

Appendix J

Case Study: Events as Communications

Events provide great opportunities for highly impactful public relations. In a First Nations communications environment community events provide your organization the opportunity to meet and talk with your community members and establish relationships with those who may be directly affected by the work that you do. Used strategically, events can be used as a communications tool to connect with different demographics of your community.

Youth make up over 50% of the Okanagan Nation and are one of our largest target groups. The ONA uses events as the main form of community engagement to connect with youth. The ONA has organized youth leadership gatherings, cultural events and the Sylix Youth Unity Run, which is by far our most successful youth-focused event.



In 2009, the Okanagan Nation held its first Sylix Youth Unity Run to bring awareness to suicide and violence that was taking place in our communities. The ONA leveraged programs and events that already brought the youth together (such as the R'Native Voice Program) to turn this idea into reality. What really made this event a success was linking with all of our member communities to allow for greater youth involvement. In addition, creating pro-active partnerships with the RCMP that brought in additional resources both financial and in-kind which contributed to the success of the event. As organizers, the ONA provide logistics and communication support to each of the communities.

Our leadership has always been supportive of our youth, but as this event has grown, Chiefs and Councils have begun to actively participate in the event as role models. Not only do they talk to our youth about the contribution this run has on our member communities, but they also take part in the run itself!

Last year the ONA received local and national recognition for creating awareness of suicide and violence. Other communities have asked to be mentored on how to successfully host a run in their communities. This has helped us build intercommunity relationships and has provided our youth with even more opportunities to connect with other youth.

This event grows stronger based on community participation and involvement, we are happy to announce that this year we ran 389 km and had over 250 runners come out from our Nation to participate!



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