



Shaking the Movers VIII: Child Exploitation



This report was prepared by Shaking the Movers VIII co-facilitators Carolyn Binns and Khatija Essaji, and co-chairs Dr. Judy Finlay and the Hon. Landon Pearson, with photographs from Sherry Prenevost.

Preface

Child exploitation is a challenging topic for young people to confront. While the numbers of children in Canada who are victims of trafficking, sexual exploitation, abusive child labour practices or coercion into armed conflict are relatively small, almost all children, as well as the rest of us, are subjected every day to false advertising or manipulation by the media in all its forms. If exploitation is making you do something you wouldn't otherwise do primarily for the profit of others, then welcome to the modern world!

When the participants at STM VII recommended child exploitation as a theme to be explored at STM VIII we were somewhat surprised. However, it has turned out to be a rich educational experience for all concerned. As the young people repeat over and over again in what follows, greater awareness about these issues is essential if children are to be protected from self-serving adults! Most of the participants were shocked to discover how many of their daily activities could be linked to child labour and will never look at their inexpensive tee-shirts, their chocolate bars, or their cell-phones in the same way again. One young refugee participant had had direct experience of armed conflict and others knew youth who had been involved. Sexual exploitation in one form or another was even more common. And they were all highly sensitive to the impact of the media.

Recognizing the world wide abuse of the rights of children and youth through exploitation and the fact that they might be contributing to it through their own actions appeared to turn the participants at STM VIII into global citizens. They are now prepared to make a difference in whatever way they can; by talking to their families and friends, by modifying their consumer habits, by supporting Fair Trade, by pressuring governments through letters and petitions to respect the obligations they have undertaken by ratifying international human rights agreements, particularly the CRC. By exploring the issues of exploitation on their own terms the young people who came to the workshop left feeling that they had the power to bring about some of the changes they would like to see. But they need to be reassured. So please listen to what they have to say in this report and let them know in one way or another that their voices have been heard.

Hon. Landon Pearson O.C.



Overview

On November 15th and 16th, 2014, the Landon Pearson Resource Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children’s Rights at Carleton University, in partnership with the School of Child and Youth Care and the Faculty of Community Services at Ryerson University, and supported by the Public Health Agency of Canada conducted a two day workshop with young people for the purpose of:

- providing an opportunity for children and youth to exercise their right to take part in important civil and political processes with the assurance that their voices will be heard and valued (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12).
- providing an opportunity for children and youth to prepare comments and recommendations for governments and civil society, with respect to Articles 32, 34, 35, 36, and 38 of the CRC and the themes that arise from these articles.

For this year’s Shaking the Movers, youth came together to look at the issue of child exploitation. Exploitation is the “the use of children for someone else’s advantage, gratification or profit often resulting in unjust, cruel and harmful treatment of the child. These activities are to the detriment of the child’s physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development” (Save the Children, 2010). Child exploitation happens all over the world, including here in Canada, especially when there are economic, social, cultural, or political circumstances that make children and youth more vulnerable. (United Nations Human Rights Commission for Refugees, n.d.).



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The Landon Pearson Resource Centre at Carleton University and the School of Child and Youth Care in the Faculty of Community Services at Ryerson University have committed to bringing the voices of young people to professionals, such as government officials, political leaders, non-governmental organizations, researchers, and other stakeholders in order to better understand the needs and rights of children and youth. This report¹ highlights discussions that Shaking the Movers participants engaged in around four areas of exploitation: (1) child labour, (2) child soldiers, (3) sexual exploitation, and (4) media exploitation. These areas of exploitation were addressed by 32 children and youth over the course of the two day workshop. The young people brainstormed solutions to some of the problems being faced by those who currently, or who may in the future, face exploitation. Authentic participation by young people on issues that concern them gives them the opportunity to shake up the movers who are making decisions about them so that planning and programming will respect their rights and serve their best interests.

“Knowing your rights, so you know you have them.”

“It’s important to understand the rights. You can read them, but if you don’t understand them, it’s pointless.”



¹ Please note, all quotes in this report, unless otherwise sourced, are from youth that attended Shaking the Movers 2014.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Articles

The following articles were addressed during Shaking the Movers 2014:

Article 12 (Respect for the views of the child): When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account.

Article 32 (Child labour): Governments should protect children from work that is dangerous or might harm their health or their education. While the Convention protects children from harmful and exploitative work, there is nothing in it that prohibits parents from expecting their children to help out at home in ways that are safe and appropriate to their age. If children help out in a family farm or business, the tasks they do should be safe and suited to their level of development and comply with national labour laws. Children's work should not jeopardize any of their other rights, including the right to education, and the right to relaxation and play.

Article 34 (Sexual exploitation): Governments should protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. This provision in the Convention is augmented by the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

Article 35 (Abduction, sale and trafficking): Governments should take all measures possible to make sure that children are not abducted, sold or trafficked. This provision in the Convention is also augmented by the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

Article 36 (Other forms of exploitation): Children should be protected from any activity that takes advantage of them or could harm their welfare and development. This would include the media in all its forms.

