, or I must remember to take Spot to the vet after I drop Sally off at school, we thought How can I best offer my presence to people today in a way that would be a gift to them? How would this affect your value as a person, knowing that the very best thing you have to offer is who you are, not what you can do?

Perhaps the most important aspect of mentoring with Bridges is this ability to be truly present. By genuinely offering your presence, that is, your full, engaged attention, your thoughts and mindfulness, your energy, and your spirit (that part of you which is connected to the bigger picture of life and humanity), you have the opportunity to create a space that is peaceful, freeing, and healing. In embracing ‘presence’, you recognize that what you have to contribute is who you are. It’s a way of being that reassures and encourages others, lends them strength when they are perhaps short on their own, and offers them hope and confidence in the fact that they can overcome challenges and continue to grow. Becoming this kind of healing presence is not something you can do on your own; it is a byproduct of being in healthy relationships with others.

But, in order for your presence to be helpful and healing, you have to undergo - and continually undergo - empathic self-transformation. Empathic self-transformation is the process of becoming empathic and compassionate towards others, and extending yourself grace in the process. Many things contribute to this process, but it by no means happens passively. Becoming truly empathic and compassionate requires hard work. Developing the ability to be truly present in relationships with others is a major contributor to the process of empathic self-transformation. This is because being truly present is about you, not about the person you are serving. You can’t expect to change the other person as much as you can expect to transform yourself in response to the other person. You fine-tune your experiences in an attempt to better understand the other person’s experiences.

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Being truly present is of great value at all times, but particularly during times that result in emotional extremes. Often what’s needed in these circumstances is not an immediate solution, but rather a listening ear and a supportive presence. At times such as this, it’s not about being heroic, but about “radiating comfort with oneself and others, even under emotional duress.”

When operating in a truly present state, you’re not afraid to engage with the things that typically make people fearful or insecure. This is because you’re not concerned with the past, and not contemplating the future; you’re simply in the now. Becoming skillful in offering your presence in this way is a journey and a process; you will never become an expert because you will continue to engage in, and learn from, new relationships.

**How To Be Truly Present**

- Be intentional about engaging in relationships, not in theoretical relationships, but in actual relationships:
  - Do what you need to do to arrive ‘present’ to the relationship (finish your last phone conversation, reflect on previous meeting with person, acknowledge how you’re thinking/feeling in the moment, etc.)
  - Eliminate distraction, or potential distractions.
  - Pay attention to your attentiveness during conversation, and in moments of togetherness.
  - Think about your thinking, and question what it is that has contributed to the formation of your thoughts, perceptions, and judgments.
  - Practice Deep Listening (see next section), and listen more than you speak.
  - Ask lots of questions (see next section for question types).
  - Be very very thoughtful in any responses you may give.
  - Make genuine attempts to put yourself in the other’s shoes - challenge yourself to think and feel what they could be thinking and feeling.

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Deep Listening

In addition to being present, deep listening contributes to the development of trusting relationships. Deep listening is not passive; it is a valuable skill that can be practiced and learned.

What is Deep Listening?
Deep listening requires that you be fully present (see previous section on Presence) to the individual or group you are listening to, and that you be genuinely interested in and open-minded about what they are saying. Deep listening involves listening, from a deep, receptive, and caring place in oneself, to deeper and often subtler levels of meaning and intention in the other person. It is listening that is generous, empathic, supportive, accurate, and trusting.4

The goal of deep listening is to hear not only the words being said, but also the deeper meaning found under the surface. When practicing deep listening, ask ‘where is this person coming from? Why are they saying what they are saying, and what motivates their words?’ This requires that you be empathic to whom you are listening, attempting to feel and understand where they are coming from, while also recognizing that you’ll never truly feel or understand where they are coming from, as their experience is not your own.

It is also important to note that deep listening does not require that you come to agreement about or approval of the things you hear. However, it does require that you listen and respond with honesty, and without negative judgment of the individual or their character.

Tips for How To Listen Deeply

- Try to literally put yourself on the same level as the individual you are listening to (if they are much shorter than you, sit down when you are talking).
- Give the individual or group you are listening to your full and undivided attention (clear your mind of distractions, put away your cell phone).
- Get rid of any preconceived ideas or misplaced (selfish, unrealistic) intentions.
- Be aware of your body language; use an open posture and demonstrate that you are listening by nodding or speaking words of affirmation that come naturally.
- Pay attention to the other individual’s facial expressions and body language.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Paraphrase in your own words what you think the other individual has said. If your paraphrasing is accurate, the person will feel heard and understood. If your paraphrasing is inaccurate, ask for clarity (and be mindful of the fact that you may have to listen more closely going forward!).
- Ask questions when you don’t understand something, or need clarification.

• Read between the lines and seek to identify feelings. For example, ask, ‘How did that make you feel?’

**Asking Good Questions**
This skill can produce incredible results. It is remarkable what an individual can learn about themselves and life, and resolve about themselves and life, when they are asked good questions. Often times, people discover critical keys to unlocking their potential when given a few good questions to ponder. Here are a few tips on how to ask good questions:

• Engage in deep listening.
• Don’t pre-plan conversational outcomes; be truly present during conversation and ask follow-up questions positioned around the last answer. This may mean that you head off on a rabbit trail for a while, but that’s ok...you never know what you may find along the way.
• Speak the youth’s language (listen for the kinds of words and the formality with which the youth speaks, and respond to them/ask questions in similar wording and with similar formality).
• Use neutral wording (don’t make your opinion obvious within the question you ask. e.g. “Wasn’t that play incredible? What did you think?”).
• Don’t make your questions too complex. Ask about one thing at a time.
• Start with more general questions, and then move to more specific questions.
• Allow the youth to fully answer the questions you ask. Don’t finish sentences for them. This may also mean having to endure periods of silence...which is ok!
• Make it clear that the youth does not need to answer your questions if they don’t want to (see following section on Boundaries).

