



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

Shaking the Movers II

Identity and Belonging
CRC Articles 29.1.c. and 30



Final Report

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National Collaborating Centre
for Aboriginal Health
Centre de collaboration nationale
de la santé Autochtone

Overview

On May 30 and 31st, 2008, 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, the Laidlaw Foundation, and the Collaborative Centre for Aboriginal Public Health at UNBC, conducted a two day workshop with children and young people, the third in its annual series, designed to expand national understanding of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) through magnifying the voices of those most affected by it. The workshop, entitled "Identity and Belonging":

- Provided an opportunity for children and young people to exercise their right to take part in discussion and to share their perspectives, with the assurance that their voices would be heard and listened to.
- Provided an opportunity for Aboriginal children and young people as well as youth belonging to ethnic, religious and official language minorities living in various parts of Canada, to prepare comments and recommendations for governments, academics and civil society.

The two articles that framed the workshop are:

Article 30 - Children of minorities or of indigenous peoples

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess or practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

Article 29 1 C – The aims of Education

1. State Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own.

Article 30 is essentially a "negative" right – that is the state, as represented by federal and provincial governments, has no right to interfere with children's cultural, religious or linguistic rights. Article 29.1.C is a "positive" right and affirms the clear responsibility of the state to promote an understanding of these rights in educational settings. To emphasize the relationship between these rights and a child's sense of identity and belonging so essential to his or her healthy development, the workshop encouraged the young people to focus on four themes:

Day 1	Linguistic rights: specifically with respect to Canada's official and aboriginal languages
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Cultural rights: the right to enjoy your own culture

Day 2 Religious rights: the right to profess and practise your own religion

Canadian Values: finding common ground and respect for the rights of all

Participants ranged in age from 11 years old to 20 years old and represented a variety of religious and cultural groups, including Aboriginals. Young people came to the workshop from rural and urban communities in the provinces of New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia. A number of older youth also participated as facilitators and recorders in the workshop. Accompanying adults and others committed to hearing what young people had to say, held separated workshops on the same themes to prepare them to listen.



The following report highlights the discussions that took place around the four thematic areas addressed by the 41 children and young people, during the two day workshop. It provides their perspectives based on their personal experiences, and brings forward recommendations that reflect their insight, their wisdom and their lived realities as members of Canadian society in all its diversity and richness.

The children and young people were brought together in the morning of the first day for an introduction which included an overview of the thematic discussion topics in the context of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Children. Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, along with the Honorable Landon Pearson, provided an outline of the importance of children's rights. Cindy in particular, focused on the situation of First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and young people in Canada. Participants were divided into four groups, each of which had a youth facilitator and a recorder, who remained with the group for all thematic discussions. After each small group discussion, groups reported back in plenary with a summary of their discussion and the key messages they felt were most pertinent. The Honorable Landon Pearson addressed the plenary after each thematic session, and provided a wrap-up statement.

The Francophone youth from Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick participated through discussions that took place in a bilingual small group forum comprised of young people who self-identified as comfortable expressing themselves in both official languages. This group highlighted the fact that they symbolized true bilingualism in Canada, in their ability and willingness to communicate in both languages, orally and in written form.

During the afternoon of the second day, as a way to recognize the value of each person's contribution and in acknowledgment of new friendships made, young people exchanged "cultural gifts". Each young person gave to another young person, something that symbolized who they were and what they felt represented them. The ceremony was an important and meaningful way to wrap up the two day event and to express thanks.

The Landon Pearson Resource Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights has undertaken the responsibility to disseminate this report, which captures the perspectives of young people, to networks of experts, academics, researchers, educators, government and civil society, in the hope that it will stimulate discussion and open dialogue, so that the young participants' recommendations and contributions will be fully recognized, valued and incorporated into the practices and policies of Canadian society.

