



Landon Pearson Resource Centre
for the Study of Childhood
and Children's Rights

Ryerson
University



Carleton
UNIVERSITY

Shaking the Movers 2020



Civil & political rights in a time of covid-19

Virtual conference for youth in
Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba

Report prepared by Lauren Akbar & Olivia Leja

Table of Contents

Letter from Landon Pearson	pg 3
Background	pg 4
Overview	pg 5
Features of STM 2020	pg 7
Introduction to small groups	pg 10
<i>Disparities in Education</i>	
<i>Climate Change</i>	
<i>Right to Protection</i>	
<i>Black Lives Matter</i>	
<i>Physical and Mental Health</i>	
Youth insights	pg 13
<i>Problems and Barriers for Change</i>	
<i>Solutions for Change</i>	
Concluding Thoughts	pg 23
Wrap-up and Acknowledgments	pg 26

Letter from Landon Pearson



Reflections on the Civil and Political Rights of Children in a time of Pandemic

Until the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1989, people rarely talked about the political rights of children let alone their civil ones, the ones designed to ensure everyone's entitlement to participate in the civil and political life of society and the state without discrimination or repression. Even the 1959 UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child spoke primarily to protection and provision rights, to safety, health, education and so on. So the inclusion of Article 12 in the CRC, the right to participate, was a major step forward. What was even more remarkable was the fact that the American delegate to the drafting process of the Convention insisted on adding after Article 12 the list of civil rights included in the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights the US had recently ratified. These rights, the right to freedom of expression and access to information, to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, to freedom of association and peaceful assembly and to privacy (Articles 13-16) are all essential preconditions for the exercise of political rights. The irony is, of course, that the US is now the only country in the world not to have ratified the CRC!

But why should Article 12 be considered a political right when it only speaks to children and youth under the voting age? In my view this is because of the reality that an informed voter necessary for a fully functioning democracy does not magically appear at the age of 18. Political skills have to be learned and practised because they represent the ultimate personal expression that shapes the governance of any country that claims to be democratic. Properly respected Article 12 can enable young people to have a say even before they have a vote. What Article 12 implies is that "there can be no talking about us and if you don't listen to us, you grown-ups, what you decide may backfire."

During this pandemic and the other challenges like climate change that are on the way the voices of youth are more important than ever. Young people are not the problem, they are the solution. We need to hear from them (you) so that they can share with us their lived experiences of Covid-19 and direct our thinking as we collectively prepare for the future. Even little children have valuable insights and much to contribute to the continual planning that now has to go on. There can be no return to the way things were before the pandemic broke out but there can be a new normal, better than before, that children and young people exercising their civil and political rights can help us to construct.

Honourable Landon Pearson,
September 25, 2020
Landon Pearson Resource Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights

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 provides children and youth with a unique opportunity to exercise their rights 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 workshops to provide spaces for children and youth to have the floor' present their unique perspectives and experiences, and provide specific recommendations and input related to a children's rights agenda. Following each workshop, the voices of the youth 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, youth participants are invited to provide recommendations for the following years' STMs topic. The section which follows offers a list of topics and UNCRC article numbers that have been explored through STM workshops in previous years.

Overview/ STM 2020 Online

On November 21st & 22nd 2020, 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 two-day virtual conference for young people in several provinces around Canada. This first-ever virtual version of the Shaking the Movers Conferences allowed for youth across provinces to participate in the conference resulting in a record number of participants from across Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba. Due to the global pandemic of COVID-19, public health requirements which prevented in-person gatherings resulted in Shaking the Movers to be moved online. To participate in this conference virtually, all of the young people met on the ZOOM platform. Opening and closing activities, group presentations, and large group discussions took place on the main page. Before the conference began, participants were asked to pick their top choices for thematic groups. During the conference, the participants were divided into breakout group rooms virtually when it was time to discuss their specific themes that they had previously

chosen and upon their return, each group shared a short presentation on their small group discussions. The presentations provided great insights to the challenges that young people are facing throughout COVID-19 and the new layers of complexity that the online world poses for education, advocacy, and creating change.

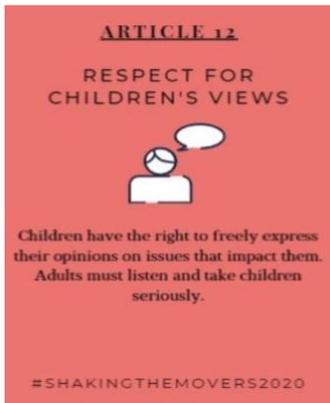
Through these unprecedented times, while we are all learning to live through a pandemic, the young people explored themes around civil and political rights within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering the realities of ZOOM fatigue, the facilitators decided to host the conference for two afternoons online, instead of the typical full two days in person. The youth were actively engaged in activities and dialogue surrounding the themes connecting to civil and political rights.

