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Since 2010, The California Endowment (TCE) has invested in youth leadership and youth organizing groups as a key component of its Building Healthy Communities (BHC) initiative. These youth groups have sought to support the healthy development of their members while engaging them in organizing, advocacy, and other efforts to advance their communities' well-being. As part of a longitudinal evaluation, this report focuses on BHC-affiliated youth organizations in Del Norte and Adjacent Tribal Lands. Located near the Oregon border, Del Norte and Adjacent Tribal Lands is one of the fourteen BHC sites in California

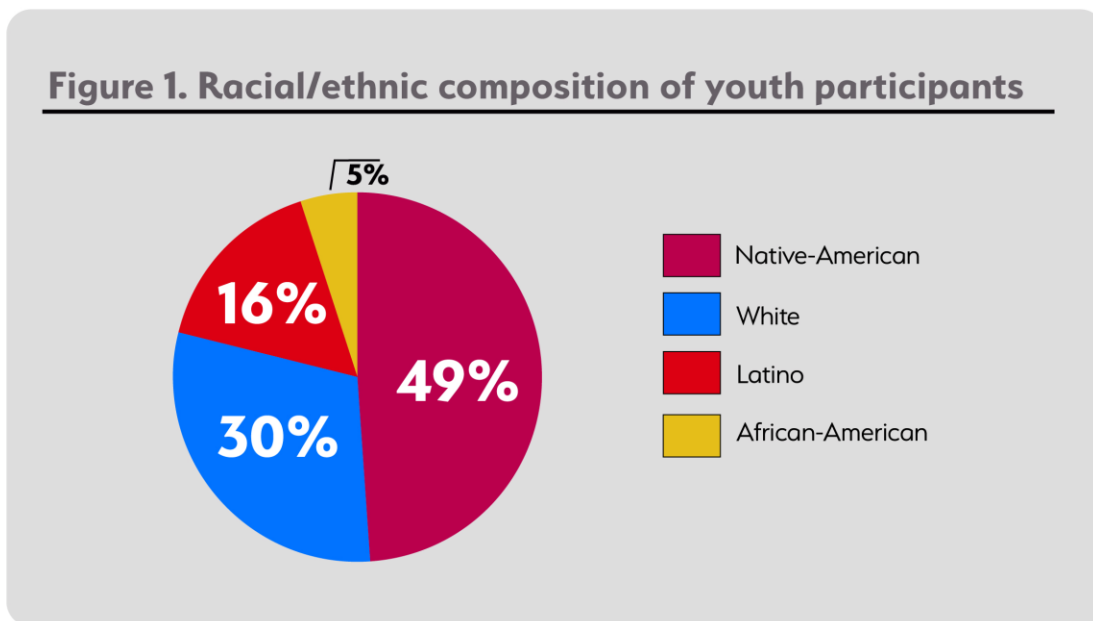
This report draws on survey data collected from the regular participants, or "core" youth members, of four organizations that engage their members in grassroots organizing and advocacy, media production and cultural arts, practices that promote healing and well-being, and other activities. These groups include: (1) Redwood Voice, (2) True North Organizing Network, (3) Warrior Institute, and (4) Youth Strategy Team.

This report contains four main sections. First, we begin by providing a demographic profile of core youth leaders in BHC-affiliated groups. Second, we describe why and how youth came to participate in their BHC group. Building on earlier evidence from this evaluation, we then present self-reports of how youth acquire a range of civic and educational skills and experiences, while also enhancing their own well-being. Lastly, we conclude by briefly summarizing interviews with key stakeholders to show how BHC-affiliated youth organizations have collectively engaged their youth members in addressing health, safety, educational, and other school and community concerns. In sum, this report provides further documentation of youth leadership efforts just past the midpoint of the 10-year BHC initiative.

DESCRIPTION OF BHC YOUTH PROGRAM REGULAR PARTICIPANTS

This study draws on 57 surveys collected from young people who regularly participated in BHC youth programs in Del Norte and Adjacent Tribal Lands. Survey participants represent 100% of core youth members in organizations that participated in the study. The average age of these members at the time of the survey was 19, but they ranged in age from 14 to 29 years of age. Participants were generally representative of the racial/ethnic composition of Del Norte and Adjacent Tribal Lands. As shown in Figure 1, approximately 49% identified as Native American, 30% identified as white, 16% identified as Latino, and 5% identified as African American.

Most youth came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, as 63% were eligible for free and reduced lunch in high school. Only 23% were raised by a parent with a bachelor's degree.



