

ASSEMBLY OF SEVEN GENERATIONS  
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# ASSEMBLY OF 7 GENERATIONS

## YEAR 1 REPORT

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The Students  
Commission  
Centre of Excellence for  
Youth Engagement



2020

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**Suggested citation:** Camazzola, G, Fayant, G, Malone, J, Ward, T, Wheatcroft, K, The Students Commission of Canada & Assembly of Seven Generations (2020). *Assembly of 7 Generations Report*. Report prepared for Assembly of 7 Generations.



# THE STORY OF A7G

IN 2012 THE FOUNDERS OF A7G ALONG WITH MANY YOUNG PEOPLE IN OTTAWA AND ACROSS TURTLE ISLAND WERE INSPIRED BY THE IDLE NO MORE MOVEMENT. THERE WERE MANY YOUTH IN OTTAWA THAT WERE AT THE RALLIES AND CEREMONIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE MOVEMENT. AND ALTHOUGH THE MOVEMENT WAS PREDOMINATELY LED BY INDIGENOUS YOUTH, THERE WERE NOT A LOT OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH TO SPEAK AND SHARE THEIR TRUTHS DIRECTLY.

IN 2013 THE FOUNDERS OF A7G TALKED ABOUT STARTING A PLATFORM FOR YOUTH TO SPEAK THEIR TRUTH. AND THE IDEA OF GATHERING YOUTH BEGAN. MANY OF THE TEACHINGS THAT PROVIDED THE FOUNDATION FOR THE GROUP HELD THE NUMBER SEVEN. THE SEVEN GRANDFATHER TEACHINGS, THE SEVEN GENERATIONS TEACHINGS AND THE SEVEN FIRES PROPHECY. BECAUSE OF THIS, THE GROUP WAS NAMED ASSEMBLY OF SEVEN GENERATIONS OR A7G.

BEFORE THE GROUP WAS INCORPORATED, THEY PARTICIPATED IN A TECH PROGRAM THAT TYPICALLY FOCUSED ON TECH SUPPORT FOR COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD. THEY WORKED WITH A7G BECAUSE THEY WANTED TO SUPPORT INDIGENOUS YOUTH IN CANADA. AN IMPORTANT LESSON THE GROUP GLEANED FROM THIS EXPERIENCE WAS THAT YOU CAN'T HAVE A PROGRAM THAT IS NOT MADE BY INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND TRY AND INDIGENIZE IT AFTER. YOU NEED TO START WITH AN INDIGENOUS PROGRAM. ANOTHER KEY LEARNING DURING THIS TIME WAS THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF PROGRAMMING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WAS TO HAVE A SAFE PLACE TO GATHER EVERY WEEK. TO LAUGH, SHARE AND SING. CREATING THE SAFETY OF THE GROUP WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING.

IN 2015 THE GROUP WAS INCORPORATED AS A NON-PROFIT AND THEY TOOK PART IN ACTIVITIES AS THEY AROSE. IN 2017 THE FIRST YOUTH/ELDERS GATHERING WAS HELD WHICH HAS BECOME A STAPLE OF THE A7G PROGRAMMING. IN 2018 A7G HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET YOUTH FROM WINNIPEG WHO WERE ACTIVE IN ABORIGINAL YOUTH OPPORTUNITY/MEET ME AT THE BELL TOWER AND WERE ABLE TO HEAR FROM THEM DIRECTLY. THE GROUP WAS INSPIRED BY THOSE IN WINNIPEG THAT DIDN'T NECESSARILY HAVE NONPROFIT STATUS OR A LOT OF FUNDS BUT WERE STEADFAST IN THEIR COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT INDIGENOUS YOUTH IN THEIR COMMUNITY.