Themes

This year the young people looked at five major themes and they are as follows;

- 1) *Disparities in Education*
- 2) *Climate Change*
- 3) *Right to Protection*
- 4) *Black Lives Matter*
- 5) *Physical and Mental Health*





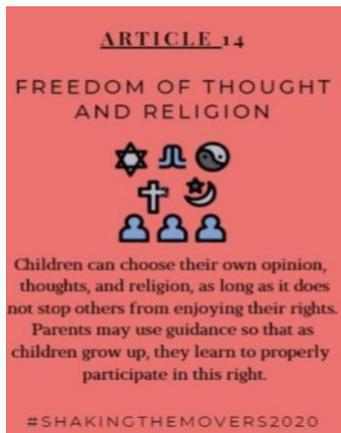
Articles

12. Respect for children's views

Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them. Adults should listen and take children seriously.

13. Sharing thoughts freely

Children have the right to share freely with others what they learn, think and feel, by talking, drawing, writing or in any other way unless it harms other people.



14. Freedom of thought and religion

Children can choose their own thoughts, opinions and religion, but this should not stop other people from enjoying their rights. Parents can guide children so that as they grow up, they learn to properly use this right.

15. Setting up or joining groups

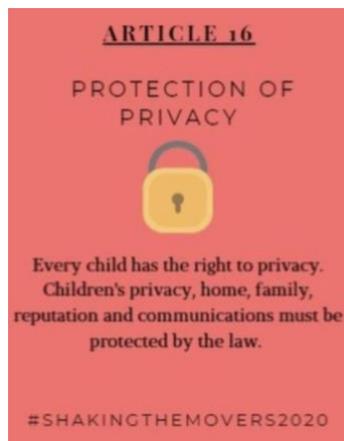
Children can join or set up groups or organisations, and they can meet

with others, as long as this does not harm other people.



16. Protection of privacy

Every child has the right to privacy. The law must protect children's privacy, family, home, communications and reputation (or good name) from any attack.



Images created by Ruby Alguire and Steven Gibson, student facilitators of the conference

Features of STM 2020

Virtual Location

Due to the current situation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the decision was made to conduct the STM 2020 conference all online. Therefore there was no physical location for any of the facilitators or youth to meet. Instead, youth participants were given a link to join a ZOOM meeting. All participants were given the agenda with an hour-by-hour break down for the first ever virtual STM conference.

Recruitment of Participants

As the conference was all online, the young people were all recruited virtually. Many of the young people learned about the STM conference through educators, peers or facilitators. Through partnership building and recruitment, many youth from an organization called CanU Canada, located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, attended the STM conference.

Youth participants registered themselves online through Google Forms and recruited peers to join the conference.

Young people were encouraged to not only sign themselves up but to also recruit friends to join the conference.

About the Youth Participants

As the conference was online, participation was not limited to young people in the GTA. Therefore, we had participants from across Ontario, Quebec, as well as many participants through CanU Canada from, Manitoba. The young people who attended range from ages 12-18, all with diverse cultural backgrounds and lived experiences.

Informed Consent

In advance of the conference each participant was provided a written consent form to consider before participating. This included consent to having their narratives and pictures shared throughout this report and within the accompanying video. Throughout the conference, facilitators ensured that the participants were continually informed of their rights to privacy and confidentiality as participants in STM. In addition, participants were encouraged to share their voices in the format that best suited their comfortability, for example: through chat box, emojis, and/or on their microphone.

Introduction to Youth Facilitators

The small group discussions and activities of this year's STM workshop were organized and facilitated by students in the School of Child and Youth Care at Ryerson University. Students of the Advanced Group Work course held the Youth Facilitator roles. In preparing for this important role, each student spent several weeks in class learning about strategies for youth engagement and processes of group facilitation with young people. The students identified and developed the five workshop themes and organized themselves into separate groups. The students used their youth engagement skills and their understanding of the processes of group facilitation to engage the young people on a virtual platform with icebreaker activities and then to move into the big discussions about their specific themes.

CYC Children's Rights Class

Involvement of Ryerson's School of Child and Youth Care Children's Rights course is a staple of Toronto's Shaking the Movers conferences. This year the informative and creative 5-minute videos presented by Ryerson's Children's Rights class prior to the conference were a new and useful innovation. At the beginning of the conference, participants were introduced to children's rights with a 5-minute video about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Then they had another video to support their discussions about their chosen theme in relation to civil and political rights in small online breakout groups. These videos helped provide the foundations for Shaking the Movers discussions.

