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Landon Pearson Resource Centre  
for the Study of Childhood  
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## Shaking the Movers X: Youth Rights and the Environment



*This report was prepared by Shaking the Movers X co-facilitators Peter Dicks and Nicole Bajcar, and co-chairs Dr. Judy Finlay and the Hon. Landon Pearson, with photographs from Sherry Prenevost.*

## Preface

Climate change may well be the greatest threat to children's rights that currently exists. The rising incidence of floods and droughts, wildfires, blizzards and storms that menace the lives and livelihoods of billions of people, especially in Africa and Asia, falls particularly heavily on children. When their parents are driven off the land by crop failure their children lose both the security of home and the security of food. When families migrate to the slums of the exploding megacities of the world children encounter new dangers. When water becomes scarce and armed groups begin to fight over it conflicts multiply and children flee for refuge. Rising sea-levels overwhelm the lowlands where they sometimes settle and they have to move again. Diseases flourish where infrastructures are weak and health declines. The well-off manage better, no matter where they live, so inequities spread. As our planet warms up around us the rights of children, and not just the very poor, are increasingly at stake and so is the very future of humankind. To extract us from the looming disaster we have brought upon ourselves we badly need the energy and creativity of children and youth and to channel that energy we first of all need to hear what they have to say.

This is why we have brought together young people in Moncton, Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal to discuss climate change through a child rights lens and bring us their ideas about what should be done. When the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was drafted and adopted over 25 years ago global warming was only beginning to be taken seriously. As a result the Convention does not specifically address children's environmental rights but it is quite clear that all the rights it does set out are impacted by what is now happening. Art. 6, the right to survival and development, is obvious. So is Art 24, the right to health "taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution". Art. 27, the right to an adequate standard of living, is clearly being violated every day. So is the right to education in a safe and secure setting as called for in Art. 28. and Art. 29, which addresses the aims of education, includes among them "the development of respect for the natural environment.

The young participants in Toronto, whose views are captured in this report, arrived at "Shaking the Movers" relatively unaware of their rights or, indeed, of the seriousness of the problems raised by climate change. However, the more they talked, the more passionate they became and the more ideas they had and, in the end, they left transformed into environmental activists! Their reflections are important for us all. Please read what they had to say.

Hon. Landon Pearson O.C.



## Overview

On November 19th and 20th, 2016, 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, conducted a two day conference 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 (UNCRC), Article 12).
- Working to normalize those rights afforded to youth under Articles 3 and 13 of the UNCRC.
- Providing an opportunity for children and youth to prepare comments and recommendations for governments and civil society, with respect to Articles 6, 24, 27, 28, 29, and 30 of the UNCRC and the themes that arise from these articles.

Shaking the Movers provides an exceptional opportunity for youth to get together and meet individuals within their age range and create new and potential long-lasting relationships and connections. The conference encourages a healthy and therapeutic environment in which youth can freely express their thoughts and opinions, in a professional and proficient manner, with Child and Youth Care intervention if applicable.

For this year's Shaking the Movers, youth came together to look at the issue of youth rights and the environment. The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has outlined climate change as one of the largest threats to the health of children internationally<sup>1</sup>. Further, the CRC interprets the UNCRC as placing the responsibility of protecting youth from these environmental harms firmly in the hands of the world's governments<sup>2</sup>. Given the tremendous climate change experienced worldwide in recent years, UNICEF has stated, "there is a pressing need for comprehensive debate, analysis and urgent action in relation to the impacts of environmental harm on children, and how State Parties can and should fulfil their human rights obligations in this regard"<sup>3</sup>.



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<sup>1</sup> General Comment No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (Art. 24), paragraph 50.

<sup>2</sup> General Comment No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (Art. 24), paragraph 50.

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF's written submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child for the Day of General Discussion on 'Children's Rights and the Environment', 23 September 2016



## Shaking the Movers X: Youth Rights and the Environment

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 report highlights discussions that Shaking the Movers X participants engaged in around three topic areas of environmental harm over the course of the two day workshop: (1) Water, (2) Healthy Surroundings, and (3) Wildlife. The young people brainstormed solutions to some of the problems related to environmental harms being faced by not only the children of today, but also tomorrow.

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. As one youth said:

*“When the voices of young people are heard, respected, and valued, we can learn so much from each other - young people are more knowledgeable than we think”.*



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

The following articles were addressed during Shaking the Movers 2016:

**Article 6 (Survival and development):** Children have the right to live. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.