AROUND THIS TIME, A CITY FUNDED DROP-IN LOST ITS FUNDING. THE PROGRAM, 510 RIDEAU, HAD SERVED INDIGENOUS PEOPLE WHO WERE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS. THIS PROGRAM CLOSED ITS DOORS DUE TO THESE CITY CUTS. IN THE TWO YEARS FOLLOWING THERE WERE SEVERAL DEATHS INCLUDING YOUNG PEOPLE. ALTHOUGH NOT RECOGNIZED BY THE CITY OF OTTAWA, IT WAS CLEAR TO THE LEADERS AT A7G THAT THESE DEATHS COULD HAVE BEEN PREVENTED IF PEOPLE JUST HAD SOMEWHERE TO GO. BECAUSE THE GROUP COULD SEE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE LOSS OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND THE CLOSING OF THE DROP-IN THEY DECIDED THEY HAD TO DO SOMETHING TO PREVENT MORE LOSS. SIX MEMBERS THAT WERE FRIENDS DECIDED TO GET TOGETHER AS A SUPPORTIVE GROUP EVERY FRIDAY NIGHT TO PROVIDE THAT SAFE AND CONSISTENT PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY. THIS FRIDAY NIGHT GATHERING HAS BEEN HAPPENING EVER SINCE.

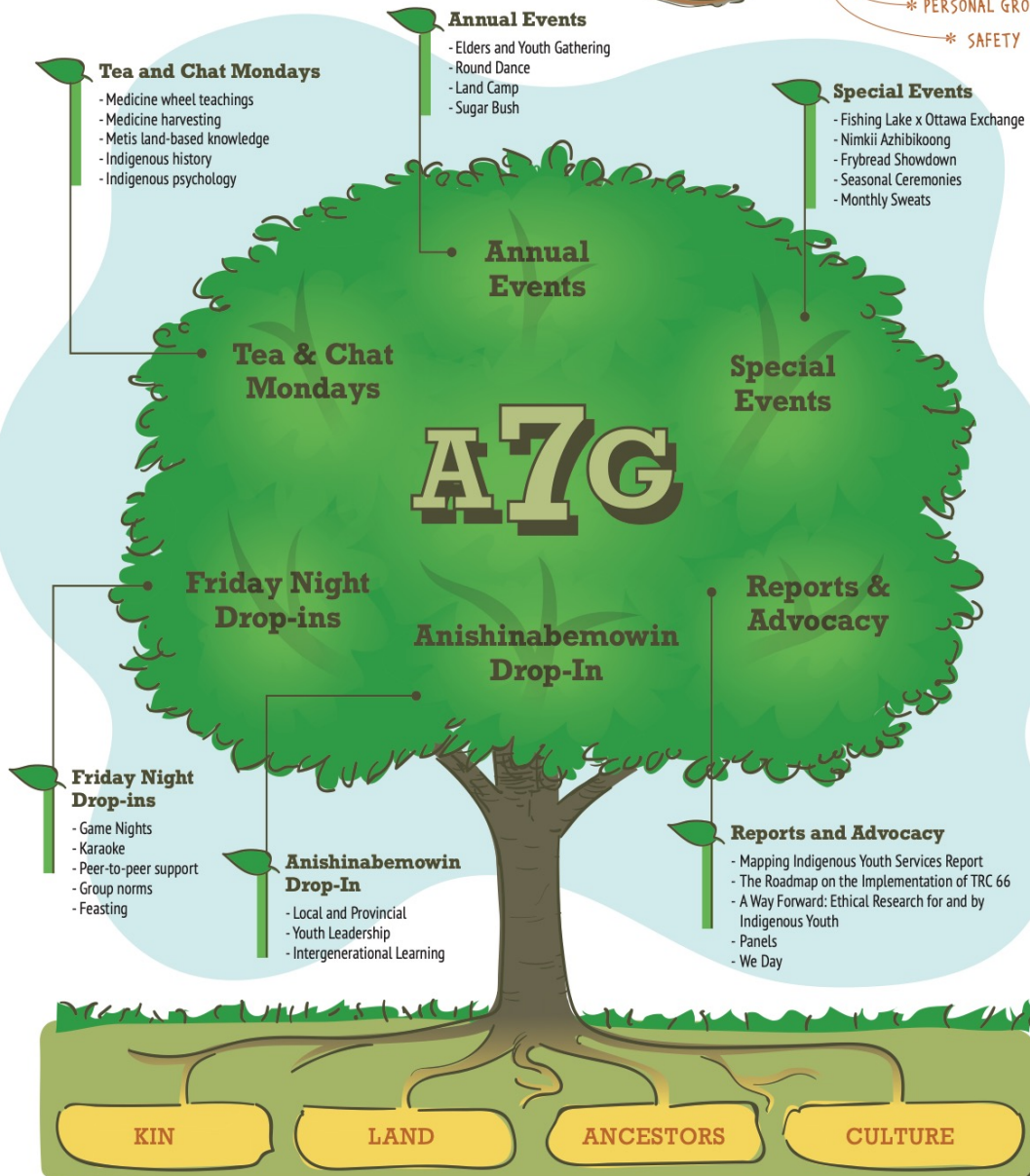
FROM THIS FRIDAY NIGHT GROUP, CALLED THE COUNCIL, IDEAS FOR OTHER PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES TOOK ROOT. TODAY A7G RUNS A WEEKLY ANISHINAABEMOWIN LANGUAGE PROGRAM, MONTHLY SWEATS, LAND BASED ACTIVITIES LIKE GARDENING AND MAPLE TAPPING, AND ANNUAL PROGRAMS LIKE THE ROUND DANCES AND LAND CAMPS. BECAUSE OF THE GROUPS DEEP CONNECTIONS WITH YOUTH IN THE COMMUNITY, A7G ALSO HOLDS A LEADERSHIP ROLE ADVOCATING FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE AND ADEQUATE SUPPORTS FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH IN OTTAWA. SIGNIFICANTLY, THIS PAST YEAR, THEY CARRIED OUT A COMMUNITY LED RESEARCH PROJECT TO EXPLORE AND DESCRIBE THE GAPS IN SERVICE THAT INDIGENOUS YOUTH EXPERIENCE IN OTTAWA.