Agenda

DAY ONE

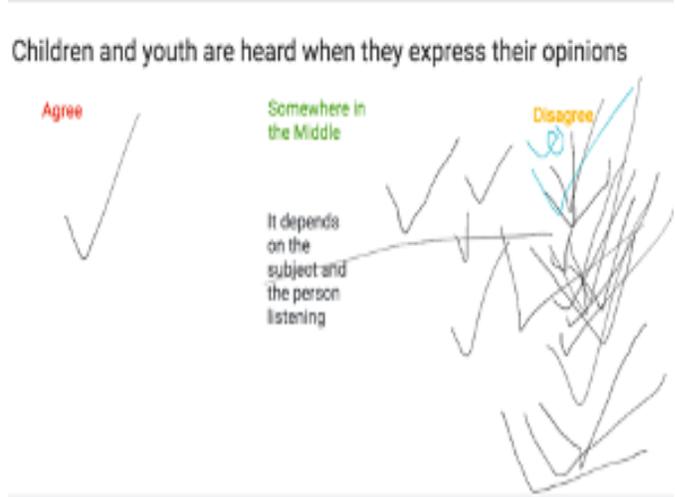
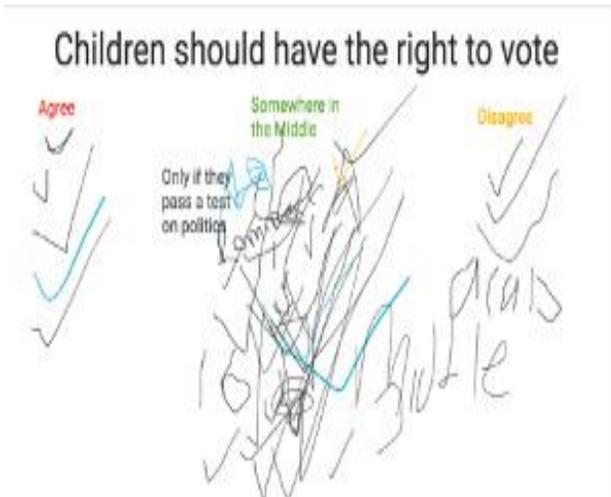
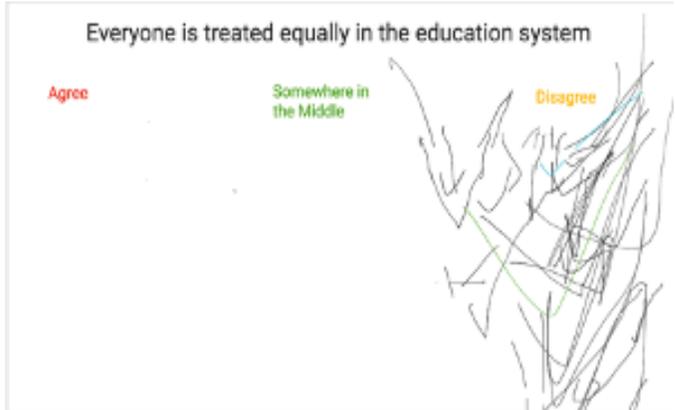
Activity	Time
Join Shaking the Movers Online through Zoom! <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Test out your camera and microphone• Read the welcome activity list	12:30pm - 1:00pm
Introduction + Welcome to Shaking the Movers <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Icebreaker Activities• What is the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child)	1:00pm - 1:30pm
Break-Out Groups: Thematic Topics within Civil and Political Rights <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group discussions on the general and specific problems within your theme• Creation of presentations on your discussion	1:30pm - 2:45pm
Stretch + Refresh (Break)	2:45pm - 2:50pm
Youth Presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 minute presentations (as a group) to share back discussions on the general and specific problems within your theme	2:50pm - 3:15pm
Debrief + Closing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feedback for presentations + preparation for Sunday• Closing activity	3:15pm - 3:30pm

DAY TWO

Activity	Time
Join Shaking the Movers Online through Zoom! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Test out your camera and microphone ● Read the welcome activity list 	12:30pm - 1:00pm
Welcome Back <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Icebreaker Activities ● Review of Day 1 	1:00pm - 1:25pm
Break-Out Groups: Thematic Topics within Civil and Political Rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Group discussions on the general and specific solutions within your theme ● Creation of presentations on your discussion 	1:25pm - 2:40pm
Stretch + Refresh (Break)	2:40pm - 2:50pm
Youth Presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 3 minute presentations (as a group) to share back discussions on the general and specific problems within your theme 	2:50pm - 3:15pm
Debrief + Closing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feedback re presentations + preparations for Sunday ● Closing activities + closing remarks 	3:15pm - 3:30pm
Optional Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● STM is welcoming you to stay for a short period of time, to share your personal opinions/thoughts/ideas on the challenges young people are facing in COVID-19 within civil and political rights ● If you would like to be interviewed/share more, please feel free to join for the optional time 	3:30pm - 4:30pm

DAY TWO

On day two of the conference, the youth participated in another Jam Board activity but this time the questions were focused more on the themes that the young people have been discussing in their small groups.



Youth Presentations

After breaking out into smaller groups online, the youth came back to the larger ZOOM group to share what they discussed in their groups. As the youth were not physically together for their group discussions, they all got very creative with the ways that they presented their information on a virtual platform.

Closing Activities and Interviews

At the end of each afternoon, to end on a high note, facilitators encouraged the young people to participate in a sound wave, demonstrating that together their voices are louder. On the last day of the conference, the youth were invited to stay for an optional hour to be interviewed to go into a bit more detail about their thoughts and opinions on civil and political rights.

Introduction to Small Groups

Overview

To start off the small groups, the youth facilitators from the Advanced Group Work Class went through key pieces of information about consent and confidentiality. They also ensured that all participants clarified their preferred pronouns, before moving on to ice breaker activities to get all the participants comfortable engaging with one another. Once these key pieces were completed, the discussion about their themes began.