**Article 24 (Health and health services):** Children have the right to good quality health care – the best health care possible – to safe drinking water, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help them stay healthy. Rich countries should help poorer countries achieve this.

**Article 27 (Adequate standard of living):** Children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. Governments should help families and guardians who cannot afford to provide this, particularly with regard to food, clothing and housing.

**Article 28: (Right to education):** All children have the right to a primary education, which should be free. Wealthy countries should help poorer countries achieve this right. Discipline in schools should respect children's dignity. For children to benefit from education, schools must be run in an orderly way – without the use of violence. Any form of school discipline should take into account the child's human dignity. Therefore, governments must ensure that school administrators review their discipline policies and eliminate any discipline practices involving physical or mental violence, abuse or neglect. The Convention places a high value on education. Young people should be encouraged to reach the highest level of education of which they are capable.

**Article 29 (Goals of education):** Children's education should develop each child's personality, talents and abilities to the fullest. It should encourage children to respect others, human rights and their own and other cultures. It should also help them learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people. Children have a particular responsibility to respect the rights their parents, and education should aim to develop respect for the values and culture of their parents. The Convention does not address such issues as school uniforms, dress codes, the singing of the national anthem or prayer in schools. It is up to governments and school officials in each country to determine whether, in the context of their society and existing laws, such matters infringe upon other rights protected by the Convention.

**Article 30 (Children of minorities/indigenous groups):** Minority or indigenous children have the right to learn about and practice their own culture, language and religion. The right to practice one's own culture, language and religion applies to everyone; the Convention here highlights this right in instances where the practices are not shared by the majority of people in the country.

**Article 3 (Best interests of the child):** The best interests of children must be the primary concern in making decisions that may affect them. All adults should do what is best for children. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children. This particularly applies to budget, policy and law makers.

**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. This does not mean that children can now tell their parents what to do. This Convention encourages adults to listen to the opinions of children and involve them in decision-making -- not give children authority over adults. Article 12 does not interfere with parents' right and responsibility to express their views on matters affecting their children. Moreover, the Convention recognizes that the level of a child's participation in decisions must be appropriate to the child's level of maturity. Children's ability to form and express their opinions develops with age and most adults will naturally give the views of teenagers greater weight than those of a preschooler, whether in family, legal or administrative decisions.

**Article 13 (Freedom of expression):** Children have the right to get and share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or others. In exercising the right to freedom of expression, children have the responsibility to also respect the rights, freedoms and reputations of others. The freedom of expression includes the right to share information in any way they choose, including by talking, drawing or writing.



### Shaking the Movers 2016

Shaking the Movers 2016's workshops and activities were organized by a class of students studying Advanced Group Work at Ryerson University's School of Child and Youth Care. The students were organized into five groups: three groups were responsible for facilitating the activities focused on those three environmental topics mentioned earlier, one group was responsible for coordinating the weekend's large scale group activity, and the final group was responsible for developing a short video capturing the essence of the conference.

In preparation for the event, those three groups responsible for facilitating discussions concerning the three environmental issues were placed in simulation exercises within the classroom setting. These simulations provided valuable feedback as to how they might better approach this topic of environmental rights in a meaningful and productive way with the youth. Beyond the simulations, each of the three groups worked with a youth activator to ensure the activities they were planning, and the material they would present, was youth-friendly. All three youth activators gave feedback to the fourth group regarding the development of the large group activity. The addition of youth activators to Shaking the Movers began in 2014 and has allowed youth to have input in the planning of the conference workshops and ensures that their thoughts, ideas, and opinions are part of that process. Being previous Shaking the Movers participants themselves, the activators are able to share their first-hand knowledge of what has worked at the conference in the past, and what has not.

In preparation for the environmental focus of the event, Rachel Plotkin of the David Suzuki Foundation came to speak to the Ryerson students in class regarding the three environmental topic areas, providing multiple resources and answering any questions they had.

Prior to the conference, participants were provided with an information package, which included backgrounders on each of the three environmental topics. The information for these summaries was compiled by the Ryerson student groups assigned to each topic, and then edited by the younger youth activators to ensure youth friendly language was used (see Appendix A). This was done to give those participating in Shaking the Movers X a brief introduction to each topic area, as well as an understanding of what the two day conference would look like.



On the first morning of the conference, all of the youth convened for an introduction into the relationship between youth rights and the environment. This included a welcome from Hon. Landon Pearson, followed by a deconstruction of the relevant UNCRC articles.

