



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

For immediate release

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### ***12 Organizations Working to Improve the Quality of Youth Programs in the CRD***

**Victoria** – On International Youth Worker Day, twelve diverse youth-serving organizations have committed to work together to support high quality youth programming in the Capital Region through a year-long Youth Program Quality Initiative (YPQI).

“The Capital Region is home to many excellent examples of youth programming and we are excited to participate with several of our peers to build on best practices in achieving successful outcomes for youth,” says Meghan Meghert, Development Manager for the Inter-Cultural Association. “It is vital to create safe and culturally welcoming programs for immigrant and refugee children and youth. Through high quality youth programming the community gains young active citizens that feel connected to their new culture and are proud of their roots.”

The YPQI promotes the use of evidence-based quality assessment processes within organizations that serve youth. The centerpiece of the YPQI is an innovative and youth-centered tool to assess, reflect on, and strengthen the quality of youth programs over a 12-month period. Throughout the process, organizations take part in program quality assessments, data-driven improvement planning, peer learning, and intensive professional development training that reflects best practices in youth development. Jason Jones, Youth Services Coordinator for the District of Saanich says that, “as a municipally run program, I was extremely pleased to see how our staff have been so engaged with the process. It is a joy to see the staff so energized to put this knowledge into use.”

**Pilot Sites (in alphabetical Order)**

- Artemis Place
- Burnside Gorge Community Centre
- Inter-Cultural Association (ICA)
- Island Sexual Health
- District of Saanich – Recreation & Community Services
- Pacific Centre Family Services Association
- Power of Hope
- Surrounded by Cedar
- Threshold Housing Society
- Victoria Immigrant & Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS)
- West Shore Parks and Recreation
- \* South Island Dispute Resolution Centre Society (temporarily withdrawn)

The YPQI is a joint initiative of The Horner Foundation and the Community Social Planning Council. Twelve additional organizations will be recruited to participate in the initiative in 2014, utilizing the lessons learned from the pilot and incorporating the voices from the pilot sites.

For more information about the Quality Matters! Victoria pilot project, or about Quality Assessment work, please **visit:** <http://www.communitycouncil.ca> or contact:

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## **Quality Matters! Victoria: About the Organizations**

**Artemis Place** for girls is a small, holistic, independent school offering academics, life skills and counselling to girls for whom traditional schools have not been successful. Artemis Place provides the opportunity to build trust through nurturing relationships in a comfortable, intimate setting where each girl can feel like she belongs. This year we have 2 of our staff participating in the YPQI basics training and pilot project supported by the Community and Social Planning Council and the Horner Foundation. The YPQI is a straightforward, hands on assessment tool that can facilitate meaningful conversations on how to enhance Artemis and allow for more enriching and engaging programming.

**The Burnside Gorge Community Association (BGCA)** leads, promotes and supports prevention and intervention-based initiatives that encourage healthy, inclusive, and socially just living. This is accomplished through; community engagement; providing a continuum of high quality programs and supports that strengthen the lives of children, youth and families in Greater Victoria; fostering community connections; and ensuring a representative voice for all those we serve. We currently have 2 recreation program staff members working with the YPQI and plan to extend the initiative to include the Out of School care programs as well as other after school time initiatives and staff members.

**The Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA)** envisions our region to be a place where different cultural groups, engage, learn and grow together. The YPQI initiative helps organizations to learn from one another. Within ICA, five staff including front line and managers have been working with the tool to evaluate immigrant programming for children and youth ages 6-19 years old. ICA hopes the tool will create space for staff to critically reflect on how programs are developed, and continue to meet the many needs of immigrant and refugee youth and families.

**Island Sexual Health (ISH)** offers comprehensive non-judgmental and confidential sexual healthcare to all ages, genders, abilities, identities and orientations in the Greater Victoria area. ISH has an outreach/education program that currently serves over 10,000 participants a year, as well as an active youth committee to provide a youth voice to the organization. Two team members completed the YPQI training and have been working with the youth committee program and hopes to improve its effectiveness and quality

**Pacific Centre Family Services Association (PCFSA)** is dedicated to maintaining outstanding services for the people we work with through education, counselling and creative programming. We serve the Westshore community and have locations in Colwood, Langford and Sooke. Currently, we have a manager and three staff who are involved in the YPQI initiative. Our goal with this process is to build on our successes through improving the quality of our youth programs. As we improve our programs through assessment and action, we will better support the youth we serve to reach their fullest potential.

**The Power of Hope (POH)** is a local organization that unleashes the positive potential of youth through arts-centered multicultural and inter generational learning programs that value self-awareness, leadership, environmental stewardship, community and social change. POH works with youth and adults primarily in the Vancouver Island, Gulf Islands and Vancouver area. POH has signed on to the YPQI process to assess and improve on the workshops they present in schools and in the community. We currently have two staff that are working on this initiative.

**Saanich Parks and Recreation Youth Services** is engaging with all levels of the community in order to support and empower youth to reach their full potential as active and contributing members of the community. A community where adults value and care for youth and nurture them, and where youth have the ability to participate fully in the life of the community in a healthy and positive way. One coordinator and three front line staff are involved in the YPQI process in our youth centres. We anticipate training more of our enthusiastic staff this fall and using the tool to look at all programs we offer.

**Surrounded by Cedar** is a delegated Child and Family Services agency serving urban Aboriginal children and youth residing in the Greater Victoria area. The purpose of our programming is to connect our children and youth to tradition, cultural teachings and to offer skills to prepare them for a healthy transition into adulthood. Two staff recently completed the YPQI training and was pleased to see how much of the tool is being used and where we could improve. Our goal is to continue to deepen our partnerships for our community and improve quality programming.

**Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS)** serves newcomer, Immigrant and refugee, Canadians in their settlement and transition to Canada in the Greater Victoria Region. The YPQI involved the Executive Director and 3 VIRCS Staff whom are working within youth program with the organization. We hope to improve on the delivery, quality and consistency of Enable Program for Children and Youth services. YPQI will also provide a great base line in the development of new initiatives to meet the needs of the demographic served.

**The West Shore Parks & Recreation Society** is dedicated to providing a full range of diverse and accessible recreational opportunities that will contribute to the health and well-being of the community as a whole. We provide opportunities to the residents of Colwood, Langford, Metchosin, Highlands, View Royal and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area. Currently 2 managers and 2 front line staff are working on the YPQI project in our After School Care Program. We hope to utilize these tools to assess a wide range of programs within our organization. This will allow us to better our programs and fulfill our commitment of providing quality programs for our community.