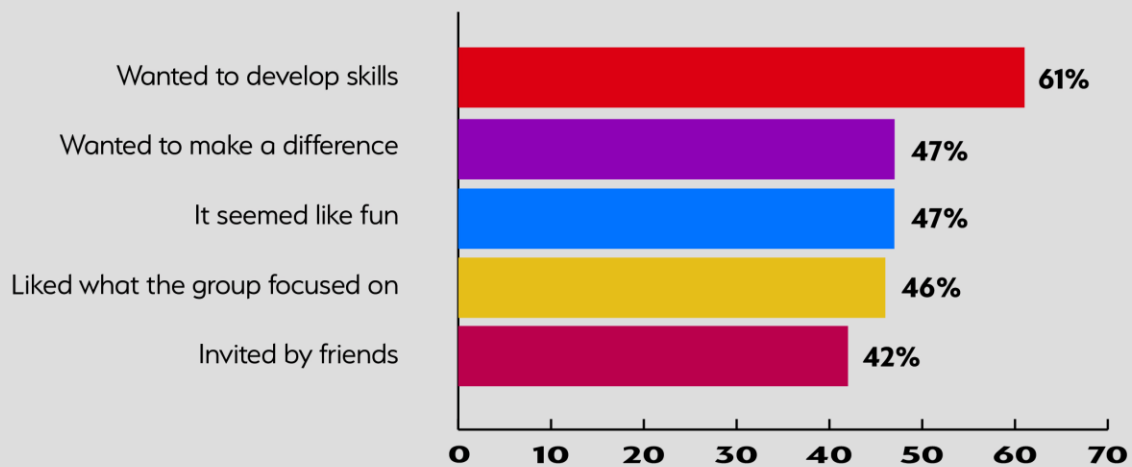
MEMBERS' INVOLVEMENT

Youth in Del Norte and Adjacent Tribal Lands vary in how long they have been involved in their organizations. Quite notably, over half of study participants —53%— had been involved in their BHC-affiliated organization for at least a year. This suggests that overall, BHC organizations retained many of their participants, offering them extended opportunities to develop their leadership capacity over time. Of the remaining youth, 12% had been involved 6-11 months and 25% were involved less than 6 months.

Youth were asked to list up to three reasons why they joined their BHC-affiliated youth organization. Figure 2 lists the top reasons for joining. In Del Norte and Adjacent Tribal Lands, the most common reason given was wanting to develop skills (61%), followed by a desire to make a difference (47%), and the organization seeming fun (47%). Other frequently reported reasons for joining included liking what the organization focused on (46%), and being invited by

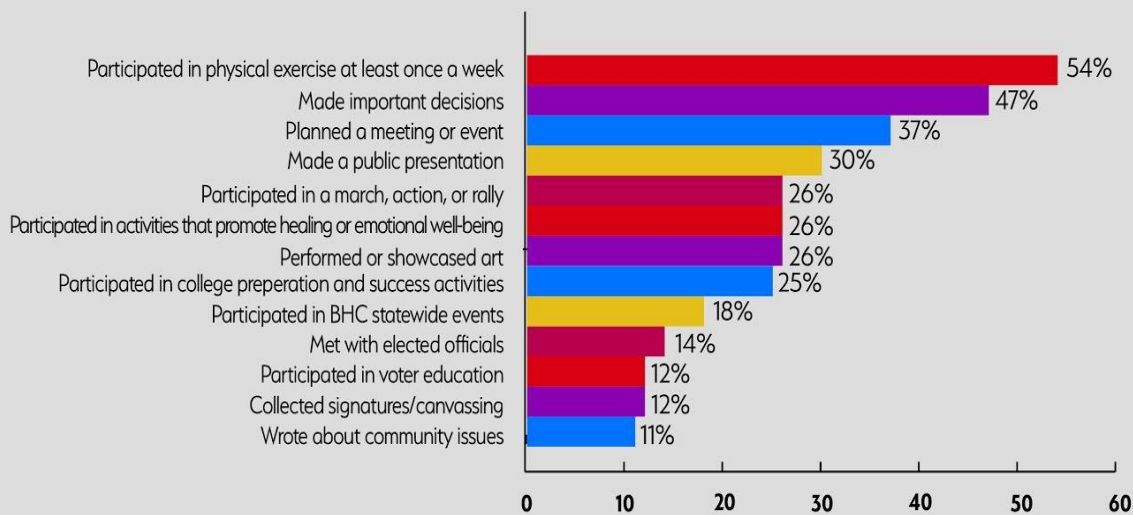
friends (42%). These findings suggest that BHC organizations attract youth who are inclined to helping their communities and are invested in their own personal development. At the same time, organizations attract members by offering a fun social environment.

Figure 2. Reason for joining BHC group



Youth in BHC-affiliated youth organizations were asked to report the types of activities that they engaged in as part of their BHC group. The list was based on common activities reported by BHC staff in an earlier survey.¹ In Del Norte and Adjacent Tribal Lands, youth most commonly claimed to have participated in physical exercise at least once a week (54%). In addition, a significant percentage made important decisions (47%), planned a meeting or event (37%), and/or made a public presentation (30%). Just over a quarter of youth engaged in activities that promote healing or emotional well-being, participated in a march, action, or rally; performed or showcased art; and/or participated in college preparation and success activities (25%). Smaller percentages participated in BHC statewide events, met with elected officials, educated voters about elections, collected signatures or canvassed, or wrote about community issues. These findings suggest that BHC organizations in Del Norte and Adjacent Tribal Lands offer youth a range of leadership and development opportunities. (See figure 3 on the next page.)