**What Not To Do (Conversation Killers)**

• Do not create a physical hierarchy between yourself and the speaker (when you are sitting or standing above the other individual).
• Do not appear obviously distracted by continuously looking elsewhere, or checking your cell phone.
• Don’t demonstrate closed off body language.
• Don’t tell the speaker that what they are saying or feeling is wrong (e.g. ‘Oh, you shouldn’t feel that way!’).
• Try not to think ahead about how you’re going to reply (you will miss important details, and likely give an irrelevant response if you do this).
• Don’t give too much self-disclosure. Don’t attempt to relate your own experiences with the youth’s experiences if you are motivated by anything other than helping the youth. Rather than jumping to relate seek to genuinely understand what the youth is saying/trying to say (requires deep listening and asking good questions). If you feel compelled to relate through a personal example, pause and ask yourself: ‘Will my sharing this story be helpful to the youth?’
• Do not ask overly challenging questions that may lead the speaker to think their behaviour is wrong (e.g. ‘How could you possibly think that?’)
• Don’t interrupt the speaker and finish his or her sentences.
Establishing Trust

Another key to effective caring adult relationships lies in the development of trust between two strangers. Volunteers often become involved in programs because they want to help youth. Without establishing trust, however, volunteers can never truly support the youth with whom they interact.

Establishing communication and developing a relationship can often be a difficult process. Learning to trust, especially for youth who have been let down before, requires time. Youth cannot be expected to trust a caring adult simply because the two of them have been put together.

A critical factor in determining whether mentorship relationships develop into satisfying and effective relationships characterized by high levels of trust is the approach of the adult. Caring adults who follow a gradual path in trust-building find that the types of support they can offer, and are accepted, broaden considerably once trust has been established. Authenticity and vulnerability are a big part of this; effective and trusting person-to-person connections result from the ability to be open, raw and present with one another. As writer and professor Henri Nouwen asserts:

“Compassion is hard because it requires the inner disposition to go with others to the place where they are weak, vulnerable, lonely, and broken. But this is not our spontaneous response to suffering. What we desire most is to do away with suffering by fleeing from it or finding a quick cure for it.

Yet perhaps our greatest gift is our ability to enter into solidarity with those who suffer. Compassion can never coexist with judgment because judgment creates a distance and distinction, which prevents us from really being with the other.”

Effective caring adults are more likely to engage in the following practices:

- They see themselves as “friends” rather than teachers or parents, and define their role as supporting the youth in a variety of ways.
- They make a point of being ‘truly present’ (see previous section).
- They are good listeners (see previous section on Deep Listening).
- They make a commitment to being consistent and dependable, to maintaining a steady presence in the youth’s life.
- They understand that the relationship may seem fairly one-sided—they may feel like they are doing all the work—and they take responsibility for keeping the relationship alive. (For example, early in the relationship, youth often test

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adults to determine whether they will actually stick around. Successful caring adults regularly initiate contact and ensure that meetings are scheduled, rather than waiting to hear from youth.

- They involve the youth in deciding how the pair will spend their time together. While youth may not express what they want to do, successful caring adults take the time to learn about the youth’s interests and provide them with options for how to spend their time, rather than planning everything without their input.
- They pay attention to the need for “fun.” Having fun together is a key part of building relationships, and it also provides youth with valuable opportunities that are otherwise often unavailable to them.
- They seek and utilize the help and advice of program staff (i.e. Mentorship Coordinators). Successful caring adults recognize that they don’t have all the answers, and they value the support and guidance that program staff can provide.

**What stands in the way of a successful relationship?**
Caring adults who focus first on building trust and becoming a friend to their youth tend to be more effective than those who try to change or reform the youth. Adults whose attention is concentrated on reforming youth often are frustrated by the youth’s lack of receptivity. These adults make the mistake of pushing too hard and too quickly on the youth’s ‘problems’: pressing them to talk about sensitive issues before they are ready, and ignoring the youth’s desire to help set the agenda for the pair’s activities. These caring adults fail precisely because they are too focused on their own agenda.

**Less successful caring adults tend to do the following.**

- They approach the relationship with narrow, specific goals aimed at changing the youth’s behavior.
- They have difficulty meeting with youth on a regular and consistent basis, often demanding that youth play an equal role in initiating contact. Unsuccessful adults often complain that their youth do not call them to schedule meetings, or that youth fail to show up for meetings when they say they will.
- They attempt to instill a set of values that may be different from or inconsistent with those of the youth or their family or community.
- They attempt to transform or reform the youth by setting tasks (for example, focusing on doing schoolwork during their meetings) and adopting a parental or authoritative role in their interactions with youth. For youth, the value of a mentor is often in having a supportive adult who is not a parent or teacher; adopting the posture of these authority figures undermines the development of trust between a mentor and youth.
- They emphasize behavior changes over developing mutual trust and respect in the relationship. Caring adults cannot force youth to change; too much focus on what is wrong with a youth is more likely to turn the youth away.
Exercise: Communication Scenarios (to practice Being Present, Deep Listening, the ability to Ask Good Questions, and Establish Trust)
Exercise: Communication Scenarios - Practicing Being Truly Present, Deep Listening, and Establishing Trust

Examples of scenarios that can be helpful to practice with another mentor acting as the young leader or to think about how you might respond.

1. You and the young leader you’re paired with have been meeting for more than two months, and she has never expressed an opinion about how you and she should spend your time together. You always suggest the activities. When you suggest one, she always says, “That’ll be OK.” When you suggest more than one and ask her to choose, she says, “It doesn’t matter which one.” When you ask her to suggest what she’d like to do, she says, “Anything will be nice.” You know it’s important for her to share in the decision-making and in your meeting today you’ve decided to try to deal with this situation.

2. During the first two months of your relationship, things between you and the young person you’re paired with seemed to be going well. But then he didn’t show up for your last two meetings. You phoned again and set up another meeting, this time arranging to pick him up in your car. He is home when you arrive, and he gives you a big smile when he sees you. But you’re upset about the missed meetings and feel you have to talk about it.

3. You and the young person you’re paired with have been meeting for three months. At your meeting today, she proudly tells you about her midterm exams: “I didn’t fail anything,” she says. Through conversation, you discover that this means she has just barely passed all her classes. You know she’s smart and should be doing much better in school.

