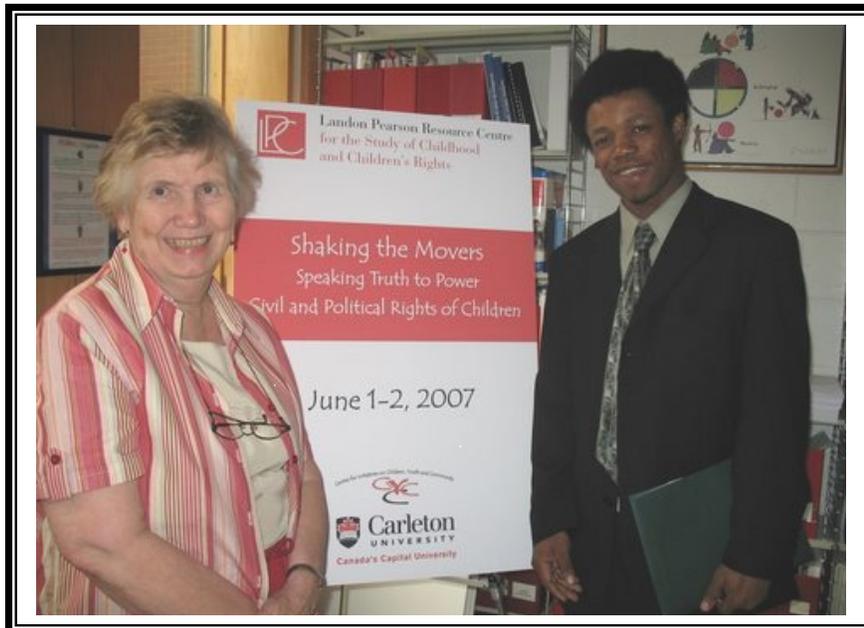




Landon Pearson Resource Centre
for the Study of Childhood
and Children's Rights

Shaking the Movers

Speaking Truth to Power: Civil and Political Rights of Children



Final Report

June 2007

Centre for Initiatives on Children, Youth and Community



Carleton
UNIVERSITY

Overview

On June 1st-2, 2007, the Landon Pearson Resource Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children’s Rights, in partnership with the Centre for Initiatives in Children, Youth and Community at Carleton University, and supported by the Public Health Agency of Canada, conducted a 2-day workshop with Canadian 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 taken into account.
- providing an opportunity for children and youth to prepare comments and recommendations for governments and civil society, with respect to four timely themes related to four articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Recent events including the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child “Day of General Discussion” (DGD) on Article 12 entitled “Speak, Participate and Decide- The Child’s Right to be Heard”, the UN Secretary General’s Report on Violence Against Children, and the Final Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights entitled “Children: The Silenced Citizens”, call out for responses from children and young people. Incorporating their voices in the action plans of the Canadian government would indicate that we were serious about upholding our international and domestic obligations as signatories to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. As young people begin to learn about their rights, they can better understand the context within which they are living and the impact their participation in these matters can have. The opportunities are endless. As the engagement of children and youth increases, so too will the level of public awareness leading to improved understanding of children’s rights, for when young people learn of their right to participate and speak their minds on issues that concern them, they also acquire the responsibility to do so.

When Lieutenant General the Honourable Roméo Dallaire spoke to the young people on June 1, this was the challenge he threw out to them. “To exercise your civil and political rights”, he told them, “you must engage with the world around you and the ‘movers’ of the world, the adult decision-makers, must create the conditions in which your ideas and perspectives can ‘shake’ them up.”

This report highlights discussions that took place around four thematic areas addressed by 40 children and youth, during the 2-day workshop. It provides their perspectives and recommendations arrived at through lived experience, reflecting their resilience, insight and wisdom.

Day 1	Article 12.....	page 4
	The right to participate and to be heard	
	Article 44.....	page 10
	Canada’s upcoming report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child	
Day 2	Article 24.....	page 14
	Health – The voices of children and young people in Canada, with special reference to the health of Aboriginal youth	
	Article 19.....	page 19
	The UN Study on Violence Against Children	

The workshop was designed for children and young people to “have the floor”, to present their unique perspectives and experiences, and to provide specific recommendations and input related to the four identified themes.

The adults attending the workshop were there to listen and hear the recommendations made, to be a resource, to provide support to youth participants, and to ensure that the workshop took place in a safe and comfortable setting. An evaluation was conducted upon completion of the workshop, which provided further opportunity for youth participants to express their thoughts and make comments and suggestions.

An information package was distributed prior to the workshop so that participants could prepare for the thematic discussions and develop a sense of the context and content of the two days.