# THE TREE MODEL

## Assembly of Seven Generations (A7G)

*From the A7G core we continue to get stronger, take action, and good things happen...*



# THE TREE MODEL

TO FRAME THIS REPORT, A TREE MODEL WAS USED TO UNDERSTAND THE PROGRAM AND TO ILLUSTRATE WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEADERS SAID IN THE THREE DIFFERENT EVALUATIONS.

THE ROOTS SECTION IS BASED ON WHAT GROUNDS A7G. IT INCLUDES CONNECTIONS BUT ALSO THE FOUNDING PRINCIPLES OF THE GROUP. WITHOUT THE ROOTS, THE TREE WOULD FALL OVER.

THE BRANCHES ARE THE WAYS A7G CONTINUES TO GROW. MUCH LIKE VALUES, THE BRANCHES DEMONSTRATE THE WAYS A7G ADAPTS, LISTENS TO YOUNG PEOPLE, LEARNS AND EXPANDS.

THE TRUNK SECTION OF THE TREE MODEL REPRESENTS WHAT YOUTH IDENTIFY AS THE CORE COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM.

THE SAPLINGS AND SHADE ARE PARTS OF THE TREE THAT NEED A BIT MORE LIGHT TO GROW OR ARE NEW IDEAS FOR WHAT GROUP MEMBERS ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO. THIS INCLUDES RECOMMENDATIONS BY YOUTH.

THE TREE REPRESENTS THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ALL PARTS OF THE PROGRAM AND SUGGESTS THAT THEY ARE NOT EASILY SEPARATED. IT ALSO REFLECTS A7G'S PROGRAMMING IN THE CONTEXT OF A COMPLEX ECOSYSTEM WITH OUTSIDE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PROGRAM AND IDEAS SEEDED FROM WITHIN THE PROGRAM CREATING SAPLINGS OR NEW IDEAS THAT ARE FED FROM THE PROGRAM CORE OR GRANDPARENT TREE.