4. The young person you’re paired with is 17 years old, and you have been meeting with him for a month. On a Monday afternoon, you meet him at school, and the two of you are having a great time shooting hoops and talking about what each of you likes to do for fun. “I had a great time this weekend,” he says. “I went to a party where this guy brought all this beer.”

5. The young person you’re paired with has been working for some time to launch the initiative she developed during the course of Bridges’ Unveiling Youth Potential program. It is a beading class for youth, whereby they learn how to do traditional beadwork together, and then sell their work for profits, which are reinvested into the youth initiative. The young person is currently bumping up against some issues: because there is already a store that sells local wares on the reserve, this other store is

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wanting to halt any competition in its tracks before it even gets off the ground. They are asking for your advice; how do you respond?

6. You and the young leader have been meeting for two months. You have gotten to know each other quite well, and trust has been established in your relationship. You suspect that the young leader’s boyfriend is verbally abusive, because of the things she has told you and the way she demonstrates her lack of confidence through actions and words. At your meeting today, she is quieter than usual, and when you arrive at the coffee shop where you are meeting, you notice a large, fresh bruise on her collarbone when she takes her coat off.

7. The young leader you’re paired with celebrated her 27th birthday on the weekend, and so she and some friends went to the states to party and do some shopping. Upon returning to Canada, the group was stopped and detained at the border for 8 hours while the border security went through all their bags, and interrogated them about the alcohol they purchased (which was appropriately stored, though they had purchased a little in excess of what was allowable). It seems to you that the border security acted beyond what was reasonable, however the young leader doesn’t seem too phased by the situation. She tells you, “This kind of thing happens to our people all the time.”

8. You and the young leader you’re paired with are walking past a playground on the reserve where he lives. As you walk past, he says to you, “My cousin once found a dead body here.” You are taken back by this comment, and ask a few questions for clarity. You learn that his cousin discovered a dead body and informed the authorities, who came to investigate but very shortly thereafter declared that it was death with no foul play - potentially a suicide. Given the dead individual’s circumstance, the community knew this wasn’t the case, and they asked for the case to be reopened and further investigated. The authorities would not do so. It becomes clear to you that this is troubling to the young leader, less so the dead body, and more so the fact that the authorities blew it off as unimportant.
Boundaries

Boundaries are people's physical, emotional, relational, spiritual, and sexual limits. Boundaries can be thought of as protective barriers that help keep ourselves and others safe.

The limits of people's boundaries can differ greatly, depending on the individual and the circumstance or context in which they find themselves. Because we all engage in a wide variety of relationships, from the relationships we have with our parents, to our spouse, to our boss, to our friends, it is reasonable to assume that the boundaries we maintain in each of these relationships will differ. Likewise, the relationship(s) that you have with youth within the context of volunteering with Bridges will also require that both you and the youth with whom you work set boundaries.

Before diving into the why's and the how's of setting boundaries as a volunteer or mentor, it is valuable to explore a little bit about: what boundaries are and why they are important; how boundaries are formed; and the ways in which they can be breached. The intention of this exploration is that you might better understand yourself and your own boundaries, as well as develop greater empathy for where the youth you serve may be coming from.

**Forming Boundaries**

We begin forming boundaries from the time we are very young; babies who are brand new to the world are already learning boundaries. We learn the limits of our boundaries based on the responses - or the feedback - we get as we engage with life in various ways. For example, think about being in a library, and approaching the librarian to ask for a book. After the first couple of words you speak you decrease the volume of your voice, because your ears have given you immediate feedback that the volume at which you are speaking is too loud. This feedback allows you to adjust your volume and appropriately match your voice to the context. “Similarly, we need a reaction, feedback, when we’re feeling something.”

When the feedback we receive is accurate, that is, it accords with what we are feeling about a situation, we are justified in responding the way we feel compelled to. “This combination - of accurate feedback and knowing yourself better - creates a boundary.”

In contrast, it is also important to note that inaccurate feedback (response that does not accord, or possibly even completely contradicts our feelings), or lack of feedback entirely can inhibit the creation of a boundary, or create an unhealthy boundary that must later be revised such that we can meaningfully engage in relationships.

i.e. Imagine that you are a child about to ride a roller coaster for the first time. You turn to your dad and say, “I’m scared!” How would your feelings be validated if your dad responded with “No you’re not; this’ll be fun!” vs. “What is it about riding the

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roller coaster that makes you feel scared? You don’t have to ride if you don’t want to.”

Violation of Boundaries
We tend to think that boundaries are violated only when someone or something else gets incorrectly close - whether physically, emotionally, sexually, etc. This is true, but it is also possible for boundaries to be violated with too much distance. The limits of each of these will differ depending on the relationship. For example, when meeting someone for the first time, it may feel incredibly inappropriate when they ask how old you are. This is an intrusion violation on your boundaries. Or another example: within the context of a parent-child relationship, too much distance can be incredibly harmful because children need plenty of nonsexual touching to healthily develop emotionally and physically. Withholding this kind of touch is a distance violation on their boundaries.

We know when our boundaries are violated; we just do. An intrusion of, or inappropriate distancing from our boundaries results in us feeling discomfort and resentment - discomfort because we know something is wrong, and resentment because we may feel as though we’re being taken advantage of, or not appreciated.9

Power Differential: Safeguarding Against Boundary Violation
Power differential is defined as “the enhanced amount of role power that accompanies any position of authority.”10 Natural power differentials exist in any relationship whereby one person is - or is perceived to be - a higher authority than the other. As such, the individual who is of lesser authority is relegated to a position of vulnerability, simply by nature of the relationship. Power differentials are most obvious in relationships where one individual is a formal authority, for example a teacher/student relationship, or an employer/employee relationship. However, power differentials can also exist within the context of informal or natural authorities, because of factors such as age, gender, race, etc.