After brief opening comments by Landon Pearson, each theme was introduced in plenary by a young adult and/or youth participant. Small group discussions then took place, facilitated by key questions. Facilitators and recorders were assigned to each group. Adults took part in their own parallel discussion group, facilitated by Landon Pearson. Adult discussion focussed on the same themes as those addressed by the young people, thus preparing the adults to be more attentive to what the youth participants had to say when they reported back to the assembled group.

The Landon Pearson Resource Center for the Study of Childhood and Children’s Rights has undertaken the responsibility to bring the voices of these young “shakers” to the ears of many “movers”. To facilitate this effort and to provide a forum for on-going dialogue and follow-up for youth participants, a website has been established where reports and responses will be posted and available www.geocities.com/shakingthemovers.

Article 12: The right to participate and to be heard



The BIG picture...	When you hear people talk about child and youth participation, what does it mean to you?
How WE fit in...	What opportunities have you had to participate? In your school? At home? In your community? In government processes? What was your experience like? How did you feel about being involved? What happened as a result of your being involved?
Playing a role...	What needs to be done so that more children and young people have opportunities to participate and to have their voices heard? In schools...At home...In communities...In government processes

Participation means...

“The right to speak is the right to be listened to, in practice there is a gap between speaking and being listened to.”

Children and youth know the difference between saying something and being heard. They understand that there are many levels of participation and that sometimes the first step to participation is just being there. Participants voiced concerns that often after that first hurdle is overcome and they are ready to participate, their voices are not heard, and what they say becomes filtered before it reaches the right people.

“Participation is not only exercising a right but also a responsibility to get involved.”

Making it Meaningful...

“The difference between tokenism and meaningful participation, is some kind of follow up, and being included from beginning to end.”

Youth participation and youth engagement are different. Bringing issues to the table that are important to young people is a way of participating as an individual in a group process, but actually listening and acting on what children say, is what most youth participants felt would give meaning to their participation.

Young people mention that there are different ways of participating and that different comfort levels exist when participating as peers or among adults. With peer-to-peer participation, young people feel more comfortable expressing themselves and are able to say what they want to say without revising or needing to take out all the “likes” and “ums”.

“Listening isn’t enough; adults must act on our concerns”.

Allowing for preparation and understanding...

“Some kids have more to say but don’t know how to say it.”

Children and young people need to be well informed before they are brought into a process or event. As is the case with most adults, youth participants need help and guidance in order to understand the issues before they feel they can discuss them. If preparation time and support are not provided, participation can be an overwhelming experience.

Safe spaces, cool spots...

Creating opportunities for children to voice their opinions involves creating spaces for participation and an appropriate setting. Meeting times and settings need to be convenient, informal and accommodating to the particular needs and schedules of young people.

Valuing our participation...

Encouraging participation with rewards and incentives shows that the time and efforts of children and youth are being valued. Providing incentives in concrete ways helps young people feel that their participation is genuine and that their opinions will be acted on. Examples provided by young people range from simple acknowledgment of their participation to offering monetary compensation.

“If money is provided as compensation in the form of a per diem, it can also serve as a great tool for learning how to deal with money and being part of the real world where there is a value for work.”

Opportunities for all...

“Many youth don’t know that they can participate, or that it’s not just for the top students- the right to participate needs to be widely communicated.”

Young people feel strongly that there needs to be wider communication about opportunities that exist to become engaged. There are many ways to participate and there is a need to ensure that all voices are being heard. This should include groups who have a hard time being heard, such as Aboriginal children and youth, new Canadians and young people with language barriers, and children with disabilities. Youth participants expressed that if different types of youth are more involved, there will be a greater understanding of them and of the issues and challenges they are facing.

Young people need to have an exchange of information that goes both ways, between adults and youth. Information should be developed in accessible language without “dumbing things down”.

Raising Awareness...

“Parents need to be informed of children’s rights as well, this will help kids rights to be respected and met in daily life.”

Children and youth are aware of the fact that many parents and adults have a fear of giving children too many rights. Their response to that fear is to assert that one person’s right isn’t more important than another person’s right.

Young people expressed the need to frame rights ideas in culturally relevant way so those who may fear rights learn to understand them better.

Young people list getting involved in the community as a way to improve awareness on issues affecting children. They also feel that children should know about their rights at a much younger age and that in elementary school, there should be more education on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

At School...

“My school is like ‘the Mean Girls movie’-lots of cliques, people don’t mix that much.”

Children and young people listed their involvement in school activities as

- Drama
- School fundraising for building a school in Kenya, homelessness, child soldiers
- Speaking out about dress code
- Advocacy action club
- Awareness raising and contests on international issues

At Home...