Article 38 (War and armed conflicts): Governments must do everything they can to protect and care for children affected by war. Children under 15 should not be forced or recruited to take part in a war or join the armed forces. The Convention's Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict further develops this right, raising the age for direct participation in armed conflict to 18 and establishing a ban on compulsory recruitment for children under 18.



Shaking the Movers 2014

For the 2014 Shaking the Movers conference, one large class of Ryerson students studying Advanced Group Work facilitated both the daytime workshops and the evening activities. The students were organized into five groups: four groups planned the daytime activities around the four areas of exploitation, and the fifth group planned the Saturday evening activities. This is different from previous years, where there were several classes involved in planning and carrying out the workshops and activities for the weekend.

The four student groups responsible for the daytime activities deconstructed the UNCRC and discussed child labour, child soldiers, sexual exploitation, and media exploitation in a language that children and youth could understand and appreciate. They also organized small group discussions and activities for the two days. Prior to the weekend, each group worked with a youth activator to ensure the activities they were planning, and the material they would present, was youth-friendly. One youth activator was paired with each Ryerson student group planning the daytime workshops, and all four of the youth activators gave their input to the Ryerson student group planning the evening activities. The addition of youth activators to Shaking the Movers allowed youth to have input in the planning of the conference workshops and ensured that their thoughts, ideas, and opinions were part of that process. All four of the youth activators had previously attended at least one Shaking the Movers conference. Two of the youth activators came to speak with the Ryerson student class about their experience at previous Shaking the Movers, including things they liked and things they would like to see changed. This was a valuable experience for the Ryerson students, as it gave them an opportunity to have Shaking the Movers explained by youth who would be attending the conference.



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This year, prior to the conference, participants were provided with an information package, which included backgrounders on each of the four types of exploitation. The information for these summaries was compiled by an older youth, and then rewritten by the younger youth activators into youth-friendly language for their peers to read (see Appendix A). This was done to give those participating in Shaking the Movers a brief introduction to each area of exploitation, as well as an understanding of what the two days would look like. On the first morning of the workshop, the young people were split up into four groups and moved through four informative group stations to learn more about each of the four types of exploitation. They then had the opportunity to rank their top choice for which area of exploitation they would like to examine further throughout the remainder of the conference. Based on these rankings, each youth participant was placed in the group that discussed their preferred topic. After discussing problems and solutions in the four smaller groups, the young people came together to give a short presentation to the entire group.



A fifth Ryerson student group organized and facilitated evening activities on the Saturday night, which included icebreakers, an obstacle course, art, photography, and recreational games. The evening did not focus on the theme of child exploitation. Rather they were designed by the students, with input from the youth activators, to allow the participants to socialize, get to know one another, and relax. The decision not to have the evening activities focused on the theme was made after some discussion with young people who had attended previous Shaking the Movers conferences. For the reasons stated above they felt the participants should have an opportunity to unwind after a day filled with discussion of rather heavy topics.

On the Saturday evening, there was also a celebration for the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This was organized by the Canadian Student Association for Children's Rights (CSACR) at Ryerson. The evening included guest speakers as well as an activity organized by CSACR, for the young people, to demonstrate a right described in the UNCRC. Please see Appendix B which outlines highlights from the celebration.



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On the second day participants returned to their chosen groups to explore their ideas further and develop skits and other forms of expression to share their recommendations with the larger group. Afterwards they engaged in the gift giving that has become a tradition for Shaking the Movers gatherings. Everyone, including the student facilitators and the three permitted adults, Judy Finlay and Landon Pearson, the co-chairs, and Sherry Prenevost, the photographer, had brought to the event a small gift that held personal meaning and was, in some small way, related to the theme of identity and belonging. The gifts were all placed in the middle of the room and then chosen at random by one of those present and taken back to where he or she was seated in the surrounding circle. One by one each person then held up the gift he or she had selected and the person who had gifted it explained why it was meaningful. This has proven over the years to be a bonding experience reinforcing connections made and deepening everyone's commitment to the sharing process.

Shaking the Movers, the workshops, and the activities are all designed to allow a safe space for youth to share their opinions, ideas and experiences, and have these listened to by peers and child and youth workers. Adults are not present during the discussions of the problems and solutions. They are only allowed back at the end to listen and record so they can communicate to others what the young people have said. This allows the youth to speak openly with their peers and the workshop facilitators all of whom are young. At the end of the two day conference, youth are given an evaluation form to provide feedback and their overall thoughts of the weekend.



"[Shaking the Movers] lets youth have their moment to shine and really express how they are feeling without the fear of being marginalized by adults. This was really emphasized this year because while we were talking amongst our smaller groups, adults were not allowed to enter the room without our permission. I really liked this because it let us have a physical space without any kind of judging or condescending. Sometimes even the presence of an adult, no matter who they are, can make me feel like my ideas aren't as valid as theirs are and as a result I do not share as much. In Shaking the Movers, I always felt like my ideas were just as important as everyone else's and the encouragement from the adults there really helped me to get the most from the conference."

