

STM IX: STANDING OUT AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

SHAKING THE MOVERS BC



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(On Behalf of STM Youths and Facilitators)



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Executive Summary

Shaking the Movers (STM) BC youth conference was a forum to hear youths speak about the issues affecting their lives, particularly on sexual exploitation. We spent 3 days learning, dialoguing and listening to one another. As facilitators, we learned to frame our inquiry and dialogue not as “what recommendations can youths give to law and policy makers on sexual exploitation?”, but to ask “what do you need as a youth to live successfully within and beyond your communities?”

23 youths and 9 facilitators attended the first STM in BC. Youths were from the Lower Mainland of Vancouver. Facilitators were current or past Simon Fraser University (SFU) students with diverse fields of study from Health Sciences, Economics, Psychology and Criminology. The conference was sponsored and supported by; Landon Pearson Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children’s Rights, SFU Centre for Restorative Justice, SFU Surrey - TD Community Engagement Centre, Equitas – International Centre for Human Rights Education, Pacific Community Resources Society, and Children of the Street Society.

This report captures the conversations over the 2 STM weekends in June and September. It begins with an introduction by Honorable Landon Pearson on how STM was formed and how it came to BC. This introduction is followed by an overview of STM June and September and youth participants and facilitators’ introductions. It gives highlights of the June activities and the 3 recommendations from June that formed the basis of discussions in September. The bulk of the report contains the direct words of youths from their dialogue with facilitators and stakeholders. Youths developed concrete outcomes using art and words which were presented to stakeholders at the end of the conference. The report concludes with feedback post-conference from facilitators and organizing committee members and lasting impressions.



Introduction by Hon. Landon Pearson



Shaking the Movers (STM) is a model for youth participation that fully respects the principles of Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Under the sponsorship of the Landon Pearson Resource Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights there have now been nine of these events involving youth from 11-19 learning about and discussing their rights in a variety of circumstances; in school, in cyberspace, in the youth justice system, with respect to their mental health concerns and with exploitation in all its forms. Youth have also talked about identity and belonging as well as the limitations placed on their civil and political rights. The youth are the "shakers" whose words and recommendations, based on their lived experience, are addressed to the "movers" who should be motivated by them to act in ways that demonstrate they have actually heard what the young people have had to say.

All of the previous STM gatherings have taken place in Ontario either at Carleton University in Ottawa where my Centre is or at Ryerson University in Toronto at the School of Child and Youth Care. STM IX is the first time the model has been used in British Columbia and while it has shown that the basic model works well in other parts of the country it has also shown that it can be improved upon depending on those involved. One innovation was the holding of two linked sessions three months apart. Since the issue addressed was a challenging one, the right to be free of sexual exploitation, the first gathering tackled it directly while the second brought many of the same participants back together again for resolution and recommendations. I was only able to attend the first session by Skype but was privileged to be present at the second one in person and I was struck by how empowered the youth were by knowing they had rights and could claim them.

I increasingly believe that one of the great values of a rights-based approach to working with children and youth as well as with other groups is that it flattens the hierarchies of power and control that allow for exploitation and other abuses. As human beings, no matter how small, we all have rights. In fact children have extra protection rights related to their age and maturity and that is why they have their own human rights convention. Since we all have rights we cannot "own" one another but we also "owe" one another respect. Human rights are all about relationships and the fact that the youth at STM IX seem to feel as comfortable with me as I did with them is, I think, proof of that. So I would like to express my thanks to all of them as well as to the organizers, the artists and the young facilitators who made this STM such an extraordinarily rich event. As a "mover" I was "shaken" to the core and truly inspired to continue my life-long work to fulfill children's rights everywhere.

Hon. Landon Pearson O.C.



Conference Overview

On June 12 – 14 and September 18-19, 2015, The Landon Pearson Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children’s Rights, in collaboration with Simon Fraser University (SFU) Centre for Restorative Justice and Equitas - International Centre for Human Rights Education, conducted a 2-weekend conference for youths. Pacific Community Resources Society (PCRS) and Children of the Street Society provided support and capacity to both youths and facilitators. This year’s theme was on sexual exploitation and how it impacts the lives of young people today. The conference workshops were designed to:

- Provide a space for young people to “have the floor”, to present their unique perspectives and experiences, in keeping with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).
- Provide specific recommendations and input related to the theme chosen for the year.

Like previous Shaking The Movers (STM) conferences, youths speak their minds without adults in the room, except to ensure youths’ needs for safety and other essentials are met. The conference was facilitated by youth for youth. Facilitators were SFU students and youths were mostly from Surrey and Coquitlam cities though invitations were sent across the Lower Mainland of Vancouver. Facilitators received at least 30 hours of training spread over 8 days to prepare for STM. Participants were aged 13 – 22 years. The youth facilitators were close in age to the young people and as a result, we bonded closely with one another. Youths saw facilitators as equals who could relate to their daily life challenges. Our relationship which was built on trust shaped the openness of conversations throughout the conference.