“Participation means having a say in anything that has anything to do with you like simple things, like having to move.”

Participating at home is as simple as being asked, and being able to make choices, large and small. In order to exercise rights in the home, parents have to know what children’s rights are. Rights have to be lived and respected early.

“Parents should be more present and talk to their children and ask them questions and be in their lives.”

In the Community...

Children and young people listed their involvement in the community as

- Participation in networks, groups and workshops addressing issues such as on sex education
- Public speaking and leadership involving children in the child welfare system
- Participation in projects at a multicultural youth centre that provides drug and alcohol addiction counselling
- Volunteering on youth committee for refugee project involving former child soldiers and victims of war
- Aboriginal youth association created by and for youth
- Youth representative on various committees
- Involvement in public awareness campaigns

“As a youth, there is always a question - does our voice stick? The youth voice is questioned because it comes from youth who know less and have experienced less.”

In Government...

Out of 40 young people present, one participant mentioned his involvement as a Canadian Army Cadet in Toronto, on the rifle team. Other young people spoke of their participation in the Bill 165 process (the Ontario Child Advocate’s Office becoming independent), as well as in other processes and events at the provincial or municipal level.

Opportunities to participate...

Most youth participants felt they had some knowledge of opportunities to become engaged. However, the underlying concern expressed was referred to as ‘sometimes a deception’, ‘being heard vs. speaking out’, and whether the information would ‘actually get to where it was supposed to be going’.

Young people expressed that only a small percentage of the youth population actually speak out on issues, and that likewise, the percentage of adults who want to hear the voices of youth is relatively small.

What makes an impact for young people is seeing other young people speak out in meaningful ways. Building on the strengths of individual young people is a way to encourage other young people to get involved and develop the skills and confidence they need to participate fully.

The feeling was also expressed that if adults see positive, valid ideas coming from young people, they may be more likely to value their participation, and more adults may become involved.

The role of adults...

“Adults speak past and youth speak future”

It is important for adults to be part of the process. Young people recognize that adults can play a crucial role as mentors, supporters, and facilitators of dialogue between youth and other adults.

“Sometimes our ideas get through but other times our opinions and ideas are just put aside because we are young.”

Adults have learning of their own to do, however, in terms of letting go of the control, letting go of the structure and giving young people opportunities to participate on their own terms. Adults also have a responsibility to talk about the benefits of involving young people, and to share positive experiences with other adults by discussing “how and why and what they did because of listening to youth.”

*“Adults will tailor their questions so you say what they want...
We need systems that are more youth friendly.”*

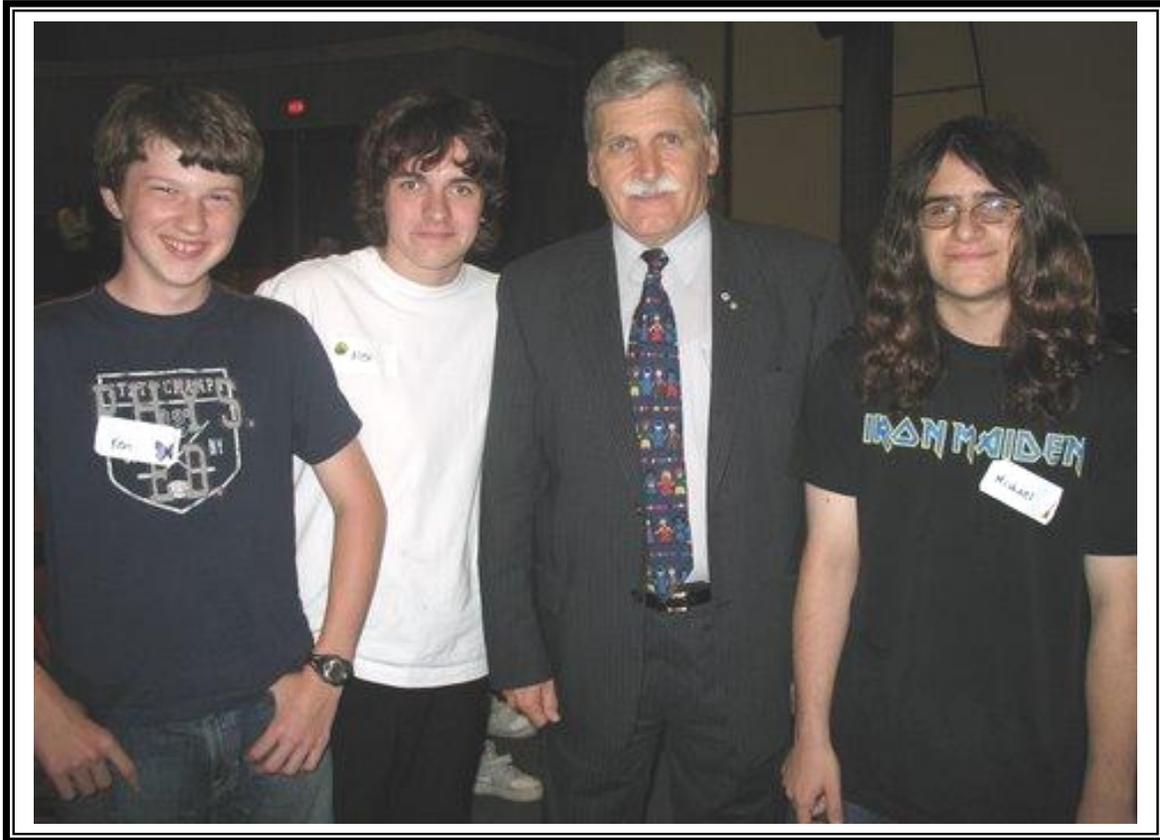
Challenges and solutions...