Figure 3. How youth participated in their BHC group



HOW YOUTH BENEFIT FROM THEIR INVOLVEMENT

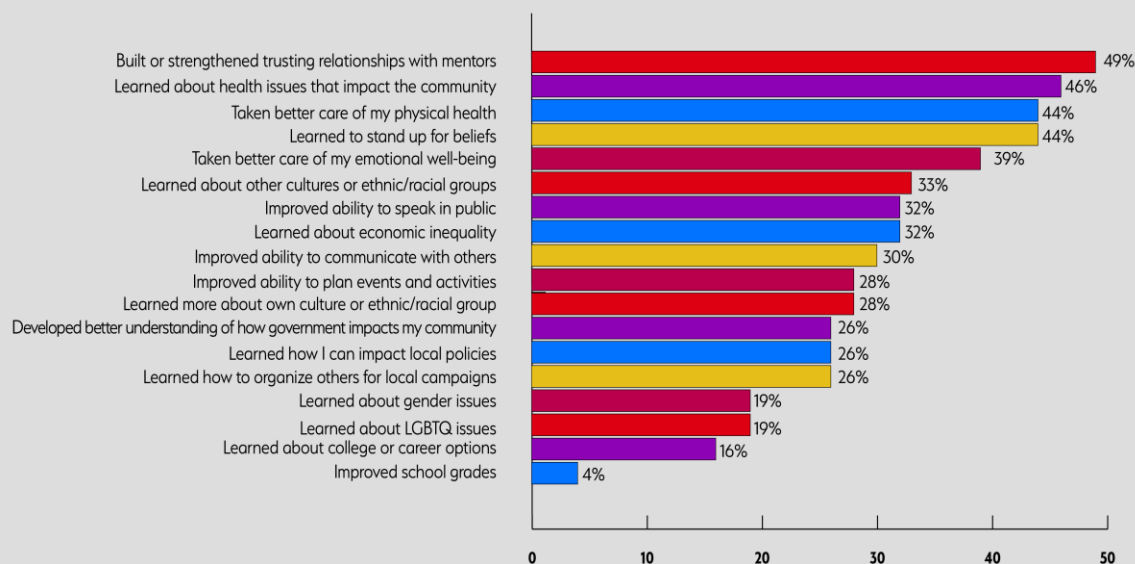
As demonstrated in earlier phases of the BHC youth program evaluation, BHC youth organizations contribute to their members' development in a variety of ways and to different degrees.² In the survey, we asked members to rate the degree to which their group involvement impacted different aspects of their personal development—did it have *no impact*, *very little impact*, *some impact*, or *a lot of impact*? Figure 4 shows the percentage of respondents who reported that their organizational involvement had “a lot of impact” on each of the areas of personal development included in the survey.

As shown in Figure 4, nearly half of youth benefited “a lot” from building or strengthening trusting relationships with mentors, as 49% reported that this was the case. A significant percentage also reported that they learned a lot about health issues that impact their community (46%), and many significantly improved their ability to stand up for their beliefs (44%). Some BHC-affiliated youth also significantly improved their ability to speak in public, communicate with others, and/or plan events and activities.

BHC-organizational affiliation had implications for members' health. While 44% claimed to have taken a lot better care of their physical health, 39% reported taking a lot better care of their emotional well-being.

Importantly, over a quarter of youth reported developing a lot better understanding of how government decisions impact their community, how they can impact local policies, and/or how to organize others for local campaigns. Finally, some youth learned a lot about their own or others' cultural and racial backgrounds, gender issues, and LGBTQ issues.

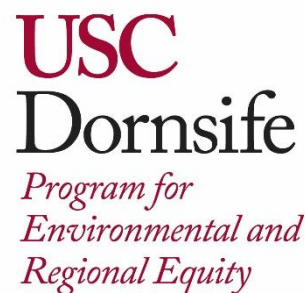
Figure 4. The degree to which BHC impacts its members: Percent responding "a lot"



EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

In recent years, youth-serving organizations in Del Norte and Adjacent Tribal Lands have largely focused on creating a safe space for healing and youth development. This is an accomplishment given the limited infrastructure in this expansive rural region. As survey results show, the work of BHC-affiliated organization has bolstered the healthy development of young people in this region. As programming evolves, BHC-affiliated organizations may potentially engage young people in organizing and advocacy efforts.

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¹ Terriquez, Veronica and Abdiel Lopez. 2016. "BHC Youth Program Inventory Survey: Key Findings." Los Angeles, USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity. Available at:

https://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/242/docs/VT_BHC_Youth_Program_Staff_Inventory_Report.2016.pdf

² Terriquez, Veronica and Gabriela Dominguez. 2014. "Building Healthy Communities Through Youth Leadership." Los Angeles, USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity. Available at: <http://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/BHC-youth-leadership/>