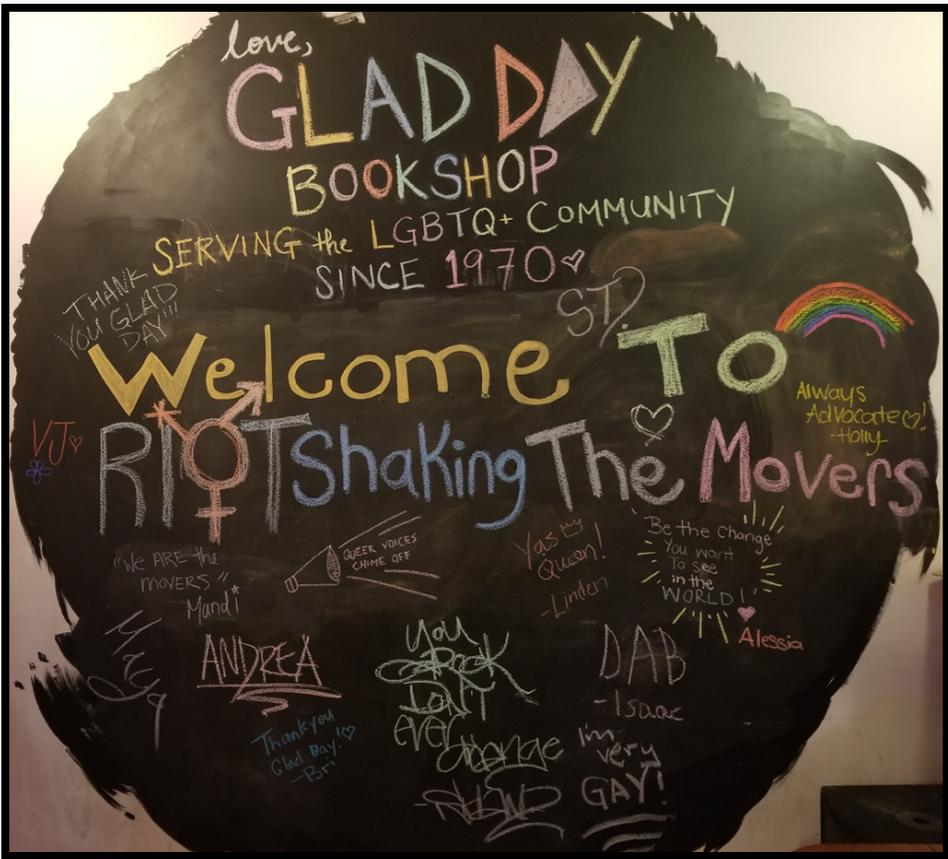


Shaking the Movers, Toronto



The UNCRC, Gender, Sexuality and Education

Toronto, Ont., November 16th, 2019

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"A lot of people don't know who they are until they reach high school. When I first met someone who was Trans I didn't even realize it. I called him by his dead name by accident and he said ... You aren't shown it as much, you don't know what to do, what to say, what pronouns are!"

A Letter from Hon. Landon Pearson: Non-Discrimination and Education:

As little children move out from their families into the wider world the socializing institution with which most of them will first interact on a regular basis will be an educational one. For the youngest this may be an early childhood care and education centre from which they will then graduate, usually around the age of four or five years, to school-based kindergarten. None of these educational opportunities, however welcome, will be compulsory and for many children, especially the littlest ones, they may be neither available nor affordable. However, by the time a child turns six education throughout Canada becomes mandatory. Whether parents choose to send their children to a public or a private school, a religious or a secular one or even decide to school their children at home the provinces will impose certain standards and expectations that are common to all within an overarching state-supported educational system. This means that education in whatever form it is offered will inevitably be a significant force for the shaping of children's identity.



The 40 states that were involved in the drafting of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) were well aware of this reality and articles 28 and 29, which are the articles most directly related to education, embody their vision, a vision that has been elaborated on over the past 30 years by the Committee on the Rights of the Child starting with its General Comment number 1 and expanded through concluding observations to the 196 states parties to the CRC that now appear regularly before it.

Article 28 firmly establishes the right of every child to education; no state has ever disagreed. It reads "and with a view to achieving this right progressively on the basis of equal opportunity [States Parties] shall, in particular; a) make primary education compulsory and free to all and b) work toward developing and making different forms of secondary education available and accessible to every child." Making education compulsory is the only way to ensure that no child, however marginalized, will be deprived of an education as she or he had been in the past. Since the CRC was adopted in 1989 progress on the implementation of Article 28 has been impressive. However, given the current state of the world, with so many children out of school and on the move as a result of armed conflict and climate change, there is still a long way to go.

Having guaranteed the right to education in Article 28, Article 29 establishes its aims. It is worth quoting this article in full because if every school within which children (and adolescents) find themselves was truly able to structure itself according to these aims, then many of the difficult issues associated with student diversity would resolve themselves.

State Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

- The development of the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
- The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the charter of the United Nations;
- The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate and for civilizations different from his or her own;

- The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
- The development or respect for the natural environment.

It is notable that the key messages of Article 29 focus on the nurturing of a student's capacity for respectful relationships; with himself or herself, with significant others, with the natural environment and with something beyond themselves that gives meaning to their lives, all factors that are now understood to be crucial to sustainable mental health in children as well as adults. In these conditions not being the same as everyone else should not be a problem but some of the identity issues with which young people grapple today such as gender fluidity and the opportunities the internet provides to create a false identity were barely emerging when the CRC was being drafted; others, such as racism, sexism, and bigotry have existed forever. With some exceptions the youthful participants in our Shaking the Movers (STM) gatherings have found the educational systems with which they have to engage fall short of fulfilling the aims set out in Article 29. Indeed, in a constant refrain over the past decade, they have told us they often feel discriminated against simply because they are children. The evidence they offer is that they are rarely taught about children's rights and that this demonstrates a lack of respect for them as persons, as holders of the "equal and inalienable rights belonging to all members of the human family" alluded to in the preamble to the CRC along with their rights "to special care and assistance" owing to their age and vulnerability.