This report highlights the discussions that took place during the June and September weekends. This was the first time STM was held for 2 weekends and in British Columbia, BC. The 2- weekend conference provided an opportunity for us to give back to the youths after sharing their ideas with us. In June, youths were introduced to child’s rights and the topic of sexual exploitation through rights-based activities - art, games, song, presentations and a skype conversation with Landon. Most of the youths were at-risk of sexual exploitation. From the onset, they were engaged in the discussions and shared real-life experiences. Counsellors, youth workers and support persons were present to keep the space safe as it was an emotionally heavy topic to discuss. Youths showed strength and resilience throughout STM.

Child’s rights seemed so unfamiliar to them. Youths expressed surprise for the rights and resources that exist, yet unaware to them. Landon’s conversation with the youths gave them hope that some adults cared to listen to their needs. The key ideas discussed in June shaped the recommendations that were brought forward to the September session. Youths validated the ideas from the draft report to affirm that we wrote what they said. While we share highlights of June, the substance of this report focuses on September. In this session, we share the voice of youths on the 3 main recommendations, their ownership of the art based process by Kat Thoreson, and leadership strides in presentations made to stakeholders at the closing of the conference.

Shaking the Movers (STM) BC provided youths with safe space to interact freely where their voices matter without feeling judged. The cover page is a picture of the circle which holds the thoughts, conversations and actions pledged at the conference. However, there is the need to translate our words into action. As you journey through this report, we invite you to listen to the voices of youths brave to stand up for their rights and stand out against sexual exploitation.



Youth Participant & Facilitator Introductions

The youths present at Shaking the Movers (STM) BC were of diverse sociocultural and sexual orientation, as well as faith and non-faith backgrounds. Youths were between ages 13 -22. Participants met our selection criteria of those who were in or out of school, willing and open to learning with their peers in a collaborative setting, and wanted to make difference in society. About 80% of those in attendance were at risk of sexual exploitation or experienced it at one point in their lives. Roughly 20% of youths have experience as student leaders in their schools.

“About **80%** of those in attendance were at risk of sexual exploitation or experienced it at one point in their lives.”

A significant characteristics of this group of youths was their wealth of experience and knowledge on sexual exploitation. Their engagement in workshop discussions was phenomenal, with many citing real-life examples of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or human trafficking cases that either they, a friend, or someone they knew online was involved. Many of the youths were survivors of parental violence or dysfunctional homes and were receiving community support from Pacific Community Resource Society (PCRS) under the guidance of their youth counsellor. Youths spoke with reason and shared their experiences. They saw STM as an opportunity to be the change they want to see in the world. The next session gives a highlight of June activities.



These pictures illustrate participants and facilitators at various stages of STM; facilitators in training pre-conference and in workshop sessions with participants during the conference.



June Highlights

This section summarizes Part 1 of STM BC and main discussions that shaped recommendations brought forward to Part 2 in September. On the first day, we formed relationships that ignited open and in depth dialogue over the weekend. With relationships, comes the responsibility to care for and ensure the safety of one another. The youths and facilitators created a values charter to establish a shared understanding of our values and expectations of behaviour to maintain safe space throughout the conference. To model these values, the group discussed identity and biases. It was agreed that we would address each other in a way that respects our rights to choose how we identify ourselves.

Day 2 commenced with a skype conversation with Former Senator Landon Pearson; a discussion on youth empowerment to speak out on issues that matter to them. Following this skype dialogue, was “Draw it right”, an interactive activity to explore youth’s understanding, awareness and identification of their rights through visuals and other non-verbal cues. This opened the door for an interactive presentation with Miranda De Jong from Children of the Street Society. Safety and privacy were key ideas emerging from the presentation. Discussions on these themes were continued during a community mapping activity that youths made visual presentations in small groups on what makes a space safe or unsafe.

The third day focused on tying in the key issues affecting youths’ lives. Youths went into small groups for “fast talk”, to discuss and analyze statements related to online safety and why people might exploit others. Art and music were also used to encourage full expression of the recommendations that would influence laws and policies on sexual exploitation. Leanne from Pacific Community Resources Society engaged youths in dialogue on available youth services and resources. Youth gave suggestions to have more in-school visits from resource centres and information sessions for parents as well as youths.