One section of Ryerson's Children's Rights undergraduate course produced four group presentations to introduce conference participants to the UNCRC. The first group produced a spoken word poem that elaborated various elements of the UNCRC in an interesting way. The second group focused on the UNCRC's articles 6 and 24 on the right to life, development and right to health by creating a skill-testing game with various questions about health care in Canada and around the world that were illustrated by beautiful hand-drawn posters held up by the various presenters. The third group highlighted article 27 and the right to adequate standard of living. It involved three volunteers to construct houses with various materials in the manner of the famous "Three Little Pigs" story. It was remarkable how quickly STM participants created excellent houses: the first was made from paper representing straw; the second used straws to represent sticks; and the third out of (Lego) bricks. The creators were asked to consider did they have the proper materials to build a sturdy house if there was a tornado or mudslide and significance of having privilege. This group highlighted the various avenues in order to take action and to obtain support to support the standard of living in Ontario and Canada. The last group focusing on the UNCRC's articles 28 and 29 about the right to, and aims of education, developed a skit inspired by Einstein's quote "Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid". A group of animals: a lion, a squirrel, a bear, a bird, a cat, a tiger, a zebra, a rabbit and a fish who all wanted to attend school but had to pay the zookeeper five stones in order to attend. Those who did not have enough were denied access. There was a test about climbing a tree and the fish failed as a result. This skit highlighted questions about accessibility and the different ways that we learn as essential to understanding education rights. In summary, these student presentations established the engaging and creative approach of the conference.

Finally, the weekend's keynote presenter, Rachel Plotkin of the David Suzuki Foundation, spoke to ongoing environmental harms across those three topic areas of discussion. She first engaged the youth in a discussion concerning the most pressing problems currently facing the protection of water, wildlife, and a healthy environment. The youth were then presented with examples of the existing protection measures currently in place and were engaged to discuss how effective they perceived them to be. Rachel ended with a discussion of the ways that the youth could become involved in helping to foster change towards a world free of environmental harms.

The young people were then split up into three groups and moved through three informative group stations to learn more about each of the three topic areas. They then had the opportunity to rank their top choice for which topic 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 what they perceived to be the problems currently facing youth related to the environment in their chosen topics, the youth all reconvened to present their views.





On the second day participants returned to their chosen groups to explore potential solutions to the problems highlighted on the first day. Following this the fourth Ryerson student group facilitated a large scale activity not related to the conference's topic for the youth. This activity allowed for the students to get to know each other better and socialize. The decision to have the activity be outside the scope of the conference topic was based on the recommendations of previous years' participants. After this, the youth returned to their chosen groups to develop skits and other forms of expression to share their recommendations with the larger group.

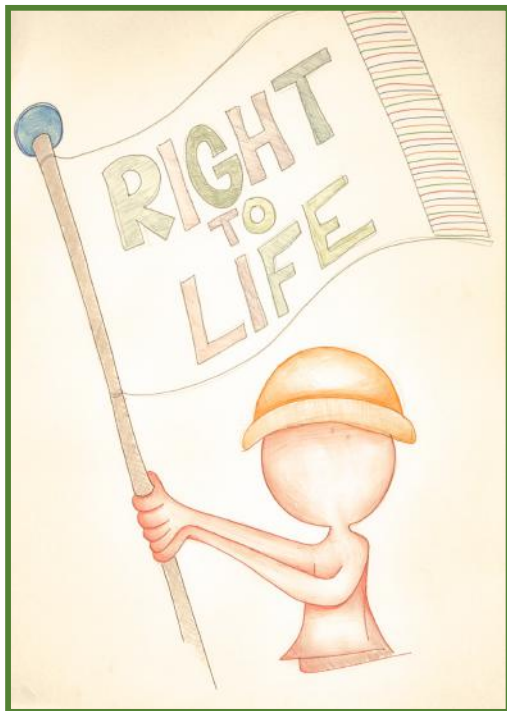
Shaking the Movers, the workshops, and the activities are all designed to allow a safe space for youth to share their opinions, ideas and experiences, and have these listened to by peers and child and youth workers. Adults are not present during the discussions of the problems and solutions. It is only during when the youth reconvene in the larger group that adults can listen to the presentations. 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 (See Appendix B).





## Shaking the Movers to Protect the Environment for all Youth

The following questions were discussed by the young people:



### Saturday: The Problems

#### General

What are the most concerning environmental issues today?

How do these environmental issue tie to the rights of young people?