Over the years our young STM participants have made many recommendations related to the educational system and how it should change to be more child rights respecting. They have rarely complained in our sessions about individual teachers but have focused instead on problems within the school culture and the school curriculum. They feel their schools are increasingly out of synch with what has been shaping the lives of children and young people in Canada over the last decade or so. Demographics are changing along with the weakening of long-standing social structures, the digital world with all its pitfalls (and opportunities) is expanding rapidly, we may be on the verge of a climate catastrophe. At the same time, they feel that they have a great deal to offer and would very much like the school to help.

Our "Shakers" are honest enough to admit that they should do more to educate themselves and their friends about their rights and they would also like their parents and caregivers and others with whom they come in contact in the systems they sporadically encounter such as health care, child welfare and youth justice to be more rights sensitive. However, these are broader issues about education in general. With respect to the issues of diversity and identity formation that they have repeatedly brought to our attention and because going to school in Canada is not a choice, the focus of STM 2019 should, we believe, remain on the education system itself and how it could change.

Landon Pearson, August 21, 2019

Background

About Shaking the Movers

Shaking the Movers (STM) is an annual youth-driven and youth-led workshop that takes place across the country. STM workshops offer spaces designed to enable children and youth to consider the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in the context of their lives. In turn, participants prepare comments and recommendations intended for governments, academia and civil society concerning its implementation. Participating in STM offers young people an opportunity to exercise their right to take part in critical civil and political processes with the assurance that their voices will be listened to and heard.



Workshop Facilitation

For over a decade, the Landon Pearson Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights has designed conferences and workshops which provide spaces for young people to have the 'floor'. Young people who participate in Shaking the Movers share their perspectives and experiences pertaining to current issues impacting their daily lives as they relate to the UNCRC. In addition, adults take on a listening role while youth participants discuss the issues and offer specific solutions recommendations for change. Each year the narratives of participants are consolidated into a report. Landon Pearson has made it her priority to ensure that these reports reach the hands of the 'movers'. At the end of each conference, participants are invited to provide suggestions for the following years STMs topic. The following list details topics and UNCRC article numbers that have been explored through STM workshops across the country in previous years.

Previous Shaking the Movers Topics

- 2007: Speaking Truth to Power: Civil and Political Rights of Children, Articles 12, 19, 24, & 44
- 2008: Identity and Belonging, Articles 29.1.C & 30
- 2009: Child Rights in Education, Articles 28, 29 & 42
- 2010: Children and the Media, Articles 13, 16, 17, 34, 36
- 2011: Youth Justice, Articles 37 & 40
- 2012: Mental Health, Articles 23 & 24
- 2013: Right to Play and Artistic Expression, Article 31
- 2014: Child Exploitation, Article 34 & 36
- 2016: Climate Change, Articles 6, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 3, 12 & 13
- 2017: Children on the Move, Articles 2, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 22, 24, 28, 36, & 38
- 2018: All Rights All Children; Non-Discrimination, Articles 2, 3, 6, 13, 2, 24, 27, 28, 29, & 30

Overview

On November 16th, 2019, in partnership with the Landon Pearson Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights, Carleton University, the School of Child and Youth Care at Ryerson University conducted a one-day conference for young people in the GTA area. Across the country, the 2019 theme of Shaking the Movers was the UNCRC, Non-Discrimination and the right to education. In Toronto the right to education and non-discrimination was examined through the lenses of LGBT2+ young people and specifically addressed gender, sexuality and the right to education. The overarching goals of Shaking the Movers, as detailed below, served as the foundation for the facilitation of this years conference;

1. Provide opportunities for young people to both learn about and exercise their right to take part in important civil and political processes.
2. Education young people on the UNCRC and the rights they have as children and youth,
3. Foster safe spaces for young people to discuss issues and solutions pertaining to the topic.

Workshop Topic, Themes & Articles

This year, 19 young people from across Toronto came together to creatively brainstorm problems and solutions pertaining to the UNCRC, queer youth rights and the education system. The remainder of this report captures the context of Toronto's 2019 STM conference and highlights the narratives of the young people who engaged in a series of conversation and activities regarding the following four themes;

Identity and Belonging, **School and Community**, **Bullying and Mental Health**, & **Curriculum and Extra Curricular Activities**

"School doesn't teach us about UNCRC rights, and we don't know that we have these rights, but they are supposed to protect us"

"It's not just about getting through a lesson plan. You need to be aware of your student's pronouns. I've challenged a teacher about this once"

I wrote a paper about the importance of it, and it seemed dismissed. I also failed that paper"



"Love is love; love is good... it's not okay. My life is gayness! The struggle gets brushed aside when you say, everyone is human! You need to see how it impacts people today"

Features of STMs 2019

About the Location

Different from prior years, Shaking the Movers, Toronto, changed the venue in which the event would be held. Also different, rather than hosting the conference over two days and at Ryerson University, the conference was held over one day and in the heart of Toronto's Church-Wellesley Village, at Glad Day Bookshop. Glad Day Bookshop is the first Canadian and the longest surviving queer bookstore worldwide. Serving the LGBTQ2+ community since 1970, Glad Day specializes in offering the widest possible selection of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans,



two-spirit, and queer literature, both in and out of print. In addition to being a bookshop, Glad Day is also a café, restaurant, bar, and event space. Above all, Glad Day is a politically driven community hub that serves as a refuge for LGBTQ2+ visitors of all ages. The decision to host this year's conference at Glad Day was made so that young people could be introduced to the community space and hopefully return to it again one day. To encourage this, STM's gifted each participant a \$10.00 Glad Day gift card to use while visiting the space on a different day.

Recruitment of Participants

Many of the young people who participated in STMs this year were recruited through connections with agencies and organizations that shared the event on their social media platforms or directly encouraged young people from their programs to participate. This year, the local in which the conference was held significantly supported recruitment efforts. Glad Day Bookshop, an iconic community hub in the Toronto Church-Wellesley Village promoted the event through their social media platforms. Given the number of folx, particularly LGBTQ2+ community members who are in Glad Day's network this was a significant resource. Other recruitment strategies included visiting a Queer Straight Alliance (QSA) at a local high school and sharing the event with past participants. As an overall observation, the opportunity for young people to spend their Saturday at Glad Day, with other like-minded young people, as well as the youth-friendly drag brunch, sparked the interest of many young people who attended.