Values Charter

The values charter was the bone of our work. It served as a guide on how we would treat each other and fulfil our individual and collective responsibilities throughout the weekend. The charter was constantly revisited on different days of the conference to ensure that new ideas were documented, collectively understood and respected. Here is what youths and facilitators had to say on values:



VALUES CHARTER

1. "no cell phones (respect the space!), listening with respect and empathy
2. "Openness: as much as you are personally comfortable with; taking as much space as we need"
3. "understanding, empathy, no judgement"
4. "mindfulness; not being disruptive; inclusivity, fairness/sensitive to other people's sensitivities and vulnerabilities; you never know what someone has gone through and how your words/actions may affect them; taking care of our well-being"
5. "to feel is human; you don't need to apologize for it"
6. "acceptance; embrace our differences"
7. "timeliness; punctuality is important"
8. "have our back, teamwork, family"
9. "active listening; respecting someone means actively showing them through your actions that you care and they matter"
10. "Just ask, if you have a question. feel comfortable asking, as long as it is done in a polite and respectful manner"
11. "It is okay to say I don't know"
12. "Respecting boundaries. If you feel triggered, do what you need to do, it's going to be okay"
13. "life happens; slow down and be present"
14. "it's okay to be silent if you don't want to talk"
15. Know what words or actions may be hurtful or uncomfortable for others and be mindful."



Keynote presentation by Children of the Street Society

The next session featured a keynote presentation on sexual exploitation by Miranda De Jong from Children of the Street Society. Miranda asked the youths their reasons for being at the conference and youths responded:

*“Much of modern day exploitation is **hidden**, [we need to] bring the next generation into dialogue.”*

“Peoples should not be afraid or ashamed of what happened to them”

“Much of modern day exploitation is hidden, [we need to] bring the next generation into dialogue”

“I am here because it was a great topic to talk about”

“It’s such a big world out there preying on vulnerable... it’s not just girls, both guys too.”

“Youth rights are often not taken seriously, they happen very close to home. The reality is that it could be happening next door”.

“We want to make a difference and we want to change the world”.

Miranda commented, *“To know that there are things to make a change, you don’t need money to start, begin with individual acknowledgement of your rights, once you have that knowledge, let that empower you.”*

The discussion continued with definitions of the terms “sexual exploitation” and “child”.

Article 3 a) of the [United Nations Trafficking in Persons Protocol](#) defines Trafficking in Persons as: (a) “Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, **for the purpose of exploitation.**

Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other **forms of sexual exploitation**, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;...”

(c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article; **(d) “Child” shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.**” (United Nations, 2000 p. 2)

The presentation was interactive as most youths had direct or indirect experiences of sexual exploitation and were familiar with the real life examples discussed in the presentation. Youths voiced an eagerness to learn more on the topic and help create positive change. A summary of youth concerns from this session are outlined below:

- **Getting a conviction is often a rare and lengthy process.**

(Real life cases of Raza and Amanda McGee) *“Why shouldn’t people like that get charged?” “It’s been since 2011, why is his conviction taking such a long time? This is something that they should get on top of.”*



- **Not only men engage in trafficking.**
(Referring to Amanda McGee) *"I was shocked when I heard that...it's kind of naive to think that women don't do that...That only men do that, but it doesn't really matter."*
"I got a shocking fact. Some women traffickers are women..."
- **Age of protection** or "age of consent" which refers to the age at which a young person can legally consent to sexual activity." (Department of Justice Canada, 2015).
"It's something I care about....12 or 13 years getting pregnant? That's too young".
"I think people should be allowed to do what they want to do. I don't support the age difference ...how is an 18 year old attracted to someone who is 14 years old, not only physically, but even emotionally?"
"I feel like 16, that's the okay age, you know what's right for you. When I was in grade 7, I didn't know anything. I still don't think 12 or 13 year olds should be engaging in consensual non-exploitative sexual activity".
"One over 19, one under 19, doesn't quite feel okay. When youth are with people who aren't youth, that's a red flag right there."
- **Slut-shaming**
"In my community, if someone leaks a video or picture, everyone blames the girl. That's what needs to change in the community. It's okay to trust someone, but it's not okay to exploit someone."
"It's not just kids who send nudes. Adults send nudes." "I experienced that one time where I trusted someone with a picture of mine and they sent it around. Now, I know better to use my head more."
- **Social media privacy settings and online exploitation** *"Technology + dangerous adults + youth = exploitation"*
"Technology + dangerous adults + youth = exploitation"

Fast Talk

Youths were divided into smaller groups to discuss their perspectives on issues related to sexual exploitation. 2 facilitators guided each small group by reading out statements that further explore assumptions on how, where, and why sexual exploitation occurs. Some answers and suggestions from the groups are:

- Statement: My right to privacy is respected on the internet**
Question: Do you feel safe in your community? Do online communities count as a community?

Youths said, *"Youth's rights are respected in some ways, but not others"*. In terms of privacy, safety, and security, youths want more control over their own online content. They also want the



ability to "red flag" suspicious people and activity, something more immediate than reporting a concern, which can be hard to put into words.