#### Specific

In your opinion what is the most pressing environmental concern facing \_\_\_\_\_ today?

Why is it important to keep our \_\_\_\_\_ safe and protected?  
And; who is making sure you environment will be safe for your future?

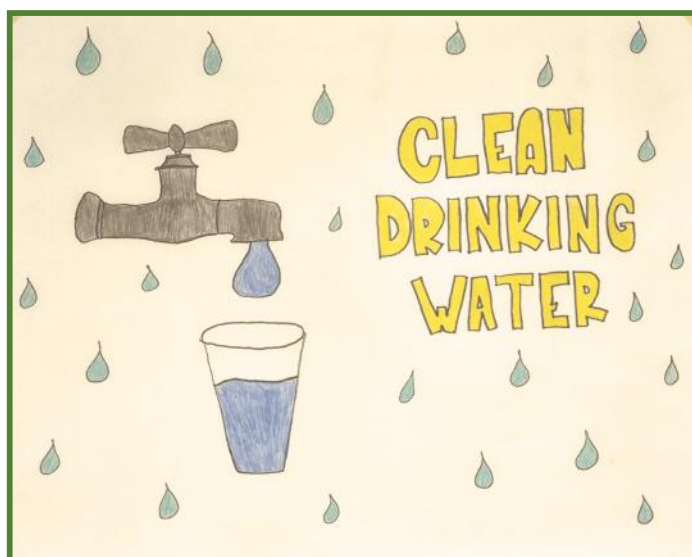
### Sunday: The Solutions

What are short term and long term strategies to protect your right to \_\_\_\_\_?

If you were Prime Minister for a day, what would you do to protect the \_\_\_\_\_?

In an ideal world, what will the government do to protect your right to \_\_\_\_\_?

What can your community/ agencies, schools, service providers, churches, community groups, family, do to support this?



## What the Youth had to Say:

### **What are the most concerning environmental issues today?**

Youth across all groups expressed that habitat destruction was a central concern, both by the processes of climate change and pollution:

*“Personally I believe that the most concerning environmental issue today is climate change. It just affects so many parts of our lives. Like what we eat, our own personal health with rising sea levels droughts and such, our food supply as well. Essentially everything in our lives is affected by climate change. Our whole lifestyle is threatened by it.”*

*“I think that pollution is the umbrella term for the pressing issues of water but there are subheadings to explain each thing that relates to pollution. So Water access, desertification, plastic water bottles, acid rain all fall under the problem of pollution.”*

Speaking to the concerns about water and a healthy environment, youth said:

*“(The) Ozone layer is affecting the climate change and making earth hotter”*

*“Irresponsible waste disposal.”*

*“We need to address insufficiency in the food supply chain”*

As the following discussion highlights, Climate change was a large concern of the youth in relation to the protection of wildlife:

*“(Animals) won’t be able to survive because we as humans have made their habitat worse through pollution, which is an unnatural factor. Climate change will have a lasting effect for thousands of years.”*

*“Climate change affects all parts of the world, disasters will happen, such as tornados, hurricanes.”*

*“Animals will not be able to survive, because of climate change and erratic weather changes such as tornados and hurricanes.”*



The youth also highlighted their concern over various industry and government's ability to contribute to those problems perceived above:

*"Well, desertification is a huge one. Desertification is the process of dry land. It can happen when large international industries go to poor countries and take the water from the land to use for their own needs and when the people of the country try to get the water the land is dry and there is no water left."*

*"When cows fart, they produce methane, which is toxic for the environment. In some countries they fine farmers for owning cows because of the methane they release. Also pollution from acid rain and intense agriculture (fuel, water, land)"*

*"The process of making and transporting water bottles causes pollution and it cost so little money to make the water bottles but they cost a lot to buy at the store."*

*"The water is making (some Aboriginals peoples) sick because it's polluted by dumping from major companies like the example that was shown of grassy narrows."*

*"Lack of sustainable food sources, cow farming, the further implications of environmental degradation and the impact on the carbon concentration levels, all affect the world we live in"*

*"When it comes to food sustainability roughly 50% of food is lost from the transportation process to market availability."*



### How do those environmental issues listed above tie into the rights of young people?

*"We will inherit the world"*

*"The right to survival. War of Syria is affected by climate change because lack of food and habitat."*

Many of the youth expressed that it was the lack of action on the part of governments and industry to not only regulate, but also educate, that tied directly into their perception of youth rights.