Shaking the Movers to protect children and youth from exploitation

The following questions were discussed by the young people:

The Problem:

1. What does exploitation mean to you?
2. What does child labour/child soldiers/sexual exploitation/media exploitation mean to you?
3. How can we explain your understanding of exploitation as a rights violation to the larger group?
4. Have you or anyone you know (about) ever been exploited?
5. When/where/how have you learned about child labour/child soldiers/sexual exploitation/media exploitation?
6. What drew you to participate in this group?
7. How can we explain your understanding of child labour/child soldiers/sexual exploitation/media exploitation to the larger group?

The Solution:

1. What can you do to protect yourself/others from exploitation?
2. What can you do to protect yourself/others from child labour/child soldiers/sexual exploitation/media exploitation?
3. What should governments, agencies, schools, service providers, churches, community groups, etc. do to protect children/youth from exploitation?
4. Demonstrate to the larger group, ways in which children and youth can be protected from exploitation (this can be exploitation in general OR specific exploitation).

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Child exploitation: What children and youth had to say

Child exploitation

Here is what the young people had to say about child exploitation:

“The umbrella topic chosen [by the participants in STM VII] for this year was Child Exploitation. This further branched off into four separate sub topics, including sexual exploitation, child labour, child soldiers and exploitation in the media. All four topics are very heavy and personally, in my everyday life I tend to steer away from such topics because of their upsetting nature. This doesn’t mean that I don’t have many questions and that I don’t want to have conversations about them but they are very touchy subjects and therefore do not often come up in my everyday lunchtime talk with my friends. Shaking the Movers provided a very safe place for me to talk about these hard topics. It allowed me to freely talk about them without being judged or questioned by my peers.”

“[Child exploitation is] when someone uses your vulnerability to their advantage.”

“Exploitation is a spectrum – that’s not what is understood. People understand violence and abuse but not the other side of the spectrum.”

“[It’s] when you feel like you do not have the option to say no!”

“Exploitation may not always be for money but will always be for some sort of gain.”

“People who exploit others see them as tools.”

“Everyone can have power over children because they haven’t learned about power.”

“[Power is] based on privileges, experience, and socio-economic status.”

“Children under 18 get exploited by trying to gain knowledge.”

“People don’t see children as people.”

“More resources should be available.”

“Once you start getting into these topics, you realize that the exploitation is so huge.”



Child labour

Here is what the young people had to say about exploitation from child labour:

"The western world consumes more than we need, whereas we buy from countries around the world that can't sustain themselves and employ children."

"Governments need to come up with a solution before getting rid of child labour all together."

"Even if one part of a product is made in Canada, and 99% of it could be made in other countries, we can still say they're made here."

"In our society, we go to high school until we're 18 and in their countries they don't get that choice."

"It's not really their decision because they need to make money for their families."

"When you force people to do something against their will, you're not using them to the best of their abilities."

"I think if we did see [child labour] we would look the other way because it's the easier option."

"As sad as it is, there are people who don't give a damn."

"If we are saying they can't work and that's the only way they can do something they love, like dance, then that's not fair!"

Youth believe that some people are ignorant about the issue of child labour, while others turn a blind eye. They also believe that companies are not transparent in how their products are produced further confusing consumers. The young people recognize that many child labourers are earning money for themselves and their families, and so they discussed the implications of ending child labour without certain supports in place for these children. Some participants argued that children and youth should be allowed to work as long as it is of their own free will.

Suggested solutions to end exploitation from child labour:

The young people came together to discuss ways to end exploitation from child labour. Here are some of their suggestions:

"Now that I know where they're made, I'm going to try and stop buying those products."

"Companies should have policies that products have a description of how the products are made and by who."

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“Age as a way to define a person is not a way to judge a person.”

“Why are we trying to standardize children?”

“We should stop making regulations based on age but instead physical ability and desire.”

“The employer should be regulating the work and should get training for everyone.”

“We want to improve working conditions.”

“A global force that could create more jobs.”

“We get to work fairly, why can’t those in third world countries?”

“Children shouldn’t be able to work in every job possible.”

“In our country we say, ‘Oh, you’re 10 years old, you shouldn’t work construction that’s dangerous’ but other countries don’t have that kind of age discrimination.”

“It would be better to teach the children trades and basic life skills.”

“Creating a global standard for education.”

“Awareness is key, we need to teach kids about their rights.”

Based on what the youth said it is clear they feel there should be greater regulation and awareness of the products that are made by child labourers. They also expressed their concerns about the working conditions child labourers face, and how these child labourers are not afforded opportunities for education because they have to work. Through their presentations, the youth helped educate the entire group on how we all need to be better informed on where our goods come from, and who is making them.



Child soldiers

Here is what the young people had to say about exploitation of child soldiers:

"I had a friend who was in army and cried for two years after she came back. So many young boys forced to kill people."

"It's affecting the families as well since children are taken away and the other siblings need to take their responsibilities at home."

"[I] can't imagine being in their situation."

"[It's] surprising to see girls in child soldiers."

"Adults choose to feel that they have more power than the younger ones."

"[It's] changing children into senseless beings or robots to survive."

"[It's] showing how weak the country or society is by choosing the most vulnerable people to be soldiers."

"My dad got captured by the army when he was at the age of 15 but he managed to escape."