Some youths were concerned about online identity theft. "Private" should be the default setting for social media profiles. Hashtags should be subject to privacy settings. Youths recommended that there should be enforcement of age restrictions on social media platforms so that older strangers cannot befriend underage users so easily.

ii) Statement: An online friend is a real friend.

Question: Do you feel safe in your community? Do online communities count as a community?

No
youth
agreed.

In response, no youth agreed.

"You never know who's on the other end" of an internet connection." "No real-world connection = no emotional connection." "Could be dangerous ulterior motives". "But, sometimes real friendships can emerge online"

"How to stay safe? Skype, with video, can be a good safety measure"

"Trusting your "gut feeling" and talking to a trusted person if you get suspicious about an online relationship." "More dialogue and discussion at home, school, in community, youth centres, etc., about protecting identity, securing online profile, and not sharing private information"

iii) Statement: Exploiting others for our own personal gain is part of human nature.

Question: Is exploitation something we can get rid of?

Some youths said it happens, but that does not make it acceptable. Some others agreed with the statement. They said history demonstrates this through a culture of "exploit, or be exploited." A number of youths disagreed. They stated that empathy and shame are more important parts of human nature that can be used to overcome a desire to exploit.

"Exploitation comes from a place of hurt, pain, due to unmet needs; it can be defeated by providing better access to basic human needs like love, belonging, community, identity, education, health care, nourishment, and employment".

We need stronger human relationships in our communities, instead of relationships with malls and stores and television, etc. Overall, youths supported that exploitation is a choice. Instead, we should *"choose beauty, choose respect, choose love, and choose rights."*



Key Recommendations

Youths summarized their needs into 3 recommendations. They are:

Recommendation 1:

*Youths reiterated that they need community **SPACES** like STM BC where they are **heard, respected and valued.***

Recommendation 2:

*Raise more awareness about these **opportunities** for civic participation. Provide **opportunities for youths to share** their knowledge as they have a lot to offer because they know personally the areas where they are negatively impacted. Curb the stigma that youths are lazy and are unwilling to contribute in meaningful ways to society.*

Recommendation 3:

*Many youths supported the idea that **children's rights** need to be more "**visible,**" and made **more accessible** to children/youth.*



Unpacking Key Recommendations

This section reflects the conversations of the youth participants and facilitators on what youths said they need. The 3 recommendations to be explored were the needs expressed by youths in STM Part 1 in June. The September session provided youths the opportunity to validate or make changes to our understanding of their needs. Prior to discussing each recommendation, youths were asked “did we get it right?” If all youths voted “agree”, we proceeded to further explore this topic. Where some youths initially chose “neutral” or “disagree”, we asked for clarification of their responses and how that statement should be revised to express their voice. Once clarified, all youths chose “agree”.

Recommendation 1:

*Youths reiterated that they need community **spaces** like STM BC where they are **heard, respected and valued.***

VOTE: Youths were asked, “Did we get it right?”



Youths said that spaces that involve fellow youth and young adults, like STM makes them feel safe. They raised the concern that authority figures, particularly the police were threatening for them. They also felt safe and heard at youth and community centres as well as in the home if there are no parents around. Adults are generally seen as more equal at youth centres.

Facilitators asked,

“What kind of spaces make you feel heard, respected and valued?”

In their own words,

“You can talk to people in youth programs, councilors and teachers, youth centres - of youth workers, we would be more open to talking to young adults. People we see as equal.”

“Make youth programs like this where we can talk about our problems (e.g. the youth resource centre).”

“I’m afraid of saying the wrong thing to a social worker and being taken away from my family.”
“We want to talk to someone who won’t report to someone else.”

“We want more confidential spaces.”

“There is too much stigma between police and youth [police will take them from their family].”
Another youth supported, “Police brutality is rampant. Actually, we are just more aware of police brutality because of the availability of social media.”



“Good public space where youth tend to congregate like the mall or any place with food.”

“It’s more of a pack mentality with youth centres than with government”

“Space for youth by youth – White Rock youth centre.”

“The Rec Centre is too far...”

“I was more likely to listen to someone from early 20’s, closer to my age, they’re more relatable”

“The scariest thing is an older guy with a suit”

As youths spoke of the kind of spaces they wanted, we probed for

“What time works for them to meet at these spaces? Are they any topics that deserve regular discussions?”

“Weekends are a good time to meet, like have more peace circles (weekends or every 2 weeks).”

“It would be nice to learn how to facilitate - Would really like that - to learn how to facilitate the circle.” “Yes, totally, as I am working to become a youth worker.”

“As long as there is an adult youth worker who is trained – would be okay with circles”

“It would be nice to give the youths an opportunity to lead.”

“We need help keeping on track, someone who is there to mediate so it’s not a total mess [someone with slightly more power, so they can be looked at for leadership].”

**“Get better
funding for youth
services.”**

“For example, we could have a weekly topic of youth safe houses in surrey. Every 2 weeks could be a different primary topic- Gender-specific, but every two weeks focus on something specific.”

