



Meth: iron fist Forum Theatre by Youth About Crystal Meth

The YMCA-YWCA of Greater Victoria's Bridging the Gap Project, and TheatreWorks, Victoria, are excited to announce Meth: iron fist, a Theatre for Living project created by Victoria youth and aimed at promoting dialogue about crystal meth in our community.

"Western Premiers fear crystal meth scourge"¹ "Crystal use blamed for crimes"²
"BC must take steps to tackle the crystal meth menace that is ravaging our young"³
"Despite scary-sounding news reports to the contrary, crystal meth use remains very rare"⁴

We have read the headlines, heard the horror stories, and witnessed the frustration of community leaders who are not sure what to do about this pressing issue. There's a lot of information out there about meth, much of it confusing, and some of it conflicting.

This project will see youth who have been affected by crystal meth create and perform interactive theatre about meth and addiction. We will look beyond the headlines to explore the factors leading to addiction and marginalization of our young people. With this project, we intend to contribute to the community dialogue about meth in a creative, entertaining and thought-provoking way.

How does it work?

In a six-day intensive workshop, youth participants aged 12-24, facilitated by director River Chandler, will utilize the games and exercises of Theatre for Living to explore their experiences with meth and addiction. During the workshop, the group will create short plays for public and school performances.

In performance, each of the short plays will be performed once, so the audience can see the situation and the problems presented. The stories will build to a crisis, offering no solutions. Each play is then performed a second time, with audience members able to "freeze" the action at any point where they see a character engaged in a struggle. The audience member says "stop", comes onto the stage, replaces the character, and tries their idea. This is called an "intervention". The process is profound, entertaining and full of surprises and learning.

¹ The Province, May, 2005

² The Times Colonist, March, 2006

³ The Province, April, 2005

⁴ The Ottawa Citizen, July, 2006

Meth: iron fist

**Directed and Joked by River Chandler, TheatreWorks
Assisted by Margo Briere, Bridging the Gap Project**

Public Performances

**Thursday, November 9th
And
Friday, November 10th**

7pm

**At The Metro Theatre
Corner of Quadra and Johnson**

**Admission by donation
Proceeds to support Victoria YMCA-YWCA Outreach Services**

**Made Possible by the Victoria Hope Society, the United Way of Greater Victoria,
Vancouver Island Health Authority & the Victoria Youth Clinic**

Media Contacts

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Background

Bridging the Gap, A citizens' engagement initiative in the interests of crystal meth prevention, education and intervention is a multi-funded, multi-partnered project. Bridging the Gap's primary goal is to foster the participation of isolated, hard to reach youth in the development of interventions that reduce the harms associated with the use of crystal meth in Victoria.
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Project Objectives

- To support and accelerate a two-way exchange of information between the street community in Victoria and local social and health services
- To build skills (community organizing, writing, publishing, graphic design, accessing inter-agency resources, communicating health information in a popular fashion) among youth participants
- To create cohesion and focus at an inter-agency level, with strong buy-in from youth active in the street community, in crystal meth prevention and education initiatives
- To improve the health and social circumstances of youth who use crystal by providing youth-centred, non-judgmental services following a harm reduction model

Community Context

Bridging the Gap is the YM-YWCA's best response to the current trends in crystal meth use among youth in Victoria. The Youth Detox in Victoria noted a doubling of admissions for crystal from 2001-2002 and continue to see this increase with approximately 70% of admissions now for crystal detox (Specialized Youth Detox Annual report 2004).

Younger people are using crystal than before - the average age of first use in a recent study was 14.5 years. Female youth also appear to be more at risk as they struggle with body image and use crystal as an appetite suppressant (Pacific Community Resources November 2002).

Counsellor observations of the vulnerability of gay and lesbian youth are confirmed by a 2006 published study of Victoria and Vancouver students. In multivariate analyses that included age, gender and sexual orientation, the 2.5% of students who self-identified as gay or bisexual had a significantly elevated risk of previous year use of crystal meth (Use of Crystal Methamphetamine and Club Drugs Among High School Students in Vancouver and Victoria. Lampinen, McGhee, Martin. 2006).

TheatreWorks offers workshops utilizing theatre to work for healthy change in schools, organizations and communities. Previous projects include Gimme the Keys, theatre about drinking, drugs and driving, with Headlines Theatre, Vancouver; U WSA'NEC: Honouring Family, with The Lau,wel,new Tribal School, Saanich; Yeah, We All Take Risks, with ANKORS, West Kooteneys; and InsideOUT: interactive theatre about homophobia and transphobia, with Burnside Gorge Community Association and School District 61.

"Using the art form of theatre to examine in depth the thorny problems youth encounter with substance use, driving and other real life issues is an effective and engaging tool to reach the hearts and minds of community members."

Principal, SJ Willis School

"Call it what you will, real theatre, forum theatre, the two plays presented at the Station Youth Centre...were powerful and gripping."

Castlegar News, March 30, 2005