*"The lack of educational resources and...lax conservation (efforts) is a factor that influences that 'ability of a population to exercise their right'"*

*"All of these definitely oppose to the right of adequate standards of living, right to survival. There isn't clean air for some areas around the world for people to properly breathe in."*



*"Speaks to the minimal access that the First Nations community has to clean water. They are getting sick from their water, which is a basic human right".*

*"Sometimes when people have a lack of water, instead of going to school to get an education, they have to substitute that time to bring water from lakes/streams/wells, to their homes. Like the First Nations of Canada."*

*"Unfortunately, the reality stands, in this industrial/information age, if you don't have a sustainable income, you will not have food or access to other niceties of life"*

One youth pointed out that although the above comments highlight the ways certain policies can be perceived as violating youth rights, youth cannot have them taken away.

*"Sometimes lack of resources can influence the potential to exercise rights, yet this does not insinuate that the capacity is not present."*

### **Why is it important to keep our environment safe and protected? And; who is making sure you environment will be safe for your future?**

Certain youth stated that government must be the body that ensures safety for youth. For example:

*"I think the government plays a role in making sure the environment will be safe. If they create laws and legislation that state how water is distributed can make sure everyone has access to it."*

One youth explained why government protections is necessary, remarking on industrial forces:

*"The influence of lobbyist of industrial agricultural are complex" ... "for instance Monsanto, in relation to GMO's and the implications of Patents".*

Others spoke to a lack of faith in government's capacity or willingness to do so:



*The government is not helping, so it is up to us".*

*"The government sometimes waits for something to happen to take action".*

*"Government cares more about their economy and to them the wildlife is not a pressing issue today because it does not affect them today".*

*"This is not the most publicized issue, environment is not the important issue in the media and if it was it would be. Like USA spends more money on military because it is in the media and a pressing issue"*

Instead, placing the responsibility on themselves:

*"I think we are in charge of making sure the environment will be safe. We have rights to clean water and we need to change the way we are polluting the earth so that we can have clean water"*

*"Yes, all children have the right to participate in decisions that will affect them and this is a step towards making a change and participating in what effects our environment".*

## What are short term and long term strategies to protect your right to freedom from environmental harm?

Short term solutions proposed by the youth focused on optimizing existing urban space:

*"Brown filled development could be a short term solution..."*

*"Green filled development is building on new land, brown filled development is building on land that has already been used. It's a way to reduce the spread of housing and deforestation".*

*"On top of one of our Ryerson buildings we have our own green space for growth... a certain amount of stories high have to have room for green spaces".*

*"Instead of penthouses make them greenhouses, a penthouse is a want but a greenhouse is a need".*

*"Why don't we build more apartments, a family of four doesn't need much space. We can build up, not out".*

They also touched on inefficiencies in the food supply chain that could be fixed short term:

*"We should encourage grocery stores to donate food waste and government should subsidize business for donating food."*

*"For agriculture we can build places that are closer to us to supply food in less rural areas. This would limit the amount we're taking away from animals homes".*

*"Not only are we losing food in transportation, we are losing nutrients and enzymes through the use of chemicals and preservatives."*



Long term, the youth returned to the larger themes of regulation and education across sectors:

*"They're going to develop of green land but know that they have limitations. Conservation by law can limit (long term harm)..."*

*"We need to be more mindful, we're wasteful in how we use the water especially on farms, we don't have to use so much of it".*

*"(Promoting) organic agriculture... plants that work together rather than doing one crop... there's also examples of densifying agriculture too".*

*"Well, government being long term and short term being personal. I think there should be regulations to keep up with corporations. A lot of the time, the corporate world finds a way to get around these regulations, but if there are stricter laws in place, they'll have a harder time overriding them."*

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*"There needs to be support for local farmer markets and we need the government to subsidize these initiatives."*

**If you were Prime Minister for a day, what would you do to protect the environment?**

Mirroring those comments above, the youth expressed that if they were to be Prime Minister, their strategy would be legislative. For instance:

*"The government shouldn't be promoting fuel usage... seems like the government could not be paying attention or figuring out how to introduce renewable energy in Canada. If I was Prime Minister for a day I'd do everything I can to set up renewable resources".*

The following conversation, relating to water, again highlights their desire to not only see concrete regulatory legislation passed, but also educative:

*"I think charging companies more for their water usage would be beneficial because it'll be a way to eliminate the amount of water being used by large companies"*

