


# Life Starts Now

HOW TO PLAN A DRY GRAD



BRITISH  
COLUMBIA

The background of the page is a solid grey color. Overlaid on this are several thin, white, straight lines that intersect at various points, creating a complex, abstract geometric pattern. The lines are of varying lengths and orientations, some running parallel to each other and others crossing them at different angles. The overall effect is that of a technical drawing or a modern graphic design element.

*THIS RESOURCE IS INTENDED AS A GUIDE TO ASSIST PARENTS, PARENT GROUPS, SCHOOL ORGANIZERS AND STUDENTS ORGANIZE A SAFE, ALCOHOL AND DRUG FREE AFTER GRADUATION CELEBRATION. THIS GUIDE PROVIDES SUGGESTIONS AND GUIDELINES ONLY AND IS IN NO WAY CONSIDERED A DEFINITIVE RESOURCE.*

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# Introduction

»» *For Grade 12 students across British Columbia, high school graduation parties are an important rite of passage and jumping off point into adulthood. The convocation, the banquet, and the dance are the social events that define where high school ends and “the rest of life” begins. It is a time to celebrate, a time to say goodbye to childhood, and a time to look to the future.*

*Immediately after the formal ceremonies and events, many graduates continue their celebrations by attending after-grad parties, and, since the mid-1990s, more and more schools and parents are choosing to stage an after-grad party that is “dry”.*

*A dry grad is an all-night supervised party for graduating students and their guests, with absolutely no alcohol or drugs allowed. A dry grad party immediately follows the formal convocation, banquet, and/or dance, and typically ends at 5:00 or 6:00 AM the following morning.*

The party generally features enticing activities, prizes, and entertainment designed to encourage graduates to attend. Since the drinking legal age in B.C. is 19, the *only* option available to organizers is to host a dry grad.

A dry grad requires parents, sponsors, and communities to work together to commemorate the success of the graduating students and to send them on their way in a safe and celebratory style. By helping to plan and stage an unforgettable dry grad, parents and teachers give grads the opportunity to reap the rewards of responsible behaviour, and to recognize that alcohol is not essential for fun.

This guide covers dry grad planning from start to finish, incorporating ideas and suggestions for success from previous dry grad organizers, information on specific B.C. legislation relevant to dry grad planning, and more.

In the end, there is no “right” way to plan a dry grad. Successful dry grad events have been both large and small. The common thread that runs through them all is that they are organized by a committed and caring group of volunteers, and they don’t permit the use of alcohol or drugs.

This guide was written to support parents, teachers and grads in their efforts to plan a celebration for a very special, one-of-a-kind moment; a moment where each grad can truly reflect that... Life Starts Now!





# Questions and Answers

»» *The aim of a dry grad party is primarily to reduce the risk of harm to the graduates, and the community at large, on a night when that risk is unusually high. It is an event where graduates can have the time of their lives without risking their lives — and without breaking the law. The size and scope of dry grad parties is intended to reflect the graduates' achievement, and acknowledge the years of hard work they put into completing their high school education.*

## What is a Dry Grad Party?

In its strictest and simplest sense, a dry grad party is an all-night after-grad celebration where a complete prohibition on drug and alcohol use is enforced. Dry grad parties typically offer an exciting and absorbing variety of fun activities, compelling entertainment, and valuable prizes, in order to entice graduates and their guests to attend and experience a fun time without alcohol and other drugs, including tobacco.

Dry grads have established a new tradition of drug- and alcohol-free celebrations because they demonstrate that a great party — at any time — doesn't need drugs and alcohol to be fun.

## Who Organizes the Dry Grad?

Dry grads require the energy and devotion of a core group of parent volunteers who do the overall planning and presentation of the party. While students, teacher advisors, and school administrators are the primary organizers of the formal graduation ceremony, it is parents who normally take responsibility for organizing a dry grad party. For the event itself, as many as 100 volunteers can be required to supervise partygoers, run and organize activities, and serve food.

Students of the graduating class sometimes become involved in organizing dry grad in various ways. For instance, they might be representatives on the organizing committee or a sub-committee, act as liaisons between the dry grad organizers and the graduates, or assist with fundraising events and other sub-committee work. However, many successful dry grad parties are organized without any assistance from students.

## How Does a Dry Grad Work?

The dry grad party should immediately follow the formal graduation ceremonies, which may include the convocation, banquet, and dance. If the formal part of the graduation (which is also a dry event) concludes at 11:00 pm, the dry grad should start at that time, so that there is no unscheduled or unsupervised time for the graduates to fill between the parties.

To make sure that no outside alcohol or drugs make their way into the party, and to transport the grads from the dance to the dry grad venue, some dry grad organizers arrange to have buses standing by, and volunteers in place to search bags before the grads board the buses.

Celebrants are not allowed to leave and return once they have entered the venue where the party is being held. Some dry grads have police present at the door and as the partygoers arrive they are screened to make sure they are not under the influence.

The dry grad runs straight through until the next morning, typically until 5:00 or 6:00 AM, to ensure that graduates do not leave to go to another party. When graduates are kept occupied until the early hours of the morning, they are more inclined to “call it a night” by the time the party ends—and go home safe and sober. Parents or other responsible adults pick grads up at the end of the party, so no one drives home after a sleepless night.

So that grads can change out of their formal party wear into more casual clothing that is better suited to the dry grad activities, a clothing check is set up at the school either the day of, or the day before the party. Grads can drop off bags and backpacks with fresh clothing, where they can be checked for drugs or alcohol, and be waiting for them to change into once they arrive at the dry grad venue.

Tickets are sold for the event to graduates, their escorts, and guests. Some dry grads require ticket buyers to register contact information in case a parent or guardian needs to be called. This information may be needed in various situations: for example, if ticket holders come to the grad already drunk or high, they will not be admitted. Also if a partygoer wants to leave the party and go home early, the organizers will telephone their contact person to pick them up.

In some communities, parent groups from two or three schools work together to present a joint dry grad. The dinner and dance are separate, and then a combined dry grad is offered for the graduates and their guests. While students enjoy a friendly rivalry between schools during sporting events and the like, there is typically a high level of friendship and camaraderie between the schools at the dry grad.