“We need someone we can talk to in the community who’s there to listen to youth because that’s their job.”

Challenges	Solutions
Feeling intimidated around adults and public speaking	Find alternative ways to provide input besides public speaking, ie. e-mail Build confidence, the more confident you are, the more you’ll say
Not being acknowledged or recognized for our contributions as participants	Be acknowledged by adults i.e. “Yes, I’ve heard what you’ve said” or “Thanks” Get involved, talk can’t do it alone
Being bullied because they’re considered “uncool”	Be able to recognize bullying and behaviour that is not appropriate and be able to correct it and stand up to it.
“You’re not a child forever”, so you get into other ‘life things’, even as adults with mortgages, jobs, it’s hard to keep people involved when they aren’t a youth anymore	Teach parents to listen and teach youth the skills to deal with things. Adults need to include youth in conversations; this means all the adults in a child’s life.
Lack of education on children’s rights	Let everyone know that we can make a difference, not just other youth Incorporate children’s rights into school curriculum Include information on children’s rights in <i>Welcome Package</i> provided to new mothers
Being invited to participate only at conferences and events	Provide more financial support to youth driven organizations Create more opportunities for Train the Trainer
Being put in different categories, i.e. labelled by disability	Learn to relate to others to understand... “if you can’t relate to it, it’s overlooked” Develop policies that address all youth without categorizing like putting “ticks in a box or on a form”
Discrimination against homeless youth and Aboriginal youth	Recognize similarities and get more youth involved-diversity and equal representation
New immigrants have a lot of added challenges like language, growing up in a different culture, ways are different	Include groups like children with disabilities, aboriginal youth, new Canadians, homeless youth Network with other immigrants, other youth
Participating in things with no follow-up	Follow through with promises
No one there to talk to or to have advocating for youth	Need Aboriginal advocate for children, maybe an Aboriginal children’s commissioner. Need a way of having youth represented at the government level, “instead of adults saying what youth want” Need children’s commissioner at the federal level to help get children’s voices heard

“Just do it, if you want to make change, make change.”

**Article 44:
Canada's upcoming report
to the Committee on the Rights of the Child**



The BIG picture...

What do you know about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child? What rights do children have? Why is it important for children to have rights?

How WE fit in...

What should Canada be doing to build awareness about children's rights and to make sure that the rights and freedoms of children and young people are realized?

Playing a role...

How should children and young people be involved in promoting, monitoring and reporting on children's rights in Canada?

Knowing our rights...

“Children need a different kind of protection than adults.”

Children and young people list a wide range of rights and related issues that they are aware of and feel are important to their full development:

- The right to be respected
- The right to freedom from violence
- The right to access health care
- The rights of Aboriginal people and their traditional practices that no other people possess.
- The right to participate in decisions that affect you
- The belief that every young person is important

*“Children in other countries know what their rights are...
Most kids here don't know about the Convention.”*

“If you don't know what they are, how do you know what you're not getting?”

Our experiences...

*“Professionals and people in authority are sometimes
the very ones who are violating our rights.”*

*“I was arrested last summer. I was in a holding cell.
The conditions were disgusting...there was urine in the cells
and stuff like that. I found out that I did have rights about this.
I called the Ombudsman and nothing happened.”*

*“I hear stories about jails where people working
there abuse youth, the videotapes are turned off...”*

*“The CAS is profiling young people who are
parents, there needs to be somewhere to go if you
are feeling harassed by CAS.”*

*“There can be lots of programs set out to educate young people
about rights, but if adults don't learn too, then it is difficult.”*

*“The RCMP training is only 8 months,
and there is not enough culturally relevant
training pertaining to aboriginal or homeless youth
or mental health.”*

*“What can we do to get people working with kids to have empathy?
I hear stories and I have stories of my own as well - what is a productive citizen?”*

Canada's report card should address...