## SUMMARY OF HOW YOUTH VOICES WERE GATHERED

THIS REPORT WAS DONE TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE OUTCOMES OF ASSEMBLY OF 7 GENERATIONS IN ALL OF THE WORK THEY DO WITH INDIGENOUS YOUTH. YOUTH COMPLETED A HEAD HEART FEET SPIRIT TOOL (HHFS), WHICH IS AN OPEN-ENDED TOOL TO COLLECT RESPONSES FROM PARTICIPANTS ON THEIR ENGAGEMENT EXPERIENCES. SPECIFICALLY, THE DIFFERENT COMPONENTS OF THE HHFS TOOL EXAMINE THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES:

- HEAD: WHAT THEY LEARNED FROM THE EXPERIENCE (COGNITIVE ASPECT)
- HEART: WHAT THEY FELT ABOUT THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE EXPERIENCE (AFFECTIVE ASPECT)
- FEET: WHAT THEY INTEND TO DO AS A RESULT OF THEIR PARTICIPATION (BEHAVIOURAL ASPECT)
- SPIRIT: HOW THEIR EXPERIENCE CONNECTS/CONTRIBUTES TO SOMETHING OUTSIDE OF THE SELF

THEY ALSO PARTICIPATED IN SHARING CIRCLES, AND LEADERS COMPLETED SHORT VIDEOS TO BETTER SUPPORT THE EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM.

# THE TREE MODEL



## ROOTS (CONNECTIONS)

THE ROOTS SECTION IS BASED ON HOW A7G HAS GROUNDED THEIR WORK. THIS STARTS WITH THE STORY OF HOW A7G BEGAN AND ALSO THE WAY THAT YOUNG PEOPLE DESCRIBE THEIR CONNECTION TO CULTURE, LAND, OTHERS AND ANCESTORS THROUGH THE PROGRAM. THESE ARE THE ROOTS OF THEIR WORK, AND WHAT INFLUENCES ALL AREAS OF WHAT THEY DO.

### CONNECTION TO LAND

"I connected with my peers and with the land this environment has the ability the potential for a deeper connection with yourself and others and the land."

"I think for urban Indigenous youth in particular it's really important for them and for us to get out on the land because that's where our culture is. our culture is out on the land. Um it's really also important for us to reconnect that way."

### CONNECTION TO OTHERS

"I connected to the people around me and nature."

"I connected by really listening and taking in what all the indigenous youth around me had to say."  
"Find bonds to each other, connections."

### CONNECTION TO CULTURE

"It's something that brings us back to the core of our culture."

"On my own learning journey understanding my culture as Anishinaabe I've learned that our culture is very much connected to the land and um with that comes our languages, our medicines and our ways of life and ways of thinking"

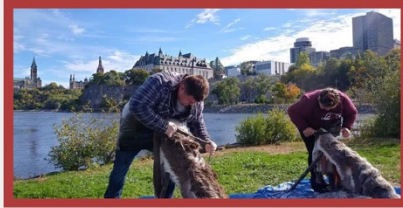
### CONNECTION TO ANCESTORS

One youth mentioned getting to connect with their ancestors by participating in A7G.





# THE TREE MODEL



## TRUNK

THE TRUNK OF THE TREE REPRESENTS THE CORE COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM. THIS INCLUDES THE COMMUNITY THEY HAVE BUILT, THE INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS THAT ARE TAUGHT, KEEPING THE PROGRAM LAND BASED, AND ALLOWING SPACE FOR PERSONAL GROWTH. PARTICIPANTS FELT GRATEFUL FOR THE PROGRAM, PASSIONATE, THEY ENJOYED IT AND BECAME INSPIRED FROM IT.

### GRATEFULNESS

"I think we're really grateful to be able to do that."

"I am grateful for all the wonderful people we met this weekend and for all that they showed."

### LAND-BASED

So this past year we did a lot of land-based activities."

"So, A7G, the land based stuff that we've been doing has been really cool to see."

### TRADITIONS

"I learned about different medical plants. And how to say thank you in Objjwa."

"I learned about how the first strawberry grew in this area, I also learned that women can play the traditional drum."

"I learned some of the ceremonies of the Nations in the area, the sacred fire, medicine walk the sweat lodge and a drum song."