*"When the government tries to regulate that, it cuts into the company's profit and they lose money, and they'll need to find ways to save water, which in the end is positive...I think we also need stronger water treatment regulations in aboriginal communities in Canada to allow for safe, clean water to be given."*

*"There should be a law that industries cannot settle near natural bodies of water because then it will help to keep those bodies of water cleaner for longer".*

*"Yes, and I also think that governments could put water facts on labels..."*

*"Yea! Sort of like those anti-smoking ads"*

*"I heard somewhere that it takes about 3 L of water just to make one single almond! Can you believe that? That's an example of a label that the government could put on the front of a water bottle..."*

*"The government could maybe propose a law that enforces products/goods to show how much water it takes to make that product/good, so that people can see how much water it used to make products/goods and it will influence people to not want to buy it".*



### **In an ideal world, what will the government do to protect your right to freedom from environmental harms?**

*"In an ideal world everything would include green and renewable energy"*

Their vision of an ideal world incorporated those regulations they spoke about earlier, such as this remark related to access to clean drinking water:

*"...definitely a new legislation has to be implemented by the government surrounding our human basic rights to clean water that is bought by our government and sold by them."*



### **What can your community/ agencies, schools, service providers, churches, community groups, family, do to support this?**

In general they felt that there was the need for continued activism and engagement by all. Additionally, the youth felt that there is a need for more education around the topic of environmental rights in schools:

*"I think they should provide more education on what we do and how it affects water in negative ways. In school they just teach you that the planet is going to die and that you should just turn off your lights, but it's more."*

*"I think it's about ensuring accountability and ensuring that people are implementing ideas. There needs to be more."*

The following conversation between the youth in response to this question further amplifies that, although they recognize their role to play, they perceive this issue of environmental rights to be sufficiently complex as to demand legislation both in terms of education and regulation not only domestically, but also internationally, in order to create substantive change:

*"Water conservation starts with us at the micro level: Education, political engagement, and community intervention programs."*

*"Yea, but what programs? How many times are they going to tell us to turn off the tap when we aren't using the water, or to turn the lights off when we leave the room? It needs to be bigger, we need awareness on water protection that expands to a global scale."*

*"The UN can only do so much, but maybe the government could propose an international treaty surrounding this issue, like a universal law...goes back to desalination plants and global agreement."*



### Summary of Youth Recommendations:

Find below the recommendations of the youth resulting from this year's Shaking the Movers conference divided by topic area:

#### Healthy Environment:

1. Governments adopt policies offering incentives to businesses that either compost or donate their unsold food to charity.
2. Governments, citizens, and community groups promote education concerning food security both within and without legislation.
3. Governments invest in more efficient and nutritious food industries, as compared with corn and cattle.
4. Governments adopt policies offering subsidies to local farmers.

#### Wildlife:

Governments adopt policies that decrease wildlife habitat destruction that include:

1. Subsidies for local farmers
2. Carbon tax, in conjunction with
3. Increased research and development in green technology and energy, including subsidies.
4. Increased investment in brownfield development
5. Decreased Instances of monoculture
6. Promotion of education regarding habitat destruction within and without legislation.
7. Legislation requiring green rooftops for all commercial properties.

Further:

8. Community groups and citizens promote education around the issue of habitat destruction.

#### Water:

1. Governments adopt legislation recognizing water as a human right.
2. Governments adopt legislation placing strict protections on water.
3. Governments adopt policies promoting tariffs and taxes on water consumption by private companies.
4. Governments, community groups, and citizens promote education concerning water security within and without legislation
5. Citizens and community groups engage in activism around the issue of environmental harms.







### Thoughts and Reflections on Shaking the Movers 2016

By taking part in this conference participants were able to raise their concerns about their environmental rights through three topic areas of discussion: Water, Wild Life, and Healthy Environment. They graciously and candidly shared information with one another over the course of the two days. The youth were able to gain the perspectives of their peers, all of whom have different backgrounds and knowledge bases.

Although opinions varied at times, the conversations found common ground to build upon. Through discussions and presentations they were able to provide invaluable insight into the relation between child rights and the environment.