Youth insights

Problems and barriers for change

On day one of the conference, the goal of the small thematic groups was to discuss the relevant issues concerning their topic within the context of civil and political rights in a time of COVID-19. The following will highlight the key pieces of the young people's conversations about barriers and challenges within their specific theme.

Disparities in Education

Disparities in Education was an enriching topic to learn the new challenges that have arisen for young people who are doing their best to continue their learning online or in-person during COVID-19. The reality is that many young people are feeling left behind, more than they may have already felt in this system. An interesting realization for facilitators was how there were quite a few technology issues that came out, which speaks to the reality that young people had to quickly adapt to online learning in these unprecedented times that we are in.

“The access to technology with covid-19 was a challenge, not everyone has access to a computer and wifi. Because I didn’t have access to technology I was behind by the time I was able to receive what I needed to learn.”

“It impacts their learning and feeling of equality.”

“...my siblings have FASD, when I speak directly to the school with my concerns about the inequalities, nobody listens. I had also contacted the governor of education. It feels like nobody listens because nothing is changing.”

“The grading marking system is unfair, I feel like it’s more about competition because rather than focusing on education, everything is about marks. If I didn’t understand my work, is someone going to help me understand it? Probably not.”

“My school didn’t even care if all students didn’t have a computer. I failed a course because my parents couldn’t afford a computer.”

“These concerns affect our rights because we have to fight for them, it shouldn’t take for me to go to the governor of education and the Member of Parliament. Still, nothing is really happening. These rights should be given to us, not have to be fought for.”

“Access to technology has been a real struggle for me, getting access to technology was hard. By the time I got some technology from my school I was so behind, already feeling overwhelmed.”

“I feel mentally exhausted, I don’t know if it’s just me, (almost all of the other group members agreed).”

“Students shouldn’t have to explain their religions and school should be teaching that to children so that they are understanding and accepting.”

“Grading system and point based grading systems undermine our learning and creativity and it rewards cheating and it damages students and peers relationships and the trust in teachers. It also encourages your students to avoid challenging work and it also teaches to value grades over knowledge.”

As demonstrated by the direct remarks from young people, there are many factors that contribute to the disparities in education. When examining the disparities and inequalities with a global context within COVID-19, the young people highlight some very troubling and challenging issues.

Climate Change

In a time where climate change is highly contested and debated, young people deserve to have the conversation about the environmental factors that are directly impacting their health and wellbeing. Youth in Canada are facing many challenges and barriers in regards to climate change and desire to speak up in an age of misinformation.

“Youth and younger children go off to protest about climate change when it shouldn't be something that youth should worry about but for the government to”

“Youth have protested and that requires them to miss school because they worry about the future with climate change because other people aren't.”

“People who don't believe in climate change are influencing other people that this isn't a big issue when it really is.”

“The life of youths in communities are already being affected in very dramatic ways. And because a lot of these people tend to live in regions that are very heavily affected, it can affect them in more ways than. Countries can be gone and if these countries are considered to be a developing country and if other countries don't think about the effect climate change will have globally, then the countries will gone within a decade.”

“Governments aren't really doing much, example, Trudeau has signed an agreement to help with climate change but it's not enough and countries are going to be destroyed because of climate change and rising sea levels. So people have to start recognizing these issues and take action.”

“Climate change might affect certain disadvantaged groups like Indigenous groups.”

“A lot of Indigenous reserves are in areas where there is a lot of pollution from mining companies, and the pollution from these companies will also affect the water quality and since they don't have access to water filtration stations they often get sick.”

“This is also a health issue and how the sustainable development goals set out by the United Nations, how they help underline that everybody needs access to clean water and clean food and also a good health care.”

“Everything is interconnected because clean water will also lead to better health. So if we help with one thing, we can potentially help with something else. It's a positive cycle.”

“The fact is that politicians should be asking for our feedback instead of us going to them continuously and that’s not really happening right now...”

“Some politicians have their tags off and sometimes they don’t see the post till months later, which makes it really hard to get your voices heard. Despite a lot of protests happening, there hasn’t been a lot of change.”

Throughout their discussions, the young people highlighted their frustrations with the government in regards to climate change. In addition, they discussed the idea that climate change and pollution greatly impacts a community and their overall health. Climate change connects to so many other facets of a community.

Right to Protection

In this thematic group, the right to protection does not necessarily mean physical protection. The youth participants discussed what protection meant to them and discussion revolved around the context of protection within schools.

To protect means:

- “to protect children need opportunities to get their thoughts heard in school”
- “And give all children equal all access to resources”
- “It means to give equal importance to both mental health and physical health”

“To protect children means to ensure all children are given equal opportunities”

“Having access to information to have their own thoughts other than just believing something from their parents”

“Equity in education, equality, and education and acceptance for their opinion”

Points from youth:

Protection relates to civil and political rights.

Recognizing family, health and school.

Schools are not pulling their weight and responsibility to protect their students. After their discussion, the young people identified unique perspectives on the topic of the right to protection. Notably, young people discussed the equal opportunities for all children as a form of protection.