It is important to be aware of the power differential that exists within a mentor/young leader relationship, and safeguard against any potential boundary violations that result from this differential. As their mentor, it is likely that the young person you’re paired with will see you as an authority figure, whether you aim to establish the relationship this way or not. As the authority, it is your responsibility to foster this position wisely, and maintain focus on the positive development of the young leader you’re paired with. Recall the previously mentioned goals for the youth who participate in Canada Bridges’ programming, centered on empowerment. As their mentor, your aim should be to pursue power-with the youth, rather than power-over.11 This requires that you give up any feeling of, or desire for control of the relationship, or its outcome(s).

Setting Boundaries when Volunteering/Mentoring\textsuperscript{12}

You should decide what boundaries are important to you before you begin mentoring. Planning in advance will help prevent being caught off guard and it will also help you plan and rehearse your desired response. In addition to the areas detailed previously, some specific areas where boundaries are important, and will likely come up in the context of working with youth, include:

- Self-disclosure: How would you respond if a youth asks you about your previous experience with sex, drug use, past relationships, or other personal issues?
- Behaviour: What would you do if a youth uses foul language, mistreats others, steals, or is disrespectful to you during one of your meetings?
- Money: How much money are you comfortable spending on each outing? How would you respond if a youth asks you to buy him/her something? How would you feel if the youth’s family requests help with their finances?
- Time: How much time do you feel comfortable spending with a youth on a weekly basis? Are you comfortable receiving phone calls at work? How late is too late to receive a phone call (or too early)? What would you do if a youth does not show up for a meeting?
- Working with parents/guardians: What would you do if a youth’s father or mother asks you out on a date? What would you do if, when greeted at the door, the youth’s mother or father begins sharing her “laundry list” of complaints about her son? What would you do if a youth’s grandmother begins crying and sharing her problems with you when you drop by for a visit?

Also recognize that being able to maintain healthy boundaries is something that both you and the youth should be able to do, in order to realize your full potential. As such, in addition to setting your own boundaries, you also have an opportunity help youth understand and set their own boundaries. You can do this by showing interest in the things they are interested in, which helps validate what they can do. Demonstrating interest in their thoughts helps them expand their sense of their own mental processes. Providing guidance can help youth realize that certain choices are better than others, and showing concern communicates that a youth is nearing a limit, in your opinion.\textsuperscript{13} Be empathic when engaging with youth, when it comes to boundaries, the opportunity to develop healthy boundaries may have been stolen from them, or they may never have had an opportunity at all.


Questions to Ask of Yourself When Setting Boundaries

1. In mentoring, the relationship is the formula, the strategy, and the intervention. How can you respond to this situation in a way that protects the well-being of the mentoring relationship?
2. The implications of your response are as important as the response itself. What are the short-term and long-term consequences of the way you choose to handle the situation?
3. Communicate from a place of personal honesty. How can you effectively communicate the importance of the boundary in question in a way that honours your needs, without blaming or shaming the other person?

Overcoming Obstacles

We all encounter different situations in life - different events, different people. Furthermore, we all experience and interpret these situations differently from one another; no two peoples’ interpretation of a situation will be the same, not even identical twins. The way we come to think, care, learn, and act in any given situation is influenced by those experiences that came before: depending on previous interactions we’ve had with people in our lives, the ways in which we think, care, learn, and act will be altered, and depending on the outcomes we experience from engagements with life (events, etc.), the ways in which we think, care, learn, and act will be altered. This is a natural process that happens within all of us, for better or for worse.

Given that a goal of Bridges’ Unveiling Youth Potential program is that youth would come to think, care, learn, and act more wisely, it is important for them to be able to identify what it is that informs the ways in which they think, care, learn, and act, and modify any patterns that could be harmful. As a mentor, this is a primary area in which you can support the youth: helping them overcome obstacles that are holding them back from thinking, caring, learning, and acting in helpful ways, and being their authentic selves. To do this, become familiar with the following tools, and consider conversations and interactions you have with the young leader in light of these things.

As mentors and people who work with youth, we too might have ideas and ways of thinking that are harmful to ourselves or to the youth we intend to support. As referenced in Part 3, Deep Listening, if we are not careful in our responses, our embedded biases or judgments might come out in our conversations with young people or others and act as obstacles to relationship development. Keeping an open mind and seeking to understand is crucially important when working with young people. As they are forming how they view the world and themselves, judgment from a person they have a trusting relationship with can be particularly hurtful.

Core Beliefs
Our interpretations of life engagements can develop into core beliefs, that is, beliefs about ourselves, about others, or about things/circumstances that we assume to be true, and therefore never question. Core beliefs can arise from experiences (with people, places, or things), innate dispositions, and/or cultural influences. Often times, core beliefs can be very helpful as they assist in orienting us to life, or in helping us cope during times of distress. But what about when these core beliefs are not helpful, or are no longer helpful? Well, then it’s time to kick them out, which is easier said than done. Dispelling unhelpful core beliefs requires that (3 steps):

1. **We identify them** - this is generally the most difficult part of this process. Because core beliefs are assumed to be true, it can be incredibly challenging to identify that they even exist. Trusting relationships, such as those we are seeking to establish through mentorship, can be very helpful when it comes to identifying core beliefs; sometimes it is easier for someone else - likely with a different lens on life - to notice deeply embedded ways of thinking, learning, car-
ing, and acting in others. Core beliefs show up in the ways that people communicate (whether verbally or otherwise) their thoughts and emotions about a particular engagement. Pay close attention to conversations you have with the young leader, to the words and the body language they use to describe their thoughts and emotions (see next section on Emotions & Reactions before moving on to the next step).
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Emotions & Reactions
First and foremost, it is critical to note that emotions are not bad; emotions are psychological and physiological responses to life circumstances, and therefore serve as important informants as to how we engage with and navigate life. Emotions can become barriers, however, when they are inappropriately managed, and particularly when they stem from unhealthy core beliefs. Within the context of human development, emotions can be tremendously helpful as they provide insight into the ideas and beliefs on which people have come to understand themselves. In this way, emotions serve as indicators of core beliefs, whether helpful or unhelpful. When seeking to identify your own core beliefs, or helping the young leader identify theirs, it can be helpful to explore the emotions that arise when this core belief is activated. Feel free to use the above reference about Emotions and Reactions, even with a young leader (if it makes sense) to identify the emotions they are feeling. From there, invite them to reflect on the core belief that is behind the emotion (because the emotion itself is NOT the problem), and where it comes from, which brings us to Step 2:

2. Then we must understand the origin - core beliefs come from somewhere, regardless of how easy the origin is to source. Possible origins include people (friends, authorities, interest groups, etc.), events (whether experienced firsthand or otherwise), cultural norms, etc. As a mentor, don’t spend too much time trying to discover the origin of unhelpful core beliefs in the young leader, but do feel free to ask questions such as, “Where do you get that idea from?” or “Who told you that?” and feel free to use the following page on ‘Contributing Voices’ as a resource.