"We learned about World War II and human rights in history class but not specifically child soldiers."

"I learned child soldiers through an internet research project at school."

"The 'Free the Children' campaign raised my awareness on child soldiers."



"I want to get more opportunity to get a grip on it and give the voice for the children even though I didn't experience it."

The young people discussed why children are recruited instead of adults to be soldiers. They said that women and children are easier to manipulate because they are innocent and that other people would not hurt a child soldier as they would not expect children to kill people. They also said that it may be easier to teach children to commit these acts, and they then they grow up with those teachings or thoughts, or that children may not always think of the consequences like adults would.

Suggested solutions to end exploitation of child soldiers:

The young people came together to discuss ways to end exploitation of child soldiers. Here are some of their suggestions:

“[To prevent exploitation we need to] learn more about the topics and how it affects people, how dangerous exploitation is.”

“Have an individual in your life who you can trust and confide in, and allow them to advocate for you [to prevent exploitation].”

“[We need] greater use of social media and technology for spreading awareness, unlike how the media currently portrays children in poor countries, like World Vision. They need to show a better representation of what life is like for these individuals.”

The youth said that they can spread the awareness on the issue of child soldiers by talking to friends or family, as well as through education. They also said they could stop buying products from company that exploit children. Some of the youth had personal stories about friends or family members who were recruited to be child soldiers. This shows that this is an issue that can closely affect families here in Canada – it is not an issue that is outside of our borders, and the participants felt this is an issue all Canadians need to be aware of.



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Sexual exploitation

Here is what the young people had to say about sexual exploitation:

"In health class all we learn about is drugs [not exploitation]."

"The thing with [sexting] is it is an exploitation once it is sent to someone else. You break the trust."

"I read somewhere that participants are usually survivors of rape."

"I believe that maybe the victim wants power back so they become perpetrators."

"Maybe the survivors are not perpetrators because they can be sympathetic because they went through it."

"I have different definitions for sex work and survival work. Survivor work is doing it to survive."

"I feel like the supports are there but it is not clear how to get support...You have to start digging around."



Participants agreed that knowledge pertaining to sexual exploitation was varied within the group due to life experiences. Young people who had attended college shared they had some knowledge around sexual exploitation, whereas those in high school had not yet been exposed to the topic. A great deal of discussion occurred around what constitutes exploitation, especially in regards to youth exploiting other youth, or themselves, and why. The youth also thought that although there are resources available pertaining to sexual exploitation, they are difficult to access. The group expressed that adults are often reluctant to discuss sexual exploitation with youth.

Suggested solutions to end sexual exploitation:

The young people came together to discuss ways to end sexual exploitation. Here are some of their suggestions:

“How do you break the cycle? Therapy? What if you can go to therapy?”

“Churches and community groups can be the ones to make people aware of resources [in regards to sexual exploitation].”

“Talking about all these and reading information makes me want to have the need for transparency.”

“They shouldn’t be punished for choosing to do what they do. It’s their body.”

“If the government decriminalizes sex work it might make people feel more comfortable to talk [about sexual exploitation].”

Youth placed significant importance on education regarding sexual exploitation and how young people can advocate for themselves. One suggestion was to create a subject in school that focuses on sexual exploitation including the different forms of sexual exploitation and the resources that are available. The participants identified existing resources such as campaigns, health clinics and help hotlines but were clear there is a need for increased support. They found the stigma attached to sex work is a barrier to the discussion of sexual exploitation and moving forward. In addition, based on their own experiences and observations, the young people asserted that increased security screening is necessary when hiring teachers in schools.



Media exploitation

Here is what the young people had to say about exploitation from the media:

“When I am walking around the Eaton Centre and I see billboards and then I buy something I instantly feel better because now I look closer to the image of the person on the billboards. I feel like I need to control myself and remind myself not to do that.”

“Did you know there are creepers? Not just people, but third parties such as Facebook and other random organizations that have access to your web-cam and can take pictures of you!”

“Snap-chat plays on our vulnerability and insecurities. We think the photos disappear but they do not, they exploit us. Why is it free?”

“I feel like the Internet gives you a false sense of safety, there’s a literal screen in front of you. Things that you would not do in the outside world, we do them on the Internet. It’s difficult for us to understand to put up the same barriers in the online world.”

“You do not know who will get a hold of your picture and exploit it.”

“These campaigns such as the Dove campaign are exploiting people’s lack of self-esteem to persuade them to buy certain products.”

“My friends and I used to go on Chat-roulette, but we stopped after because the people on it show explicit videos.”

“Stranger danger applies online too.”

“Where I am from a very large incident went down where someone said ‘Look, I have this nude photo, now you have to go get three more nude photos.’”

“[Someone I know] had a picture of herself in a bikini and it kept getting sent to people throughout the school, and the teacher saw it, and constituted it as child pornography.”

“I feel as though even though the media blurs out the images of the girls who are exposing themselves it should still not be shown.”

“I never grew up with a lot of things, which is fine, but then I started working and then I was able to purchase these things and it just makes you feel like you fit in now. I have to stop myself because I do not want to be that type of person. I have to remind myself ‘No, it’s not important.’”