“Get better funding for youth services.”

One youth asked, “but who will bring the money?”

Another responded, “Restaurants may sponsor if they have the posters. We can even write a sponsorship letter to ask for funding for youth initiatives.”

**Recommendation 2:**

Raise more awareness about these **opportunities** for civic participation. Provide **opportunities for youths to share** their knowledge; they have a lot to offer because they know personally the areas where they are negatively impacted. Curb the stigma that youths are lazy and are unwilling to contribute in meaningful ways to society.

VOTE: Did we get it right?

All for
AGREE

NEUTRAL

DISAGREE

Where/how to find out about opportunities...

STM Part 1 featured skype conversation with Landon on meaningful ways to contribute to society, a presentation on sexual exploitation by Children of the Street, as well as a dialogue with Pacific Community Resources Society (PCRS) on resources for youths. The majority of youths were surprised to hear, for instance, that they could write to parliament. At STM Part II, youths stressed that the opportunities advertised were often posted on inaccessible locations such as “government websites” where youths rarely visit when online. So we asked, “Where or how would you like to find out about opportunities for engagement? How can we make these opportunities accessible?” Their response,

“Posters should be places where youths are often. For example, schools, youth centres - Put up posters around school and community centre because everyone will head to school eventually. Other youth centres in Newton, White rock, Fleetwood”

“Schools should send out information in leaflets to youth and their parents - Yearly newsletters to go to parents on safes house and group homes”

*“Agencies should share information about opportunities amongst themselves and display any opportunities so that the likelihood of youths learning about the opportunities is increased.”
“Would be nice to have interagency communication e.g. PCRS one to one workers could connect to youths on a personal level and work with foster care workers.”*

“Postings should be in places like public transit and stations/stops - Buses and skytrains would be good.”

“Radio announcements about opportunities.”

“Most of us youths have nothing to do and so we want to participate. You have to advertise where the youths are, so we can see.”

“A youth opportunity page should exist on social media- Facebook page for youths to “like” so it’ll come up on the news feed eventually.”



“Brochures, like those showing what jobs are there for after grade 12, to see what there is to do afterwards.”

“Broadcast on the internet, Facebook small groups. Use Hashtags.”

“Fast food restaurant where youths hang out and eat, good place to advertise - Olympia pizza is very connected.”

“Advertise in Youth Festivals. Help people through music, radio or YouTube.

“Advertise: “if you are looking for opportunities...”

“Advertise at the food trucks, there are lots of youths there. At 7:00pm right opposite of MCC by Night Shift (Food trucks). “People ask hey how’s your day... people show compassion. Its’ very home-y for me” (Information should be provided at the food trucks since these are frequented by those in need).

“Front room – right next to strip (not safe for youth), its worst. Check out Chuck Bailey Skate park.”

The kinds of opportunities that would interest youths...

As most youths spoke out on places and media to receive information on opportunities, it ignited the question, **“What kinds of events or opportunities would interest you?”** Here is what they said:

*“like **Shaking the Movers.**”*

“Kids helpline.”

“like Shaking the Movers.”

“Opportunities for youths to go around and tell others about their rights.”

“For example, I volunteered for a soup kitchen to help provide others with food. I got my 30 hours done for volunteer. It was a good experience.”

“Working at food kitchens...It helps peers with food and shelter while also providing skills and the feeling of security for volunteers”.

“Connecting people on the street to resources that will help them. Important because we know many people in need.” (Many youths powerfully echoed this point).

“People need a place of safety like STM - Don’t forget to mention food.”

“Kids need safe spaces and housing for kids arguing with their parents -Hopefully night shift will start making programs for adults - adults need homes too. Help both kids and adults.”



“Content should be personalized to the neighbourhood it is being posted in especially when people are homeless.”

“Designing posters about available resources that are specific for to the needs of each neighbourhood.”

“We would be interested in working with artist to create posters. We could get street input.”

“It’d be nice to partner up and make those posters together. If there is a whole bunch of different designs, it would catch people’s attention.”. “Posters about job hunt, what’s going on in the world.”

As youths shared on the kinds of opportunities that interest them, they also expressed interest in assisting adults at risk of being homeless because they have similar lived experiences -inadequate bed space in shelters and safe houses, and the vulnerabilities of life on the street. They not only requested support services for themselves, but also for others who are in need. They want to be part of the solution.

Here are the words of youths:

“not just rights for us, but rights for others”

“Talk to workers to find jobs - not just rights for us, but rights for others, like adults - help others to find help.”

“Tent City – you see a lot of homeless adults living in tents. People are getting kicked off the strip and they are getting pushed out - a lot of drug addicts.”

“They shouldn’t shut down the strip. It was all concealed to the streets before but now they’re going where kids are going.”