3. Then we must rewrite core beliefs truthfully - the truth is that the young person you’re paired with is a remarkable individual with much to contribute to the story of life. And the world needs young leaders to be excellent versions of their authentic selves, and contribute in the beautiful and important ways that they are able to. Remind the young leader you’re paired with of these things regularly, tailored specifically to who they are and their unique context. Look for, and deeply consider the skills, talents, passions, and gifts that the young person you’re paired with has to offer, and encourage them with reminders of these things often (and in contrast to unhelpful core beliefs that they may have bought into). Feel free to tell young leaders that their unhelpful core beliefs are just not true, and why. This kind of encouragement is like refreshing water to a weary spirit.

And feel free to use the following list called ‘Possible Unhelpful Core Beliefs’ (not within the context of spending time with the young leader; familiarize yourself with this list in advance) to help identify core beliefs that may serve as obstacles. (Note: it is important to also seek to develop this capacity in the youth themselves, such that they can come to identify obstacles in their own lives.)
Defectiveness
- I'm not good enough
- I can't get anything right
- I'm stupid
- I'm inferior
- I'm nothing
- I'm worthless/insignificant
- I'm a bad person
- I'm unattractive (ugly, fat, etc.)
- I'm useless
- I'm a failure
- I don't deserve anything good
- There's something wrong with me
- I do not measure up to others
- I'm always wrong
- I've done things wrong
- I'm abnormal

Unlovable
- I'm not lovable
- I'm unacceptable
- I'm always left out
- I'm not wanted
- I'm alone
- I'm unwelcome
- I don't fit in anywhere
- I'm uninteresting
- Nobody loves me
- I'm unlikeable
- I'm bound to be rejected

Abandonment
- People I love will leave me
- I will be abandoned if I love or care for something/someone
- I am uninteresting (and people will leave me because of it)
- I'm unimportant
- If I assert myself, people will leave me
- I can't be happy if I'm on my own
- I'm not as good as other people
- My partner is no longer interested in me
- I'm bound to be rejected/abandoned/alone

Helplessness/Powerlessness
- I'm helpless/powerless
- I'm out of control
- I must have control to be okay
- I'm weak
- I'm vulnerable
- I'm trapped
- I'm needy
- I'm ineffective
- I do not measure up to others
- I'm unsuccessful
- I can't achieve
- I can't change
- I can't handle anything
- There's no way out
- Other people will manipulate me and control my life
- I am trapped and can't escape
- If I experience emotions, I will lose control
- I can't do it
- I'm always number two
- I finish last
- I can't stand up for myself
- I'm a loser
- I can't say 'no'

Entitlement
- If people don't respect me, I can't stand it
- I deserve a lot of attention and praise
- I'm superior and entitled to special treatment
- If I don't excel, then I'm inferior and worthless
- If I don't excel, I'll just end up ordinary
- I am a very special person (and other people should treat me that way)
- I don't have to be bound by rules that apply to other people

Reference: Possible Unhelpful Core Beliefs

Contributing Voices

More Adaptive Voices
- Voices of The People
- Voices of The Majorit
- Voices of Immediate Group
- Voices of Immediate Events
- Voices of Authority
- Voices of Rules & Laws

More Conventional Voices
- Voices of Habit
- Voices of Immediate Events
- Voices of Conventional

What voices are attended to?
What voices should be attended to?

Voices of The People

Voices of Reason

Voices of Interest Groups

Voices of The Opposition

Voices of History

Voices of Humanity

Voices of Ideas

Voices of Life

Voices of Underlying Causal Systems

Contributing Voices
Encouraging Spark

The term ‘spark’ is used by The Search Institute in the US to describe “how young people experience talents, interests, or strengths that make them feel really happy, energized, and passionate, and that give them real purpose, direction, or focus.” Sparks are more than just fun or interesting activities; they are passions that give youth joy and energy. The Search Institute asserts that sparks are part of who a young person is—part of their sense of identity. While the Search Institute does not draw this conclusion, at Bridges we suggest that youth are attracted to certain sparks in their lives because of these sparks’ ability to enable youth to explore and make meaning of their relationships - relationships with themselves, with others, and with the bigger picture of life. A study undertaken by The Search Institute in 2009 demonstrated that sparks in young people are important because youth who know, and have opportunity to pursue their sparks have greater initiative, sense of purpose, and desire to make a positive difference in the world. These youth are also more likely to place high value on strong friendships, civic engagement, and serving others.17

Watch Peter Benson TED talk: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TqzUHcW58Us

Ideally, all youth have the opportunity to explore various interests and outlets, and pursue their spark. However, this simply isn’t the case. Critical barriers to youth knowing and pursuing their sparks include: lack of opportunities available and lack of positive and encouraging relationships.

Name, Nourish, and Nurture Youth Sparks

As a caring adult, you can play an important role in supporting youth as they explore things they are passionate about - the things that make them come alive. This may require you to help youth find opportunities and creative outlets in which to pursue sparks, and most importantly, it will require that you be an encouraging (and challenging, when appropriate) voice in their lives. Questions you can ask to help identify (name) youth’s sparks include: What is it that gives you joy and energy? What’s going on in those moments when life feels the fullest with purpose and hope? When do you feel most fully alive? Sometimes these kinds of questions are very difficult for youth to answer, in this case, take initiative and call out their strengths, skills, and giftedness. Who knows - they may never have experienced encouragement like this before. As mentioned in the previously linked TED talk: one of your goals as a mentor is to help name, nourish, and nurture youth sparks.

