

# Youth Voice, Development and Healing Gatherings

**YOUNG PEOPLES  
VOICES MATTER.**

**OUR PROCESSES  
HELP AMPLIFY  
THEM.**



# Connecting and Lifting Up Young People



**Youth Voice,  
Development and  
Healing Gatherings**

# THE VISION

In the early 1990's, in his late teens, Pytor Hodgson, CEO of Three Things Consulting took part in a national speaking tour, sharing his experiences with homelessness, growing up First Nations in an adoptive non-Indigenous family, having like so many others, been adopted after having been in foster care, and the disconnection that created in his life. In addition, he spoke about environmental and social justice issues that were prevalent at the time. This sparked a path forward that led him to speak at hundreds of national and international conferences and events over the next two decades, often as a keynote speaker sharing his experience..



Pytor was regularly invited to communities to visit and offer motivational talks to young people. In school gyms, community centres, classrooms and at youth events, Pytor would use his lived experiences to encourage young people to make healthy choices and the outcomes they could lead to in your life.

Yet, those weren't always experienced by Pytor in his own life. While outwardly, life looked great, Pytor, for almost two decades struggled with a serious addiction and as a young person was diagnosed with depression and anxiety. It wasn't until 2008 that he had hit a wall and had to make a choice: would the real Pytor please stand up. Or could he? After spending an extended time in a recovery centre, followed by connecting to Elders and regularly using mental health supports, he began the long walk along the red road, one that he continues today, still clean, sober and with strategies that have kept him not only healthier, but the most authentic version of himself.







This story, Pytor's story, is how we get to today. Between 2010 and 2012, each talk Pytor offered, each community he visited, quickly flying in, and flying out, something felt off. He knew, in the moment, it mattered that he was there, kind of. While he may have been able to serve his role, motivate an audience in the moment, he began to question what he was truly offering. In his work over the previous 20 years, in addition to speaking, from front line youth and family work, advocacy, program design, delivery and management and evaluation – he came to understand a powerful truth: relationships matter.

This led the creation of Three Things Consulting where Pytor wanted to instill in young people #the3Things – You Matter. You Are Important. You Belong. He began doing what he knew: traveling across Canada and delivering this message, community to community, event to event and school gym to gym. Yet, that aching feeling was there – that while it might be helpful, in a moment, what was he, and Three Things, doing to create the most meaningful, intergenerational change needed in these spaces. Was flying in and out, where five days later young people didn't remember his name, (and fairly presuming not lots of the message) helping to address the centuries long hurt caused by colonization, systemic violence and the ongoing racism and discrimination experienced by young people?

Maybe not...

With these understandings Pytor and the team at Three Things, anchored in approaches and knowledge carried for generations, began to develop a series of processes delivered in collaboration with First Nations and community-based organizations. While primarily used with small groups, they were also components in Three Things larger scale signature projects, such as Msit No'Kmaq: All My Relations, (a partnership project that saw 45 Indigenous youth take part in an almost month-long sail training, leadership development and identity building program that had them sail from Halifax to France). Regardless of size, scope or content of a particular process, each were anchored in key beliefs:





Young people need to learn about and truly understand #the3Things and how they apply to themselves. To do that most effectively, they need to experience **respect** as an essential part in creating relationships that matter, and that takes time.

Healing requires **honesty**, and young people deserve spaces where they can be vulnerable yet safe with an understanding that their path forward doesn't have to be that of others.

They can have shared experiences, but different outcomes.

The **wisdom** held by young people matters. Young people's voices are important, and they deserve and need safer and brave spaces to share their ideas, challenges, hopes, visions, and hurts. The **courage** they demonstrate needs to be acknowledged by adults listening and acting on what is shared. Being heard is an anchor in the path of healing.

Young people are and can be leaders today, not simply 'tomorrow's leaders'. Yet they need to build on their own capacity and develop skills that can assist them in speaking out, supporting one and other, coping with life's challenges and being **love** driven as leaders.