"There are passages such as 'treat your neighbour as you would want to be treated'. So even if they are gay, or something, you should still be respecting of them the way you would to yourself"

About the Youth Participants

The young people who participated in this year's STM's Workshop were between the ages of 15 and 22 years and most were from the Greater Toronto Area. Participants were diverse in genders and sexualities. Young people identified as queer, trans, non-binary, and/or as allies. Each of the 19 young people who attend ended shared a passion for using their voices as catalysts for social change. All of them shared the vision of a better future for LGBTQ2+ children and youth. Like other years, many participants expressed that before attending this year's STM's conference they were not informed of their rights under the UNCRC.

“When you can feel bias and judgement, it affects you so much deeper later in life. As an adult, your self-worth plummets because no one cared to acknowledge you the appropriate way”



Informed Consent

In advance of the conference each young person was provided written consent to participate. This included consent to having their narratives and pictures shared

throughout this report and within the accompanying video. Throughout the conference, Facilitators ensured that young people were continually informed of their rights to privacy and confidentiality as participant of STM's.

Introduction to Youth Facilitators

The discussion groups and activities of this year's STM conference were organized and facilitated by students from the School of Child and Youth Care (CYC) at Ryerson University. Ahead of the conference and in preparation of this role, students spent many weeks in-class learning about strategies of youth engagement, and processes of group facilitation with young people. The class organized themselves into six separate groups at the start of the semester. Four of the six groups were responsible for planning for, setting up, and facilitating the four distinct stations based on the identified topics. The fifth group held the MC role for the event and the 6th group, the media group, held the responsibility of capturing the event through video and the photographs displayed throughout the report.

Unique to this year's topic, a significant amount of attention was given to promoting the student's awareness of child and youth care practices, specifically as it pertains to facilitating engagement with queer young people. For example, students learned about the theory behind and use of progressive and queer centered language and gained a general awareness of the supports and resources available to queer young people, especially within the GTA. Students were also required to research and present a topic that looked further into issues facing queer young people both nationally and internationally. Further to this, early on in their semester a queer-identifying guest speaker, who is also a drag queen, visited the class and spoke to students about youth work with LGBTQ2+ identifying young people. During the guest speaker's visit they supported the students in developing the four unique topics that the conference would address. On the day of the conference students applied theory to practice by using their youth engagement skills and learned understanding group processes and facilitation to create a safe space for meaningful discussion amongst participants.

The photographs displayed throughout this report illustrate participants and facilitators during various stages of the 2019 STMs workshop.

CYC Children's Rights Class

With the help of students from Ryerson University's Children's Rights class, participants began their morning and afternoon learning about the UNCRC and relevant articles. Involvement of Ryerson's School of Child and Youth care Children's Rights class is a staple of Toronto's Shaking the Movers conferences and each year the informative and creative presentations delivered by Ryerson's Children's Rights class helps set the foundations for smaller group discussions.

"I don't think kids need to wait until they are having a lot of struggles to get help, then it can be too late. It's a preventable issue if you are getting the help before you need it desperately"

Youth Presentations

Following the smaller discussion workshops each of four groups came back together to present their ideas and insights to each-other. Most of the groups chose to present their ideas alongside the use of mind-maps as a visual. Young people particularly and passionately presented their ideas to the larger groups

"A lot of people forget that we are all human. We need to realize this even though we have different opinions about different things. We are all brought up from nothing. We are who we are. We are all human"



Closing Activities and Evaluation

The conference day ended with a taco dinner. While everyone ate in the same space, young people sat at tables with their small groups. Facilitators used this as an opportunity to create space for a meaningful goodbye. Young people were offered gift bags with pride stickers, bracelets, pins, a gift card for Glad Day Bookshop, and pamphlets and flyers of organizations and agencies that support queer youth in Toronto. Like other years, young people also received a certificate of participation. Finally, workshop evaluation forms were distributed which offer participants a platform to voice their STM 2018 experience and provide feedback for improvement and offer topic ideas for next year's workshop. Their feedback is outlined at the end of this report.

"Many students are still referred between 'boys' and 'girls'. There's no acknowledgement or sensitivity around those genders. Many people don't identify with those genders only. There's also a lack of GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance). I'm a representative for my school, but it's interesting to see how many schools don't have that representation, or teachers who take initiative in being a support for students in the LGBTQ2+ community"

Drag Brunch

Drag brunch is a well-known staple within the LGBTQ2+ community. Almost every restaurant and bar within the Church and Wellesley Village, including Glad Day, hosts a weekend Drag Brunch. However, not often are these drag brunches youth friendly or affordable to young people. One of the most exciting features of this year's Shaking the Movers conference was a youth friendly Drag Brunch which included an hour-long show hosted not by Drag Queens, but rather by Drag Kings and Gender Performers. The purpose of having a drag show hosted by Drag Kings and Gender Performers was so that young people could watch a show where they may see their identities represented within. Alexandher Brandy and Manny Dingo opened-up their show with a small presentation on drag show etiquette, including a mini lesson on how to ask someone what their pronouns are before making assumptions. Both performers were inviting of young people who had any questions about drag and gender performing!

About the Performers



Manny Dingo, an electric powerhouse who incorporates new way voguing with old way, with gymnastics. He serves animated faces he will serve you drop splits, hands, cartwheels and head stands! He has been performing in drag for four years this past August. His journey started out in Halifax, Nova Scotia and he is enjoying the spaces he gets to be a part of in Toronto his main goal is to take up space and show representation for BIPOC individuals.

"Uneducated people are more likely to be discriminatory against the LGBTQ2+ community, or outdated teachers that don't understand the population of kids they're teaching"

Toronto's High(eye) Browed Low Brow Performer, **Alexandher Brandy** is here to challenge the social norm with his gender bending drag. Father of Rebel Gen, producer of House of Kings, and TMI (Trans Masc Individuals), host of Drag King Battle, Birthday Bashers, and season three host of Empires Ball this man will show you masculine glamour like you've never seen it before! Find him on instagram @axbrandy.