Note: Sparks need not become academic or career pursuits for youth. Just because they are passionate about something does not mean that they should necessarily pursue a successful career around it. Of course the interest, which sparks youth, may become their career,

but this isn’t the point of sparks. The point is that it’s important for youth to have the opportunities and supportive relationships to explore areas of interest that will connect them in meaningful ways with themselves, with others, and with the big picture of life.

**Types of Sparks:**

(generally divided into 3 categories: *skills/talents* (making music, studying archaeology, etc.); *commitments* (social justice, stewardship of the planet, etc.); *qualities* (empathic, good listener, etc.)

- Participating in sports, athletics, or other physical activities
- Participating in or leading art, dance, drama, music, writing, or other creative activities
- Using computers, electronics, or other types of technology
- Studying, reading, doing research, or other ways of learning
- Being in nature, caring for animals, or participating in outdoor recreation
- Doing religious or spiritual activities, or learning about religions or spirituality
- Being an entrepreneur, running a business, or inventing things
- Doing construction, architecture, or other types of mechanics or engineering
- Serving others, participating in politics, or working on social issues
- Teaching, leading others, or public speaking
- Other

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Self Care

Self-care is care that is provided for you, by you. It is about seeking to acknowledge and understand your needs (particularly during times when you choose to, or are required to give much of yourself) and taking steps to meet your needs. As a caring adult in the context of Bridges’ volunteer and mentor processes, you are invited to spend your time and energy nurturing others, for the sake of their growth and development. This is very important work, but it can only be done well when you are also doing what is necessary to care for yourself. It is critical to know how to refuel (this can look very different from person to person), and actually take time to do this on a regular basis, for the sake of yourself and others.

When it comes to self-care, often times we are encouraged to engage in an activity that we enjoy, and that nurtures who we are. This can be helpful to the overall process, but it is not the point of self-care. Self-care is fundamentally about deepening your relationship with yourself, and developing your understanding of yourself in relation to the world around you. It is about making meaning of your experiences - of yourself as one in a diverse world of many - and integrating this learning into your daily interactions. For many, this is an almost (or perhaps totally) spiritual process, in the sense that people who do self-care effectively ‘re-fuel’ by connecting with themselves in relation to the big picture of life, love, and humanity.

The analogy of a tree can be useful when it comes to thinking about self-care. As an effective caring adult, imagine yourself as a tree. People will often congregate under your branches, whether because of the beauty they experience there, or to take shelter from harsh conditions. It is the canopy of your branches that provide shelter to people you care about, but the size, quality, and condition of your branches is dependent on the strength of your roots. As you allow yourself, or are required to engage with life in new and more intensive ways - ways that push the boundaries of your ability to care beyond what you previously thought possible - you must develop your root system such that this growth and learning can happen in an effective and sustainable way. This is made possible through taking time for self-care, which looks like digging deeper within yourself to explore and seek to understand who you are and what you are able to contribute by being who you are, within the context of your relationships with yourself, within the context of your relationships with others, and within the context of your relationship with the big picture of life, love, and humanity.

Many of the concepts outlined in this training manual can be used for self-care, through employing them as self-reflection. In a way, this requires that you remove yourself from the equation, and examine yourself analytically as though from the outside, looking in. Try turning the lens of being present, deep listening, and establishing trust on yourself. Examine your boundaries and seek to understand how they came to be that way. Pay attention to your own thoughts and emotions, and think deeply about the core beliefs they originate from (and work to rewrite the ones that are not helpful!). And make time for your ‘spark’ - a creative or thought-provoking outlet that enables you to reconnect with your passions.
and your purpose. For effective caring adults, this spark may serve as a catalyst for self care, a means by which you are able to self-reflect and integrate learnings. For example, some people enjoy hiking in the mountains, others will spend time working in their garden. Listening to or playing music is a common outlet and reflection point, or maybe you prefer to write in a journal (or record your reflections on a voice recorder), or talk openly with a trusted friend. Whatever it is that enables you to debrief your experiences and dig deeper within yourself to develop your foundations as a caring adult, make time for it. It is amongst the most important things you can do, for yourself and for others.

**Resources:**
Canada Bridges has an incredible network of people and resources who are equipped and willing to support you in this process of deeply caring for others, and because it will be necessary, reflecting on yourself throughout. Feel free to contact the Bridges’ Mentorship Coordinators at any point if you would like to discuss your volunteer/mentor experience, and for support in your personal growth process. The Mentorship Coordinators will connect you with appropriate resources and/or people, and when it makes sense, be a listening ear and provide feedback. Bridges’ mentors will also come together on a somewhat regular basis to connect and share with one another and debrief their experiences in a group mentorship format.

We invite you to participate in this journey - to be a caring adult (no matter how young at heart) who commits to fostering the faith, self-confidence, and hope in the youth of today. The journey will not always be easy, but it will be healing, rewarding, and so much fun. And you may even reconnect with your own ‘youth’ in new and important ways as you journey.
Appendix A: Positive Characteristics

adaptable
diligent
romantic
adventurous
diplomatic
self-aware
affable
discerning
self-confident
affable
disciplined
self-disciplined
affectionate
discreet
self-motivated
agile
dynamic
sensible
agreeable
easygoing
sensitive
agreeable
emotional
alert
alluring
ambitious
amusing
aspiring
assertive
attentive
attractive
bold
brave
bright
broad-minded
calm
capable
careful
caring
charismatic
cheerful
communicative
compassionate
composed
confident
conscientious
considerate
convivial
cooperative
courageous
courteous
creative
daring
decisive
declarative
dedicated
determined
devoted