In keeping with the principles of the CRC and meaningful youth engagement, participants were asked to suggest topics for next year's workshop. In capturing the outcome of the discussion as well as the feedback provided through evaluation forms, children and young people's rights in education has been identified as a primary concern and priority. Shaking the Movers III in 2009 will therefore centre on Articles 28 and 29 in their entirety.

Linguistic rights:

Canada's official and aboriginal languages



Linguistic rights...

- How is language important for your identity?
- What is your understanding of Canada's official languages as well as our indigenous languages?
- Why is it particularly important to preserve indigenous languages in Canada?

The first morning of the workshop consisted of small group discussions related to linguistic rights in Canada. Children and young people addressed a range of issues, including the historical reasons that Canada has two official languages, the question of Canada's Aboriginal languages and the importance of preserving language as part of any individual's culture and identity. Using the exact language of youth participants, as expressed by them, the following section highlights their perspectives and ideas.

Language is...

...one person expressing their thoughts and feelings to another...culture...access to knowledge...communication...

"Language shows who I am, where I'm from."

« Ca fait parti de notre histoire, notre mode de vie, nos ancêtres, notre croyance »

"The way I use my language defines who I am."

« C'est plus que des mots, c'est une façon d'être. »

Language affects our identity ...

"Protection for children in care is having their language and culture;

it's a form of resiliency."

"When I hear identity I think of the media. The media has helped to shape who we are and who we believe ourselves to be."

"I don't feel language influences my identity because I speak English and live in an English speaking country."

"Look through history, French has had a huge impact on Canada."

« L'importance des droits : sécurité de la langue, préserver la langue. »

"Language can also be a factor that separates, because of different views – sadly, even if the language creates a feeling of belonging, it's true that it can also create friction."

Official languages ...

"Often people will state that English is their first language because they do not want to feel excluded."

"Many aboriginal people feel they aren't Canadian because their language isn't recognized as official."

"Natives feel separate, some youth feel confused about identity, their heritage first, Canadian second."

Aboriginal languages...

"It's hard to speak your language when you don't live with your parents."

"In school, if I get suspended for speaking my language, I won't care."

"Suicide stems from loss of identity, if you don't know your language, you don't know your culture"

"You have no sense of belonging to your culture if you don't know your language"

Many young people offered solutions and made suggestions to address the issues they discussed related to Aboriginal language rights in Canada:

- Teach the language that is dominant in the community
- Offer different languages after school for those who are interested in learning them.
- Official languages should be based on the country's history, and opportunity to learn languages should be based on demographics/population

- It should be mandatory to learn native languages and about native culture. Likewise, you should teach not only the official languages, but also the culture behind them as well.
- Before French, it should be native languages that we learn in school
- There should be classes that teach our language
- Should have conferences where youth can demonstrate their language
- Need more cooperation in families to encourage speaking native languages

“Language can act to marginalize people.”

“Language has overt and covert ways of displacing people.”

“You can’t accommodate everybody, Canada can only do so much. We can’t even adapt to the people who own this land, so how are we going to adapt to all the cultures coming in?”

“We need to remember that this is the native’s land.”

“Why are Canada’s official language French and English? What happened to the Indigenous languages? Is it based on a certain perception of Canadian history?”

“Within Ontario education system there is a lack of Indigenous teachings (history), rather it is a much more Eurocentric focus.

This gives everyone of false sense of Canadian history.”

“In BC it is common to hear Indigenous languages (Cree) spoken everywhere. It may depend on where you live in Canada.”

“Elders usually speak their native language, some don’t even know English”

“Some languages have sounds that people can’t get if they are not taught young.”

De qui dépend la survie d’une langue?