*"Every aspect of life is connected to the environment"*

*"I feel that these environmental issue concerning the rights of young children. It feels like these issues going on are violating the rights of young children. Children have the right to clean air, clean water, and a safe environment to live in. But all these issues surrounding the environment are already violating those rights."*

*"I think these environment issues affect young people because, since climate change is not limited to certain regions on earth, when it happens it affects the entire earth, not just adults, but also young children. If you look at some regions, like some parts of the world, there is child labour, stuff like that happening. Every time it goes back to climate change and environmental issues. That's why it's very important to address these issues at conferences such as this, or other influential conferences at the United Nations."*



## Shaking the Movers X: Youth Rights and the Environment

For many, this was their first experience learning about and discussing children's rights. Youth remarked that a lack of education surrounding rights has demanded that they take them for granted. One youth, echoing the voices of several others, stated that the most important thing they learned on the weekend was:

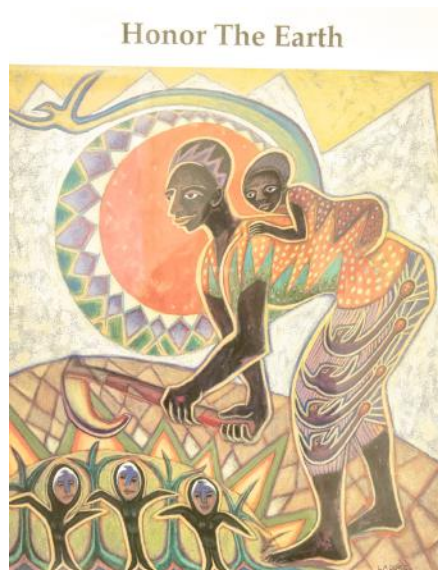
*"It is important for us to have our voices + opinions heard, and that it is possible"*

Another, expressed a feeling of empowerment:

*"(The conference) makes me feel confident that I can change something and make something happen"*

The importance of this cannot be understated, as following the conference many of these youth expressed a desire to take what they had learned and use this new found confidence to pass it on to others:

*"What I hope will happen in regards to environment because of the conference is that people will come out of the conference seeing that we have the capacity to combat these issues even on a small scale. Maybe like convincing our parents to get solar panels for the house, or to waste less compost more, and recycle more. So just to be more motivated to participate on this issue on a micro level, as well as advocate them on social media, calling our local MP's office, stuff like that."*



This conference made clear 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 made by the young people to eliminate environmental harms and it is their hope that these suggestions be taken seriously in moving forward.

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, and most importantly the youth who attended the conference bringing their thoughts, ideas, passion, and expertise in what is important to children and youth.





## Appendix A: Backgrounders on Youth Rights and the Environment

# HEALTHY SURROUNDINGS

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### **RIGHTS**

Article 24 of the United Nations convention on the rights of a child (UNCRC) states that State Parties recognize the right of children to the highest attainable standard of health. Article 24 states that a standard of health is to be achieved through readily available technology and the groundwork of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, all while accounting for the associated dangers of environmental pollution. With this in mind, our group will address the topic of environmental pollution from a critical lens of analysis, relating to food, soil, and air. Though almost interchangeable in their relationship to each other, we have chosen to exclude water from our analysis as it will be discussed further in another group.

### **Areas of Focus:**

### **FOOD**

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations defines food security as existing "when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (World Food Summit, 1996). Regarding food security, we have to look at transportation, the quality of food, use of GMO's, pesticides, and the outright industrialization of food. We will look at how the production of food impacts the environment and the effects of domestic industrial animal production and agriculture. Human intervention is the leading cause of environmental degradation. Questions we will be looking at are: How agriculture impacts the land? What are the impacts of these industrial food production practices on our environment?



### **AIR**

Air pollution is a result of harmful substances in the earth's atmosphere such as fossil fuels and methane gasses causing damage to the environment and in turn affecting climate change and global warming. The focus is mainly on carbon emissions, which last in our atmosphere about one hundred years. It is crucial that we address the Mismanagement of lands, power of lobbyists, as well as the political influence of the powers that be.



### **SOIL**

Soil is the skin of the earth and a huge part in having a healthy environment. Soil is the base for healthy agriculture and healthy forestation leading to clean air and environment. The questions we will be looking at are: what is soil pollution? What are the impacts of polluted soil? How can we protect our soil?

# WILDLIFE

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**Right now** we are in the midst of the **Earth's sixth great extinction**.

This is fastest extinction in our planet's history, greater even than the one that caused dinosaurs to be extinct, but rather than asteroid strikes, volcanic eruptions, or natural climate shifts, this one is caused almost entirely by people.

While there is a natural "background" rate of extinction on this planet as species die off to make way for new ones, the United Nations Environment Programme has reported that extinctions are currently happening at near 1,000 times the background rate. It is estimated that **every day between 150 and 200 species** of plant, insect, bird and mammal **become extinct**.