A dry grad is designed to be an overwhelmingly positive experience for the graduates. A fun party will generate word-of-mouth interest and enthusiasm among future graduates (and will lead to future dry grad parties) for years to come. Accordingly, the party should feature great entertainment.

To encourage graduates to remain at the party until the very end, special prizes are given away throughout the night, usually culminating with a “grand prize” draw as the festivities are drawing to a close.

## ***Where Do Dry Grads Take Place?***

Since dry grad parties last all night, organizers should consider the impact of the event on the surrounding area when choosing a location for the party. Issues such as traffic, noise, and parking availability should be taken into account.

The venue should have enough space to accommodate a number of different activities and entertainment. It should also feature controlled access so all entrances and exits can be monitored by security volunteers.

Locations that would be appropriate for a dry grad party include a local recreation centre, a school or college facility, an amusement park or water park, or a convention centre.

## ***What Happens at a Dry Grad?***

There is no single prescribed event or activity that must take place as part of a dry grad. Since one of the goals of a dry grad is to provide graduates with an evening of exhilarating entertainment, the activities chosen are usually highly original, unusual, and compelling.

Many organizers survey the senior class to find out what events and entertainment they would like to have at their party. However, some organizers like the idea of surprising the graduates; in that case, it can be helpful to look at what other dry grad events have done to excite and capture the imagination of their graduates.

Some popular dry grad entertainment ideas include live music, photo booths, inflatable games (such as Obstacle Course, Gladiator Joust and Sumo Wrestling), swimming and other sports, magicians, fortune tellers or hypnotists.

In addition to the entertainment, free food and beverages are served throughout the party. The menu generally consists of “finger foods,” thus reducing the need for cutlery and other more formal dining arrangements.



Holding prize giveaways at dry grads has proven to be an effective way to entice graduates to attend and stay throughout the evening. Some dry grad organizers try to have one prize for each person attending the party.

## What is the Dry Grad Planning Timeline?

As with any other big party, the sooner planning begins the better. To ensure that the location of choice is secured, organizers may need to book one year before the event.

Also, organizers need to keep in mind that many donors and sponsors may need months of advance notice in order to prepare and deliver their donations or services.

In addition, large companies and corporations will often require applications for funding to be submitted long before the actual event in order to fit donations within their fiscal year (*see chart below*).





# Five Essential Elements

»» *Planning a dry grad requires attention to an extraordinary number of details, and lots of work is required to make it all come together. As long as organizers focus on each of the five elements in this section, they will have a good chance of pulling off a great party.*

Each sub-committee can then focus on the details related to their piece; all coming together via the organizing committee to complete the high level planning, manage and identify overlaps (see chart below).



## Getting Organized

It is a good idea for groups getting started on planning a dry grad to structure themselves into an organizing committee, and a number of sub-committees — each responsible for one component of the dry grad. The organizing committee would:

- » Determine the terms of reference for the sub-committees — their vision, mission and goals;
- » Play the secretariat role for the dry grad planning effort, surveying grads to find out what they want at the event, recording event planning activities and evaluating the event;
- » Establish sub-committee membership — elect chairs and identify members, ensuring to include student and school representatives where feasible;
- » Manage dry grad finances, create and manage the budget;
- » Arrange for appropriate event insurance; and
- » Write the evaluation report to guide next year's organizing committee.

## 1. Finances

Financial considerations should be addressed by the organizing committee early on. A treasurer/bookkeeper should be appointed, a budget developed, bank accounts opened and clear guidelines on how monies are collected and dispersed communicated to all committees.

A well planned and regularly monitored budget will mitigate the risk of the dry grad committee not being able to pay bills.

The organizing committee will need to decide whether to incorporate as a non-profit society, register as a charity or operate as a committee under the parent advisory council (PAC) or the school. This decision can be a complicated and time-consuming process, and should be addressed early in the planning process.

Charitable status with Revenue Canada is required in order to be able to provide a tax receipt for donations. If the dry grad organizers do not have charitable status, then it could be helpful to ask for the support and partnership of a local community charity.

Ask school administration or the PAC for advice on the best way to operate. The BC Centre for Non-Profit Development provides a great Fact Sheet on how to start a non-profit:

*[www.ufv.ca/Assets/BC+Centres+\(CRIM\)/Non-Profit+Development/Factsheets/Starting\\_a\\_Non\\_Profit\\_Society.pdf](http://www.ufv.ca/Assets/BC+Centres+(CRIM)/Non-Profit+Development/Factsheets/Starting_a_Non_Profit_Society.pdf)*

## 2. Communications

### HAVE A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Planning a dry grad involves more than simply choosing a venue, booking entertainment, and arranging for food and drinks.

Although the concept of a dry grad is now a common one, and support from parents, schools and communities can generally be counted on, one group will often require a strong “sales” effort; the graduating class.

It is important for organizers to be able to reply to any questions or concerns with persuasive facts and information, such as success stories about previous dry grads at the school, in the community, or in other communities.

It is helpful to distribute information about the dry grad concept early in the school year by conducting presentations for teachers, parents, students, and others in the community.

A Facebook page linked to the school’s web site should be set up as early as possible in the school year. If the school has a Twitter account, it should be used to help spread the word.

Talk to the school to find out how best to communicate with parents and grads. Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy laws will need to be considered, and all schools in British Columbia have policies and procedures that will help.

A communications plan documents the key messages that will help to promote the dry grad, as well as the communications activities that can take place to spread the word. See the appendices for a Communications Plan Table of Contents.

### RECRUIT ALLIES

If a dry grad is a new concept for the school or community, it will be good to find and engage allies who share the same vision, understand its benefits, and can help make it a reality.

Potential allies might include local police, the Centre for Addictions Research of B.C., Police Victim Services of B.C., the local chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada, area addictions counsellors, educators, school trustees, first aid staff, sports organizations, other parents including PACs, faith communities, and the graduates themselves.

Again, having clear facts and information on hand will be a powerful tool when trying to convince others to help create a dry grad.

### ADVERTISE AND PROMOTE

Organizers will need to advertise the event itself and convince graduates to attend. They will need to solicit donations from a variety of sources and fundraise in the community.

The best strategy at this stage is to promote dry grad plans to as large an audience as possible, using tools such as the school website and newsletter, Facebook, Twitter, press releases and article submissions to local newspapers, and interviews on a local radio station.