- les organismes qui se battent pour les droits
- les artistes visuels, télévisuels, écrit, musicales...
- les autochtones
- les francophones
- le milieu minoritaire

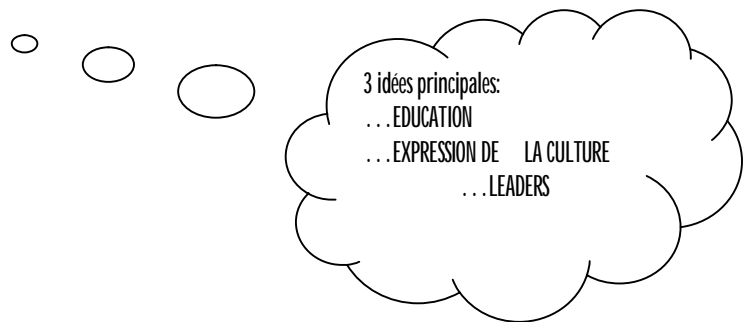
Solutions...

“The problem is the number of their people- they have less power to make a change. The fact that they are not always concentrated in the same region is also problematic.”

- Leur éducation doit inclure leur langue maternel et leurs traditions
- Le curriculum devrait être spécifique à la clientèle
- We need a change in the way the government administers money and the services for Aboriginal peoples
- We need a government for and by Aboriginals
- Il faut travailler ensemble, il y a plusieurs cultures, il faut collaborer.
- Préservation culturel
- Fix the damages done by residential schools
- School is a great way to start, when ‘learning a culture’ and for those who have lost their culture
- Il faut s’assurer que les différentes communautés aient accès à leur culture (radio, télé, etc.)
- Touts les efforts ne doivent pas être individuels, le public est aussi important- utiliser la chaîne de radio et télé de l’état, par exemple
- Tourism helps to preserve a culture-Art can have a place in that as well – funding should be distributed to organizations that exist to promote such things
- Créer un réseau entre organismes qui existent déjà- la bonne communication
- Il faut améliorer le taux d’absentéisme dans les écoles des réserves – chercher des leaders, l’éducation est tellement importante

“Il faut qu’ils et elles gèrent leurs affaires. Les territoires sont déjà un bon début, quoi qu’on reconnaisse que ce n’est pas parfait. »

“Everything starts with Education-proper allocation of funding, to be able to break stereotypes”



Cultural rights:

The right to enjoy your own culture



Cultural rights...

- What does "culture" mean to you?
- How important is your culture to you?
- What challenges have you faced in exercising your cultural rights in Canada? How did you overcome them?
- What shapes your cultural identity? (Family? School? Community? Peers?)

The afternoon of the first day moved to discussion related to the cultural rights of children and young people. Participants expressed what their sense of culture is, and the impact culture has in their lives. Many young people shared their personal experiences and in some cases, the challenges they have faced related to the cultural groups they identify with or belong to. Using the exact language of youth participants, as expressed by them, the following section highlights their perspectives and ideas.

Culture is...

"I create my own culture as I go."

...adaptable... spiritual strength...hunting instinct...beliefs...where you come from...family...who you are...identity...food...clothing...tradition...dancing...your home...your foundation...music...celebration...spiritual leaders...school...friends...how you dress...films...way of thinking...language...environment...sports...ethnic origin...history

*"If you don't know your culture you don't know where you're from."
"Exploring other people's culture is really fun."*

"Culture is something I don't want to die. I want to pass it on to my kids."

...a sense of belonging...security...fulfillment...morals...values...parents...part of what you do... what people pass down to you as wisdom...something you believe in...a lifestyle that goes with a whole bunch of other things... the environment around you...your place...what brings people together through a commonality... the way you understand things... the way you view the world...community...essential...where you come from and how you're brought up...

"There is a loss of identity if culture is taken away."

"Traditionally culture can be very well defined; Canadian culture is a bit harder to define."

"Your personality is shaped by your culture."

« La culture est importante, si on ne se sent pas chez soi nulle part, ce n'est pas une vie. »

"Would this same conversation happen anywhere else but here in Canada, where we are so multicultural?"

Our cultures...

Youth culture...Canadian culture...country music culture...student culture...Arabic culture...Muslim culture...Palestinian culture...Native culture...sports culture...musical culture...university culture...gay/straight culture...Italian culture...French culture...Jewish culture...Zionist culture...Christian culture...hippie culture...Ojibwa culture...