### PLANNING & ORGANIZING EVENTS

"We've been fortunate to be able to plan and organize some of the events we've been doing. One of them for me, one of the biggest things we did was to bring the young people to the sweat lodge."

### ENJOYMENT

"I Enjoy this day With the GROUP."

## PASSION

"Other indigenous passion for their culture and wanting to keep it alive has made me feel like as if I should try harder to fight for my language / culture. This experience has really opened up my eyes and gave me more appreciation for my own culture."

## COMMUNITY

"Being out on the land with a group of people also... I think that's a great way to build community because you literally have to rely on one another and that's what a strong community is. It's trusting the people that are around you and relying on them and vice versa and them relying on you."

## INSPIRING

"I feel awoken, motivation, free, relaxed, and enjoyment. I love it here, it is a really nice environment for the youths, adults, and young to just stay and get together at one place helping one another. I really love it!!!"

"I feel inspired to continue learning be in community in a good way."

## PERSONAL GROWTH

"The A7G experience has grounded me a lot more, it make me feel as if I've gotten to get to know myself a bit more than I already have. And I have a much greater appreciation for my beliefs and that I'm able to achieve anything I set my mind to."

"For me that was a big point in my life when I started to go to the sweat lodges, where I started learning about my own traumas and my own culture and my own understanding and my own understanding of what it means to be Anishinaabe. And going to those lodges really helped with that."

"So as much as it's new for the young people it's also new for us as leaders too. Big opportunities to learn and do better."

"Saved my life."

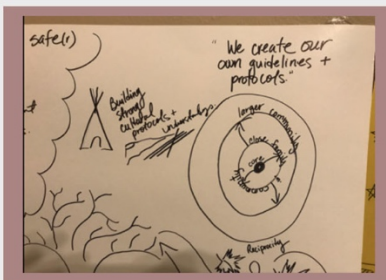
## SAFETY

"Feels like a comfortable space."

"Feel free to talk about culture."

"Confidential."

"Welcoming."

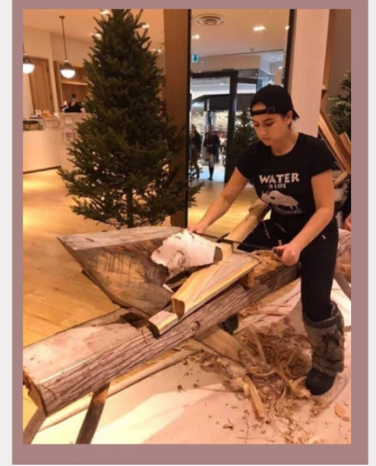




# THE TREE MODEL

## BRANCHES

BRANCHES OF THE TREE REPRESENT THE KNOWLEDGE THAT A7G HAS CONTINUED TO EXPAND THROUGH THEIR PROGRAM. PARTICIPANTS MENTIONED THE WAYS THAT THEY PLAN TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE, GAINED NEW KNOWLEDGE, AND WILL CONTINUE TO LEARN FOLLOWING THEIR EXPERIENCES.



### CONTINUED LEARNING

"I will continue to learn."

"This weekend has inspired me to learn more about traditional medicinal plants, flowers, trees & their uses."

### SHARING KNOWLEDGE

"I can tell others about the things I learned about and expand the teachings."

"I will share my new knowledge with my mother and sibling when it is time to speak to them once more."

"With that I've learnt, I will continue on to carry it with me over the years, and pass it on to the next generations or attempt to anyways."

"Pass down of what I learned such as look a like medicinal plants, different saps from maple and pine, the vitamins hidden in edible plants."

### NEW KNOWLEDGE

"I learned that every plant has a meaning."

"I learned that there are stories from the north that are both factual and mythical. There are/ were giants and magic that shamans used to use in order to keep justice. There are creation stories for the fog. and there stories where the land is from."

"I've learn about where and how to plant a raspberry. When to take to eat it."

"No matter how late you are you can always learn more."





# THE TREE MODEL

## OUTSIDE FACTORS

THE OUTSIDE FACTORS ARE THINGS THAT WERE MENTIONED THAT ARE OUT OF THE CONTROL OF THE PROGRAM.