Despite organizers’ best efforts, attracting people to support and attend a first dry grad party in a community or at a school may be very challenging.

Many dry grads have started small and, over time, have developed into major community events. When this happens, it is usually the result of the best promotion of all — word of mouth. A successful first party will blaze the path for successful dry grads in subsequent years.

If your community or school has held dry grads in the past, promoting your event will be much easier, especially if previous events were successful. If you can talk to prior dry grad organizers, you gain the opportunity to learn from their experiences, and can then focus your efforts more effectively.

### 3. Fundraising

The cost associated with throwing a dry grad currently ranges from approximately \$10,000 to \$30,000. Ticket sales generally cover one-third to one-half of the costs, but the remainder will usually need to be obtained through fundraising and community sponsorships.

Organizers will need to plan, promote and run fundraising events; keep an accurate accounting of all funds received and spent; and actively approach businesses and other potential sponsors for donations and support.

Effective fundraising and sponsorship strategies will vary, depending upon the presence of businesses and service clubs in each area.

Organizers can ask for cash, volunteers, gifts for door prizes, free or reduced-cost food, party supplies, entertainment or services such as bus transport. Consider offering those students who provide lots of help with fundraising reduced-cost tickets to the event.

#### **MUNICIPAL COUNCILS AND LOCAL SERVICE CLUBS**

There are many organizations that have an interest in ensuring the safety and well-being of youth, who would be happy to support a dry grad event, demonstrating to the public that youth safety is an important consideration in their business philosophy.

#### **LOCAL BUSINESSES**

Some communities receive a lot of support from doctors, lawyers, and health care professionals. Other groups to consider could be car dealerships, local churches, area colleges or universities, or local trade unions. Fundraising sub-committee members can phone, write letters, present at board meetings, etc.

#### **CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP**

A number of large corporations and grocery chains provide sponsorships for community events that benefit youth and children.

To secure sponsorship of a dry grad event, organizers can approach local outlets of larger chains and ask for information about their gift-giving programs, or search online for the addresses and contact information for national corporate offices.

#### **ALUMNI AND PAC**

Approach school alumni and PAC for contributions; many PACs budget for this expense annually. Some schools ask their alumni to contribute to dry grad and distribute funds collected as scholarship prizes of around \$100 – \$200 for grads attending the event.

#### **B.C. LIQUOR DISTRIBUTION BRANCH**

Support Dry Grad is an annual community-based fundraising campaign sponsored by the BC Liquor Distribution Branch that provides financial support to public school districts and the Federation of Independent Schools.

The funding is then disseminated to local high schools and dry grad planning committees by the school district or federation. See Appendix A for full details.

#### **RAFFLES**

Raffles can be a great way to raise funds. To operate a raffle as a fundraiser in B.C., groups must first obtain a raffle licence. B.C. gaming information can be found at:

[www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/gaming/licences/index.htm#one](http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/gaming/licences/index.htm#one)

#### **CONTESTS**

Some companies or organizations hold on-line contests where participants can win prizes or funds for a particular project, such as the BC Automobile Association Dry Grad Video Challenge or the Chatter High virtual fundraiser for schools. See Appendix F for more information.

#### **OTHER**

Bottle drives, car washes, fashion shows or other fundraising events can be held, especially when the dry grad organizers have a large group of enthusiastic students who want to help raise funds.

Parents, families and friends can be encouraged to use their Air Miles, Canadian Tire money or other loyalty program points to obtain and donate prizes.

Sales of chocolates, flowers and services can assist with raising funds.

Social Media — a “donate” button can be added to the dry grad Facebook page, school or PAC or other website using Pay-pal or Canada Helps.org.



## 4. Event Management

### VENUE

The choice of venue can go a long way in determining the success of a dry grad event.

The venue needs to be “workable” for a dry grad — entrances and exits need to be easily controlled so they can be monitored over the course of the evening.

Campgrounds and other open spaces are not good choices for a dry grad celebration.

The venue should be able to accommodate all the graduates and their guests, while providing enough space to have fun and make the best use of all the activities that will be offered.

Venues that offer special facilities like ice rinks, swimming pools, gymnasiums, media rooms, pool tables or kitchens are especially suitable.

Floor plans of the facility may be required if organizers need to map out the locations of various staffing stations and entertainment.

In some instances, contracted electrical work may be required to meet the minimum code standards for some larger entertainment pieces. This information should be provided at the time the equipment is booked, and coordinated with the facility’s management.

Organizers may need to arrange an insurance policy to cover the liability of using specific facilities, equipment, and entertainment. Do not assume the school or venue’s insurance is enough; check with an insurance broker.

### FIRST AID

First aid providers should be available all night long to ensure the safety and well being of the participants and volunteers and to respond if there are any accidents or illnesses.

If no parent or school volunteers with appropriate training are available, contact local first aid training organizations (such as St. John’s Ambulance or the Red Cross) who may be able to provide volunteers and/or equipment.

### SECURITY

The fundamental premise of a dry grad event is that alcohol and drugs will not be allowed. Dry grad parties feature security rules that are designed to accomplish this goal.

The main security features of a dry grad are:

- » The party must be completely contained within a closed venue;
- » Tickets are required for entry;
- » No “in-and-out” privileges — once someone leaves, he or she can’t come back in;
- » All entrances, exits, and events must be supervised by adult volunteers; and
- » All attendees are strongly encouraged to be picked up by an adult.

As far as security issues go, most organizers report that there are very few problems at the dry grad.

It is best to have only a few actual rules — just enough to allow graduates to be safe and maintain a respectful environment. For the most part, the participants are encouraged to get active, have fun, and celebrate their graduation.

### AT THE DOOR

To ensure that no drugs or alcohol make it into the party, some organizers have instituted searches at the entry point when party participants arrive.

If alcohol is found, it is immediately confiscated and disposed of. The students’ contacts are called, and they are sent home. If any graduates or guests appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol when they arrive, their contacts are likewise notified and admission refused.

To prevent students from leaving to use alcohol or drugs, and then coming back to the dry grad party, dry grad events prohibit guests leaving and re-entering the party. In most cases, this has proven to be no problem. However, if someone tries to break this rule, there are different ways to handle the situation — organizers should have clear protocol drawn up beforehand so their volunteer staff knows what to do.