Black Lives Matter (BLM)

The rich discussions that young people had in this thematic group brought up many issues and challenges that they are currently facing. While the young people did discuss the Black Lives Matter movement, they also discussed many related issues like white fragility and white supremacy within a Canadian context.

“Racism is a structure not an event. Anti-Black racism is not only restricted to the United States, while in reality Black citizens in Canada non-stop feel threatened and unsafe in their everyday lives, simply because of the color of their skin.”

“The group that have power in Canada continuing anti-Black racism are those in political, economic, and social control.”

“The idea that systemic racism within our government, whether it is healthcare, a police force, as well as the education system or significant contributors to anti-Black racism that we see today in the assumption that within the education system is a safe haven in a race neutral is unfortunately misleading.”

“In reality, the education system in Canada streams students based on their race.”

“Black students are ongoingly being mistreated while their sufferings are largely being ignored and ultimately becomes a primary encounter with systemic racism and justice consuming anti-Black racism.”

“In terms of the effect, if a person of colour treats a white person wrongly based on prejudice it may be unacceptable and morally wrong. However, it does not impact them systematically and they will never have to fight against the system that holds racist ideologies that result in them being racially profiled whether its by the police or in public.”

“White supremacy and white privilege is a system of structural power that elevates white people as a group to pretend that their problems don’t exist. We cannot fully understand they’ve never really addressed it and this concept is critical to our understanding of white fragility.”

“It’s hard for white people to acknowledge it and imagine it without a society therefore, as leaders white individuals must take the initiative to identify, speak up against white supremacy in order to confront it.”

“I acknowledge my role as a Black person is not to give up on people around me who unintentionally possess these racist patterns but I’m aware that frequently

these racist behaviours are unavoidable due to our socialization of society, with that being said, we must work together with people to trust the ability to have discussions and work together towards improvement.”

“This will only work if we have pivotal change and we need to interrupt the unjust systems and the truth is it does unfairly benefit some people.”

“Discussion is an important thing whether it's on social media or amongst friends and coworkers.”

“People of colour learn to not discuss their experiences of struggles of pain because simply they're supposed to remain strong and calm. Otherwise they're seen as the angry Black people.”

“The idea for everyone to work together and overall takes away that sciences are one of the main reasons racism persists within our society and system.”

“Academia holds up white supremacy better than rednecks.”

“I think a huge problem starts from teachers, especially geography teachers. I feel like in the west they lack good knowledge of geography or really understand how other countries work. I think a lot of teacher's institute racism at a young age with favouritism of white students or Canadian born students.”

The youth participants had diverse conversations about race and the Black Lives Matter movement overall. Much of their discussions focused on inequalities in education in regards to race.

Physical and Mental Health

During this unique time of living through a global pandemic, the topic of physical and mental health has become a vital issue. The young people discussed the impact of the COVID-19 virus on their health overall and issues related to it.

“One of the things we talked about was not having anyone to talk to or being believed when talking to someone and a lot of people were feeling lost and confused and with school going on everyone was stressful and they thought teachers weren't doing their job correctly because there were like communication problems and we were lacking motivation”

“In school it is tough when teachers do not like communicating really well with them. The impact of the Coronavirus after the pandemic. Not just during the pandemic”

“I would say because it can play a big impact in the way we are learning. If you are mentally and physically not well, it can affect the way you learn, especially for the youth.”

“It’s so triggering when people feel like they need to have the right not to wear masks.”

“I feel like teachers need to understand that we are going through the same thing and we are experiencing more emotions and thoughts than they are”

Through the specific examples, its clear to see that youth are up against several different challenges and issues in terms of their mental and physical health with the added stress of the global pandemic. A common theme in the other groups was around education and the young people here outlined the difficulty they have been facing at school with the added pressure of the pandemic and how that has affected their overall health.

Youth insights

Solutions for change

After highlighting the issues within their themes on day one, the second day of the conference was all about solutions for change. The young people went back into their chosen thematic groups and discussed possible solutions to the issues they highlighted the previous day. The following are highlights from their discussions about solutions.

CLIMATE CHANGE

In discussing solutions for change, the youth participants in the climate change groups came up with two main overall solutions and key points that going along with them. Below is a collection of quotations from young people in their discussions about change.

Social Media

- “Keep advocating, that’s the biggest takeaway I have from this”
- “We talked about the negative of social media, there could be misinformation spread”
- “We can use social media to contact people who could help the cause”
- “Talked about adding hashtags to help contact politicians”
- “We have so many resources today that we must utilize to get our voice out”

Ideal government

- “If there is one thing we should all agree on, it is that climate change affects everyone”
- “We want politicians to recognize it. Some do, but some politicians deny it”
- “Politicians have to listen but they have to take action”
- “Youth voting should be lowered to 16. Many youth are very educated and very involved in politics”
- “Youth representation is important, where people can input their opinions - why we are here today”
- “One of the things that I learned in grade 10 civics is the power of people is bigger than the power of government”
- “From my personal experiences politicians don’t usually listen to us. I have encountered situations where I was talking to someone who works in the government and they told me that I’m just a kid and shouldn’t be worrying about this issue”
- “attending in person protest and getting in touch with your MP’s is also very important”

RIGHT TO PROTECTION

After discussing the issues on day one, the young people in the right to protection group discussed what they felt they needed as well as what they can do to create change. Ultimately the young people discussed continuing to speak up and making sure their voices get heard even in the challenging times of a global pandemic.