Young people need to know who they are – inherently. In doing so, they can celebrate themselves, where and who they come from, and how core **truths** have guided their peoples for generations. Their roots matter and are the tether between the past, the present and future. It further allows young people to feel pride, and **humility**, in who they are and their connection to all their relations.



It isn't a coincidence these beliefs align with the Seven Sacred Teachings, as the Grandmothers and Elders who have contributed so much to the development and delivery of our work, as advisors, carers, champions, helpers and healers have reinforced these as the values that are essential for us to demonstrate in our work: and we have seen the results.

Our Youth Voice, Development and Healing Gatherings have been experienced by Indigenous young people, Black youth, youth in care, and young people from all backgrounds and lived experiences, including those often identified as leaders with each process producing powerful outcomes: for the young people, the adults who join them, and their communities or organizations. In addition to individual First Nations, some of our organizational clients have included national youth serving organizations such as Pathways to Education and Girl Guides of Canada.

# 'C' THE PROCESS

Three Things Youth Voice, Development and Healing

Gatherings are rooted in relationship building, creative spaces and approaches that lift up and honour young people. Each activity and Gathering incorporates:

**CEREMONY**  
**CIRCLES**  
**COMMUNITY BUILDING**  
**CAPACITY BUILDING**  
**CONTENT THAT MATTERS**



When we gather, whether in community or bringing young people and allies to an event we specifically design to meet their needs, these core component are what have been proven to generate positive experiences and outcomes and in particular, ongoing development and action in communities and organizations.

Regardless of the background of participants we open with Ceremony, led either by Three Things Grandmothers, Elders and Knowledge Keepers and / or in collaboration with local individuals who carry this knowledge. While never mandatory to participate in Ceremony, when we open in this good way we bring our hearts and minds together as one. For some, this is an introduction to these traditional ways of being together, and it has been our experience it is a strong anchor for our shared journey together.



We use Circles rooted in a strength based approach that allows for young people and allies to share their experiences, insights, ideas and needs in creative processes.

We created these processes, what Western narratives might call trainings, conferences, or workshops in a different, though not new approach: one that doesn't trade off professionalism or outcomes, instead, they allow goals to be met in a more traditional way. Our process is rooted in a history that looks to repair harm, strengthen relationships, and improve communication. We welcome participants to sit in Circle, where a series of expectations and guidance, shared for 1000's of years from generation to generation, sets a tone that allows for challenging yet important discussions to take place.

Circles are widely used throughout the world to help facilitate meaningful dialogue, including within many Indigenous Peoples, here in Canada and abroad. The Circle, as described in *The Sacred Fire* (1993) shares that 'In traditional Native society, a sharing of one's journey is a great teacher, for it acknowledges that the pain, the laughter and love we experience can bring us closer together and helps us learn from one and other experiences.'

Our invitation is to adopt the Seven Sacred Teachings as the anchor of our Circles, as these are strengthened when we are working, sharing, and learning together.

Collectively we practice the laws described in the teachings: Respect, Honesty, Wisdom, Love, Courage, Truth, and Humility. By being in Circle it allows us to see each other, to have contact with each other directly and reminds us, that regardless of your role, lived experience or capacity – we are all equal in the Circle; we will all have the space needed to define as our own.

The Circle promotes understanding, builds trust, helps us solve problems, reminds us that we are not alone, share in our common experiences and respect not just each other, but ourselves. We may discuss challenging topics and share traumatic episodes that generate painful moments inside a Circle, which is natural. It is how we respond to this, by being together in the Circle that is important. Those moments are lessened as they are not attached at that moment to feelings of isolation and shame; those attachments are removed.

There are no winners and no losers in the Circle. Simply a greater informed community and strengthened understanding of how to move forward in developing meaning, respectful and relevant messaging on the topic at hand.



The Gatherings we host develop a community amongst everyone present. In our 30 years of standing alongside young people we have seen how important it is for them to know they belong, meaning, when they are in our shared spaces, there is a feeling of security and support along with a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity.