Some organizers acquire wristbands to identify attendees when they arrive. If they leave, the bands are cut and the students are not allowed back in.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

### **VOLUNTEERS' RESPONSIBILITIES**

Security personnel and other adult supervisors should remain in the background as much as possible so as not to intrude upon the event, and to give the youth a great deal of room to enjoy themselves.

It is important not to convey the impression that the adult organizers do not trust the grads, or want to treat them like children.

Of course, the adult volunteers attending the event must follow the same rules as the grads. All adult volunteers should be given clear instructions to abstain from alcohol themselves on this important night and any who fail to do so should immediately be requested to leave the site. Setting a good example is critical.

### **VOLUNTEER SHIFTS**

A dry grad event is most manageable when there are two to four hour shifts for volunteers, if numbers allow. It is recommended that volunteers leave the facility as soon as they have finished their shifts, so there are not too many adults around. The night is really for the graduates.

The number of events or activities, the number of guests, the length of the shifts, and the requirements for the facility determine the number of volunteers required.

One large event with approximately 700 guests may require 12 organizers, 25 security personnel, 20 game supervisors, 2 first aid attendants, 6 cleaners and at least 6 food servers.

Most of the adult volunteers for a dry grad tend to be the parents of the graduating class. This poses a slight problem for those parents who want to attend the ceremony, or who may be already volunteering for the banquet or chaperoning the dance, because they can't be in two places at once; participating in the formal graduation events, as well as setting up the facility for the dry grad.

A great solution is to have final set-up activities completed by a group of Grade 11 parents. This strategy contributes to the continuity of the event as well, since these Grade 11 parents often form the nucleus of the next year's organizing committee.

As well, it is best if Grade 11 parents fill the chaperone roles at the party. It can't be overstressed...this event is for the grads, not their parents, and most grads won't welcome their parents hanging around.

### **VOLUNTEER ID**

If T-shirts have been printed for the dry grad, volunteers should be given shirts with "food", "security", "clean-up" or "first aid" boldly printed across the front or back. Each volunteer should add a "name tag" to their t-shirts with a fabric marker.

Clean-up crews will work throughout the evening, and are usually expanded with the last shift of volunteers, along with fresh volunteers who have had some sleep and can close the facility.

### **VOLUNTEER STAFF REQUIREMENTS**

As volunteers are recruited at the beginning of the year, it is recommended that one organizer be the primary contact until a few weeks before the dry grad.

Confirmation calls for volunteers should occur four to six weeks prior to the dry grad. Within two weeks of the event, the coordinators in each staff area (food, security, etc.) should call each volunteer to provide detailed instructions. The night before the event, final confirmations should be made.

The following is the suggested staffing levels and volunteer assignments for a function of 200 and can be scaled up or down in proportion to the size of the event (*see chart on page 16*).

## SUGGESTED VOLUNTEER STAFFING LEVELS AND ASSIGNMENTS<sup>1</sup>

AREA/POSITION	# OF PEOPLE REQUIRED	ASSIGNMENTS
General reception area	2 positions	Give out information and site maps, oversee volunteer check-in, hold prizes (larger prizes that are “won” might be stored here).
The door or entrance gate	2 positions	Take tickets; prepare and hand out packets with coupons, program guides, and other giveaways; award door prizes.
Security at all entrances and exits	positions as required to staff all doors of the facility	Monitor traffic in and out, maintain and enforce the rules; search and seize alcohol or drugs at entry point. <i>(Note: local police representatives could be useful during entry times to assist in screening at admission. Any bag searches must be done by volunteers.)</i>
Food – main concession	2 positions	Prepare food, put out food, and pick up discards throughout shifts. <i>(Note: additional concessions such as cotton candy or popcorn will require more volunteers.)</i>
First aid	2 positions	Provide first responder emergency services as required. <i>(Note: some facilities may have a first aid room and or supplies that can be utilized as needed. In other cases, organizers will need to source first aid equipment and supplies and set up an area in a quiet corner.)</i>
Air games	2 positions for each	Ensure the safe use and smooth operation of the inflatable games.
Sports, games, challenges	2 positions per event, or as required by safety codes	To safely monitor and operate the specified sport, game, or challenge. <i>(Note: If swimming is available, then facility safety guidelines must be followed and lifeguards may be needed.)</i>
Prizes	2 positions	Keep all prizes on site secure and give away prizes as awarded.
Set-up crew	10 – 15 positions	Meet vendors and equipment rental providers at the facility to ensure set-up; organize prize stores and reception area; prepare fresh food and beverages; prepare other areas (e.g. movie theatre, dancing/music area, dining tables and chairs).
Clean-up crew	10–15 positions	To conduct clean-up; meet rental crews coming to retrieve equipment; gather all left-over materials, prizes, food, and decorations for storage or return; gather and sort recyclables.

<sup>1</sup> ALBERTA HEALTH SERVICES “A GRAD TO REMEMBER”, ALBERTA ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE COMMISSION. (2003).

## 5. Activities, Prizes and Food

### ACTIVITIES

To encourage and promote attendance, entertainment should be compelling, varied, and unique.

The idea is to provide graduates and guests with a stream of fun and exciting activities. There should be enough amusements to keep the celebrants occupied all night long. Here are some entertainment ideas.

#### INFLATABLE AMUSEMENT EQUIPMENT

A number of promotional companies rent amusement equipment that is created by inflating it with air from a constant blower. The equipment requirements are usually a separate power source like a portable generator, or specially rigged electric connections.

Also referred to as “air games,” the inflatable entertainment includes Obstacle Course, Gladiator Joust, Bungee Run and Velcro Olympics. This is competitive entertainment, encouraging participants to be physically active and involved. Rentals are available from party suppliers.

#### SPORTS AND RECREATION

When dry grads are held in facilities that have amenities like swimming pools, ice rinks, gymnasiums, racquetball and volleyball courts, these are often made available for the graduates to enjoy. Some coordinated activities might include relay races, water hockey, snorkeling, kayaking, basketball, or hockey games.

Other recreational equipment that can be rented include dunk tanks, Velcro or climbing walls, horizontal bungee jumping, Sumo Wrestling, obstacle courses and hot tubs.

Money machines are also sometimes available (a glass booth with wind blowing up from the bottom, scattering money and coupons for contestants to grab).