“What I learned was there are many ways that children and youth are being exploited through the media and there are not enough specific laws to stop this kind of exploitation or hold people accountable. Additionally, many children and youth are unaware that they are being exploited through the media.”

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The youth were shocked at the amount of sharing of personal information that takes place online by third parties. They expressed that most youth aren't aware of the extent of the lack of privacy online, or the terms and conditions of social media sites. Participants said they believe terms and conditions are not written in youth friendly language, and that this is done to purposefully exploit them. The young people also had an in depth discussion about child pornography and the role of the media.



Suggested solutions to end exploitation from the media:

The young people came together to discuss ways to end exploitation from media. Here are some of their suggestions:

“Introduce the Light Beam app to schools.”

“Warn kids about predators, chat rooms, Omegle, very explicit users.”

“Help children and youth understand the extent of what media is.”

“Educate children and youth on the dangers.”

“Protect younger siblings and family members by monitoring the sites they visit.”

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“Ask questions! Who can see this? How do they know me? Who sent this message?”

“Raise awareness about how pictures can be put out forever to the worldwide web, not just in the moment!”

“Know terms and conditions.”

“Be conscious about your relationships. Do you really know them? I like him but should I send this photo? Who else do they hang out with?”

Youth thought that a key part of reducing or eliminating media exploitation is knowledge. In terms of online media exploitation youth believe it is important to be aware of the sharing of personal information with themselves, other youth, and third parties. In turn, young people thought some ways they could protect themselves are by checking privacy settings, screening people they associate with, being aware of their environment, and other online safety habits. In addition they believe children and youth should be informed about their right to privacy. Most youth thought the media itself should be more forthcoming with how information is used and place restrictions on this.



Reflections on Shaking the Movers 2014

The following are some of the thoughts of the participants on Shaking the Movers 2014:

“The great discussions kept everyone involved and let everyone be heard. Throughout the time spent at Shaking the Movers, everyone was able to express their opinions to their specific topics at least once, and we were all encouraged to participate in the presentations. The leaders were able to give us all a strong impression of what was happening in all different parts of the world, and let us all know what we could do to make a difference, in not just other parts of the world, but in our communities as well. In the end, I think everyone enjoyed the discussions, I know I did.”



“I was provided with accurate information. I really appreciated this because as a youth, I feel as if some adults do not want to talk to me about these difficult topics because they feel like I am not mature enough to understand. When this happens, I am forced to turn to the Internet and since I don’t have any previous knowledge, I believe everything that I read. I feel like this is a huge issue that does not need to be an issue at all because the solution is simple, communication. I felt like the information was provided to me in an appropriate way that was easy to understand but not patronizing.”

“[The facilitators] bring us together with information and questions regarding the topics, but then allow us, the youth, to direct the conversation to where we feel it should be. They are there to give gentle nudges to help keep the conversation flowing, but without a doubt, all the ideas and conclusions the groups create are those of the youth. It’s a unique opportunity where everyone in the room is validating, respecting and supporting youth’s voices.”

“Although it was a very enjoyable weekend, never did the harsh reality of child exploitation leave my thoughts. The main activity was modeled after a well-known game show. Most of the youth were very engaged in the game and the conversations that allowed. Very provocative statements were made and the discussions felt alive. During the afternoon there were intermissions where socializing was encouraged. Occasionally, the pressing issues were brought up and everyone seemed attentive. The activities were very effective in raising points on the unjust treatment of children all around the world.”

“Our final, and best if I might say, skit followed a young student who was learning all the different ways in which to learn about child soldiers. Each skit was thought of by the youth, added and adjusted by the youth, practiced by the youth and presented by the youth with such passion, intensity, and purpose that would never be found at a conference not driven by youth.”



Final thoughts

With another Shaking the Movers coming to a close, the youth prepared to return home to Mississauga, London, Kingston, Oshawa, Kitchener, Toronto, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Neskantaga First Nation, and Nibinamik First Nation. As youth said their final good-byes there was a profound feeling of connectedness. The culture of acceptance the youth created allowed for a deep level of sharing and understanding to take place, uncommon for a group of recent strangers. Youth found themselves walking away with not only new knowledge but lasting friendships.

By taking part in this conference participants were able to raise their concerns about child labour, child soldiers, sexual exploitation, and media exploitation. They bravely shared their intimate personal experiences and observations about topics that often felt emotionally heavy. The youth were able to gain the perspectives of their peers, many of whom have first-hand experience with exploitation. The collection of stories, observations, and opinions varied greatly, yet contained common threads everyone could relate to. Through discussions and presentations they were able to provide invaluable insight into issues around various types of exploitation of children and youth.



For many, this was their first experience learning about and discussing children's rights. Youth expressed feeling empowered to advocate for themselves and others, with many vowing to pass on what they had learned at Shaking the Movers 2014. They were also adamant that other youth should have similar opportunities to learn about and discuss children's rights. Throughout the entire weekend there was a strong sense that these young people were catalysts of change for themselves and future generations. The youth were very clear about the importance of bringing young people together to discuss issues that affect them and that are important to them. This can help foster a passion to advocate for change which can spread exponentially to other youth and adults.