Introduction to Small Groups

Group Selection Process (Min-It to Win-It)

Using the classic game, min-it-to-win it, facilitators creatively engaged young people in a process to support them in making the decision on which group and topic they would be in for the day. Each of the four groups of students responsible for facilitating of the small groups spent the semester developing a 3-minute skit/creative way to encourage participants to sign-up for their topic. Their recruitment presentations each included a general overview of their topics and examples of rights and issues that would be discussed throughout the day. Within these three minutes facilitators offered a general overview of their topic and what engagement/participation in their group could look like. Based on this information, participants ranked their top three choices and then placed in the group that discussed their preferred topic choice. This yearly rotational activity provides young people with the opportunity to learn and experience, in a broad sense, the rights and issues regarding all four of the weekend's themes and topics while delving more deeply into their topic of choice. Once in their small groups, students facilitated as well as documented discussions with the young people framed around the questions below.

Guiding Small Group Discussion Questions:

Saturday AM: General Problems

- What are some of the challenges that 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth face today in the education system?
- How do these challenges impact the rights of 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth?
- With regards to anti-discrimination, who is ensuring that the rights for 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth are being protected?

Saturday AM: Specific Problems

- What is the most pressing concern about _____ facing 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth today in education settings?
- How does _____ impact 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth?
- Why is it important to consider _____ when addressing the rights & needs of 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth?

Saturday PM: General Problems

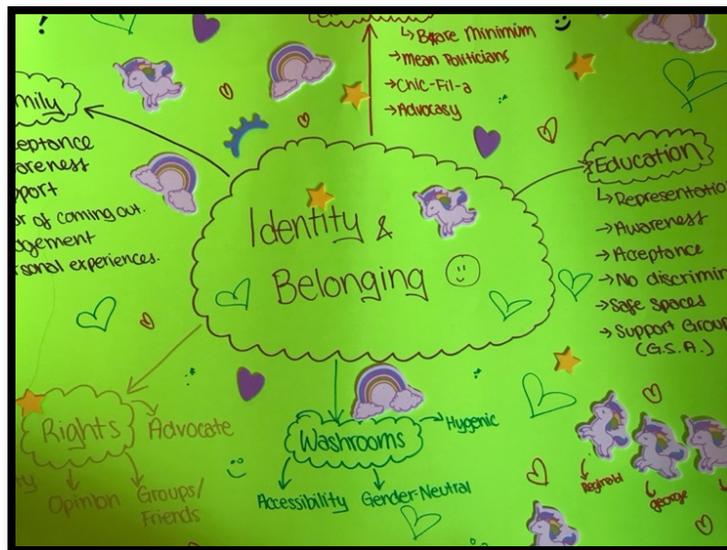
- What are short term and long-term strategies to improve and protect the rights for 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth in education settings?
- If you were prime minister for a day, what would you do to protect the rights of 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth in education settings?
- What do you recommend the government do to protect the rights of 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth in education settings?
- What can your schools, local agencies, service providers, community groups, and family (chosen) do to support this?
- What are some ways children and youth can and do participate in making change?

“Some of it is generational and some of it is a choice, you can learn differently at any age, and if you are older, you’ve watched society changed a lot. You should be more capable of understanding that it will continue to change”

Identity and Belonging

Overview

The Identity and Belonging group started off their day with an overview of what to expect and what would be talked about. The hand game stella-ella-hola was used as both an icebreaker and a way to initiate the morning discussion on the problems. The person that the song ended on was the person who would read out the next discussion question. From there the conversations would begin. The general problem that was discussed was an overall lack of respect of society for the different identities of LGBTQ2+ individuals. Young people expressed feeling as though they don't have a place where they belong. As it pertains to the group's topic; identity and belonging, the main themes that arose were



teachers not being supportive of gender identities and schools not having gender neutral washrooms. As some solutions, young people discussed gender neutral washrooms in safe areas as needing to become mandatory and normalized in schools. This would make everyone feel comfortable and much safer. Throughout the entire day, participants remained compassionate, accepting and understanding of one another which helped foster engagement and the building of relationships.

"School is a place where we are supposed to get our education. Everyone just wants to get their education. Just let them be themselves"

"When I was a kid, I was always different, and I got blamed for being different and I didn't even know what different was. I feel like if I knew I was gay as a kid my life would be different. For identity and belonging, there is a theory by Erickson for developmental steps, and developing and belonging is one of the first steps to help you grow in your environment. Gay individuals are more mature because they have to grow up and stand up for themselves, because they have to deal with so much more and be independent a lot sooner"

"Even though LGBTQ2+ is becoming more normalized in today's time, there is still a lot of discrimination, especially with the older generation"

School as Community

Overview

To engage participants and encourage them to choose this group, the community and belonging team used a puppet show to the background of the Gloria Gaynor's song, "I am what I am", which is considered a gay Pride anthem. The message of this song is that everyone should accept themselves the way they are and should not hide or should not pretend to be someone else for other people. The general problems discussed in the School and Community group included the lack of support for queer youth and an overall ignorance of their school systems to acknowledge the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Throughout the day, each of the young people shared their own individual experiences in their schools; including teachers challenging students, gender neutral washrooms and dealing with bullying at school.



