



PINE RIVER INSTITUTE

Mission, Vision and the Importance of Research & Evaluation

The Pine River Institute is a therapeutic and educational community dedicated to improving the health, development and quality of life of troubled Canadian youth and their families who are struggling with addictive behaviour. Our mission is to provide the highest quality care to our participants so they can regain their lives, their families, and their futures. We are also committed to advancing the field of adolescent development and addiction treatment.

We achieve our mission by offering an integrated therapeutic learning program which is family centered, comprehensive, individualized, and takes place in a safe, substance free environment.

Our vision is to transform the way that adolescents and families struggling with addictive behaviour are treated in Canada and beyond.

Research and evaluation is a critical part of the Pine River program and the foundation is being laid for a comprehensive program that focuses on the following areas:

Process Evaluation
Outcome Evaluation
Community and Academic Collaborations
Organizational Capacity

We use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to assess program functioning and to gain knowledge about what works for the young people and families we serve.

Team members advising on Pine River's program evaluation include Belinda Seagram, PhD, C.Psych, Clinical Director; Eric King, MSW, Director of Family Programs; Dr. Harvey Schipper, MD FRCP(C), Director; Samantha Yamada, M.Ed, Doctoral Candidate (Psychology), Research and Evaluation Coordinator; and Karen Minden, PhD, CEO.

Defining Success

Pine River Institute is committed to evaluating success based on quality of life and functional living indicators, including the following:

- Improved physical health
- Attending school or working
- Not returning to anti-social or risk-taking behaviours
- Meeting mutually agreed aftercare goals in student-parent contract such as attendance at school, curfew, substance-free home, advising parents of whereabouts and social plans, part time job, attendance at aftercare groups and counselling, participation in chores at home.
- Reduced parental stress

Methodology

The in house research and evaluation program combines quantitative and qualitative measures at multiple points during a participant's time in the program. Follow-up data was gained through student and parent self reports. Limitations to self report methodology include the possibility of bias due to demand characteristics and selective attrition. An effort was made to test the validity and generalizability of the self-report data through collection of collateral reports of treatment progress from the clinical staff team.

Statistical tests of significance were not applied to these figures. Rather, they are presented graphically, so that trends might be noted in this preliminary stage of program evaluation.

Quantitative Measures

The following measures have been selected based on four criteria:

1. Alignment with the organizational mission statement
2. Alignment with community and academic collaborators
3. Validity and reliability of the tool
4. Ease of use

Critical points of measurement for quantitative tools are:

- ✓ Prior to entry into the program (or within the first 24 hours)
- ✓ Upon completion of the Outdoor Leadership Experience
- ✓ When exiting the Pine River residential program
- ✓ 3 months post-program
- ✓ 6 months post-program
- ✓ 1 year post-program
- ✓ 2 years post-program

Qualitative Measures

Qualitative data is being collected in written form. The written application packages, feedback questionnaires (post parent retreat) and written portions of

the post-wilderness questionnaire provided rich information that helps us to better understand the contexts and experiences of our participants.

Students

Construct	Tool	Admission	Post OLE	At Graduation	3 months	6 months	1 yr	2 yr
Stage of Change	Socrates (version 8D)	Y	Y	-	-	-	-	-
Quality of Life	Comprehensive Quality of Life, Adolescent Version	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Mental Health	Beck Depression and Anxiety	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Child Behaviour Change	YOQ – self report	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Parents

Construct	Tool	Admission	After Parent Retreat	At Graduation	3 months	6 months	1 yr	2 yr
Stress	SIPA	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Quality of Life	Comprehensive Quality of Life, Adult Version	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Mental Health	Beck Depression and Anxiety	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Child Behaviour Change	YOQ – parent report	Y	-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Community and Academic Collaborations

In order to augment the impact of the research being conducted at Pine River Institute, we have been working on collaborations with local academic institutions as well as the leading researchers in the fields of wilderness therapy and residential therapeutic schools.

The National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs (NATSAP)

NATSAP has initiated a comprehensive research program that includes the creation of a large database comprised of some of the top programs in North America. Pine River has joined this collaborative research effort and has been in close communication with the lead research coordinators (at the University of New Hampshire) to ensure that each step taken by the Pine River research program is aligned with the NATSAP methodology and objectives.