#### CONTESTS

Some dry grads hold a “air guitar” contest, a “talent contest” or “battle of the bands” ahead of the big night. The finalists are given the opportunity to perform at the dry grad, with the winner taking home a significant cash prize.

There are some tips for holding a successful contest.

- » Schedule dry grad performances throughout the course of the evening so as to prevent contestants from performing early in the night and then departing.
- » Establish rules and conditions for performances, such as: no swearing; participants must be students attending the school; participants must purchase dry grad tickets (no free passes).

#### PERFORMING ARTISTS

These include live performers such as hypnotists, caricature artists, magicians, and temporary tattoo artists. Offered in conjunction with more active sports and competitions, this type of entertainment is a great way to keep the interest of the graduates as they take breaks.

#### MUSIC

No great party is complete without music to dance to, listen to, sing to, or be part of. Live bands, pre-recorded music, and karaoke have all made a show at dry grads.

Many organizers express a preference for music played by disc jockeys (DJs), allowing for a wide variety of entertainment with minimal set-up and tear-down activity.

The popular “rave style” music format is to have a variety of DJs performing over the course of the night with the “headliners” playing their sets at strategic points in the early morning. This will re-energize the partygoers and encourage everyone to stay until the end. The breaks between DJs can be utilized for prize giveaways.

#### MOVIES

A movie theatre set up in a quieter part of the facility gives students and guests a chance to rest and enjoy a good movie.

#### VIDEO GAMES

Another quiet pastime is a “gaming room” with a number of Xbox or Wii consoles set up and running popular games. Some facilities will even have the capability to connect gaming consoles to large wall screen display units.

## MEMENTOES

Most dry grads have t-shirts printed for all attendees, as well as for all volunteers. The t-shirts are often produced in the grad or school “colours”, and include the school name, grad year, sponsors and major donors.

Activity stations where partygoers can have a caricature drawn, or a painting or temporary tattoo applied to their skin are popular.

Another very popular idea is an “Autograph Booth” where a variety of coloured permanent fabric markers, secured to a large board with strings to prevent loss over the course of the evening, are at the ready for attendees to decorate and sign each others’ t-shirts.

To ensure that there are pictures to record the event, one dry grad employs the talents of two Grade 11 students from the yearbook or photography club of the school. The students are given free admission to the dry grad, and are provided with equipment to shoot pictures all night long. Photo booths and caricature artists can also provide memorable mementoes.

## FOOD AND DRINK

When arranging food for dry grads, try to offer a variety of finger foods that don’t require plates or cutlery. Some options are fresh vegetables or fruit and dip platters, pizza, popcorn, nachos, submarine sandwiches, donuts, chips, and candy.

Any foods that require refrigeration or may spoil overnight are not recommended. Ensure that the choices include healthy items, not just “junk” food.

Most organizers of previous dry grads recommend that the food and drinks be made available throughout the night. Few event planners include breakfast at the dry grad party, primarily because the youth eat all night long, and most don’t have an appetite for a large breakfast at the end of the party.

Some fun foods, such as cotton candy or fresh popcorn, can be made on site with the appropriate machine. A chocolate fountain with plenty of fresh fruit for dipping is always popular. At least one self-serve water cooler with recycled paper cups or reusable water bottles is a must.

Some dry grad events have slush machines, soft ice cream machines or juice/pop/sport drink dispensers set up for students to help themselves.

Large grocery stores, chain restaurants, and pizza franchises are good sources for gift certificates, discounts, or food donations. While these contributions might not cover the entire cost of the food, they will help defray much of the overall expense. It is important to “shop locally” when trying to gain support for a dry grad, as businesses will be more interested in building goodwill in their own community.

## PRIZES

Everybody likes getting something for free, so it isn’t too surprising that offering prizes has turned out to be an immensely popular way of convincing graduates to attend a dry grad party — so much so, in fact, that many organizers try to have one item for every graduate attending the event.

Prizes should be as plentiful and spectacular as possible, and may include anything from light sticks, to music CDs, to gift cards, to personal electronics, to DVD players and sound systems, to laptops and tablet computers, to a grand prize of cash or a car. The only requirement is that items must all be desirable to, and popular with, students in the graduating class.

Prizes are typically handed out over the course of the evening, with winners selected through simple ticket draws. To be eligible to win a prize, the student must be present at the dry grad. This reduces the likelihood of attendees leaving before the end of the night.

The largest and most expensive items (such as expensive personal electronics, a car or a large amount of money) are given away at the end of the event. These items are usually awarded only to graduates.

## A GRAND PRIZE CAR

An extremely popular dry grad prize is a “like new” automobile, donated by a car dealership, and reconditioned with the support of the area’s businesses, the school’s trade programs, and related suppliers.

Since 1998 when the first car was given away at a dry grad in Langley, many cars have been won at dry grad parties in B.C., and the concept has greatly increased the attendance and popularity of these events.



The program works by having a local car dealership donate a used vehicle to the dry grad program. The dealer then seeks out the services of body shops, mechanics, upholsterers, detailers, and tire shops, asking them to donate their services to restore the car to nearly new condition. After any needed work is done, the car is given final certification by the dealership's mechanics.

Some organizers have even secured brand new vehicles for their events from local businesses. With the cars as the draw, dry grad parties in Surrey and Langley now have an extraordinary 90% attendance rate.

At the end of the dry grad party, one lucky graduate's name is drawn and announced as the winner. The make and model of the car itself is kept secret until the next day, when the presentation of the vehicle is made at a special ceremony in front of the entire student body, the school administration, the press, and local community leaders. This is one of the most powerful draws for a dry grad, and can help make the event the most anticipated and popular party of the year.

#### **DOOR PRIZES**

One dry grad party distributes door prizes as the guests arrive. For example, a small door prize like a glow stick or reusable water bottle may be given away to every tenth guest, with the 50th arrival, the 75th, or the 100th person to pass through the front door (or all three!) receiving a digital camera.