"The only safe place in my school was the music department. All the teachers there were really welcoming... the art world in general. Everyone didn't care who you were or why you were there"

The need for School as Community

- "Parents that are supportive can help protect your rights, but some parents are supportive until their child comes out"
- "People have to hide your identity from their family and it probably makes them so uncomfortable and upset because they don't feel welcomed"
- "It's worse when holidays come around and you have to spend a lot of time with your families"
- "My parents are very supportive when I have problems relating to school or academic problems such as grades or assignments, but I can't go to them with other problems"
- "There are a lot of things that I can't tell my parents because they wouldn't understand"
- How do kids navigate childhood, to early adulthood when people discriminate against the LGBTQ2+ community? It has an impact on your overall relationship with yourself. Like, if I can't be myself at school, where else would I feel accepted?
- "I went to catholic school. Two girls I knew got suspended for kissing in the hallway. I only came out after high school. They drill it into your head that it's wrong, disgusting. Everyone is scared to talk to their family because they are told it is wrong in school. Not a lot of people have very supportive families like I did. I got lucky"



Curriculum & Extra-Curricular Activities

Overview

The morning in the Curriculum and Extra Curriculum group began with an icebreaker activity. Participants were invited to create their own name tags on drawn-out popcorn. They chose the flavour they identified with by looking at a flavour poster. While several participants were energetic and interactive from the start, it took others a bit more time to warm-up to everyone. Once group norms were discussed and participant learned that it was a safe space and they could take breaks or refrain from sharing whenever they wanted the group dynamics shifted. Before beginning the morning discussion, participants made their own stress balls. During this activity, facilitators began going through the morning questions with the group. Major themes discussed in the morning included a lack of groups/supports for young people, i.e. Gay Straight Alliances, a lack of representation of queer adults (teachers/support staff) in their schools, limited if any literature written by queer authors available to young people and issues around gendering, especially within sports and gym class. In the afternoon, a group painting activity reengaged the group before beginning the discussion on solutions and recommendations to the problems discussed earlier.



Major themes discussed in the morning included a lack of groups/supports for young people, i.e. Gay Straight Alliances, a lack of representation of queer adults (teachers/support staff) in their schools, limited if any literature written by queer authors available to young people and issues around gendering, especially within sports and gym class. In the afternoon, a group painting activity reengaged the group before beginning the discussion on solutions and recommendations to the problems discussed earlier.

- **"There's also a lack of GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance). I'm a representative for my school, but it's interesting to see how many schools don't have that representation, or teachers who take initiative in being a support for students in the LGBTQ2+ community"**
- **"When I got to high school in grade 9 when they teach sex-ed, one girl in the back said, 'what about LGBTQ2+ people' and the teacher got really mad at her and she ended up getting detention. Even in public schools this is happening"**
- **"I've never really read any literature on or literature written by the LGBTQ+ community in school"**

Gym Class & Change Rooms

- **"I think, regarding curriculum, gym classes are still gender separated. So, boys with boys and girls with girls. That causes a lot of issues. What happens when someone identifies as she/her but is being forced to change around boys? Change rooms or washrooms are a huge issue too"**
- **"I actually have a friend who has to change in the washroom separately before going into gym class. He will take time in-between classes to change and go to class to avoid the change-room situation. He doesn't want to change in a room full of people he doesn't identify with. It's isolating for him, and sometimes people call him out on it... It's really sad"**
- **"I think the change room and washroom thing is a big deal. We have gender-neutral washrooms in our school but they're locked and in less-than-good condition. You need to have someone unlock it for you to use, or you need to be given the key. That doesn't happen with students who use other washrooms, so why these obstacles for students who want gender-neutral bathrooms? It's just unfair and it outs some kids"**
- **"We should have co-ed sports teams. Some people would feel more comfortable on the one team rather than deciding which team they should belong with. Plus, all the bullying"**

Youth Insights

Problems & Barriers for Change

Challenges Queer Youth Face in the Education System

“They made pride flags rising optional for students to attend. When I wanted to go, the teacher said, “I’m straight, where is my flag?” My mom talked to the principal and teacher got training but did not follow up. No apology and [no] resolution”



ADMINISTRATION AND EDUCATORS

- “The **school board** doesn't do anything”
- “Schools **don't care about our safety**. This isn't even an LGBTQ2+ issue anymore, it affects all students. **We don't fit into a category** for them to teach”
- “Our **education system hasn't changed** over the years, just **slowly modified**”
- “They talk about not being judgmental, but **that's as far as they go in catholic school**. Because of **religion** and they can't really go further than that”
- “My **guidance counsellor** relates all my problems to my workload and academics”
- She **failed me** for advocating on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community. It was just a **gross use of power**”
- We talked to the vice principal and he recommended to educate people on pronoun and advised to speak to a gender study teacher. **A 15-year-old trans student is more knowledgeable than that teacher!**”
- “After pride month the **school never talks about it ever again**. It should be every day. It's an important topic”
- I feel like teachers and administrative staff need to realize that **they don't have the final say** and their opinion doesn't matter as much as students, and just because they have certain training **doesn't mean that their opinion is more valuable than the kids**”

I shouldn't have to tell teachers that I'm attending therapy, or my diagnosis, or show a doctor's note. If I tell them that I'm struggling, they should believe me. They shouldn't need proof”

THE PROBLEM WITH BULLYING

"I was threatened to be hurt, to be raped, stalked, beat up, all because I [am] Trans."

"I was getting bullied to the point where I left school the following year, but I was still getting A's and B's. I don't know if this is why my principal didn't care all that much. It's very frustrating"

"Another guy called me a "fag" He kept doing it. He did it again and got suspended. I was crying, but he did not feel any remorse for that. I went to the vice principal. I told her "It's bullshit!" She then said, "If you did that, it's the same thing he did." SO! You are punishing him for the word he said but he cannot apologize? Don't be homophobic cause it's the rules. Make sure it's a [safe] environment"

"Some people have to hide who they really are around their friends because they use the word gay or homo as a diss"



A Lack of and Need for Support and Resources

- "So many people that are transitioning don't know any of the resources or people to help them."
- "Some guidance counsellors actually hear you out whereas others brush off your problem and act as if problems can only be academic related"
- "Placing support programs or groups in school wouldn't work because it doesn't feel safe"
- "People are very judgmental about things that they can't relate to, so it's hard to find support systems at school"

"A lot of people don't know who they are until they reach high school. When I first met someone, who was trans I didn't even realize it. I called him by his dead name by accident, and he said, 'actually, it's Mike. You aren't shown it as much, you don't know what to do, what to say, what pronouns are!'"