“It is harder to express yourself in Covid times, not everyone is comfortable online”

“I learned our words need to get heard more quicker, the government needs to take action/ For example, we are still going to school while everything is shutting down. In some schools, switching to online class, teachers are giving out more work”

“In this case, students are getting overwhelmed and stressed”

“I believe teachers should give us more leeway, instead of doing everything by the book, they should ask us what we want to happen and actually take it into consideration”

“I learned the first step to enacting change is to educate those around us about the issues we face as youth”

“Even as a young person, I am still capable of bringing change as long as I apply myself. I’ve learned how important it is for my voice to be heard, and how it is even more important for me to listen to the voices of my peers. I understand that everyone's rights are impacted in different ways, and that everyone’s experiences are different which can affect how their voices are heard. Moving forward, I will put in more effort to be socially aware and to speak up when I witness injustices”

“Take action more quickly rather than waiting for it to get worse than, take action.”

PHYSICAL and MENTAL HEALTH

After day one, the youth participants in the physical and mental health group had a very rich conversation about the issues that they are up against. Day two was much the same in that they discussed solutions that would have short term and long term effects as well as ways that they themselves can be creating change now.

“Write letters to elected officials”

“Make clubs”

“Kids can be nice to each other, be cautious about what you say to people”

“Create a YouTube channel with multiple different children making statements about how they feel”

“ I think a long-term solution might be finding someone you feel comfortable talking to and sharing how you are feeling with them. Finding things that make you happy and feel good about life.”

“I think a long-time solution is finding a good coping mechanism such as hobbies. Enjoying the small moments of life.”

“Short term I would probably say writing little messages on sticky notes, about how you feel but also being open to sharing it with people who you can trust.

“...more funding toward mental health in schools.”

“I know this is a provincial level thing but I would advise them to put in a course about mental health that is mandatory.”

“ I would invest in mental health overall, in all aspects.”

“ Teachers can make you feel more comfortable in class, make you feel safe, have a positive attitude towards students, make students feel comfortable that they are in the classroom because the mood they are in reflects upon the students.”

“ I think just talking about it and spreading awareness is really important”

“I would say creating programs where the youth could express how they are feeling.”

BLACK LIVES MATTER (BLM)

It's no surprise that after a very in depth and engaging conversation about the issues on day one that the young people in the black lives matter group had a very enriching conversation about solutions on day two. The youth participants discussed various solutions that different institutions should be engaging in. The following highlights key points from their discussion.

“Systemic racism goes beyond police brutality”

“Individuals need to reflect on their privilege and what it means to truly have those benefits”

“These conversations cannot happen unless we as a society teach these issues”

“In our communities we can raise our voices, this can spark a domino effect”

“So many people of colour are being marginalized or silenced”

“Building inclusiveness and celebrating Black history”

“Our curriculum must change, I just took the social justice and equity course, I am surprised it is only an elective - it should be mandatory”

“We talked about representation in our schools... it shapes how Black students view themselves”

“Schools are not created as safe spaces, people don't feel like they belong”

“The BLM frames within the human rights context”

“A long term solution is better mental health and social resources, to successfully demilitarize the police”

“Often police have entered homes in militarized fashion which has caused panic in citizens”

Short term - awareness/education will cause long term effects to happen

Government:

- Addressing issues and accountability (short)
- Providing support/resources to help allies (long)
- Better mental health supports for those who deal with marginalization (long)
- Policing training - approaches to how they navigate with communities, defunding the police into community service and proper resources (long)

Families:

- Having conversations despite comfortability
- Breaking cycle of compliance and educating each other

Schools:

- Not race neutral, bias curriculum from a colonized approach
- History of continents to gain understanding and appreciation for those around us (long term)
- Create interest within students to learn about others (short)
- Social justice - mandatory to spread awareness and help youth gain knowledge at earlier time
- Equality and respectful environment for everyone, creating a safe space not allowing oppression to occur - teaching peers to do the same (short)

Communities:

- Changing our idea of diversity and battling oppression together (long)
- Safe spaces where we're able to encourage diversity - learning from other's experiences and how we navigate in life together
- Call on injustice in society to combat conflict (short)
- Police training in how to communicate/approach communities with anti-oppressive framework

DISPARITIES IN EDUCATION

After discussing the possible issues on day one, the disparities in education group had an engaging conversation on day two about solutions for change. The highlights from their conversation are below. Ultimately the young people discussed the importance of speaking up and the power that young people have when they make their voices heard.