# A Road Map to Success



*The following master checklist is intended as a rough guideline. Organizers should adjust the checklist to fit their needs and special considerations.*

## Master Checklist

### GROUNDWORK – SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER

#### ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

- Review evaluations/reports from previous years.
- Recruit key volunteers (Grade 11 and Grade 12 parents primarily, but other parents welcome) and set up core organizing committee.
- Determine committee structure (i.e. non-profit, charity, or PAC committee), decision-making process (consensus, majority vote, etc.), decision recording process, meeting schedule and other guidelines for functioning (terms of reference).
- Appoint a treasurer and signing authority and set up bank account. Figure out how the group is going to receive and spend money — set up account or go through school's account.
- Designate sub-committee chairs (fundraising, communications, activities and decorations, event management, evaluation) and reporting requirements.
- Meet with school administration and Parent Advisory Council (at the first PAC meeting of the year) to promote dry grad and ask for their support.
- Confirm dates for formal convocation and book a facility for the same night.
- Arrange to have dry grad organizing committee presence at each "Graduation Information" meeting throughout the school year to a) present progress reports; b) promote event; and c) distribute and/or post volunteer sign-up sheets.
- Advertise the opportunity for students to prepare entries for the BCAA Dry Grad Video Challenge ([www.bcaa.com/drygrad](http://www.bcaa.com/drygrad)) or other online contests.
- Prepare summary of lessons learned from evaluations/reports from previous years and educate everyone involved.
- Conduct a survey of the senior class to find out what activities they would like to see at their dry grad.

## PLANNING – OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER

### ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

- Estimate volunteers required and develop list of roles and responsibilities.
- Meet with student representatives and teacher advisors interested in assisting with dry grad.
- Ask the school administration for assistance in contacting Grade 11 and 12 students and all parents.
- Hold an inaugural planning meeting and set initial volunteer commitments amongst the sub-committees (volunteers may move between groups as need dictates over the course of the school year).
- Identify chairs for each sub-committee and assign action items.
- Review sub-committee volunteer requests and allocate resources.
- Make major choices and decisions such as the dry grad name and logo, colours or themes, and major goals of the party.
- Review and finalize each sub-committee's plans in conjunction with facility floor plans and amenities.
- Decide on activities and performers.
- Decide what refreshments will be offered.

### FUNDRAISING

- Plan fundraising campaign soliciting donations, funds, and sponsorship.
- Start fundraising as quickly as is practical at the start of the year.
- Prepare fundraising letter (using dry grad letterhead stationery).
- Identify potential sponsors and assign committee members to solicit sponsorships.
- Identify potential donor groups and assign committee members to solicit donations of goods, services and/or funds.

### COMMUNICATIONS

- Prepare communications plan.
- Begin a master email list of all participants — identified by category (volunteer, grad, sponsor, school administration, etc).
- Set up a Facebook page for the dry grad and advertise. Ask questions, ask for help, ask for ideas, keep the audience engaged.

### EVENT MANAGEMENT

- Identify required work crews (nutrition, reception, activity supervision, security, first aid, clean-up, etc).
- Develop "job descriptions" for various types of volunteers.

### ACTIVITIES, PRIZES & FOOD

- Develop options for activities and performers.
- Develop options for memento products.
- Develop options for decorations.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

- Continue to recruit volunteers.
- Write letters to recruit volunteers from local youth groups if needed.
- Display volunteer sign-up sheets at grad planning and PAC meetings.
- Continue to manage volunteer requirements across the sub-committees.
- Design and print admission tickets. Clearly print the opening and closing times of admittance on the tickets, along with the “no re-entry” and “no drugs or alcohol” policies. Leave space on tickets for names to tear off for door prizes.
- Design and print “thank you” certificates for use with all sponsors, donors and volunteers.
- Arrange for dry grad photographers (e.g., Grade 11 photography students/newsletter or yearbook staff).
- Deliver tickets to school offices to be put on sale alongside the formal banquet and dance tickets.
- Develop evaluation plan:
  - Review major goals of the party;
  - Determine how to best to measure how well goals are met; and
  - Design reporting methods (how and when you will capture evidence).
- Prepare an evaluation form to be added to the Dry Grad Facebook page that asks grads if they will be attending and if so, why; and if not, why not.

FUNDRAISING

- Solicit sponsorships.
- Solicit donations.
- Complete “thank-you” cards or certificates for each donor or sponsor.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Publicize contact information for anyone interested in approaching the dry grad committee with offers of assistance.
- Launch regular communications beginning with dry grad Facebook page.
- Arrange for web presence linking from school web site to dry grad Facebook page.
- Write regular school newsletter articles, community newspaper articles, etc.
- Ensure that everyone knows they are not required to pay for anything on site.
- Look for other opportunities to publicize the dry grad in the community (posters, etc).
- Ask school Arts teachers to encourage students to create promotional posters, etc.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE...



#### EVENT MANAGEMENT

- Recruit security volunteers (parents).
- Contact local police to ask for volunteer members to provide security at the event.
- Determine required furniture and infrastructure for each work crew (e.g., Reception will need table, chairs, full height coat racks and hangers suitable for storing formal grad wear, ticket receptacle; Nutrition will need kitchen facilities, First Aid will need a first aid kit, a stretcher or room with a cot, etc).
- Order T-shirts with staff position titles such as “volunteer,” “security,” and “first aid.” Make sure sponsors’ names are on the shirts. Make sure volunteer coordinator t-shirts are a different colour from volunteers and grads so they are highly visible.
- Order equipment. Clearly state the delivery and pick up times for equipment suppliers.

#### ACTIVITIES, PRIZES & FOOD

- Finalize development of programming for the evening, and draft a schedule of events.
- Book equipment for activities and performers.
- Review facility floor plan and confirm locations for each activity (ensure infrastructure in place to support each activity (power, lighting, sound, etc).
- Plan facility decorations.
- Identify prize assignments for the door and activities.
- Identify required volunteer supervision requirements for each activity.
- Order t-shirts for grads and fabric pens in complementary colours for autographing t-shirts. Ensure to order various sizes of T-shirts.

## PREPARATION – FEBRUARY, MARCH, APRIL

### ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

- Purchase liability insurance from a local broker.
- Confirm the schedule of events.
- Arrange secure storage location for dry grad donations and materials.
- Prepare cheques as needed.
- Ensure ordering of supplies is coordinated (e.g., t-shirts for grads and t-shirts for volunteers).
- Provide dry grad information to parents and new students touring the school each spring.
- Prepare evaluation forms to be used for attendees the night of the event to identify what improvements are required for next year's dry grad.
- Put a site map on the back of the evaluation form.