*“The way a child is treated by a society is an indication of
what that society is all about.”*

- Access to health care for young people
- The right to education
- Standardized health care
- Poverty
- Awareness of children's rights
- A safe environment
- Early childhood issues

- Education and health compared to other countries...as a primary responsibility
- Substance abuse
- Violence
- The separations/divisions between sectors in Canada

“There is a separate country inside Canada.”

There is a realization among young people that separations and divisions seem to exist between many sectors in Canada. Of great concern to young people is the notion that although Canada may be ranked high for its standard of living compared to other countries, the situation of many Aboriginal communities is much different and ranks 73rd on the list and that in fact “some people in Canada live in third world situations.”

Youth feel that different rights are realized or not realized in specific areas. There are certain sectors, such as “youth on the street”, who cannot access services.

*“Once you are out of the system it is very hard to get back in.
Even grade “A” students, very successful students,
can get involved in drugs and go down.”*

The overall sense is that Canada is doing well on the ‘essential rights’ like basic human needs, but that ‘participatory rights’ are more on the sidelines. There was also a common feeling expressed that decisions are made that don’t always put youth first.

“Overall Evaluation of Canada... Grade B-”

Including children and young people in monitoring and reporting means...

1. Getting information and awareness out about rights:

- Go into schools to reach young people
- Make information easily accessible and child friendly
- Get kids involved in organizing events - the whole process helps raise awareness and participation
- Build awareness and creating effective ways of getting information about rights brought forward in order to get kids talking about rights
- Spread the word to even younger children
- Create pamphlets and posters in clinics where youth go
- Do presentations in schools
- Teach human rights in school as a mandatory part of the curriculum
- Use new forms of technology and pop media like Youtube and Facebook
- Use Art and music and other things young people are already into
- like Much Music
- Mail-out or poster campaign with a paper with all the rights of children listed
- Pizza and pop session or coffee night on rights
- Create TV commercials that catch people’s attention like the ‘Heritage Moments’
- Make reports public
- Include business and commerce too, they need to understand how this effects them
- Make the Convention part of our law

“After you’re aware you can evaluate the status of your rights.”

2. Asking children and young people for their feedback on rights:

- Go beyond standard options for input and being able to say anything you think is important
- Get street level information
- Talk to youth and bringing it to government
- Make response and feedback system easy and interactive
- Conduct workshops and focus groups, have someone there to talk to about issues who you can really get to know
- Develop a report card for youth to receive and to fill out in terms of how Canada is doing
- Create newsletters, surveys and questionnaires that can be accessed through websites, videos, and newspapers
- Have in school essay-writing contest and develop lessons for teachers to teach
- Create a formal way of involving youth in creating a report card

3. Finding ways for children and young people to help monitor rights:

- Have politicians, school officials, and police listen
- Have support from school system to organize events or rights discussions
- Provide opportunities for exchange and interaction to keep youth engaged
- Hire youth to prepare reports
- Involve universities in monitoring rights, integrate education with rights- provide scholarships for universities doing research on rights

“Before youth can evaluate how Canada is doing about rights, awareness must be raised with everyone.”

A place to go and someone to tell...

“There needs to be a way for young people to know their rights, to know what to do, and to know what process is in place to help if your rights are not being met.”

“Somebody has to believe you.”

Youth participants stress again and again, the need for a children’s commissioner whose job it is to provide follow up and adequate support to children and young people. They recommend a youth ombudsman in every city, somewhere to go if they feel their rights are being violated.

Additional ideas expressed by youth participants include, but are not limited to:

- Creating more systems of accountability and things that deter people from abusing power
- Having a youth ombudsman in every city
- Having a Children’s Commissioner who can follow up on the concluding observations of Canada’s report, before the next report is due
- Having a “go to person” within government
- Someone who can be a link between youth and their MPs

“Young people need to know their rights but more than that they need someone to tell and that person has to be willing to do something based on that knowing your rights is important, but more than that is having someone to tell who is willing to do something about it.”

“Human rights should be a priority in this country. We have so much.”

Article 24: Health – The voices of children and young people in Canada with special reference to the health of Aboriginal youth



The BIG picture...	<p>What do you see as the top physical and mental health issues for children and young people in Canada?</p> <p>What are the specific health issues that relate to Aboriginal children and young people?</p>
How WE fit in...	<p>What has been your experience with the Health system in Canada?</p> <p>How can Canada ensure that the health needs of children and young people are met and that their rights and freedoms are respected?</p>
Playing a role...	<p>How should children and young people be involved in addressing these health issues?</p> <p>How can we ensure that all children and young people have opportunities to participate in the design and development of health policies?</p>

We are healthy when...

