

For Youth, By Youth

Healthy Living Youth Council mid-year retreat

The [Healthy Living Youth Council \(HLYC\)](#) is a group of secondary school students from around the province who share a passion for promoting health. This is the second year of the HLYC, and this year's council has 13 members. The members of the council are the driving force behind the realization of a "for youth, by youth" model of engaging students in healthy living activities in their school communities to make a positive impact. The purpose of the HLYC is to give students the opportunity, tools, and support to ask questions, provide feedback, and apply their ideas towards the promotion of healthy living and healthy schools. Through this process, they develop into healthy living champions.

This year's council members, along with two HLYC alumni members, recently returned from connecting once again as a group at [Camp Squeah](#) in Hope for their mid-year retreat. The group first came together in November 2013 at the kick-off event at [Camp Fircom](#) on Gambier Island. Since then, the council has met a number of goals and continue to bring the HLYC vision and mission into reality. They have engaged in various learning opportunities, including participation in monthly webinars and attendance at the [Balancing Our Minds](#) event in February 2014.

Camp Squeah provided a beautiful environment to allow for team building and healthy living opportunities, such as healthy living workshops and walks in the forest, while the youth worked together to reflect on their year thus far, plan for what is ahead and brainstorm about authentic student engagement. There were also opportunities for skill development in leadership, communication, collaboration and project planning. Each of the HLYC members is currently leading an action project in their own school community and the retreat provided them with an opportunity to share with each other about their projects as well as collect feedback and suggestions. Some members of the council are specifically addressing how students can be engaged more in their health and learning, while others are addressing aspects of health such as healthy eating at their school and the mental wellbeing of students.

One HLYC member, Sheetal, shares her experience of the retreat:

The mid-year retreat was an unforgettable experience and definitely worthwhile. My favourite part of the retreat was on the first night where we collaborated well enough to prepare a healthy, nutritious dinner, like a family. The other thing I really enjoyed was the workshops, specifically, the Student Engagement Subcommittee workshop and the nutrition workshop. By taking part in these workshops, I was able to increase my listening, cooperation and leadership skills. We took a great amount of time discussing our personal goals with regards to our progress with our Action Projects. Another highlight was the team-building rope activity we did outdoors. The objective of that activity was to see how effectively we would communicate with one another to meet our goal of walking across the ropes. As the retreat came to an end, we sat in a circle and had an amazing opportunity to share our final thoughts and overall successes. Now that the retreat is over, I cannot wait to see everyone at the annual Symposium!

The HLYC members are invited to attend the [Healthy Schools Leadership Symposium](#) on May 5th, 2014 to share information about their action projects and their experience in the HLYC.

To learn more about the HLYC, click [here](#). To view pictures of the HLYC Retreat at Camp Squeah, click [here](#).