THE PROBLEM WITH ADULTS

- In “middle school and high school you are so close to adulthood. You are like entirely capable of mature and adult thought and a lot of people don't see kids as people, or as like people in training, but not human beings who are also entitled to the same amount of respect”
- “Kids are getting educated about the [LGBTQ 2+] community, but this is not enough. It's a start, but the older generations are so reluctant to change because it wasn't a thing in their time, and our generation is so open and accepting towards other people”
- “They are really hard-headed. They have been taught all their life to be a certain way and now they see all this change... and they don't want to change”
- “Older generations are the hardest people to get to understand the [LGBTQ2+ community]. I always tell them, you say whatever you want, but I am still your kid. Its family, so it's hard to disregard your family. Especially when you are different and not the same as your family”
- “Lots of older generations were not taught about LGBTQ+ stuff at all. They are not educated at all on it. They are very stubborn and hard-headed. There's this thing called family therapy, trying to set that up would help to educate parents and show them how they can support their child in the right way”
- “Older people think the whole concept of LGBTQ2+ is wrong because people didn't come out of the closet in those day”

“One of the most important rights that a child should have is the right to get apologized to by adults. Because, so often adults will not apologize to a child even if they are wrong. [Admitting] that they are wrong, and getting an apology is important”



Teachers wouldn't have a job if it weren't for students being in school and students wouldn't be able to learn if there weren't any teachers. They just need to understand that we're both just trying to do our job to the best of our ability”

THE PROBLEM WITH GENDER IDENTITY AND MISGENDERING

- “When teachers are picking helpers and **say something like: I need 2 boys and 2 girls**”
- “If teachers can't refer to your pronouns the way you want, it just makes you feel like you're only there to get work done. **You, as a person, don't feel valued**”
- I think that if the treatment of gender identity in schools was better, my grades would be a lot better. I'm getting bad marks in class, mainly because I don't ask questions or participate in class because **people don't understand where I'm coming from a lot of the time**”
- “My friend was talking about being mis-gendered on her report card on paper. Teachers doing it in class is one thing; it's in passing, but then having it on paper can **misrepresent you**”



THE PROBLEM WITH GENDER SPECIFIC BATHROOMS

- “A lot of the times the gender-neutral washrooms are locked because of misuse”
- “Some kids don't want people knowing their business, but have to ask for a gender-neutral bathroom key, or **need to be escorted?** That's just **weird, inappropriate**, and it can be a **safety concern. Not everyone is accepting**, and if people notice this about you, going to a separate washroom... it just **puts a target on your back** and it also outs you”
- “When I came out at my school, they first said I couldn't use the girls or the boy's bathroom. **So, I stopped drinking water**”
- “The gender-neutral washrooms is in the main hallway are] where the smoker's hangout. This **isn't a safe option for me.** What I end up doing was to go to the bathroom with buddies or waiting until I get home”
- Our hall monitor tends to check in the [gender neutral] washroom to make sure people aren't vaping or doing **things they shouldn't be doing in the washroom**”
- It's like **everyone's talking behind their back** and that is what stops them from using the gender-neutral bathrooms, because it's like makes them stand out
- “It's a very vulnerable space and is meant to be a safe personal space, but there is a lot of **disrespect**”
- “The name for gender neutral washrooms [at my school] **is 'the Nooch'** because it is now a **hangout spot**”

Youth Insights

THE PROBLEM WITH THE GOVERNMENT

"If the Government actually wants equal rights for everyone, then society needs to be more involved"

- "They will show up at pride to show face, but they will never actually create action"
- "They have done everything they're supposed to do but it's not enough"
- "The Government is supposed to be our biggest protector, but they do the bare minimum"
- "I feel like there are a lot of shadows"
- "There are laws in place, but the government is not doing much to enforce these laws or make sure these laws are protected"
- "Schools don't have funding or use funding for the wrong things!"
- "There's not enough support for the community, especially the younger members"
- "So many people that are transitioning don't know any of the resources or people to help them!"



Dear Government...

"Stop beating around the bush!"

"Less talk more action"

"Lower the voting age to 16!"

"[Have] some sort of repercussion for intentionally refusing to use trans people names and pronouns"

"You can't help being trans then you should have the right to exist as a person just as much as a CIS person, so it shouldn't cost you extra money to do that"



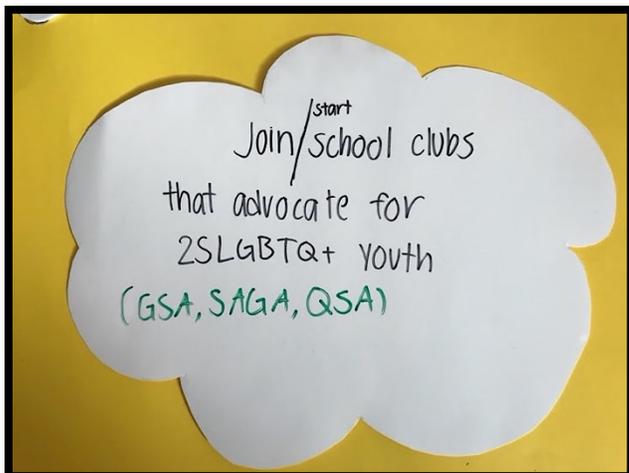
Youth Insights

SOLUTIONS FOR CHANGE

What are some ways that Children and Youth can Participate in Creating Change?

"This conference right here is a great way of participating in making change. I am grateful for meeting you all, and being here to this conference and learning so much"

- "Start a **petition** and get everyone to sign it"
- "Email a bunch of politicians **at election time**"
- "I think this goes back to **advocating for policies**. That is the only way we would be able to get these **changes in the schools**"
- "We need to **advocate** for policy change such as **sports teams and even physed. classes**"
- "It all starts with us. We need to **vote** and **influence people to vote**"
- "Coming up with an **advocacy group** within your school would help to **advocate** for your right to have a **safe washroom**, so people don't just use it to vape in"
- "In school, I'm a part of a GSA which is a gay straight alliance. We are able to **support the community**, and we are **able to be a part of something** that can make a change"



"We cannot tell Doug Ford what to do, obviously. But our **school trustees** need to hear our **voices**, and **change can happen**"

"It's the small things of trying to be open with **and accept LGBTQ+**. It's **the little things** that **matter the most**"

"We need to **stop** the whole **see nothing say nothing thing**. If we see something wrong or hear something wrong, then we can **pass it on** to other people.

