Objectives of Connecting the Dots
Connecting the Dots was an innovative project which sought to promote the mental health of urban Aboriginal youth and families by mobilizing the community to address risk and protective factors influencing mental health.

The project had three overall goals:
- To improve urban Aboriginal mental health
- To adapt the Communities That Care model to the urban Aboriginal context
- To initiate and sustain a long term partnership between the Canadian Mental Health Association and Aboriginal Friendship Centres

The numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target population</th>
<th>Service providers</th>
<th>General public</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>173</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>300</td>
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</tbody>
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Key Kelowna risk and protective factors

Key risk factors
- Food insecurity
- Lack of cultural connections
- Difficulties with family management
- Barriers to access programs
- Lack of cultural identity

Key protective factors
- Food security
- Improved family management
- Cultural connections
- Cultural programming
- Transportation and mobilization

Kelowna partners

**Partners**
- UBC Okanagan; West Bank First Nation; Okanagan Boys and Girls Club; Success by Six; Central Okanagan Foundation—Vital Signs; The Bridge Youth and Family Services; Aboriginal Community Action Towards Children’s Health Coalition, Ministry of Children and Family Development; Regional District of Central Okanagan

**Advisory group**

**Connecting the Dots core team**
Canadian Mental Health Association Kelowna
Amanda Swoboda, Mike Gawliuk, Shelagh Turner
Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society
Niki Stevenson, Cam Martin, Edna Terbasket

Key Kelowna interventions

- Strengthening Families
- Food Skills
- Photovoice
Key Kelowna findings

Food Skills

- “Made a difference on my well-being by having better fuel.”
- “Helped me take my mind off stress and my ability to live healthier.”
- “Made a difference to feelings of belonging.”

Strengthening Families

- “Taught me how to parent in a more calm respectable manner.”
- “Helped my inner strength.”
- “Showed me how to stop, listen and change behaviour.”

Photovoice

- “Provided youth with a strong modality to have their voices heard, it engaged them in learning new skills, involved them in positive, safe social activity. It provided a means to convey youths’ thoughts and emotions and a means to engage them in thinking about their world differently.”

Lessons learned

- Activities should include the whole family
- Building trust and relationships is essential and takes time
- Community engagement and key leader champions are very important for success
- Cultural competency of all stakeholders is vital

Art by Aboriginal artist Jamin Zuroski, representing culturally relevant adaptations for Communities That Care

Cultural adaptations

- Followed cultural protocol, respected wisdom and followed teachings of Elders
- Included whole community, including Elders, families, adults, youth and children
- Adapted youth survey to be culturally relevant
- Use of meaningful language
- Followed Tribal Best Practices

Cost of project in Kelowna

over $500,000

www.cmha.bc.ca/connectingthedots