“People think they are so far gone that they cannot be helped, especially the older ones. I want to find opportunities to help get adults off the street - at Central – nobody wants to leave, they know everybody out there.”

“There’s only 6 safe beds for youth → Need more spaces specifically for youth when they are younger than 18. Create youth beds -Some places won’t allow youth to come in because of their background.”

“At safe houses, there are job fairs and job sheets to get you focused on your life outside of drugs like All Nations Safe house.”

“People say they have to move out of Surrey to not be a drug addict anymore. You only quit once you’re ready to quit your drug. A lot of people like drugs”

“I was tired of people saying that I won’t be friends with you if you do drugs, that’s why I stopped”. “I didn’t like the disaster that was created when I was using.”

“Advertise addictions treatment program, but don’t make getting rid of drug addiction your main or only topic.”

**Recommendation 3:**

Many youths supported the idea that **children's rights** need to be more **"visible"**,
and made **more accessible** to children/youth.

VOTE: Did we get it right?

All for
AGREE

NEUTRAL

DISAGREE

During our discussion with youths, many youths highlighted the need for their rights to be more visible and accessible to them. They shared experiences where adults whose care they were placed in violated their rights because they knew the youths lacked knowledge of their rights. From their comments below, one will find that even when these rights were visible, sometimes they were not accessible.

Here are some of their answers:

"Hard copies should be available at youth centres, community centres, and schools."

"We need to know our rights as Canadian citizens - Kids get in trouble but they don't know if what happened to them is okay."

"We need to simplify our rights."

"Children's rights are not so easy to find, would be nice if we could see it all in one place like on a website like government websites."

"The problem is a lot kids don't go to government websites – Instead, put it on brochures or pamphlets."

"Pamphlets at the youth centres sounds good" – "Know your rights" pamphlets."

"Would like to learn more about rights in the education system."

"Find fun and interesting ways to incorporate rights [so they know what their personal rights are and when they are being violated]. - Kindergarten or grade 1. Use role plays or acting of gym to learn rights."

"Hard to read Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, need to get the larger picture" – "All copies should be in child/youth friendly language."

"As a kid, it would have been great to know what my teachers were not allowed to say to me - Just because they're smart or older doesn't mean they are better."

"My teacher told me, "You are up to no good." People tell me positive things, but it is usually the negative comment that sticks!"



Majority of youths agreed that their school teachers also need to learn about rights, so they could teach them in school. Youths expressed frustration at the irony of being robbed off their rights to education in an educational system that suspends and expels a lot of youths. Youths wanted to know of alternative resources beyond the school board to whom they could appeal abuse of their rights. In their own words:

"Teachers enforce recycling but they do not enforce youth's rights, they don't speak about it."

"If my rights are violated, I would go to youth workers, principals and teachers - High School counsellors are there to help."

*"I feel safe with my High School counsellors because they can help you and tell you where to go."
"I feel comfortable going to the police, youth workers and parents."*

"They are tonnes of youth offices, but people don't know where they are [they are so hidden that they are hard to find -Better signage needed]."

"We need youth space to hang out"

"I wouldn't know where to find the youth centre. I need to find someone who knows about it or goes to it - Each youth centre has different strengths" – "We need youth space to hang out - Some youth centres only have counsellors and hand out bus tickets with conditions."

"Every child has the right to education, but kids get suspended and expelled. When they don't show up to class, or they are bullied, they are suspended. Students who were troubled when they were younger, and made mistakes, should not be punished when they are older and want to go to school."

*"But there are a lot of alternative measures like adult schools"
"What do kids do when we get bullied? And can't go to school?"*

"I've gone to 4 different schools because of bullies. Now, I am told by the School District that I can no longer attend any schools in the district because I have changed schools a couple times, meaning I have to go to school faraway."

"I'm not going to a school where I'm not wanted. What do we do with kids who are red flagged at 13 and can't go back to school at 16?"

"Youth workers don't have a lot of power in the school board - when I stand up for others, why do I get suspended?"

"Bullying in school takes everything from a kid."

"Need someone to address [concerns of] those who are getting expelled. Where are the school counsellors? A lot of this has to do with a kid's home life."



“Base of rights are human rights values.”

“We should talk about rights starting in kindergarten when they are young and don’t have a problem hanging out with anyone. This will help with a lot of social issues in many schools.”

*“We...need to know more about...**our rights.**”*

“Focus on more life skills at school. We don’t need global history, but need to know more about what we will need in our everyday life, knowing our rights and what we are allowed to do.”

“Kids who don’t know about car insurances, consequences of loitering and sleeping at parks, or how to budget end up on the streets.”

“Kids end up being homeless, meet predators who get them stuck in drugs, gangs or situations where they are sexually exploited.”

Youths emphasized their rights to education and to be informed as priority in making their rights visible and accessible to them. They made the connection that without knowledge of one’s rights, they might end up in harmful situations, one of which is being sexually exploited.