### FUNDRAISING

- Confirm and pick up donations and sponsors' contributions, deliver "thank-you" certificates.

### COMMUNICATIONS

- Make the last push to promote the event and ticket sales.
- Organize a "sneak peek" promotional presentation or event, booking one piece of equipment for use at the school over the lunch hour. Sell tickets at this event.
- Ensure the email list is up to date.

### EVENT MANAGEMENT

- Make arrangements for cleaning equipment (brooms, mops, etc).
- Finalize volunteer assignments for the actual dry grad event, establishing the shifts for each work crew.
- Implement a volunteer check-in procedure: the volunteer coordinator should be on site early and the different area supervisors should be highly visible.
- Review food arrangements, place orders.
- Make sure there are enough garbage cans and recycling bins at the site.

### ACTIVITIES, PRIZES & FOOD

- Contact artists and performers to confirm booking, and double check any requirements they have regarding equipment, lighting, etc.
- If possible, provide a locker room for their costumes and props.
- Finalize volunteer assignments for decorating and activity set-up and supervision, establishing the shifts for each work crew.
- Make up a large banner saying "Welcome (or Congratulations) Graduates".

## FINAL DAYS – APRIL, MAY

### ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

- Secure insurance certificate and provide a copy to the facility manager and others as required.
- Pick up unsold tickets from school along with a cheque for sold tickets.
- Confirm the schedule of events and volunteer assignments.
- Secure some door prizes that will be specially drawn from the returned evaluations.

### FUNDRAISING

- Wind up fundraising.

### COMMUNICATIONS

- Stage a final promotional stunt at the school.
- At the commencement practice, try to arrange for a dry grad student representative to update graduates on the event and promote ticket sales.
- Issue a press release recognizing all sponsors and donors and acknowledging the contributions of parents, students and teachers.

### EVENT MANAGEMENT

- Make final confirmations for all event equipment (coat racks, tables, etc).
- Re-confirm food equipment (popcorn makers, pop machines, etc), arrange pick-up and drop-off times and verify supply needs with rental company (popcorn, salt, sugar, syrup, etc).
- Shop for food supplies.
- Ensure that all work crew coordinators have a list of the volunteers in their crew (security, food, games, etc.) and have them call to confirm each volunteer's assignment.
- Arrange pick-ups of T-shirts and other memorabilia or products.
- Make name tags for the volunteers.

### ACTIVITIES, PRIZES & FOOD

- Make final confirmations for all activity-related equipment rentals.
- Shop for supplies (game supplies, decorations, etc).
- Review floor plan and create clear signage identifying where to go and where events are located.

## THE EVENT – JUNE

### ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

- Meet with all organizers and volunteers prior to gate opening to confirm plans and attend to last minute adjustments. Remind coordinators to thank volunteers at each venue over the course of the evening.
- Hand out evaluation forms to attendees upon entrance and let them know there are door prizes reserved especially for respondents.
- Close to the end of the event, make an announcement pushing for completion of forms.
- Award door prizes for evaluation respondents.
- If you plan on selling tickets at the door, prepare a cash float.
- Complete admissions and close the gate.

### EVENT MANAGEMENT

- Do final set-up (Grade 11 parents to do so Grade 12 parents can attend formal graduation ceremonies).
- Confirm and meet all scheduled drop-offs for equipment and food: ensure payment for all required.

### ACTIVITIES, PRIZES & FOOD

- Decorate and post signage and schedule of events.
- Confirm and meet all scheduled drop-offs for activities equipment: ensure payment for all required.
- Set up volunteer check-in, post volunteer assignments and direct volunteers to assigned duties.

## AFTERWARDS – JULY

### ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

- Pay any remaining outstanding bills, send email evaluation forms to all volunteers, and review attendee evaluations.
- Submit any applications for funding from large corporations for the next year's event.
- Debrief the event with all committee chairs.
- Hold a post-event meeting that includes:
  - Final reports from all sub-committees; and
  - A round table to collect lessons learned for the evaluation report.
- Identify key points learned and record changes for next year.
- Prepare final evaluation for next year's committee.
- Assist next year's organizing committee to get things started and book the facility for next year's event.

### FUNDRAISING

- Ensure all thank-you notes have been sent.



# Appendices

»» *A dry grad is designed to be an overwhelmingly positive experience for the graduates. A fun party will generate word-of-mouth interest and enthusiasm among future graduates (and will lead to future dry grad parties) for years to come. Accordingly, the party should feature great entertainment.*

## **Appendix A:** **BC Liquor Distribution Branch** **— Support Dry Grad Campaign**

Support Dry Grad is an annual community-based fundraising campaign sponsored by the B.C. Liquor Distribution Branch (LDB).

Each year, BC Liquor Store customers can donate \$1 in-store to Support Dry Grad — this donation provides local Dry Grad planning committees with financial support to plan alcohol-free high school graduation events and activities. Both public and private schools are able to participate in this campaign.

All BC Liquor Store customer donations are distributed to each participating public school district or, in the case of private schools, the Federation of Independent Schools.

The donation reflects the total money raised in BC Liquor Stores located in that school district's catchment area.

Support Dry Grad donations are sent by the LDB to each school district superintendent, who is then responsible for distributing the funds allocated to that school district. Individual high school grad committees must apply for this funding through the district superintendent.

The funds are dispersed to the districts and the Federation in late April or early May each year. The amount each public high school receives depends on the amount raised in their area and the policies of the school district and superintendent.

For more information, dry grad planners should contact the local Superintendent of Schools or Federation.

## **Appendix B:** **Applicable Laws**

There are some issues that need to be clarified when considering the different graduation options, or when trying to make a public case for supporting a dry grad.

### **LIQUOR LAW BASICS FOR PARENTS OF MINOR CHILDREN**

The reasons behind the laws concerning minors' access to liquor are public interest and public safety concerns about the effects of alcohol on youth.

Studies indicate that children are currently consuming larger amounts of alcohol, and at earlier ages, than before. Alcohol consumption by minors is associated with unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, smoking, violence, poor school performance, suicide, and death and injury from crashes, drowning, falls, etc.

Alcohol can also have negative developmental impacts on the part of the brain responsible for higher-level thinking.