For more details on NATSAP please see: www.natsap.org

York University

Pine River Institute has been selected as one of two programs that are the focus of a doctoral level seminar on program evaluation at York University. The course, being taught by Dr. Debra Pepler (a leading Canadian Psychologist and Researcher in the area of at-risk youth), allows students to gain field experience in designing program evaluation while collaborating with the chosen organizations. A team of graduate students was assigned to Pine River and works with the organization to fine tune the design of the research program while also preparing a grant application to a provincial level funding body to support the ongoing evaluation of the program.

Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health

Pine River has been working with research consultants from the Centre on building research capacity for outcome and program evaluation. We have applied for a research grant from this organization.

Comments from Parents, Students & Professionals

YOUTH

"I just remember paddling along at five o'clock in the morning, the sun just starting to creep over...and the mist starting to disappear. It was just...calming. I can still remember the feelings...I can think back to it if I'm stressed out, instead of trying to do something else like smoke weed. It's given me something a lot healthier." – PRI graduate

"The Wilderness program at Pine River was the most life changing experience for the better. When I started, I felt hopeless, lost and just completely worthless. I couldn't find a reason to get out of bed anymore or if there was any hope for me to ever live a better life than the one I was living. My wilderness experience was the first time I ever went camping, I couldn't even imagine being away from the city sleeping in a tent but now that I'm through it I look at it as one of the most emotional times and the key to my happiness. It helped me deal with issues I didn't even realize existed, I got through many negative experiences that I had just thrown to the back of my mind and thought had disappeared but they were really adding up and affecting how I was on a day to day basis because of them. Looking back if Pine River wasn't there, I honestly don't know where I would be. - PRI student

PARENTS

"We've seen what Pine River can do. It can save lives. The Pine River staff have given us tremendous support and hope for our son's successful recovery." - PRI parent

"My child arrived home some weeks ago from treatment at the Pine River Institute...The first few days went well and I pinched myself...Two week passed. School was 'good'...at six weeks we're in a rhythm. 'Life is good,' – my child's phrase, not mine. I see a future, I believe it may be bright." – PRI parent

"What a transformation; the PRI experience is not to be believed!...Pinch me! I'm feeling like a very lucky mom!" – PRI parent

"I cannot begin to express how much I appreciate the family retreat that we had this past week. From the moment that I arrived, I felt totally relaxed and comfortable with both of you. I appreciate the expertise and support that you provided to the group during the time that we were together. The past year of my life has been extremely difficult and very isolating. I have really gone through this process alone and it was nice to be able to connect with others who were experiencing the same feelings. On some level it was comforting to know that even the couples who were going through it together still had the same feelings that I had about it.

The group exercises were very helpful and allowed me to get in touch with how I am feeling. It was nice to be able to really ask all of the hard questions that I have been trying to process in a very safe and supportive environment.

I really enjoyed meeting the other parents and now feel that I have a connection to the community. I look forward to my next visit at PRI and being able to greet the parents with a sense of understanding and empathy that everyone is going through the same thing that I am. As I had expressed before, if your child had a physical illness everyone would come and support you but when it is a psychological illness there is often a lot of blame and shame. Being able to talk about it in a warm, supportive and understanding environment is perhaps one of the first steps in the healing process.

Your level of commitment, honesty, patience and expertise is very evident. Sending my daughter to PRI is perhaps the best decision that I have ever made. If I had any doubts about the school I can now say that my mind is much clearer. From time to time I get phone calls when my daughter is frustrated and she vents but it certainly makes it easier to be even more supportive of the school after having experienced a small piece of it.

The work that you do is very important. You are changing lives in a very positive way.

Thank you for making a very important contribution in my life and especially in the life of my daughter. " - PRI parent

PROFESSIONALS

"When I first met with staff at Pine River Institute to lay plans for your educational program, I was suitably impressed by what I saw. Over the course of later, more extensive involvement with PRI, my impressions about the work you do grew stronger with each visit.

In my years as regional director of education for the Ministry of Education's western region, and in subsequent work I have done in Malaysia and at Trent University in Peterborough, I have had the opportunity to work with many high quality initiatives. I can with confidence say that none has been able to match the quality I have seen first-hand at PRI. Your vision, mission, passion, and dedication to quality are unparalleled.

In addition to establishing a much needed service for our youth, you have established a model for the delivery of other intervention programs in our province. To that end, I wish you continued good fortune in your untiring commitment to the young people of Ontario."
- Terry Boucher, B.A., B.Ed, M.Ed

"I am truly impressed by the Pine River Institute in all ways. My experience has been so good that I have been telling everyone about you guys. Keep up the good work." -
Adolescent protection worker