“Activism is a really big part of change”

“I think if students had more of a space to talk about what they want to change, it would be a lot easier”

“We as children have to stand up and make the change”

“I don't understand why we have to make the change when there should have already have been change”

“I've tried talking to people in government, it didn't work out very well”

“Maybe if we talk to people we know, like teachers and other youth, it will work out better”

Concluding thoughts

At the end of the second afternoon, the participants were given the opportunity to be interviewed by facilitators for closing remarks about civil and political rights and how young people can engage in them. The following are the questions that were posed to the young people and their responses

1. After participating in the Shaking the Movers conference, how would you personally define civil and political rights?

“... Well, both civil and political rights are interconnected [...] civil rights deal with standards of like, penal systems, whereas political rights deal with specific components of participation in political processes. They both talk about human rights, and civil rights include freedom of worship, like you can worship your own religion, to think and express who you are and be able to vote. And whereas political rights/life is like having access to things you'd like to have access to.”

“Well, they're rights that protect an individual's freedom.”

“It's important to educate yourself on your own rights, and you should be really in tune with news and different social issues around the world. Once you do that it's important to voice your opinion and you can do that through online like social media but also you can join activities and programs in your community and around the world for example like this. I have joined the youth parliament in my community.”

“I feel like there's two aspects to it, there's the political sense. I feel like the politicians need to approach you but after today's conference it's pretty clear that politicians are not willing to listen and even if they are there isn't going to be action taken. So in some sense you have to go out of your way to do something because like if no one is going to listen then you have to do what you can to change something that you want to see changed. And the civil aspect of it. I think the civil really ties into the political. For me, it is the general things that we do so like civilians and citizens we all have rights especially youth but even in a first world country like Canada we don't see these rights reflected very well in terms of youth having a voice. So I think I would define it as something that we have to go out of our way to get but work towards getting at a more constant or persistent rate.”

2. How do you engage in civil and political rights/activism?

“... Well I participate in [...] different ways. One of them would be [...] participating in opportunities like this one. Being able to talk to people older than me, and getting to know [...] what their thoughts are on the same topic. ‘Cause [...] we all don’t have the [...] same thoughts, on [...] the same things? Like, somebody might say a cup of water that’s [...] half full. And somebody might say, ‘Oh it’s [...] half empty.’ So we’re all different, So [...] I like these opportunities and being able to go out to protests and show my support for the [...] situations.”

“Well, you know how there’s [...] BLM? I go to the protests, which [...] tells the government that we want justice. And that’s one of the ways.”

“So as we discussed, politicians aren't willing to listen so there are certain ways that you can reach them which are effective to some extent. So obviously writing letters, keeping on advocating in whatever way you can, protesting because even though it may not have immediate effects, after a while it builds up and eventually politicians and people who have power have to take action to change what we want to see changed. And then using social media in a positive way to inform others, to reach out to connect to youth and moving forward in a way that will benefit everyone.”

3. What do you think is important for children and youth to know in regards to their civil and political rights?

“I feel like they need to be aware of what civil and political rights are, in order for them to like, know what they can use them for, what are the positives, and what are the negatives of having them and using them. And [...] they’re a privilege, right? They’re not a right. You should be thankful you have them, and not take them [...] for granted.”

“Well it’s important for children to know ‘cause [...] there might be wrong stuff happening with them. And they’re not aware of it. So [...] it’s important to know, so they can take some actions towards those wrong steps.”

“ It is important for children and youth to know their own rights because we are literally the future of the planet and we have to make decisions that will benefit us and benefit society and overall make a positive change in the world and knowing your rights is important. It becomes educating yourself, educating others.”

“we can’t disregard the fact that if they’re not going to listen that they’re never going to listen. Once you enforce your rights and project your opinion, like we’re not being listened to, you can’t keep ignoring us. At a certain point they can’t keep ignoring

us. That not in the charter of rights or in our Canadian law. And even the political aspect, it has to become a bigger thing for everyone to conceptualize on because unless we all agree that our rights are being violated, there isn't going to be change.

4. What advice do you have for other young people about engaging in civil and political rights?

“... Don't be afraid to [...] share your voice and know that you can empower so many people with your voice [...] If you're asking somebody a question, it's not a stupid question. Somebody else probably has the same question, so [...] use your voice, and make the change!”

“It's a great way to help out, and tell the government that [...] you want justice and we're there. And just don't forget about us, we stand up for others and ourselves.”

“I would say that, I think the important thing is to never give up and always know that you have a voice, and just because someone whether an adult or someone in your class says they don't agree with you or that you are being stupid then just ignore that, unless you're actually being stupid. But what I meant was that you are allowed to voice your own opinion.”