Overall, it is evident that youth have a strong desire to participate in discussions and decisions that affect them, as is their right. This report has outlined the recommendations

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made by the young people to eliminate child exploitation and it is their hope that these suggestions be taken seriously in moving forward.

“All in all, I find Shaking the Movers a very powerful conference, mostly because I believe there is so much knowledge to be learned from youth and when we are given the opportunity to truthfully say our opinions and feelings, it uncovers answers for many problems that just do not need to be problems anymore. I think every youth should get an experience like Shaking the Movers at least once, because it is amazing how much was uncovered over the weekend, information that can really help the world.”

“The Shaking the Movers conference is an inspiring weekend that not only is empowering to be surrounded by such passionate and interesting people, but hugely important in giving youth a voice in these issues that affect them. Leaving Toronto that weekend, I felt excited about the work I did there, and inspired to do more.”

The facilitators of the Shaking the Movers conference would like to thank all who helped to support this year’s event, including the Landon Pearson Resource Centre, Carleton University, The Faculty of Community Services, Ryerson University, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and most importantly the youth who attended the conference bringing their thoughts, ideas, passion, and expertise in what is important to children and youth.



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Appendix A: Backgrounders on child exploitation

The following are the backgrounders, or summaries, that were given to Shaking the Movers participants before the conference. The information was compiled by an older youth, and then rewritten by the younger youth activators into youth-friendly language for their peers.

Child labour

The hope for a brighter tomorrow lies within the children of the world. Nowadays, pressure from society can be stressful to kids but that does not mean that change for the greater good cannot be done. Child labour is an important and alarming issue that affects the way in which children grow up. Child labour is a way of taking advantage of children where they are forced to work. This work is usually difficult and harmful for the child as it takes away their chances for a prosperous and enjoyable lifestyle. In today's world, there are several products that come from child labour. Items such as the clothes you wear and devices you use to communicate, such as cellphones, are just a few examples of things that are sometimes produced by child labour.

Chocolate, a treat that is enjoyed, is in fact a symbol of taking advantage of children. Cocoa, the plant from which chocolate comes from is grown and produced by children in third world countries. And since big companies advertise goods in a way that conceals the unethical methods used to create their products, it would not be a surprise that the last time you ate a chocolate bar you had no reason to believe you were in any way supporting child labour. This is done to encourage people to indulge in consumerism, an idea which rationalizes the degradation of humans, in this case, children in the work force. The largest producer of cocoa in West Africa, a state called Côte d'Ivoire, is home to up to twelve thousand child slaves who are victims of trafficking. The next time you eat a chocolate bar, take a minute to think about not only the effort it took to create the wrapper and the candy bar itself, but the ingredients as well. Chocolate is not the only product known to result from the hardship of child labourers, a lot of clothes are notorious for being the work of children your age!

It may be hard to imagine that the clothes you wear on your back might be the product unethical and forced work of children in different parts of the world, but at the same time information is available and it is a choice whether to stay in the dark or act for change with regards to this important issue. Another issue that stems from a common device and is contributing to the issue of child labour is popular among today's youth are cellphones, the issue is also known as the "conflict mineral issue".

The origin of tungsten, coltan and tantalum—minerals found in all cellphones - is located primarily in the mines of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The conditions that the children go through is sad and unjust. The average earnings of a child aged between the years of eight to sixteen, for one full day of mining, range between one dollar and five dollars. Many of the profits obtained from mining these minerals goes to support conflict so the use of children is kept in secrecy and armed forces patrol the mines. The reality is that there are many acts of exploitation around the world and even here in Canada. It is

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important to realize that the services and devices we, as citizens of Canada, are given are privileges. In countries such as Congo and Côte d'Ivoire children feel grateful when they have a nice, hot meal in front of them and clean water to drink. There is a huge difference between what is considered important and necessary in countries like Canada and a countries like the Congo.

The clothing industry makes a huge profit from consumers who purchase clothes from popular stores such as Wal-Mart, American Eagle, Hollister, Abercrombie and Fitch, GAP, Sport check and more. The majority of what we wear on a daily basis is produced and manufactured in third world countries. Common countries are China, Bangladesh, Brazil, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Lesotho, the Philippines, Portugal, and many others. Child labour site locations, also known as sweatshops, are basically massively exploitative where children who cannot afford clothing themselves are forced to work up to twelve hours a day to provide for department stores located in countries such as Canada. Of course companies like Wal-Mart and Abercrombie and Fitch do not care much for the massive contributions that the children put into work in order to complete goods. The amount of money a child makes for hours of work in producing a cotton shirt or a pair of pants is very low and it is unjust considering the amount of work that is put into the effort. The process in producing material items such as a simple shirt and pants firstly involves cotton which comes from the cotton plant. After this step the material must be transported to a local sweatshop location where dozens if not hundreds of child labourers use the material to sew, dye and produce the item that we conveniently buy in department stores. In inspecting the issue of child labour in the clothing, cellphone, and food industry the problem is put into light how we as consumers are somewhat responsible for the great demand of products that are often sourced from the work of children. Material goods such as clothing, cellphones and even chocolate are all products of hard, tiresome work. It is important for youth to be aware and understand the ways in which child labour affects us personally and globally is in order to encourage change for this global crisis. Having to do hard, physical labour is no way for kids to spend their childhood. Imagine being forced into a situation where you had to work against your will without being given justified purpose. Most children who are forced into working at a young age don't know any better and think that the lives they are living are normal and equal to how all children live in the world. Sadly, victims of child labour do not have the knowledge and resources to stand up for themselves and challenge social justice issues such as equality and freedom. Living in Canada, we are privileged to live in a country where we experience available help in cases of neglect, abuse, or exploitation in working. As the youth of today's world, we all represent hope and reason for change. Young people have the ability to question and see the world from a unique and fresh point of view. Change and inspiration comes from within. Knowing that every human being deserves respect, dignity and freedom will remind us of our duty to be the voice of our generation and put a stop to the exploitation of children through child labour.