A report by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Zoological Society of London states that we're on track to lose a full two-thirds (66%) of wild populations by 2020. **Fifty-eight per cent have already been lost between 1970 and 2012**. Because species are bound together in the web of life, every extinction potentially leads to the extinction of others who were dependent on that species. As a result, numbers of extinctions are expected to snowball in the coming decades. Some estimate that by the year 2100 we may have lost over half of what's currently left of marine and land species.

The biggest contributor to extinction is habitat destruction and loss from resource extraction (like logging, mining, oil and gas development) and farming. Agriculture alone is linked to about 70 per cent of the loss of land-based biodiversity. Just 15% of the Earth's land is protected for non-humans. Poaching and hunting are also contributors.

We are also over-fishing. Unless we change our fishing practices, all stocks of fish we currently eat are predicted to collapse by 2048, with major effects rippling through marine ecosystems.

The introduction of exotic species and harmful pollution from industrial activity are also responsible for wildlife decline. Global warming magnifies all these threats, changing the very nature of ecosystems in which animals have adapted to survive.

**"We are all wildlife,"** as a current WWF campaign so rightly states. **The threat of a mass extinction is a threat to us**. It is the relationships between the various forms of life that make this planet livable for us all. Try holding your breath and you'll see how much you depend on the phytoplankton in the oceans to create oxygen. We must correct our relationship for other beings, for humans, for those yet to come.

# WATER

Our environment is connected by water. Lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands and groundwater flow through our communities. Water is used to grow our food, support industry, have fun, get around, drink, and as a habitat for many plants and animals. To ensure water ecosystems are healthy, there are a range of challenges to meet including pollution, impact of plastic bottles, water accessibility, and connecting our human rights to the protection of the environment.

(David Suzuki Foundation)

## Water Pollution

### Acid Rain:

- Acid rain refers to rainwater that, having been contaminated with chemicals introduced into the atmosphere through industrial and automobile emissions, has had its acidity increased beyond that of clean rainwater
- Water quality is affected Negatively



### Waste Water:

- 150 billion liters of untreated and undertreated wastewater (sewage) is dumped into our waterways every year. This is an environmental, human health and economic issue.
- The nation's largest source of water pollution

## Impact of Plastic Water bottles on the Environment

- **Fact 1** Only 1 out of 5 bottles are recycled
- **Fact 2** Unlike tap water, bottled water is not produced locally, so energy is needed to pump, process, transport, and refrigerate the products.
- **Fact 3** Plastic water bottles take over 1,000 years to bio-degrade and if incinerated, they produce toxic fumes. It is estimated that over 80% of all single-use water bottles simply become "litter."
- **Fact 4** It is estimated that actually 3 liters of water is used to package 1 liter of bottled water.



## Access to Water

- Grassy Narrows & pipeline spills
- Two-thirds of all First Nation communities in Canada have been under at least one drinking water advisory at some time in the last decade
- A variety of factors can trigger a water advisory, ranging from bad pipe connections, low pressure, improper filtration and disinfection right up to contamination with bacteria.

### Connecting Our Rights to the Environment

#### The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

##### **Article 6:** The right to survival and development

**Article 24:** The right to health taking into consideration the dangers & risks of environmental pollution

**Article 27:** The right to an adequate standard of living, is clearly being violated every day

**Article 28 & 29:** Right to education in a safe setting, which addresses the aims of education, includes "the development of respect for the natural environment"



## Appendix B: Shaking the Movers X Evaluation Form

### **YOUR PARTING THOUGHTS**

Before you leave, tell us about your experience at the Shaking the Movers X Conference. Please complete this evaluation form and hand it in on your way out the door.

Your input will help us to plan future events!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Participant's choice)      Age : \_\_\_\_\_ ( Participant's choice)

Statements	Do not agree		Somewhat agree		Totally agree
Your Voice was Heard	1	2	3	4	5
Your Voice was Respected	1	2	3	4	5
The Conference was sensitive to your personal needs (e.g. age, gender, food preferences)	1	2	3	4	5
The Conference was sensitive to your culture	1	2	3	4	5
You had enough time to connect with other participants	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoyed myself	1	2	3	4	5

1. What is the ONE THING that you'll remember about this Conference?
2. What was the most important thing that you learned?
3. What is one thing that you would change to make the Conference better for the participants next year?
4. Finally, what topic do you think next year's Shaking the Movers Conference should be about?