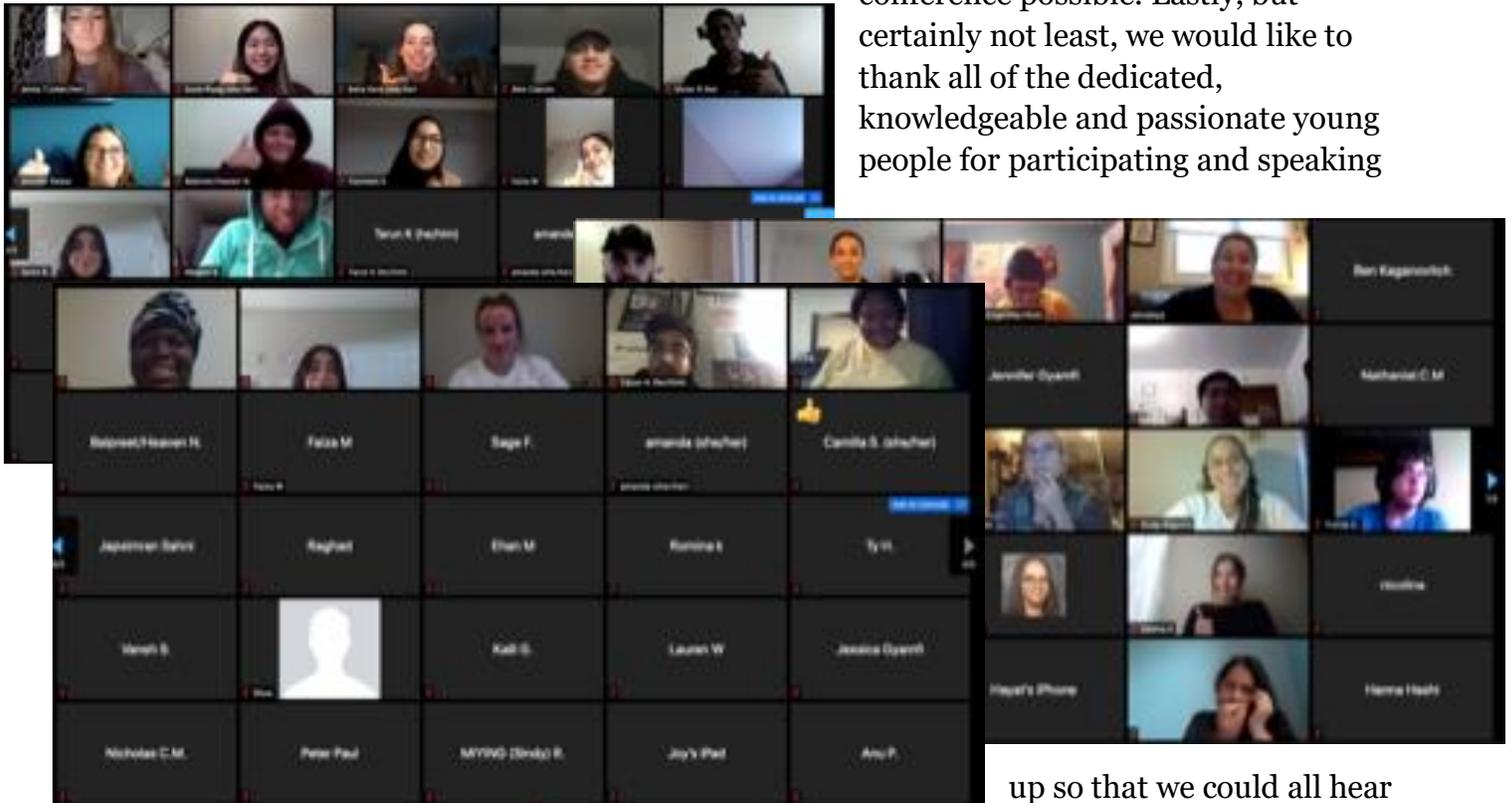
“So personally I would define young people as anyone under 29 or 25, so in terms of that I feel like when you're over 18, in a sense you're an adult but then you're also still learning so you're young too but then according to society if you're over 18 you're an adult so I guess adults/youth need to listen to each other and support each other. I think people over 18 have a different set of powers in a sense so if that group supports like people who are 15 or 16 or even people who are 10, cause people who are 10 are really smart and they know their rights and I've seen people who are 10 advocate for what they want. So those two age groups, if they come together and move forward, once again together consensually, then we will see change.”

Acknowledgements

After a successful first virtual Shaking the Movers conference, it became clear that the platform does not take away the importance of hearing, listening, and elevating youth voices. As we all know, COVID-19 has created new ways of thinking, the importance of innovation, and trying to do things differently in order to respond to current need. What we consistently heard from young people was that this seemed to be the first time many of them felt listened to, heard, and understood. Although this may seem shocking to some, it is a good reminder that young people's voices are incredibly important and they are crucial to creating real and meaningful changes in the world. This year we heard the voices of youth from Manitoba, Quebec, and Ontario, Although our conference looked different this year, the feelings of excitement, community, and the notion that we are stronger together were just as powerful as ever.

We would like to thank Ryerson University for sponsoring the conference. Of course, we would like to thank the Honourable Landon Pearson for making this

conference possible. Lastly, but certainly not least, we would like to thank all of the dedicated, knowledgeable and passionate young people for participating and speaking



up so that we could all hear your voices. If there is one resounding message that we can all take away from you after this conference, it is that we are stronger together. Your support for each other as well as your communities is admirable and we hope that you will go forward continuing to make your voices heard.

All participants are encouraged to stay in touch in a newly created Shaking the Movers alumni network. We would love to stay in touch with you all. Please let us know if you are interested. You can email Tara Collins at tara.collins@ryerson.ca

Thank you for making our first ever virtual Shaking the Movers a success.

See you next year!