We are happy and in good relationships with our friends and family
We can participate in our cultures
We can be with our friends and do the things we enjoy
We help others

*“Canada has a façade of how good things are –
but there are a lot of things under the surface.”*

Physical health means...

what you are...your body...your body image...it is concrete, not abstract

Top physical health issues:

- Access to sexual health
- Media – conflicting messages
- Pollution, global warming and issues like air quality in big cities
- Internet/technology
- Over-prescribing/over-medication of youth– side effects from synthetic drugs just masking the problems
- Walk-in clinics
- Diet - healthy food is expensive, many kids only get cheap food that isn't healthy
- Some kids don't even have access to food
- Self-esteem is a big issue that is mental but can effect physical such as eating disorders
- Dietary resources need to be culturally sensitive
- Vitamins are really important, proper nutrition needs to be provided for kids in care
- We don't have enough opportunities for kids to access recreation like non-competitive sports, especially in rural areas.
- Kids have problems too, their self esteem comes from people around them, adults need to understand that kids have problems too
- Problems in families where parents are not really available

Mental health means...

emotions...what you think and feel...there are more layers

Top mental health issues:

- Mental health waiting list for help is up to a year
- Mental health issues- e.g. if girls don't have someone to love they will get pregnant so they will have someone to love
- We don't know the signs of mental health issues
- If mental health is not addressed, kids will smoke, drink alcohol, suicide
- Stress/affects our Health
- School, parents, friends, media, alcohol, poverty, nowhere to go
- Emotional health and body image
- We need to get the stigma out of mental health
- One in four people have mental health issues – we need to find ways to help each other
- More attention and awareness on mental health issues

Health issues facing Aboriginal children and youth:

- Over diagnosis of ADHD among aboriginal youth, particularly boys
- Physical barriers – lack of access to health services
- Unhealthy community relationships and structures
- Example of Jordan’s Principle: a person’s needs need to come before jurisdictional issues and politics
- Need more Aboriginal health care professionals and role models for mental development
- Racism and discrimination are huge problems
- Suicide
- Diabetes
- Sexual exploitation
- Environment – the land and its condition and what it can provide is integral to health, the ability to take care of it and access it.
- Economic exploitation is a big issue because it effects the community and access to it
- Holistic approaches need to be integrated, accepted and holistic medication should be covered
- Access to recreation for young people is a physical and mental health issue
- Overmedication: alternatives aren’t there, large risk for addiction
- Children are being neglected in many ways including lack of education, health awareness
- Dental health and access- in some communities a dentist comes only once a year
- Physical barriers to access health services
- Unhealthy community relationships due to effects of colonization
- Loss of traditional language

Our experiences as Aboriginal children and youth...

“I have never learned anything about Aboriginal health in school.”

“There is such ignorance about the issues that aboriginal youth face.”

“It seems that we are repeating history and saying how well we’ve done but it’s not working.”

“Canada can not have credibility on an international scale because we have racism and inequalities here.”

“Aboriginal kids actually watch less TV.”

“It is important that people advocate in support of Aboriginal youth not on their behalf because this takes away power.”

“Climate change is affecting food access and traditional foods in the north.”

“When you are young having people love you is very important, a lot of neglect happens in Inuit communities because of isolation of communities, lack of access to services, traditions that are against girls, no parenting skills, fetal alcohol syndrome, etc.”

“The loss of traditional language can effect mental health because it is detrimental to how young people view themselves and because it is a cultural loss- you feel confused and trapped between two cultures, Canadian and traditional cultures.”

“Health should be ‘community specific, not pan-aboriginal but status blind’—so no one has to present a status card

to get services but health services need to be decided by individual communities.”

“It is very painful to lose your culture. Culture and community is a part of mental health.”

Our experiences in the health care system...

“There are youth who don’t want to tell parents but if it’s a matter of health or safety your parents need to be notified – you cannot keep life and death situations a secret.”

“I want to be the one to tell my parents.”

“I think young girls have the right to make decisions about abortion on their own. They have to make decisions about their own bodies.”

“Youth in care give social workers permission to access doctor and medical information- this has both pros and cons.”

“Kids don’t feel comfortable with adults so they won’t go for help...there is no one to talk to get answers ...it takes 2-3 weeks to get into clinics.”

“We have a good guidance counselor in our school- she is always saying hello in the hallways and is easily accessible.”