- » The legal drinking age in British Columbia is 19 years of age.
- » It's against the law to purchase liquor for or give liquor to a minor. An exception is made if you are a parent or guardian of a minor, in which case you may provide liquor **only** to your child in the privacy of your home. This exception does not allow you to provide liquor to any other minors who may be in your home.
- » It is against the law to sell or give liquor to any other minor, or permit a minor who is not your child to drink liquor in your home or business. The fine for doing this is a minimum of \$500, and you may also be held legally responsible for any damages or injury caused as a result.
- » If minors are caught with liquor in their possession, if they try to buy liquor, if they are found inside a bar or pub, or if they try to buy liquor using false ID, they are breaking the law and may receive a \$230 violation ticket fine.
- » Police have the right to seize liquor if it is found in the possession of minors. They may also seize liquor from adults if they believe the liquor has been purchased on behalf of a minor.

For more information on B.C.'s liquor laws, please see the Liquor Control and Licensing Branch website, available at: [www.pssg.gov.B.C.ca/lclb/index.htm](http://www.pssg.gov.B.C.ca/lclb/index.htm)

## Appendix C: PowerPoint Presentation

A PowerPoint presentation has been provided, which can be used to gain support from students, teachers, school administrators, parents, and potential volunteers and community sponsors. The PowerPoint presentation answers the following questions.

- » What is a dry grad party?
- » Who organizes a dry grad?
- » How does a dry grad work?
- » Where do dry grads take place?
- » What happens at a dry grad?
- » What is the dry grad planning timeline?

## Appendix D: Communications Plan Table of Contents

A well thought out communications plan can help significantly to mitigate the risk associated with a dry grad event, including:

- » Poor uptake from grads;
- » Lack of community support with funding, prizes and in-kind support could jeopardize the event;
- » Fundraising conflicts with other school and/or parent priorities (band, school trips, sports teams); and
- » Not enough volunteer support to plan/run the event.

The following sample table of contents outlines what a dry grad communications plan should consider:

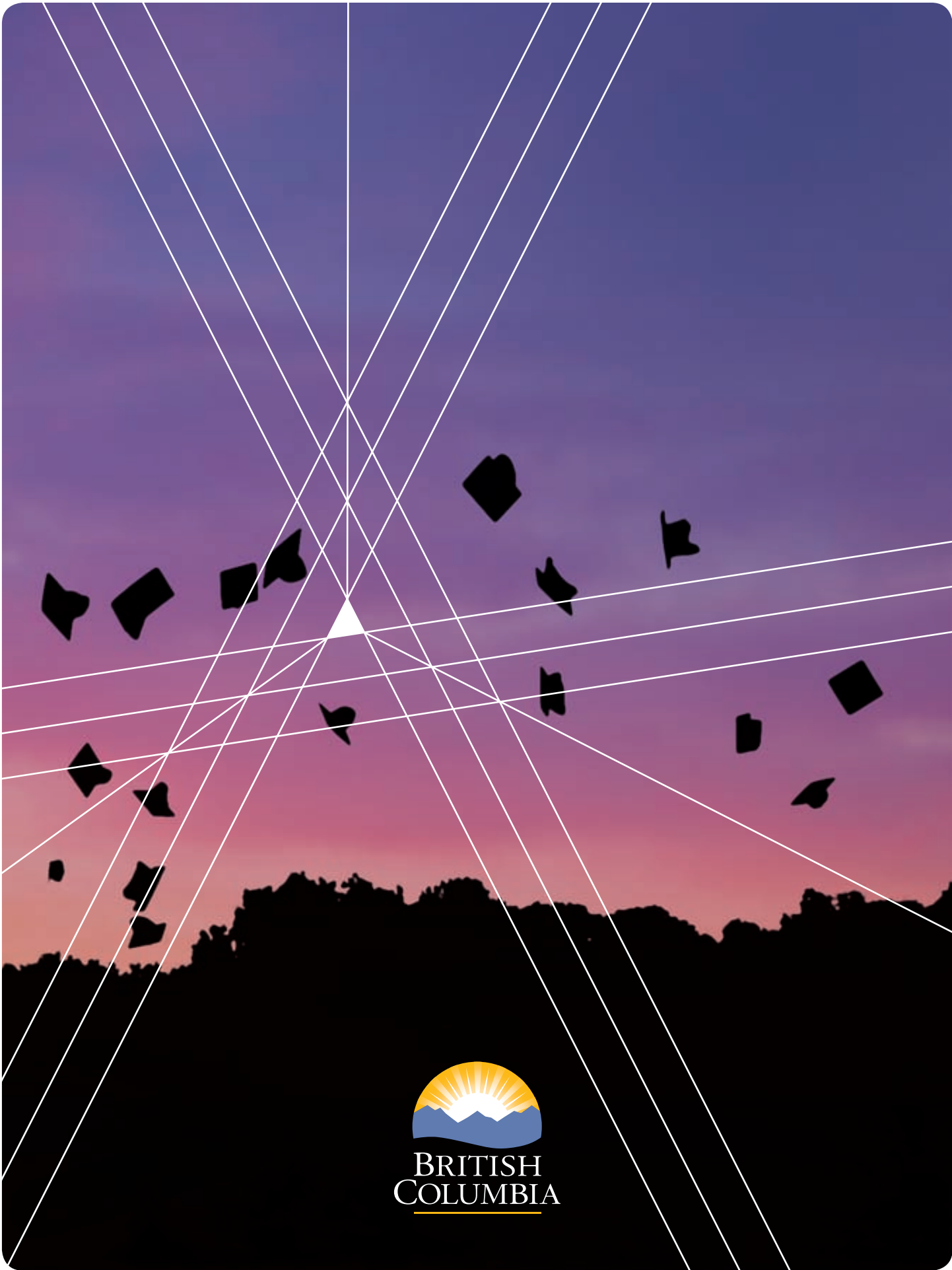
- » Objectives of the plan;
- » Key messages;
- » Target audiences;
- » Key communications methods and tools;
- » Opportunities;
- » Vulnerabilities/potential issues/mitigation strategies; and
- » Communications calendar.

## Appendix E: Acknowledgements

Thanks to Alberta Health Services whose document "A Grad to Remember" provided useful background material.

Thanks to the Spectrum Community School Dry Grad Committee (Chair: Susan Shea) for reviewing this resource and providing valuable input prior to its release.





  
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