Advocate for people who might feel afraid to talk about the topic. **Lead**"

"Certain youth need to step up and take it upon themselves to continue to push for equal representation and to continue to push till discrimination isn't such a prevalent issue in our society. If the government doesn't happen to take us seriously now, we have to keep persisting over and over until they do"

Solutions for our Schools

How can Schools Help Protect Queer Youth Rights in the Education System?

“Advocate for **safe spaces** and also give a **platform for children to speak up**”

“You can start by having **ally-teachers** that are friendly and **easy to talk to and not assholes**”

“Having a **screening processes** for teachers is **necessary**”

“By having some sort of **repercussion** for intentionally refusing to use trans people names and pronouns, like being like, ‘no I won’t call you ...’, or insisting they use their birth assigned gender”

“There should also be **mandatory trainings** for teachers, such as **anti-oppressive trainings, positive space trainings, and Trans 1.0**”



ACCESS TO SUPPORTS AND SAFE SPACES

“Child and Youth Care Workers in school setting are a **very important resource**”

“Have **gender neutral bathrooms and safe spaces** for them to go that are more **accessible**”

“There shouldn’t have to be extra washrooms. But they also **shouldn’t use accessible washrooms for trans people**. We can **all learn to share a space and make it appropriate**, especially in schools”

“If there is going to be a **gender-neutral bathroom**, **there should be no him or her bathrooms either**, then it isn’t really focusing down on those who are them/they.”

“The MOBYSS bus goes around to schools in the GTA, it’s a portable clinic, they are medically trained, and some are trained therapists. It just happened last year.”

SUPPORT PEER TO PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS

- **“Peer to peer support is very very helpful. If you are talking to an adult, [you wonder], do you really understand? Do you really remember what it was like?”**
- **[Have] more support in schools, peer support, people who have already gone through it”**

"Going to an arts school allows me to talk about mental health a lot more and I always wonder how different my life would be if I didn't have the space to educate myself"

AWARENESS THROUGH OUR CURRICULUM

- "My school had an **anxiety group**, but there was a limit number [of students] and it made it kind of **exclusive and isolated**. I think it could be **integrated more into the classes**."

- "**Courses** can be made. I don't think they should be mandatory, but they **should be available. Teaching [children] at a young age** so that [information about mental health and LGBTQ2+ issues] is learnt"

- "We can add to curriculum such as science and biology, but also **adding in literature by authors who identify as LGBTQ2+**"

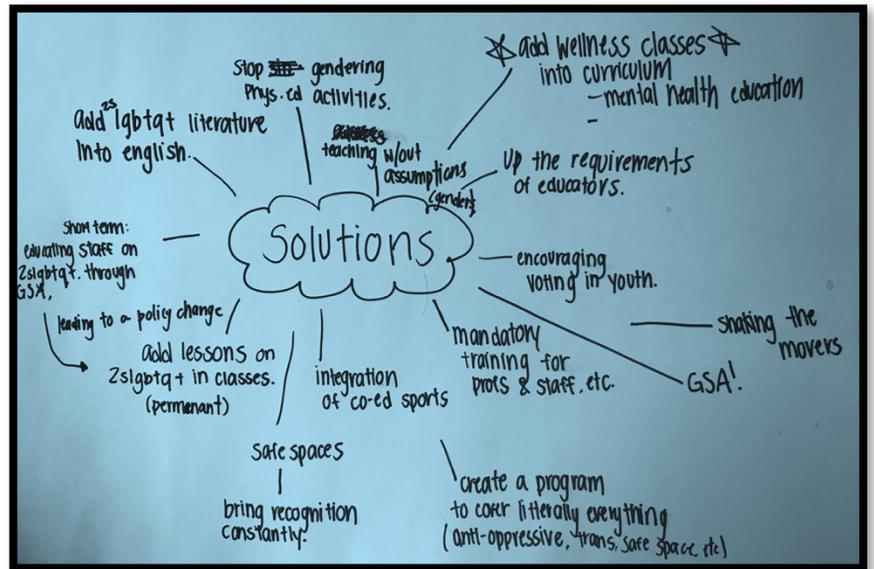
- "**Giving a foundation in elementary school and then building on it throughout high school**"

- "I didn't even know what gay was until I went to high school"

- "Give youth the **"option** to take a **class on gender and sexuality** in high-school as an elective"

- "Gender studies courses can be helpful in school and should be mandatory so everyone can learn the importance of gender identity, terms, sexuality"

"There are a lot of changes going on in the [LGBTQ2+] community that a lot of people don't know about, such as [the acronym]. They don't explain that, and they don't know the proper terminology. If it was talked about more in classes, it would be more eye opening and people wouldn't be as judgmental"



A NEED FOR QUEER REPRESENTATION AND ADULT ALLIES

- "In order to talk about gender and sexuality you need people who aren't CIS head to talk to about that stuff"

- "One of the most important things for queer adults to do is just exist in these spaces"

"Incorporating queer adults into school environments is important. I've had a handful of gay teachers, however I have not seen trans teachers, and the lack of adults in that position, if adults are going to stick to not listening to kids you should at least have some voices from adults that are representing who those kids are going to grow up to be"

Dear Teachers

- "The **most important** thing [...] to learn is **respecting individual identities**"
- "Chill out, you know **my world does not revolve around a history assignment**. [My world] has many different facets, and you are not entitled to hearing about any that don't relate to you"
- "It's not just about getting through a lesson plan... You need to **be aware of your student's pronouns**. I've challenged a teacher about this once. I wrote a paper about the importance of it and it seemed dismissed. I also **failed that paper**"
- "Recognize that **students are not three-dimensional human beings**. We have things going on at home and in our personal lives. **Please don't try to fail me** on a test because I wasn't present because had an **anxiety attack**"
- "[Don't be] invasive about mental health issues. Kids should have **the right to privacy** and shouldn't have to explain the details around the issues they are having"



"Every student is different and comfortable with different things. I'd say the most important thing is making sure that your classroom and your other settings remain a comfortable environment, making sure that everyone feels safe, feels heard, and [that] there's no negativity. Ultimately, maintaining a safe environment is the most important thing."