### GAPS

"Not enough metis culture in Ottawa."

"No services West of Ottawa."

"Still experiencing racism and bullying."

### CITY STRUGGLES

"...the fact that we're able to provide youth with opportunities to do land based activities and find out how to do that stuff while living in the city is something that is just really cool and it's something that not everyone has access to."

"...we've also been able to make partnerships within the city. For example, the maple sugar bush, we've been able to learn our own traditions I guess about how to tap a tree and do it all in the city. Which has been really good. We've also had a few ceremonies like pipe ceremonies actually in the city. And we've had a fire kind of outside a park, but we've had to get a permit and stuff like that, but we're still able to have a fire and do ceremonies inside the city."

"I find it hard to connect to the land when you're in a city full of concrete and high rises and malls and things like that."

"So, the work that we're doing it's really, it's not really done in cities. You know, because of everything that's around, um all these buildings and concrete. Everything is kinda grided out in cities but, when you go back to the land you are able to just take a breather and relax and refocus."

# THE TREE MODEL

## SAPLINGS & SHADE (RECOMMENDATIONS)

THE SPOTS OF THE TREE THAT NEED A BIT MORE LIGHT TO GROW AND THE SAPLINGS AROUND THE TREE ARE THE NEW IDEAS AND RECOMMENDATIONS THAT HAVE COME FORWARD FROM THE EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM.

"SHARING OUR STORIES."

"HOW FOLKS THAT ONLY COME  
ONCE IN A WHILE CAN FEEL INCLUDED."

"MORE MUSIC AND INSTRUMENTS;  
MAKE A BAND."

### THINGS TO WORK ON

- More music + instruments, make a band.
- Sharing our stories
- How folks that only come once in a while can feel more included.
- Not enough Metis culture in Ottawa.
- No services on West End of Ottawa.
- Still experiencing racism + bullying

# CONCLUSION

THE VOICES GATHERED IN THIS REPORT DEMONSTRATE THE MANY WAYS THAT ASSEMBLY OF SEVEN GENERATIONS IS MAKING AN IMPACT IN THE COMMUNITY. THREE DIFFERENT WAYS OF GATHERING YOUTH VOICES WERE USED IN ORDER TO GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS. YOUTH COMPLETED AN OPEN-ENDED TOOL (HEAD HEART FEET SPIRIT TOOL) AND PARTICIPATED IN SHARING CIRCLES. LEADERS ALSO COMPLETED SHORT VIDEOS. THE COMBINED VOICES FROM THE TOOLS WERE ORGANIZED INTO A TREE MODEL, WITH “ROOTS” (CONNECTIONS), “TRUNK” (CORE COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM), AND “BRANCHES” (KNOWLEDGE) SECTIONS. THE MODEL ALSO INCLUDES OUTSIDE FACTORS, SAPLINGS AND SPOTS OF THE TREE THAT NEED MORE LIGHT TO GROW (“RECOMMENDATIONS”).

THE “ROOTS” SECTION OF THE TREE MODEL WAS BASED UPON CONNECTIONS. CONNECTIONS ARE THE ROOTS OF A7G’S WORK AND INFLUENCES ALL AREAS OF WHAT THEY DO. THROUGH THE PROGRAM YOUTH IDENTIFIED THAT THEY FELT PARTICULARLY CONNECTED TO THEIR CULTURE, LAND, ANCESTORS, AND OTHER A7G YOUTH. BOTH YOUTH AND FACILITATORS NOTED THAT THEY WERE ABLE TO FORM DEEP CONNECTIONS WITH OTHERS THROUGH THE EXPERIENCES PROVIDED BY A7G.