An increased sense of belonging leads to collaboration, problem solving, and healthy decision making. It also helps participants understand that they matter, and their experiences, insights and ideas are important.

We do this by including large and small group activities; discussions using age-appropriate tools, creative spaces, opportunities for intentional play, and culturally related activities or excursions. The process will be developed in a way that at the completion each youth feels that they mattered to the process, their sharing and contribution was important, and they belonged in our community.

Young people (and allies) who participate in our spaces are developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes that communities and organizations need to survive, adapt, and thrive. They build confidence, understanding and pride in their identity. Capacity building happens as young people participate, naturally. Following our gatherings, they are best equipped to become active leaders in their own spaces and places.

The content of our Gatherings are anchored in the needs of your community, organization or young people. While we have several predesigned sessions we can offer, and have proven to be successful, if there is an issue or need you identify, we can work with you to create a process that meets that need. What matters to you matters to us and we will tailor our program to meet those needs.

Content of past gatherings have included: life celebration and suicide prevention, substance use and abuse, experiences of youth in/from care, LeaderSeed, Everyone Is Sacred, education, Lifting up 2SLGBT+ young people, reconciliation and, violence prevention.

Sometimes the content can be challenging, as are the conversations. Too often that is why in some spaces, young people are not currently engaged in them. There is discomfort in bringing these conversations to younger people. It is also why we developed these gatherings: to create space for young people to have their voices heard in conversations that matter to them and their wellbeing. These are heart and spirit issues, anchored in growing knowledge and creating action plans to address them, from the voices of those most affected.

# POTENTIAL STEPS WE CAN WALK TOGETHER

**Connect with Community / Organization:** What is the need, determining what collaboration will look like, confirming budget, signing Shared Agreements and Contract

**Design A Process:** Finalize plan, timeline, roles and responsibilities

**Community Visit:** Over 2/3 days our team meet the young people and adult allies who are/may participate: hearing their ideas with a focus on relationship building

**Gathering in Ottawa:** Designed and delivered over 4 -6 days resulting in key outcomes and deliverables

**Support and Follow Up:** Return to community to support youth and allies in amplifying participants calls to action/ recommendations/ideas to leadership

**Evaluation & Storytelling:** We can provide qualitative and quantitative evaluations of the experience, the process and outcomes.

# APPLICATION PROCESSES OR SELF SELECTING

Determining who will attend an in person gathering can be a challenging process. Some key questions might include:

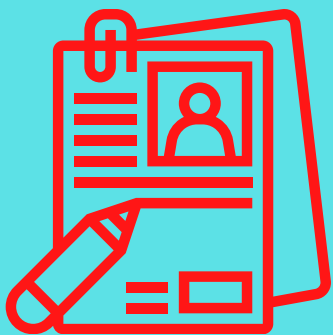
Do we open it up to anyone who wants to attend?

What age range of participants are we thinking of?

Do we want an application process where youth are selected?

If so, what are the key components we should look for?

Who should select the youth from that process?



We can help.

Our team can design a selection process that meets your needs and/or other communication tools including promotional material, all related consent forms, and information packages for youth and families.



# COMMUNITY VISITS

While not mandatory, what we have learned is that an initial visit to a Nation, community or organization can prove to be an essential first step in developing relationships between our team and the youth and adult allies who will be involved.

These visits are reciprocal – where the Three Things Team could offer focused workshops, presentations on the Gathering to youth and families, and planning with the adult allies supporting youth. In return, the youth and or community could host activities, youth led community tours and other events that would introduce the Three Things team to the youth and community to help develop trust and understanding of our work and role.

We can also help create a local process where young people determine and influence the final topic / goals of the in person gathering.

This initial visit helps cement an understanding of who Three Things is and what the in person gathering would/could look like. If an application process is being used locally to determine who would attend the in person gathering it could be promoted by Three Things and used a tool to encourage engagement.

These community visits are most often between 1 – 4 days depending on the activities to be undertaken.