~ Dominador 18 years

Child soldiers

Living in such a privileged country, most of us have a different definition of unfair. For us, it may be not being allowed to go to a party, or not getting the clothing or cell phone or video game we asked for. In some countries, their definition of unfair is something we could never even imagine going through.

Children as young as nine are kidnapped, and taken out of their homes, and forced into fighting wars in their own countries. They are forced to witness the death of their neighbors, friends and families. These children are given big weapons such as rifles and machine guns, and are trained to be relentless, meaning they are ordered to kill their own people and in effect, participate in inhuman war crimes.

Young girls are often kidnapped and forced into combat, as well as being sexually abused and treated as slaves by the Rebels.

Not only does being forced into war effect the youth physically, it also takes an emotional, mental, and spiritual toll. Being a child soldier can lessen the youths' self-worth, self-dignity, and self-pride, three necessary forms of self-respect that are stolen from the youth when they are forced to participate in these wars.

Being taken away from their homes, and sent straight into combat for years at a time deprives the youth of education, healthy relationships, and growing up with their families. After being forced into combat, the youth are not always welcomed back into their communities and homes, due to the crimes they were forced into committing. Most end up living in the bush without jobs, education, money or family.

As a privileged Canadian female youth, I cannot imagine the horror of being kidnapped out of my home and away from my family and friends, only to be abused and forced into committing atrocities against other human beings, especially my family.

So why them and not us? Is something I do not understand.

~ Kaila, 14 years

Sexual exploitation

As youth we are sometimes left with misconceptions regarding what is considered sexual exploitation. Certain examples of it may seem more familiar than others and some may even surprise you that they fall into this category. Sexual exploitation is a form of abuse and for youth it is especially traumatizing because they are not able to fully understand the idea of consent or sometimes what is happening. Commercial sexual exploitation is when an adult uses a child sexually, in exchange for a payment of any kind. A payment could be anything from money or material goods, to the promise of shelter, food, protection or any other necessities. Commercial sexual exploitation can happen: (1) when someone pays for sex with children; (2) when people record sexual activities involving children; (3) or when

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children are bought and sold and moved so that people can use them sexually. The media also plays a large role in the sexual exploitation of youth. Even though it cannot physically take advantage of youth, the media does project sexualized ideas that can influence them.

Four major types of sexual exploitation that are listed above are: Child prostitution, child pornography, sex trafficking and exploitation by the media. These are defined as follows: Child prostitution is when anything of value is traded for sexual acts. This can happen in brothels (places where sex is sold), clubs, streets, hotels, houses and schools. Child pornography is words, images, videos or sound recordings of children being sexually abused. The child doesn't always know it's being recorded or what it will be used for and the Internet makes sharing, trading and selling child pornography much easier with email, chat rooms and websites. Sex trafficking is a business where people are collected, held and delivered to other people to perform sexual acts for payment. The child (and their family) can be tricked, pressured or bribed into sex trafficking, and moved from their home to somewhere else in the same country or another. Sexual exploitation is a physical act but the media can project sexualized ideas. Children are like sponges and can absorb these ideas through the images, videos, television, advertisements and lyrics that they are exposed to. These messages and ideas make certain things seem natural and normal and can influence how they should act and what they believe is normal and what is not.

The term "sexual exploitation" isn't always used by youth to talk about involvement in the sex trade, but in the eyes of the law, that's what it is. Understanding what sexual exploitation is is especially important because anyone can be a victim of sexual exploitation; they can be bribed, kidnapped or threatened. Sometimes drug use or homelessness can lead youth into the survival sex trade, however others may not have this history and can be lured, forced or tricked into believing that they are in a loving and consensual relationship. As a youth I believe that it is very important that the different types of sexual exploitation are better understood, that sometimes in certain cases they are normalized and as youth, we are not properly educated on the reality and truths of them. Some of these types of sexual exploitation seem more familiar than others, however all of them are examples of sexual exploitation.