If I were Prime Minister

- "That sounds like a lot of power. I'm not really sure what I would do first. There's a lot to fix"
- "I'd introduce **Mandatory LGBTQ2+ education in schools**"
- "I would also like to **diversify** the professionals. Put in more LGBTQ+ teachers into the curriculum"
- I would bring in gender neutral spaces. Take out the male and female out of all spaces such as change-rooms and washrooms. **Just make it neutral.**
- "Putting a lot of attention into respecting names and pronouns would be a giant priority"



"In the U.S. right now what's happening is they are trying to make LGBTQ2+ discrimination legal. If we don't follow the laws that are in place for a reason, if there are people who don't act like decent human beings, then what? We are the country that is the most similar to the US. We've moved so far forward and now we're coming back!"

Concluding Thoughts

Parting Words of Young People

WHERE DID YOU LEARN ABOUT THE CONFERENCE?

- Someone told me about it when I can to Glad Day one day
- Instagram post
- Facebook
- My Gender Studies teacher
- My friend X3
- My sister
- My professor invited me X2
- School GSA
- School counsellor
- My mom

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU'LL REMEMBER ABOUT THIS YEAR'S STM'S WORKSHOP?

- My friend that I made here
- The impact of being LGBTQ2+ on mental health
- The friend that I made here and the problems we discussed
- The drag show (X5)
- Meeting new people
- The law that states that adults have the obligation to hear and take the voices of young people seriously
- The people and the passion that was expressed
- The information that I learned about rights
- Making a real and tangible impact
- Honestly, I learned so many rights today that I was not aware of
- Solutions for problems the community is facing

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT YOU LEARNED AT THE CONFERENCE?

- How to build inclusion spaces
- Rights!
- Adults care (some)!
- How important it is to speak up about the rights of the LGBTQ2+ community and how to fix them
- Everyone goes through different experiences
- I am not alone
- Other people's experiences
- That these problems influence so many young people like me
- It is extremely important to speak up about beliefs, ideas and experiences to make a change and break cycles
- That there is a law that states that all adults need to listen to children's voice and make their options valid
- Its crucial for discussions to include and emphasize marginalized voices
- Things I can do to make an impact at school
- How much everyone is affected by mental health
- What I can do to encourage my peerS

"Since we have to face such a crazy thing at such a young age, it's an advantage to think outside of the box"

HOW COULD NEXT YEAR'S CONFERENCE BE MADE BETTER?

- More LGBTQ2+ adults
- Mostly nothing, except for maybe dancing at the end
- Personally, I feel as though this was an absolutely amazing and insightful. I feel very educated now, so I'd change nothing
- Double the break time
- More often, and publicized events
- More time to talk
- I feel like this conference was well put together and does not need improvement
- Nothing, it was great
- Nothing, this conference was insightful
- More discussion about cultural intersections and LGBTQ2+ identities
- A quieter environment
- More group activities

WHAT TOPIC DO YOU THINK NEXT YEAR'S STM'S CONFERENCE SHOULD BE ABOUT?

- World issues X2
- Human trafficking – important and on the rise in Toronto, affecting millions
- Immigration politics and refugee crisis X4
- Environment/climate change X2
- Climate crisis and the role of youth
- International students/people who have English as a second language
- Accessibility X2
- Body image
- Lack of education in different countries
- Internet safety



CONCLUSION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

On November 16th, 2019, the Landon Pearson Centre, in partnership with the School of Child and Youth Care (CYC) from Ryerson University, invited young people from across the Greater Toronto Area to participate in this year's Shaking the Movers Conference. Across provinces the topic of Shaking the Movers was non-discrimination and the right to education. The Toronto site saw this as an opportunity to speak to young people specifically about their rights to education and non-discrimination as it pertains to gender and sexuality. For the past several years, young people attending the Toronto Shaking the Movers conference have suggested this topic for future conferences. Given the depth of insight they shared with us it is more than understandable why they have been asking for a space to unpack the issues outline throughout this report. Across all four groups; belonging and identity, school and community, mental health and bullying, and curriculum and extra-curricular activities, young people narrated sincere concern regarding the discrimination queer youth face overtly and/or covertly in their schools and communities on a daily basis. Young people underscored that in the absence of family and community support, schools must become a space where they feel safe and accepted as queer youth. Undermining this is a lack of queer representation and ally ship amongst adults in the education system who hold the responsibility of keeping them safe. It is unacceptable, for example, that young people are avoiding drinking water at school because they do not feel safe using the restroom.

As reflected in and throughout this report the participants who attended this year's conference are wise beyond their years, politically driven and each hold a deep sense of care and personal responsibility for one another and the future of their generation. One of the most significant take-aways for the adults who witnessed this conference is the confirmation that when young people are given a platform to speak and be heard they will change the world. There is much for adults, allies and peers to learn from the queer young people who shared their insights at this year's conference.

We would like to acknowledge the Laidlaw Foundation, the School of Child and Youth Care and the Landon Pearson Centre for making this conference happen both through their financial contributions and access to valuable resources. We would also like to acknowledge the hard work of students in the Advance Group Work class, as well as students from the Children's Rights class. In addition, the conference this year was shaped by the location - Glad Day Bookshop, who catered the event and offered the generous in-kind donation of their space. This meant closing down the Bookshop the entire day and reserving it entirely for the young people who attended this year's conference. Glad Day did this because of their care for LGBTQ2+ young people and their belief in the purpose of shaking the Movers.

Most of all we would like to thank each and every young person who generously gave their time and selflessly lent their voices for the purpose of informing this report. Without each of everyone of your Shaking the Movers could not be possible! Finally, we would also like to acknowledge that most participants identified as part of the LGBTQ2+ community and shared their insights to mostly CIS and hereto-identifying facilitators. The amount of emotional labor that was invested in their sharing must not be underestimated. With this said, in conclusion of this report, we sincerely ask for the support of the 'movers' in turning their words into actions.