Artistic Expression of Recommendations

After expressing their recommendations through words, youths were given the opportunity to voice their needs through art. Kat Thoreson, an artist, craftivist and therapeutic art facilitator guided the youths through an art-based process to bud their creative side. Supported by Kat and Filmmaker Parmida, youths created this masterpiece.

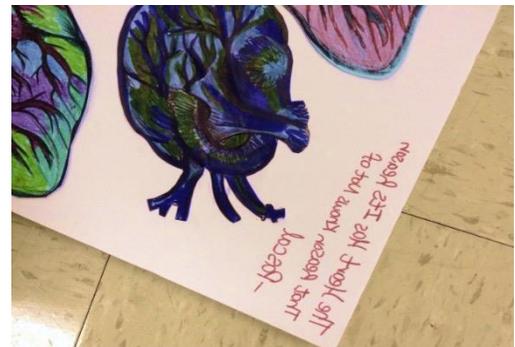
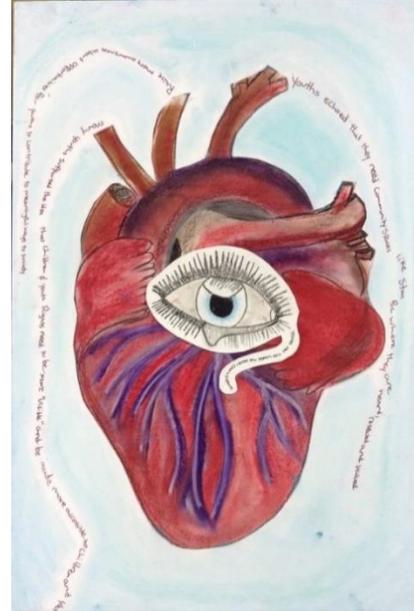


*“Birds symbolize **freedom**: if I had wings I would fly straight to you.”*
- *Voice of youths*



***“Tears are the words
the heart can’t say”***

- Voice of youths



***“Hearts feel and eyes communicate what
we can’t say or won’t say”***

- Voice of youths



The youths then presented their recommendations through art to the stakeholders in attendance.

Youth Presentations to Stakeholders

Youths, facilitators and stakeholders introduced themselves and why they believed children's rights were important. Once the introductions ended, youths took ownership of the process. They organized themselves into two groups to present their recommendations to the stakeholders. Youths choose whether or not to participate in the presentations. The choice to participate gave youths the opportunity to determine what was safe and comfortable for them as well as make decisions in their best interests. Their presentations are highlighted below:

Group 1:

"Get the word out to raise more awareness of our rights and how to get involved in the community e.g.: Bus stands)."

"Make us 'rights' smart, not just book smart"

"Use Media like music, websites, books, TV"

"Use Ads -newspapers, magazines"

"Have more people talk about rights at schools."

"I as a youth feel disrespected by authority figures. They don't hear us out"

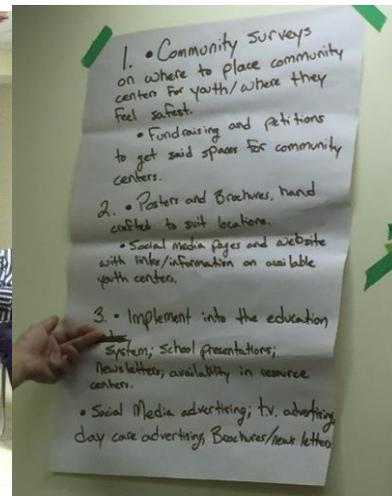
"Clothing - t-shirts, tank-tops [could have words about rights]."

"Have more peace circles like STM."

"Do community projects."

"More youth festivals. Host a Rights fair."

Youth will hear about their rights because if these festivals happened, they believe people would go. In the past, they have gone to events like that for youths and it was really fun.



**Group 2:**

“Do surveys of youth of where they feel safest and where they would like to be such as youth centres/housing centres.”

“Put up posters, brochures that are handmade because then youths can see that more effort was put into them and if these mediums were created by youth it would have a lot more meaning and influence. By youth for youth!”

“List the social media and professional website with all youth/recreation centres available in a particular youth’s area. This is a problem right now as youth are not sure where they can go for help and a lot of places, like Guildford Youth Centre, are often hidden and hard to find or see for youth.”

“Implement presentations at schools to educate people on their rights. Have an assembly if teachers will not educate kids on their rights.”

“[We need] newsletters so people know where they can go to find out about their rights.”

“[Make] petitions”

Discussion with Stakeholders

The stakeholders present were moved and inspired by the youths who were passionate about their rights. One stakeholder asked about the top rights and needs that were consistently mentioned. These were:

“Right to be heard”

“Right to be free from violence”

“Frustration associated with the lack of knowledge concerning rights

“Mental health issues”

Representatives of various organizations were also interested in how we could translate these words into action. They asked, “What’s next? How can we help you?”