“You have to miss school to access health, if I miss school I will not get a credit.”

“We have a nurse who comes into our school and he doesn’t even talk about abstinence.”

“At our school we can ask private questions on a piece of paper and we address a lot of these issues.”

“We can go to our teacher but I would go to a friend first, especially for a serious question.”

“Youth feel they need to escape so they turn to drugs.”

“It’s easier to get drugs and alcohol than to go to the doctor- and more confidential.”

“As a smoker regrettably, I know it is easier than people think for 10 or 11 year olds to get smokes, they don’t even need to bother with ID. Quitting should be easy but it isn’t, it’s one of the hardest things to do. It is an addiction like a strong drug like heroin, only it’s in your face wherever you go.”

“Media will be around for a long time, we might as well learn how to use it well.”

“I feel like it’s children’s right to be safe from second hand smoke vs., adults right to smoke.”

“I know people with anorexia, it doesn’t just affect their body, it effects their mind, they are just really sad people.”

Involving us in addressing health issues means...

“Youth should be involved in promoting, implementing and maintaining the physical, mental and spiritual health of their unique community.”

- Getting more youth involved in education – right now the system is run by people over 30- it’s a problem
- Having adult-youth partnerships
- Encouraging youth to take leadership
- Understanding that teachers are not knowledgeable about everything
- Speaking at the level of our maturity
- Using methods that make it more comfortable like skits, music, commercials, etc.
- Ensuring a non-judgmental atmosphere
- Providing opportunities to have youth to train staff at hospitals and walk-in clinics
- Providing opportunities for young people to meet and talk together
- Developing internships and youth representatives
- Allowing for their input and keeping the commitment
- Remembering the importance of community
- Knowing your roots and feeling a sense of belonging
- Giving young people a chance to know about their culture but also to learn about others
- Having a health care person in the children’s commissioner’s office who consults with many groups of young people
- Having young people in places of power
- Shifting the way adults look at kids’ contributions.
- Empowering Aboriginal young people to speak to issues and facilitate involvement in their own communities

Ensuring that Canada’s health needs are met means...

- Designing a health system that really listens to patients
- Having enough family doctors so you can establish relationships
- Moving away from approaches that only focus on symptoms
- Nurturing talents
- Providing education
- Shorter waiting times
- Developing methods for young people to make complaints and ask questions about issues
- Having someone specific to help like an ombudsman’s office for children
- Making sure that everyone has access
- Creating a system that recognizes that kids are diverse and understands different racial needs
- More addictions resources for homeless youth that are available to those under 18 yrs
- Asking kids what they need
- Calling upon government representatives to do that
- Implementing the CRC domestically
- Ensuring adequate access to family doctors in smaller communities
- Creating more opportunities for peer counseling so you can build bonds with others
- The creation of a national Aboriginal health strategy recognizing that Aboriginal health needs are unique
- Giving everyone a chance to go to medical school and giving more funding and opportunities to all ethnicities, and recognizing foreign education and training

“Child and youth involvement is a strategic investment in human capital instead of hoping good leaders will come along, we need to build good leaders.”

Article 19: The UN Study on Violence Against Children



The BIG picture... How can adults be more effective in preventing violence against children?

How WE fit in... What are the most important issues of violence that you would like Canada to address?

Playing a role... What role do children and young people have in preventing violence against children?

Violence is...

- Loss of innocence
- Anger, hatred, fear
- Child soldiers
- Sadness
- A sick feeling in my stomach
- Stress
- Violation
- Bullying
- Horrible - something that affects the rest of your life
- Multigenerational that continues down
- Racism, sexism and discrimination
- Child soldiers - international responsibilities
- It's still legal to hit children
- Abuse with items
- Date rape - a lot of females are sexually assaulted and it's violent assault
- Pedophiles and incest
- Neglect – when we report youth being neglected it's not the full story
- Neglect can be poverty, poor housing and addiction
- Violence against other young people like bullying and gangs

“Anything that takes innocence away from children is wrong.”

Violence happens...

In the home and family:

- Helping parents learn how to parent and how to deal with stress and anger
- Work with parents and child before resorting to foster care- it can fill the little hope that's there
- Sometime violence happens when children visit other family members or friends, not just immediate family
- Violence often starts in the family and then extends out into the community
- There should be some kind of legal ramification for parents who let their children listen to violent messaging
- Sexual abuse usually happens to youth by people that they know-that they also know that nobody will believe them
- If someone is abused or has been there is an 80% chance of reoccurrence

In institutions like prisons and schools:

- Cliques in the high school do not understand each other
- Gangs – people want to be safe and be part of something
- Sometimes teachers don't know what to do – they ask students to solve their issues on their own
- Verbal abuse from teachers including emotional abuse
- Physical abuse from teachers
- The escalation of violence from a young age into later teenaged years – or starts at name calling and escalates into violence when it isn't addressed properly by appropriate adults
- Sometimes there is need to go over the head of principal and school admin to police when necessary participants gave a story when they did this as a result at a form of violence occurring repeatedly

In the community:

- Violence is forced upon us - in my community I remember being in a road block at 9 yrs
- It's a community's job to raise a child
- I grew up in a good neighborhood that was considered safe. I was bullied everyday and nobody believed me.