~ Becca, 17 years

Media exploitation

We live in a society that relies heavily on technology to perform basic tasks throughout our days. This may be to check when the bus is going to be at your bus stop on your phone, or creating a power point presentation for a class project. We use technology, for the most part, to benefit our lives and therefore we see it as this positive thing that can't be bad. Unfortunately this isn't true, it is this exact mindset that we have all been essentially brainwashed to believe that makes technology and more importantly the messages portrayed through it so dangerous. Being a teenager, we have to make lots of decisions in our lives. From small ones like what to wear to school one day to bigger ones like trying to figure out who you really are as an individual. To make these decisions we look around us, to our friends and family and also our computer, TV and phone screens and billboards and

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magazines. And since, technology and the media helps us out so much in other aspects of our lives, we give it more of a say in our decision making most of the time whether we realize it or not. It makes sense, if a young teenage model is on the front page of a magazine with a big smile on their face, it gives off the message that they have figured out who they are and are happy with. So, it is understandable that the reader would think if he or she does the same things as the model, dyes their hair, loses 10 pounds, buys the same clothes and acts the same way, happiness will follow. This is never true, yet this is the kind of behavior and mentality that advertisements and media thrive on and sadly is very addictive behaviour for youth. This can have a very small effect on youth's lives like dying or cutting their hair but it can also contribute to mental and physical disorders that can be quite harmful like anorexia and depression.

Alongside that, technology and the media play a very big part in the sexual exploitation of youth. When we think of sexual exploitation we think of the physical side, but sexual exploitation stretches way further than just that. As a youth, sexuality and the concept of a healthy sexual life is very hard to understand and our views regarding the topic are very impressionable. When we see music videos and posters and commercials that show youth as sexualized beings it makes us think we should be too, that that is what is normal and in the primal necessity to fit in, we as youth act more sexualized and do more sexual things that we really might not feel like doing. It is as if the media has taken away the boundaries and lines of what is appropriate and what isn't and has left many youth confused and making decisions that may be harmful to them. This is where it flows over to physical exploitation. For example a youth may not feel like they have the right to refuse having sex with someone because they believe it is something that everyone is doing, and something they must do to become cool, or more like their favourite singer. As well, with technology at its peak, "sexting" has become normalized. Sexting is the act of sending sexualized messages, videos and photos over text. This is very dangerous because of the sheer accessibility. Texts can be sent to anyone around the world with one press of a button. Using the media as an outlet of sexualization has quite a short-term impact on safety and self-esteem. As well, there is a long-term impact that youth tend to not think about and that is that their photos and videos are on the internet forever and this can affect their lives in the future like when they are looking for work or are in a relationship. The fact is that it is easier and initially feels a lot safer emotionally, to many youth to explore their sexuality through a screen. The media has made it very easy for youth to do this but has also provided a place of no boundaries and for someone who doesn't know what they are looking for, it is easy to get lost in a harmful situation. The main goal for media and technology is to influence people, especially youth and that is exactly what it does. It influences youth in such a big but subliminal way that it is hard for them to realize how they have changed and whether or not it is good for them.

~ Najat, 15 years

Appendix B: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 25th Anniversary Celebration

The goal of the 25th Anniversary Celebration of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC) was to let all the students at the event know how important this document is, and that 25 years after its adoption there are real reasons to celebrate.

On the Saturday night of the conference all the youth gathered in the atrium of the SHE Building at Ryerson to enjoy pizza and cake together as well hear the speakers. Landon Pearson, who has been involved with the CRC since its adoption in 1989, began by saying, "Let's celebrate!" Because of the CRC there has been notably progress with respect to child health, child poverty and education especially for girls. Children are seen in the CRC as persons with the same rights as others and special rights because they are more vulnerable. It also guarantees children the right to be heard. She went on to say that the youth attending the conference are the voices of the future and we want these positive outcomes to continue. Landon concluded by stating that we should look back and "honour and congratulate all those who worked so hard to create the Convention as well as all those who continue to support and interpret it."

Next was Samira Ahmed, who works for JUST: Justice for Children and Youth. She works with a team of six lawyer who enforce rights from a Convention perspective in Canada. Samira discussed how exploitation is still evident in Canada. One example that she gave was that youth are working during school hours. This is a violation but something that occurs in many communities today. Many youth in today's society experience things such as age-based discrimination. An example of this is allowing only one youth into a store at a time over their lunch hour. Samira argues that the focus should be on healing and not solutions such as jail time when youth have committed offenses. Samira left pamphlets and hand-outs for the youth attending the conference that provided information such as hotlines, and other people to help in these situations of exploitations and discrimination.

Finally, Julia Haswell spoke to the youth. She provided a great deal of help in writing the topics for this conference. Julia asked the youth "Why does something like the Convention matter? Why should you care?" Julia, who is very passionate about this topic, said it was important to be aware because we are fortunate to be here. This means we need to be mindful of other children and youth who could be facing issues such as exploitation. Her goal is to help people find a connection. This is not a connection with things such as material goods but a connection with children and youth. She concluded by stating, "Above all else, it is the children and youth that matter!"

Overall, the anniversary event was a success and was enjoyed by all. It was a time to celebrate such a tremendous accomplishment, and the importance of the Convention in today's society.

~ With notes from Sarah Marchand, Child and Youth Care student