"Everything in my head is my culture."

Challenges we've faced...

"Culture is important and sometimes it is neglected."

- There are so many misinterpretations of different cultures, like body language and eye contact
- There is a lack of education when it comes to other cultures and also a lack of communication and understanding.
- There is a lack of opportunity to learn.
- There is overt racism in the law. For example, "fire is a symbol and a representation of law" and often Indigenous people are not allowed to set fires.
- It is difficult when a child's beliefs are different from those of their parents. It is hard to not only challenge society's ignorance but even more difficult when it's within your own family or your inner circle.

A young person's experience:

"I was wearing a hijab and listening to my iPod. A woman saw the wire sticking out of my headscarf and ran away because she thought that I was going to blow myself up. I felt judged for wearing the hijab."

A young person's experience:

"Once I sent in the same résumé under two different names, a white girl's name and a black girl's name. The résumé that seemed like it came from a white girl got a call from the company, the other one didn't."

A young person's experience:

"We noticed a lot of homophobia so we formed a Gay/Straight Alliance and handed out badges to people to get more awareness and less discrimination happening."

A young person's experience:

"Some people think that listening to "metal music" is evil and people who are part of the metal culture are worshipping Satan or something"

"People just hate because they're jealous."

"Making segregated schools is ridiculous."

"Your parents put stuff in your head... Racism starts with parents, they put it in our heads... Parents want their kids to hang around people of their own race... It's hard to disobey your parents"

"Black history stuff only reinforces the black's sense of injustice, stirs stuff up in their heads, stirs up racism again."

"I feel pulled between two cultures, native and Canadian."

Solutions...

In order to protect cultures in Canada, the government should:

- have more holidays that reflect more of the diversity of cultures that exist within Canada.
- create museums to show all the cultures in Canada
- It should be a right and a priority to know about different cultures (Aboriginal, French Canadian, Anglo Canadian) – it will lead to respect

"Political will is measured by funding."

Religious rights:

The right to profess and practice your own religion



Religious rights...

- What does freedom of religion mean to you?
- Are there any limits to freedom of religion?

Religious rights and freedoms were addressed during the morning of the second day. Children and young people identified many barriers and obstacles, but were also able to offer solutions that they felt might address their concerns related to religious rights in Canada. Using the exact language of youth participants, as expressed by them, the following section highlights their perspectives and ideas.

Freedom of religion means...

- Freedom to practice your own religion.
- Security to be able to do it.
- Having the safety to be able to practice it.
- To be free to practice what you believe in
- Oppression (the history behind the church).
- Celebrating the stages of life
- Allowing you to grow as an individual
- Following what you agree with
- A way of living

"You should be able to express your religion, it's your business."

"Religion and spirituality provide a sense of rites of passage for individuals."

"Religion gets you through things."

"The medicine wheel represents a balance."

Limits to religious rights...

- Parents shouldn't force the hijab on their daughter.
- If a religion has been passed on, it's a legitimate religion. But if there are concerns safety-wise, it's a problem.

- Muslim women who do not want to remove their coverings for government identification, there should be restrictions when taking government photos, these restrictions are in place for everyone.
- Certain religions have beliefs that do not coincide with Canadian law (Example, wearing kirpans)
- It becomes even more complicated when medical treatments are unwanted because of one's religion.
- a religion, any everyone practicing it, can be labeled because of the extremists, like terrorism and Muslims

"Canadians are not accustomed to different religions and therefore form an unfair bias towards the people who practice them."

"Limitations are made by those who do not understand."

"People can also be excluded from certain groups because of what they believe in."

"Religion is based on fear."

Challenges...

- We don't share religious beliefs because we're afraid of judgment and stereotypes.
- Overcoming judgment depends on the person who's judging you. To overcome your own judgments of others, find out who they are, you have to get to know the person.
- In the Bible it says God accepts all people. This is not entirely true, I think he only accepts you as long as you're Christian
- C'est difficile d'accommoder chacun (e)
- We still have to give equal rights to all the different religions
- Some religions are asking more than others

"Religion wasn't such a huge issue before 9/11."