In the media:

- There is a new song on the radio that says "we got them guns that go boom boom"
- Music and lyrics are inappropriate for kids and are so accessible. It's everywhere...rap, hip hop, actors are in the media and are influencing new culture – it could facilitate the transition from using a toy to a real gun
- It's really hard to abolish violence and bad messages in the media, so we need to fight harder to reach out to more people to positive messaging
- There is a difference between movies like Blood Diamonds (which is educational) and Fight club which is gratuitous violence
- Teletoons has so much violence in its programming
- There is the example of 50 Cent, a rap artist who was banned in a city because of his violent messaging and his record sales sky-rocketed

"Talk about it. It happens. Get it out there."

Our experiences...

"I think youth violence is an outlet for youth who don't know what to do with their time – parents may work long hours and gangs take care of you."

"I think it's youth against youth-violence can be a way of getting attention."

"I feel safe at school we are being watched but I read also of a kid that was handicapped and his friends put him in a burning shed."

"There is a thrill kids get out violence-I don't know if they are born with or they developed it."

"When people get sad and depressed they often resort to violence."

"It seems backwards that school admin. are not taking youth seriously when they have a problem."

"If you've only been exposed to violence that's your only reaction."

"If someone bothers me, I don't care, I just do my own thing."

"Instead of creating reasons to fight, people need to just walk away."

"Walking away sometimes doesn't help, sometimes you have to fight."

"Cops don't listen to girls who have been raped because of lack of bruises or blood-they should take care of charging the people before they judge the case."

"It's hard to live, sometimes it's more like survival-I feel lucky to be here in Canada."

"People instigate it- they get excited for a fight. For those who walk away, the view is that if you walk you are weak. You gotta stand up, but you don't always have to fight."

"Gaining respect through fear is not a way to go."

"Education causes prevention."

Our solutions...

“You need to solve your problems before you can solve someone else’s.”

For families:

- Mandatory parenting classes
- More communication between adults and children
- Sometimes helps to get a third party involved like a counselor
- Parents are the role models for children
- Build a foundation for kids
- Families and parents work hard, they come home and don’t know what the kid has been doing – parents need to get more involved
- Solutions need to start at home because your connection with family is where you learn

For institutions:

- Programs in our schools for peer anti-violence
- Conflict resolution classes and techniques help a lot
- More education on sexual violence
- Drama program at school to express ourselves on these issues
- Announcements at school, put posters up
- Start a club at your school to talk about violence and help find solutions
- Create a Teen Court-get experience by jury of peers

For communities:

- Panel presentations on bullying – youth could participate in a follow up process for children who were through CAS and abuse situations
- Knowing and understanding what’s going on in our communities
- Community-specific responses and strategies

For the media:

- Educate the public – media and news sources
- We need to become more media savvy
- Challenge media to display positive stories about what youth are doing and cut out a lot of the violence
- The media needs to deglorify violence- it is the most predominant factor
- Some things should be censored, like war, it’s not ok for 3 yr olds
- Video games – if you censor them it puts them on a pedestal and game ratings go up

For ourselves:

- Kids can speak out, get involved, talk to people
- Learn to be empathetic and stop being a victim, have compassion, respect, and an open mind
- Volunteer, be a mentor, ‘Youth to youth’ empowerment
- Make a personal decision to stop it when you see it and not to talk about other people in their backs
- Be an advocate-talk about it and discuss
- People need space and time to think about/know about how to deal with anger
- Stand up to injustice and talk them down so they don’t want to do it
- We need to be equipped to process what we’re seeing
- We don’t always have to fight
- Call the Kids Help Line

“We need to change the way things are.”

How adults can help...

“Adults should just not do violence towards children.”

- Provide more safe places like Youth Centres
- Try to understand where youth are coming from
- Youth need people to talk to
- Let youth help educate the public- only the youth know what it feels like
- Let youth tell their stories-stick with their stories
- Be accountable for your actions
- Celebrate the strengths of youth
- Learn to solve problems together
- Ask youth about what they think

“An adult who has been abused knows what it feels like.”