adaptable
adventurous
affable
affectionate
agile
agreeable
alert
alluring
ambitious
amiable
amicable
amusing
aspiring
assertive
attentive
attractive
bold
brave
bright
broad-minded
calm
capable
careful
caring
charismatic
cheerful
communicative
compassionate
composed
confident
conscientious
considerate
convivial
cooperative
courageous
courteous
creative
daring
decisive
declarative
dedicated
determined
devoted

diligent
discerning
disciplined
dynamic
easygoing
emotional
encouraging
energetic
enterprising
entertaining
enthusiastic
exuberant
fair
faithful
farsighted
fearless
flexible
forceful
frank
friendly
funny
generous
gentle
good
graceful
gregarious
happy
hard-working
healthy
helpful
honest
hopeful
humble
humorous
imaginative
impartial
independent
innovative
insightful
inspiring
instructive
intellectual
introspective
intuitive
inventive
inviting
judicious
kind
loving
loyal
modest
motivating
neat
nice
nurturing
optimistic
organized
passionate
patient
persistent
persuasive
pioneering
philosophical
placid
plucky
polite
positive
powerful
practical
proactive
productive
protecting
proud
prudent
quick-witted
quiet
rational
reflective
reliable
reserved
resilient
resourceful
respectful
responsive
romantic
self-aware
self-confident
self-disciplined
self-motivated
sensible
sensitive
serene
shy
sincere
sociable
straightforward
strategic
strong
supportive
sympathetic
tenacious
thorough
thoughtful
tidy
tolerant
tough
unassuming
unselfish
understanding
versatile
warmhearted
willing
wise
witty
Appendix B: “When I Was at Your Stage...” 19

For some adults, it can be challenging to relate to younger people because they cannot help but bring their years of learning and experience to the relationship. These individuals think, speak and act from a place of already having learned life lessons, and therefore can have a hard time empathizing with someone who is in the midst of this learning. When it comes to relating with youth, it is critical that you seek to engage with them where they are at, and support them as they journey through and learn from life. Of course your wisdom and experience will be a helpful contribution to this, but try to offer stories and suggestions in a relatable way, taking into consideration the youth’s context.

To help set the stage for this kind of engagement, think back to when you were just beginning university, and answer the following questions:

- What was your style like - your clothes and hair?
- What did you like to eat?
- What books did you like reading?
- What was your favourite thing about school? What was your favourite subject in school?
- What did you look forward to after school?
- What sports/hobbies did you enjoy?
- What did you like to collect?
- What made you unique?
- What were your friends like?
- How did you deal with peer pressure?
- How did you cope with challenges?
- What were your parents/guardians like? What did you appreciate about them? What annoyed you about them? What did you eventually learn to appreciate about them?

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Appendix C: Possible Activities

50 Activity Ideas for Mentors and Young Leaders

This is a list of suggested activities for mentors and young leaders. It is by no means exhaustive and we encourage you to collaboratively come up with things to together. Additionally, there will probably be times when it would be better to just get together and chat than do a particularly activity. Trust your judgment and the input of one another!

Activity ideas (in no particular order):

1. **Go for a walk.** This can be a great way to spark conversation and encourage honesty – it can help people to be more comfortable when there are other things to look at instead of staring deeply into one another’s eyes. Fish Creek Provincial Park and Nose Hill give a person the sense that they’ve left the city, which can be a nice break from the urban setting and way to connect with the land for Indigenous young people who grew up on reserve.

2. **Check out a free festival in the city.** Especially in summer there are lots of free events and festivals going on. Often these are a nice way to learn about other cultures and explore communities. Eventbrite is a good place to search free events. Keep an eye on your inbox for the monthly mentorship email where we share free events in the city.

3. **Go to a movie or stay-in for a movie night.** Who doesn’t like movies?

4. **Access resources at the Youth Employment Centre (YEC) together.** If the young leader you’re paired with is looking for a job, it might be helpful to check out the YEC so they can update and print their resume, learn about upcoming free First Aid sessions and find out about youth-friendly employers.

5. **Go grocery shopping.** This can be a good way to make healthy and economical choices together. Also, grocery shopping is kind of boring so it might make it more fun.

6. **Ride a transit route.** When you’re figuring out how to get somewhere for the first time, it can be helpful to test it out with someone else so it’s less intimidating when you have to take that route for reals (e.g. to go to school or to work on time).

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7. **Run errands together.** People learn a lot from observing how others manage their time, prioritize tasks, and where they go to get things done. Also running errands is kind of boring so why not take a friend with you?

8. **Go for lunch or coffee.** Almost always a good setting for good conversation.

9. **Play a sport.** Lots of options here! There are free basketball and tennis courts around the city, you could rent cross-country skis, kick a soccer ball around, throw a baseball and much more.

10. **Try out a weird activity. Like axe throwing.** The hipsters have turned a bunch of activities into businesses. Some are more affordable than others but almost all are sure to be entertaining.

11. **Talk out ideas for a school assignment, entrepreneurial project, or career path.** Suggestions and encouragement go a long way.

12. **Go to an event in their community together.** Maybe the young leader you’re paired with could use a ride out to their home community to attend an event or wants you to come along and meet some of their family. Or maybe they have developed a different kind of community here in Calgary (like a chess club) that is having an event you could check out.

13. **Help fill out a scholarship application.** It’s always helpful to have a second pair of eyes look over an application.

14. **Reading time.** Sometimes it’s nice to have company for quiet activities, like reading a book at a park or coffee shop.

15. **Volunteer together.** Maybe there’s a cause you both care about and would like to give some time to?

16. **Float the Bow.** Awesome summertime fun activity. Rafts can be rented from the Outdoor Centre at the University of Calgary. Total for a four person raft, life jackets, and paddles will be around $70.

17. **Go for a hike.** A few options for scenic walks in Calgary include Fish Creek Provincial Park, Weaselhead Flats, Quarry Road Trail, Douglas Fir Trail, and Inglewood Bird Sanctuary. Of course, there are many more options near the mountains if you have access to a vehicle!

