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

629 target population
300 service providers
426 general public

Key Quesnel risk and protective factors

Key risk factors
- Loss of effective parenting skills
- Loss of identity
- Loss of trust between service providers and the Aboriginal community
- Loss of connections with Elders and youth
- Transition between grades 7–8 and 9–10

Key protective factors
- Create strong healthy connections
- Reclaim culture
- Build trust with service providers
- Healthy traditional parenting/secure attachment

Quesnel partners

Partners
North Cariboo Aboriginal Family Program Society; School District 28; College of New Caledonia; Ministry of Children and Family Development; Axis Family resources; local Band Councils

Key Leader board, Elders Guiding Circle
Lanny Kipling, Connecting the Dots Coordinator; Sandy Brunton, Executive Director, Quesnel Tillicum Society; Trevor Barnes, Canadian Mental Health Association, Cariboo Chilcotin Branch (Williams Lake)

Key Quesnel interventions
- Culture camps
- Parenting and traditional teaching workshops
- Trust building circles
- Family gatherings
Key Quesnel findings

Family dances
“Fantastic time. Great to see families having fun together. Elders and children dancing together. Tons of laughter and smiles.”

Parenting traditional teaching modules
“I’ve learned so much from this training—the things that I’ve learned that was about my family helped explain a lot.”

Trust building circles
“Yes. It is trust that is a building block for a healthy individual and community.”

Culture camps
“Makes me good and I feel better about myself.”
“What I like most was the teaching that was brought to my family and the games.”

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

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 Quesnel
over $400,000

www.cmha.bc.ca/connectingthedots