# IN PERSON GATHERINGS

We have found that the time required for the most meaningful engagement, providing a quality experience that is rooted in community building, ceremony and content that is relevant, responsive, and respectful is 4 - 6 days.

We will provide full management of the gathering and liaise between the needs of youth, adult allies, other stakeholders and provide updates / changes to the program as required, provide safety, security and wellness supports for all participants including emergency readiness, coordination of facilitators and additional supports and coordination of guests, speakers and outings/excursions.

Our team checks in once per day to ensure that the process is working, and the objectives are being met.

We keep space open into the evening where participants can visit, play music, have snacks, and be supported by members of our team. By providing activities for engagement throughout the day we reinforce our commitment to keeping young people safe and secure.

As part of the gathering management and with our Grandmothers and Elders leadership we will be responsible to ensure to respect protocol and anchor a cultural component in our opening, teachings, and engagement with all participants.

The event will be rooted in the four directions with the young people being designated to a Council when they arrive, and we will have a team of 3 experienced facilitators and 3 - 4 supports who will help deliver the final program to the youth and allies.



A friendly reminder

You Are  
Important.





The facilitators will also be responsible for providing support to the youth and be able to address issues that can arise when youth are travelling away from home. They will be able to support the adult allies to ensure all are having a meaningful experience while building their capacity in youth engagement.

A fourth facilitator is in place to provide ongoing support to the other facilitators and the youth and will be an experienced youth leader / child and

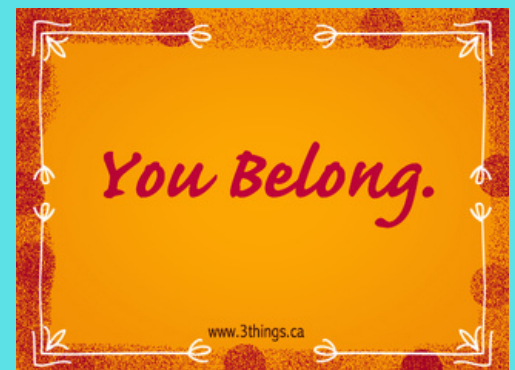
youth worker. This person will manage the off-site activities, evening programming, provide 24-hour support, (particularly in the evening and overnight) and be the point of contact for any unforeseen emergency.

The physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of young people and adults at Three Things hosted gatherings is our primary priority. We will create space and supports to allow for overall well-being. From waking up to calling it a day, our team will be there to provide the necessary supports, guidance, and accountability to the young people.

We will use a daily evaluation tool, rooted in the four directions, to gather input from participants on their experience and insight from that day. These are reviewed each evening to gauge where young people are at in the process, determine if changes to the process are necessary and to ensure the safety and wellness of each participant. We can explore a more focused outcome evaluation as an enhancement to the program that can provide a more in-depth report on the personal outcomes for the young people.

A key component of our gatherings, and what separates it from others is the significant role adults play in honouring, celebrating and engaging with young people. They too will come together and gather. In participating, the adults become Amplifiers helping carry forward the voices of the youth participants into their own lives, communities, and systems.

We will author a short process report: highlighting the experience and outcomes generated by the gathering. This report will be delivered within 30 days of the gathering and will include photos, evaluative feedback and final ratified version of any statements, declarations, or recommendations that the young people produce.





# Finding Balance At Youth Voice, Development and Healing Gatherings



**You matter.  
You are important.  
You belong.**



Three  
Things  
Consulting

# EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL PROGRAMMING OPPORTUNITIES

How You(th) Want To Be Engaged

Substances Speak: So Should We

Listening to the Voices of Youth

I Am A Leader Today

LeaderSEED

Walking A New Path:  
Transitioning from Youth To Young Adulthood

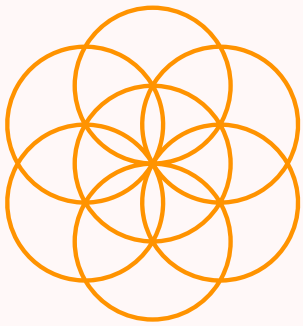
I Am Indigenous

Seven Sacred Teachings  
Learning From The Past For Our Present & The Future

To learn more about any of these programs, please contact  
us directly.