THE “TRUNK” SECTION OF THE TREE MODEL REPRESENTED WHAT YOUTH IDENTIFIED AS THE CORE COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM. YOUTH INDICATED THAT THE SENSE OF COMMUNITY AMONG THE GROUP IS VERY IMPORTANT, WHILE ALSO EXPRESSING THEIR GRATITUDE FOR THE PROGRAM. THEY DESCRIBED THE IMPORTANCE OF HOW CULTURE IS TAUGHT AND SHARED AMONG THE GROUP. PARTICULARLY, YOUTH LEARNED MORE ABOUT; MEDICINAL PLANTS, HOW TO COMMUNICATE IN THEIR LANGUAGES, CEREMONIES, AND DRUM SONGS. ANOTHER CORE COMPONENT EXPRESSED BY YOUTH WAS KEEPING THE PROGRAM LAND BASED. YOUTH SHARED THAT GOING OUT TO THE LAND TO RECONNECT WAS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THEIR INTERACTION. THEY ALSO DESCRIBED THE TRUNK AS ALLOWING SPACE FOR PERSONAL GROWTH, WHERE THEY WERE ABLE TO GET TO KNOW THEMSELVES MORE. PARTICIPANTS FELT GRATEFUL FOR THE PROGRAM, PASSIONATE, AND EXPRESSED A SENSE OF ENJOYMENT AND INSPIRATION FROM THEIR PARTICIPATION.

THE “BRANCHES” SECTION OF THE TREE REPRESENTS THE KNOWLEDGE THAT A7G CONTINUES TO EXPAND THROUGH THEIR PROGRAM. MANY YOUTHS REPORTED THAT THEY GAINED EXTENSIVE KNOWLEDGE FROM PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM, WHILE ALSO NOTING THE RESPONSIBILITY TO SHARE THIS KNOWLEDGE WITH THEIR FRIENDS, FAMILIES AND FUTURE GENERATIONS. THEY ALSO EXPRESSED THAT THEY WILL CONTINUE TO LEARN AND DEVELOP THEIR SKILLS FOLLOWING THEIR EXPERIENCES IN THE PROGRAM.

YOUTH WERE ALSO ASKED ABOUT ANY OUTSIDE FACTORS THAT HAVE HINDERED THEIR EXPERIENCE IN THE PROGRAM. THESE WERE DESCRIBED AS THINGS OUT OF CONTROL OF THE PROGRAM. CITY STRUGGLES WAS A FACTOR DISCUSSED BY YOUTH AS A BARRIER TO PARTICIPATION. YOUTH SHARED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DISCONNECTION WITH THE LAND WHEN WITHIN THE CITY ENVIRONMENT. HOWEVER, THEY NOTED THAT THE WORK OF A7G TO BRIDGE THIS GAP BY DOING LAND BASED WORK IN THE CITY OR PROVIDING OPTIONS OUT OF THE CITY WAS MEANINGFUL. OUTSIDE OF THE PROGRAM, YOUNG PEOPLE ALSO NOTED GAPS IN COMMUNITY SERVICES, LACK OF METIS CULTURAL CONNECTIONS IN OTTAWA, RACISM AND BULLYING.

FINALLY, THE “SAPLINGS” IN THE TREE MODEL REPRESENTED YOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROGRAM. YOUTH SUGGESTED USING MORE MUSIC AND INSTRUMENTS OR TO MAKE A BAND WITHIN THE PROGRAM. THEY ALSO MENTIONED MAKING FOLKS THAT ONLY COME OCCASIONALLY FEEL INCLUDED. AND THEY NOTED OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE THEIR STORIES AS A RECOMMENDATION.

ASSEMBLY OF 7 GENERATIONS CLEARLY PROVIDE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON INDIGENOUS YOUTH. THE VOICES FOUND WITHIN THIS REPORT ILLUSTRATE THAT YOUTH WHO PARTICIPATED IN A7G AND WHO TOOK PART IN THEIR ACTIVITIES EXPERIENCED QUALITY ENGAGEMENT AND ARE ENGAGED WITH A SPACE WHERE THEY FEEL IMMERSSED IN THEIR CULTURE AND CONNECTED. THEY NOTED SOME OF THE STRUGGLES OF BEING AN INDIGENOUS YOUTH IN OTTAWA BUT DEMONSTRATED THE MANY WAYS IN WHICH A7G SUPPORTS THEM IN CONNECTION BACK WITH THEIR CULTURE, EACH OTHER, AND THE LAND.