Solutions...

"Religion is difficult."

- The more religions we have in society, the better off we are
- It's good that there are different religions, because otherwise it would be boring, we'd all be the same. Can you imagine all of Canada fitting into one church?
- We should have special days for different religions at schools as optional activities that people can participate in if they want.
- We deal with the incidents when they come instead of having clear guidelines to prevent incidents – these guidelines have to be non-discriminating
- We should be more informed on different religions
- No one should be pinpointed, laws should be the same for everyone
- Il ne faut pas oublier la pensée autochtone – elle n'est pas assez reconnu
- you should have the right to choose

- On peut pratiquer notre religion et avoir un milieu pour le faire mais en public il faut respecter tous.

« Nous devons regarder ce qui nous rassemble et pas ce qui nous divise. »

“We should have the right not to be religious.”

“You need to meet people halfway, you can’t get everything you want.”

Canada et les droits religieux...

- On peut tout même dire que le Canada est un bon pays au sens des droits religieux
- Charte des droits et libertés est au-dessus des droits de religion
- C’est difficile à naviguer car il y a tellement de différence et c’est difficile d’accommoder chacun (e)
- Les Canadiens ne sont pas tellement religieux (eg. Québec), donc il y a une incompréhension, on voit la religion comme étant négative
- Canada is flexible, we need immigrants and being flexible attracts them

Canadian Values:

Finding common ground and respect for the rights of all



Canadian Values...

- Do you feel a strong sense of Canadian identity? Why or why not?
- The Convention states that education should prepare the child “for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national, and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.” Does Canadian society reflect these values?
- Describe Canada as you see it. (My Canada is...)

In the afternoon of the second day, children and young people discussed Canadian values and what it means to be a member of Canadian society. Many positive points were made and a general sense of belonging and pride was expressed. Using the exact language of youth participants, as expressed by them, the following section highlights their perspectives and ideas.

Canadian identity...

- A sense of unity in a diverse nation
- Strong tie to hockey
- Multiculturalism
- The term “eh”
- Pride
- Freedom of speech
- Media images
- relaxed mannerism
- Welcoming persons
- Laid back people, although our laws aren’t (there are many rules and they are strictly upheld).

“I don’t consider myself Canadian; I think it’s important to stick to where you’re originally from.”

“I’m 100% Canadian; I’ve never been not accepted by Canadian society.”

“If I was native I would acknowledge Canada more. If you’re not native and you consider yourself Canadian, you’re boring.”

Je m’identifie avec...

- Je m'identifie comme acadien, ensuite Canadien
- Je m'identifie comme canadien-français
- Je m'identifie comme Montréalaise, québécoise et ensuite comme Canadienne

"Canada is defined by the diversity of people and cultures found within it."

Improvements to be made...

- More contribution to world events.
- Incorporate more cultures into everyday life and celebrations
- Improve education (which is currently curriculum-focused with values as secondary)
- More opportunities for interaction between students and teachers
- Address issues of crime and the use of drugs and alcohol

"Canadians try to keep the Americans out, the French in and hide the Aborigines."

Canada and the world...

"Canada is the only country in the world that can take their flag into a different country and be respected."

- We have a positive Canadian image at the international level
- We are recognized as different from Americans
- There is a big difference between US and Canada-we are much more laid back

"When I travel to other countries, I see how lucky we are here."

My Canada...

"I feel free here."

Multiculturalism...Diversity...

sports...freedom...peace...opportunity...tolerance...acceptance...warmth...security
 ...Hockey night in Canada...free health care...free education...bilingualism...four
 seasons...bon dialogue...peacekeeping...confiance...respect...humor...Heritage
 moments...beavers...diversity...simplicity...maple syrup

"Each province provides a little something to the country."

"Even if you are mixed, you are still Canadian."

"I love Canada."