Youths said,

- STM in schools
- Annual occurrence (quarterly or semi)
- STM Parade = participation from elementary to high school groups
- Advertise in schools as a monthly get-together [as “everyone invited”]
- Create action plans for individuals
- What Gets Youth Out = Art, music, food and entertainment, knowing who will be there (that is: friends are IMPORTANT!!!)
- Girls and guys outings separately and then brought together
- Funding Proposal = the youth group directly affected writes for themselves
- Film documentary as part of fundraising initiative = share on social media = short term actions and concrete outcomes
- Youth councils meeting other youth councils

The discussions ended with a collective resolve to take positive action on youths’ ideas and keep the momentum and relationships built strong and sustainable.



Feedback from Youth Facilitators/ Organizing Committee

Post-STM conference, youth facilitators and organizing committee members held a debrief session. One process that captured the essence of our debrief was the Rose-Bud-Thorn. The Rose represents highlights of the weekend, the bud an area of growth that needs nurturing, and the thorn for something that was not done well yet could be improved on. The rose-bud-thorn below were selected from various persons to reflect the diversity of perspectives. Here are their comments:

Rose:

"Seeing all of the very concrete recommendations that came out of STM. Interesting that many of them were in regard to the education system. "Make us RIGHTS smart, not BOOK smart!"."

"The art project with Kat really got the kids to engage and participate in an activity that was more "hands-on" and less "listening"."

"I believe that creating a safe and inclusive space for discussion is the foundation for a conference like Shaking The Movers. Shaking The Movers is all about youth engagement and empowerment at its core. If an individual feels safe and welcome, then they are more likely to participate in our process and only through their thoughts and actions will the movers be shaken. We made our group of fine young people feel like their thoughts mattered and that their words would truly be heard. A quiet young man became one of the most outspoken and not a single person held back from contributing even if they were typically more reserved and uncertain. Our group of youths provided a rich collection of information and presented their recommendations boldly because we laid the groundwork for success. So, I believe that was our beautiful flower."

Bud:

"Definitely the art. I think the youths realized they were actually much better at it than they may have thought, and I think it increased their confidence and created a new outlet for them to express themselves. Definitely think it's something worth integrating into their lives on the regular."

"After the conference, an idea was presented to have the youth create a leadership team for the Surrey Youth Resource Centre. They would require guidance, in which the facilitators were happy to continue our relationship with them."

"My bud is the youths' expressed desire to continue holding community circles. It means a lot that they want to continue to work with us, and I look forward to nurturing and supporting our post-STM development."

Thorn:

"I don't think we did that great a job of incorporating sexual exploitation into this weekend. While the first weekend I really felt like we did, back in June, I kinda felt like this time we didn't do nearly as much as we could have. Granted, we had less time because art took up a lot, but more effort on our part could have tied it all back to sexual exploitation."



“I wish there was a better container or mechanism for negative thoughts. Sometimes the emotions became very heavy, and it would be nice to be able to take breaks, or excuse ourselves for a short moment.”

“I thought maybe the space that we chose was a bit small. It was okay for the group that we had (still a little crowded) but if the same amount of people came that we were anticipating, I don't know if it would have been enough room. And for future STMs we would probably be looking to have even more youths come out to it than the first one, so the Guildford Youth Centre may not be big enough.”

“My thorn is that the stakeholders who were present are not necessarily the stakeholders that needed to hear what the youth have to say. The people who came are those who already care and give in the field of youth rights, and I felt that we were missing some key players who would have learned a lot about youth's needs (RCMP-Surrey Youth Liaison; Ministry of Education representative; shelter workers, to name a few). In other words, how do we get -and hold- the attention of those who may be resistant to listening to the needs of our youth?”

Lasting Impressions

Shaking The Movers conference, popularly called STM, was not a single event. It was a journey worth embarking on. As we look back to the challenges in the planning stage, unsure of how the process would unfold, most youths and facilitators would agree that the challenges made us grow resilient.

In the beginning, youths were unsure of how to put their words into recommendations. The word, “recommendations” seemed scary, almost intimidating. As youths realized that recommendations meant what they wanted to see happen, their transformation was empowering. Voices soared throughout the room, echoing their rights and stepping into leadership roles to brainstorm solutions to problems identified. One youth said, *“Didn't expect to talk so much”* and everyone laughed to acknowledge his transformation.

The safety of the circle almost always gets the quietest of persons speaking with passion and a sense of connectedness to those in the circle. Participants and facilitators who had developed genuine friendships and enjoyed the conference found it bitter-sweet to part ways. As a way forward, both left the conference with plans to meet at scheduled times to develop ideas from the conference.

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