A Three Things Youth Voice,  
Development & Healing Program



# Everyone Is Sacred



## Providing:

- youth the opportunity to identify their own strengths and challenges
- an increased understanding of the causes and consequences of negative risk taking
- strategies to prevent unhealthy decision making
- an increased level of pride in their culture, community, and Nation



# A Three Things Youth Voice, Development & Healing Program



**3** You matter.  
You are important.  
You belong.

Three  
Things  
Consulting



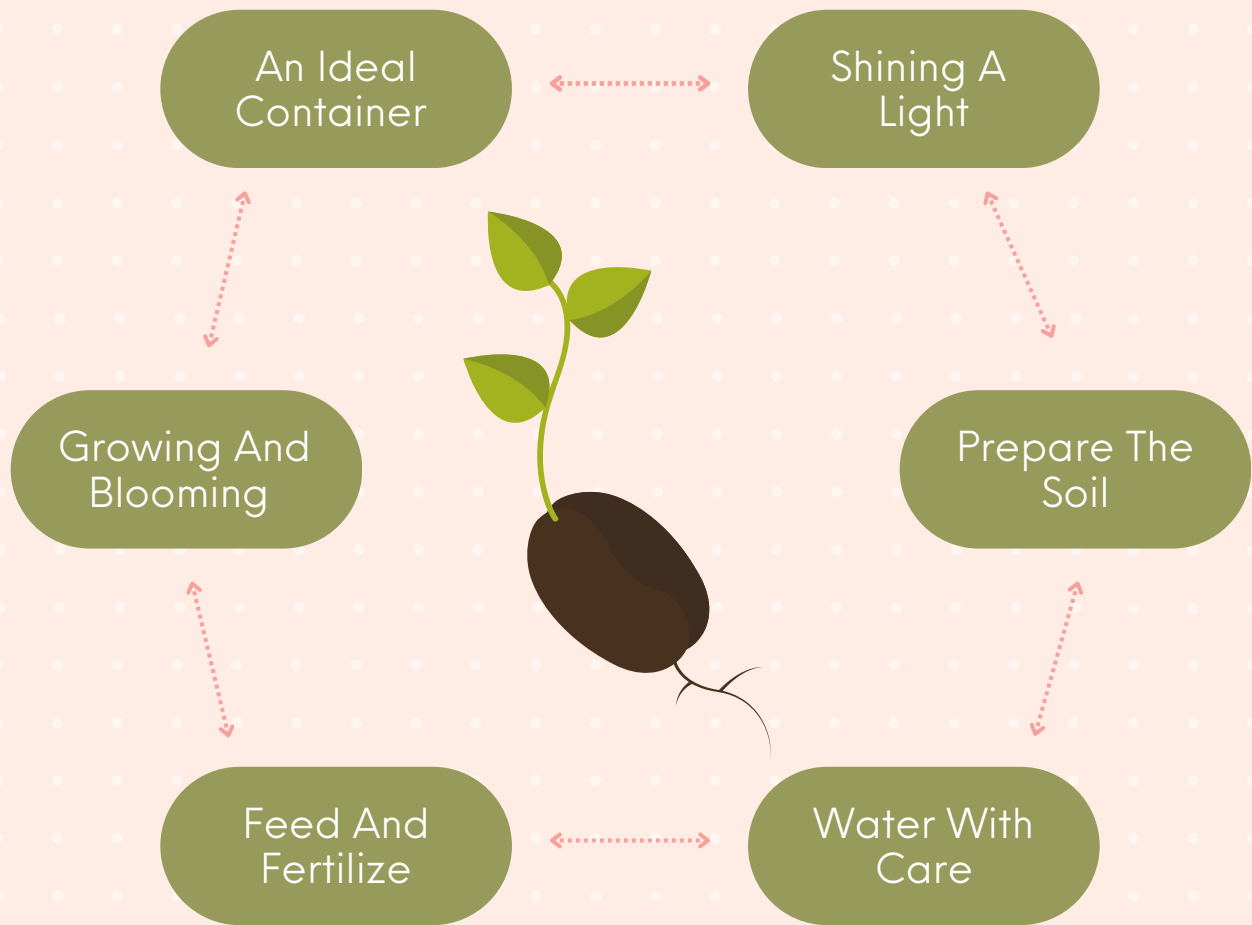
# I Am Indigenous

Building knowlege, pride and self-identity with Indigenous youth



# A Three Things Youth Voice, Development & Healing Program

Bringing youth together building on their inherent skills and gifts to grow their leadership capacity for their community, Nation or organization.



[www.3things.ca](http://www.3things.ca)

**3** Three  
Things  
Consulting  
You matter.  
You are important.  
You belong.

LeaderSeed

# BUDGET NOTES

When we provide proposed budgets they include a team of recognized leaders who are equipped to lead powerful and meaningful experiences that generate the outcomes needed for positive change. For a group of 20 youth and 3 - 5 adult allies, we generally have a team of 8 - 9.

It also includes:

- Preparatory materials for youth and families
- Ground Transportation to/from airport and all venues while at the Gathering
- Youth Accommodation in Ottawa (Double)
- Adult Ally and Three Things Team Accommodation (Single)
- All meals (onsite and off property) and snacks for all participants
- Community building activities offsite
- Materials including welcome gifts and prizes
- We can also manage all travel related components to/from Ottawa if required

We have a suite of enhancements to strengthen the program: these options can enhance the event should it be desired. They are components we recommend based on our experience designing and delivering youth programming.

## Telling the Story

There are several powerful ways that the information generated and process itself can be used to inform leaders, decision makers and young people. This gathering can be a benchmark for others with the production of a creative process to help tell the story ensures a legacy exists from the input.

## Storyteller

A dedicated note taker, photographer, interviewer and report writer providing a fulsome report on the Gathering.

## Graphic Recorder

Having someone onsite synthesizing complex concepts and youths discussions into engaging, digestible pictures that can be used moving forward. The artist works to capture the key ideas and communicate these through a visual summary, using words, notes and sketches.



# BUDGET NOTES

## Video(s)

- A full documentary that highlights the experience, learnings and narrative would be a powerful tool to use in future work. This would include interviews and profiles of youth and Amplifiers that details the experience and showcases the final outcomes.
- Short form snackable videos that provide snapshots and are produced fully onsite and ongoing – allowing others to follow along on social media and online, with each short video showcasing a moment, experience or idea coming out of the gathering.

See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNyvOyLYNYc> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jfgC3fqyouA&t=137s> for examples of our work as Executive Producers.