18. **Canoe in the Glenmore Reservoir.** You can rent a canoe from the Calgary Canoe Club for $15/hr, $25 per half day, or $35 for the whole day. Another option for kayak/paddleboard/canoe rentals if you have a bigger vehicle is the Outdoor Centre at the University of Calgary.
19. **Teach one another a new skill.** Maybe the young leader you’re paired with has a talent they want to share (like beading or dj’ing) that you’re interested in learning and maybe there’s something you know how to do they would like to learn too.

20. **Be spooked at a Ghost Tour.** Sign up for a ghost tour for around $10-20 or follow this link: https://bit.ly/2PNeT8a and/or research haunted places online and go for a self-guided tour free of charge.

21. **Cook together.** This is a great way to learn from one another – maybe you both have a favourite recipe you can share!

22. **Have your own paint nite.** Buy some paint and other art supplies to try out painting. There’s probably some mentors or young leaders in the group with artistic talents who would be willing to lead you through a painting too if you or the young leader you’re paired with wanted some guidance.

23. **Glenbow.** Check out this museum for free as a First Nations, Inuit, or Métis person anytime or as a non-Indigenous person, you can go for free on the first Thursday of every month in the evening. They have a great display about Niitsitapiisini (Our Way of Life), which was developed with the support of Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) Elders and community members.

24. **Skating on outdoor rinks.** Skates can be rented at the University of Calgary Outdoor Centre if you don’t have them or on location at some outdoor skating facilities. You might want to check out the Olympic Oval if you’re not into being outside in the cold, where you can also try out speed skates. They have special discount nights too!

25. **Explore campus.** If the young leader you’re paired with is going to the same campus you went to, maybe you can check out some of your favourite old study spots or hangouts together. If they’re at a campus you haven’t gone to, maybe you can wander aimlessly and find where their classes will be together.

26. **Library events.** The library has recruited some great Indigenous staff lately and has a lot of interesting and engaging community events going on! Plus, while you’re there you and the young leader you’re paired with can sign up for a free library card and access lots of free movies and books. Woo!

27. **Introduce them to someone new.** Maybe there’s someone in your network (personal and/or professional) who would be a great person for the young leader you’re matched with to meet because of similar goals.

28. **Tell your story in detail.** Maybe you’ve been asking a lot of questions about the young leader you’re paired with and it’s starting to feel one-sided – it could be time to tell the story of you. This helps with relationship building and gives young leaders an example of how to work towards personal goals.
29. **Invite them to job shadow you or check out a workplace.** If they’re interested in learning more about the area you work in, why not take them around your work for the day?

30. **Ask their advice.** Maybe there’s something in your life that you’re working on that you could use a second opinion on – it feels good to help others.

31. **Attend a lecture, workshop, or learning event together.** Learning can spark new passions, interests, and ideas or maybe there’s a particular skill the young leader you’re paired with wants to learn. There are often free lectures series on at universities or put on by non-profits or small businesses.

32. **Game night.** From Monopoly, Risk, to D&D, there are lots of options. If you don’t have games at your place, try out a board game café.

33. **Mini road trip.** Leaving the city for a day can be a nice escape. There are lots of beautiful and interesting things to see within a couple hours of Calgary (examples, Drumheller, Dinosaur Provincial Park, Frank Slide, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, Rocky Mountain House Historic Site, Blackfoot Crossing, and then the obvious ones – the mountains, Banff, and Canmore).

34. **Write down bucket lists.** Take some time to dream big and imagine what are things each of you want to do in this lifetime.

35. **Hit up the gym.** If the young leader you’re paired with is going to school they probably have a membership that’s included in their tuition or cheap access to the on-campus gym where you could join them for a workout sesh. The Y also has cheaper membership options and there is also some free outdoor workout equipment around the city (for example at the University of Calgary and at Bowness Park).

36. **At-home workout.** YouTube can provide lots of free yoga, boot-camp style workouts, and others ranging in difficulty.

37. **Fishing.** On the Bow or a little ways out of the city, this can be a nice way to spend a day.

38. **Practice a language together.** Maybe the young leader you’re paired with really wants to travel to Japan one day and it would be helpful to learn some Japanese...or maybe they want to practice their Indigenous language (there are apps for that!) and you can learn together.

39. **Vision board.** Instead of writing down specific goals that you and the young leader you’re paired with want to work towards, why not create vision boards together? Vision boards can motivate us because whenever we look at them they’re a reminder of what we’re working towards.
40. **Learn to knit or sew together.** Like axe throwing, the hipsters are bringing back knitting. Then the two of you can make all your friends and families scarves as gifts. But for real, YouTube can teach you anything. Sewing is a cool skill to have if you want to turn thrift store finds into trendy outfits.

41. **Open mic nights.** Maybe one or both of you has always wanted to sing or read your poetry but could use the support of the other to go. Or maybe it’s not for you but you want to check out some local talent and support.

42. **Arcade.** Re-live childhood and go win yourself a prize!

43. **Crafting.** Pinterest will help you out with this one and a dollarstore run.

44. **Thrift store hunting.** Perhaps one of you is in need of a Halloween costume, new (to you) clothes, or some household wares like plates. Alternatively, you could pick out some funny art and add monsters to it...

45. **See a show.** University of Calgary or Mount Royal University theatre productions are probably the most affordable option but there are also Thursday deals with Lunchbox Theatre, Theatre Calgary Rush Ticket Tuesdays, $10 tickets for students at Alberta Theatre Projects, and pay what you can shows at Sage Theatre. Making Treaty 7 does some sweet shows too.

46. **Accompany them to an important meeting.** Whether it’s meeting a faculty member, going to a doctor’s appointment, or meeting with an academic advisor, taking them there or meeting up with them afterwards can be a nice demonstration of support.

47. **Come up with a budget.** It’s not a fun activity but important to make funding or student loans last the year.

48. **Watch an amateur sport game.** Sure, tickets to the Flames are pretty unaffordable, but going to a Dinos or Cougars game or the Hitmen is still pretty fun and more reasonably priced.

49. **Makeover.** Sephora or Shoppers Drug Marts will do free makeovers if you make a small purchase.

50. **Karaoke nights.** There’s a family friendly karaoke night that happens on Fridays, not too late, get in touch with Shalome for the details!