## Sharing the Stories Evaluation

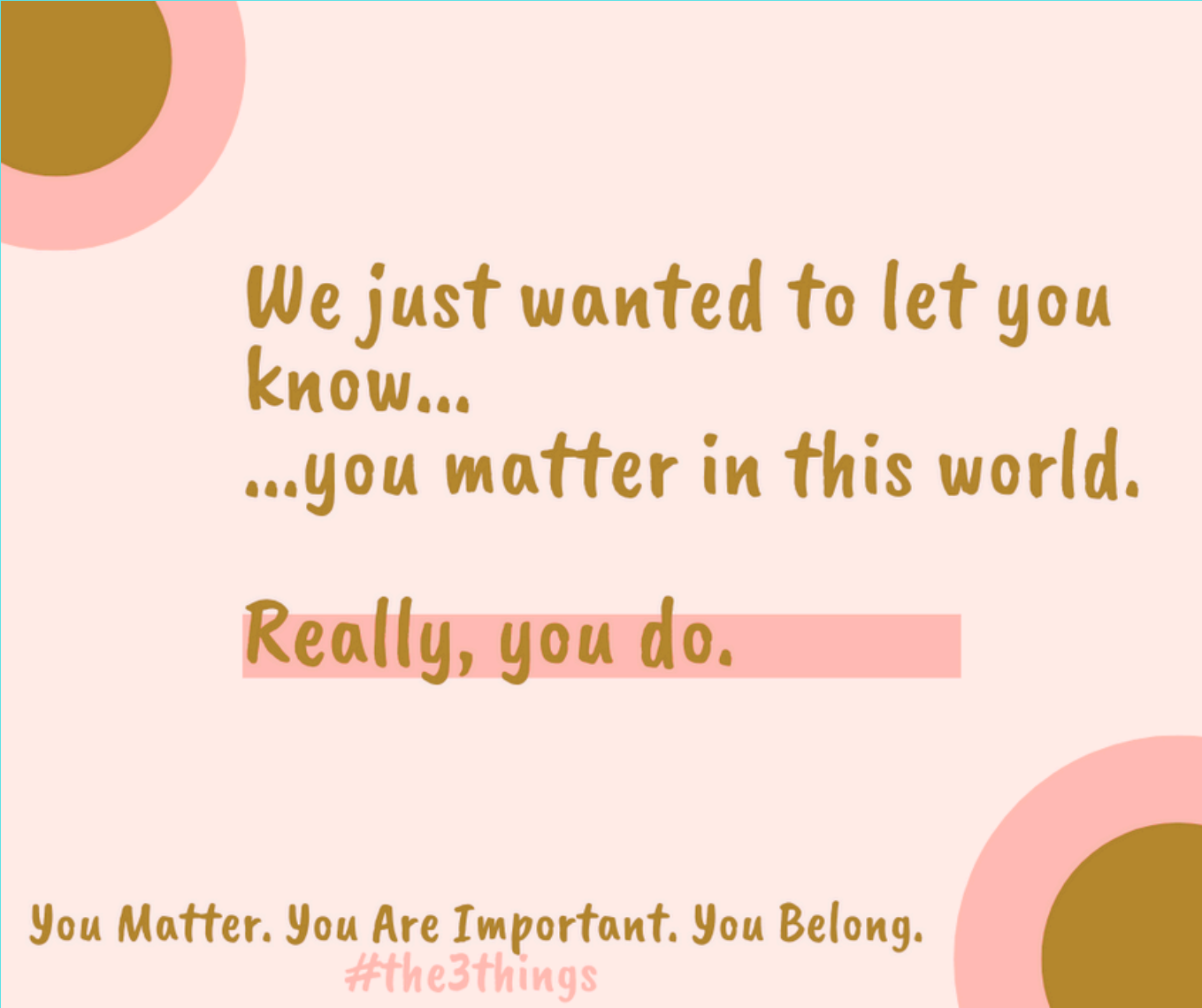
A research and evaluation platform for youth, organizations and governments led by the Students Commission of Canada and used by more than 315 organizations and programs across Canada including more than 25 Indigenous organizations, programs and First Nations . They develop a customized evaluation plan that is grounded in sharing the voice of young people and reporting allows for anonymous comparisons to similar related activities to determine the strengths and challenges a program may have faced. Their platform includes reliable and valid evaluation tools and methodology grounded in the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR). With you, we would review their tools and select the ones that are the most appropriate for your gathering.

## Onsite Honouring Event/Concert

Andrew Joseph Stevens III, more widely known as Drives the Common Man, has gained a strong following through his energetic and supremely danceable covers, remixes, and mashups on TikTok over the past few years and the release of charted tracks. Performing throughout Turtle Island he embeds his Mi'kmaq roots, (for example incorporating the flute that has become a fan-favourite), and has fast become a positive role model to Indigenous youth from sea to sea to sea. We can facilitate a concert that honours the youth participants headlined by Drives, with or without additional artists.

# CONTACT US

For further discussion for your own Youth Voice, Development and Healing Gathering please contact us at [youmatter@3things.ca](mailto:youmatter@3things.ca)



We just wanted to let you  
know...  
...you matter in this world.

Really, you do.

You Matter. You Are Important. You Belong.  
#the3things