

Julien Ayoub

Jean-Guy Bigeau

Nadia Caidi

Sharon Anne Cook

Leesa Dean

Colleen Kelly

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Harvey Skinner

CANADIAN ISSUES

THÈMES CANADIENS

Fall / Automne 2004

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Engaging
Canada's Youth

L'engagement social
de la jeunesse canadienne



The Canadian American Research Symposium (CARS)

September 9-10, 2004
Ellis Island Immigration Museum, NY.

Constructing National Histories In Canada and the United States

In September 2003, the Association for Canadian Studies held a joint Canadian-American Research Seminar (CARS), which focused on diversity in Canada and the United-States. The purpose of this ACS initiative was to foster policy-relevant dialogue on issues of mutual concern and interest to Canadians and Americans. The objectives of the seminar included: (1) to encourage Canadian and American specialists on various policy themes to share current research and ideas, (2) to foster new and innovative forms of exchange and collaboration and (3) to create a policy forum dedicated to introducing a comparative perspective into the Canadian policy debate.

Building on the success of the 2003 event, a third symposium, entitled *Constructing National Histories in Canada and the US*, will again be held in New York City on September 9-10, 2004 at the *Ellis Island Immigration Museum*.

The 2004 edition of CARS will look at:

- Nation-building processes
- Knowledge of history
- Recognition and Rights
- History and Public Policy

Some of the other distinguished participants include:

- George Elliott Clarke, University of Toronto
- Margaret Conrad, University of New-Brunswick
- Craig Calhoun, New York University
- Brent D. Glass, Smithsonian Institute
- Lysiane Gagnon, journalist, La Presse
- John Thompson, Duke University
- Nancy Foner, City University of New York
- Roger Waldinger, UCLA
- Richard Jensen, University of Chicago
- Victor Rabinovitch, Canadian Museum of Civilization

For additional information or for any questions please contact the ACS executive director at: jack.jedwab@acs-aec.ca or at (514) 925-3094. You can also contact Natalie Ouimet, the conference coordinator at natalie.ouimet@acs-aec.ca or at (514) 925-3094.

Program and registration updates are made available through www.acs-aec.ca

Le Symposium Canado-Américain de recherche (SCAR)

Les 9 et 10 septembre 2004
Ellis Island Immigration Museum, NY.

Construire l'histoire nationale au Canada et aux États-Unis

En septembre 2003, l'Association d'études canadiennes tenait le premier symposium canado-américain de recherche qui se pencha sur la diversité au Canada et aux États-Unis.

Les objectifs de cette initiative de l'AEC incluent le désir de promouvoir un dialogue accru sur les thèmes de politiques publiques d'intérêt commun aux Canadiens et aux Américains. En général, les objectifs du symposium incluent (1) la promotion d'échange de résultats de recherche entre les spécialistes canadiens et américains dans les divers domaines touchant la politique publique. (2) Nous visons également l'innovation en termes de communication et de collaboration ainsi que (3) l'implantation d'une méthode comparative dans le débat politique canadien.

À la suite du grand succès de l'évènement tenu en 2003, l'AEC organisera de nouveau un SCAR, intitulé *Construire l'histoire nationale au Canada et aux États-Unis*, au *Ellis Island Immigration Museum* à New York, les 9 et 10 septembre prochains.

L'édition SCAR 2004 examinera :

- La formation d'une nation
- La connaissance historique
- Reconnaissance et droits
- L'histoire et les politiques publiques

Parmi les invités de marque, notons :

- George Elliott Clarke, University of Toronto
- Margaret Conrad, University of New-Brunswick
- Craig Calhoun, New York University
- Brent D. Glass, Smithsonian Institute
- Lysiane Gagnon, journaliste, La Presse
- John Thompson, Duke University
- Nancy Foner, City University of New York
- Roger Waldinger, UCLA
- Richard Jensen, University of Chicago
- Victor Rabinovitch, Musée canadien des civilisations

Pour plus d'informations ou pour toutes questions, contactez Jack Jedwab, directeur général de l'AEC au (514) 925-3094 ou à jack.jedwab@acs-aec.ca ou Natalie Ouimet, coordinatrice du symposium au (514) 925-3094 ou à natalie.ouimet@acs-aec.ca.

Mise à jour du programme du symposium et formulaire d'inscription disponibles au www.acs-aec.ca.

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CITC est une publication trimestrielle de l'Association d'études canadiennes (AEC). Il est distribué gratuitement aux membres de l'Association. CITC est une publication bilingue. Tous les textes émanant de l'Association sont publiés en français et en anglais. Tous les autres textes sont publiés dans la langue d'origine. Les collaborateurs et collaboratrices de CITC sont entièrement responsables des idées et opinions exprimées dans leurs articles. L'Association d'études canadiennes est un organisme pan-canadien à but non lucratif dont l'objectif est de promouvoir l'enseignement, la recherche et les publications sur le Canada. L'AEC est une société savante, membre de la Fédération canadienne des sciences humaines et sociales. Elle est également membre fondateur du Conseil international d'études canadiennes.

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LETTERS/LETTRES

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We want to hear from you.

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INTERVIEW WITH SEAN DAY:

Summer Camp Director



For Sean Day, camp was his first real experience of the outdoors. At age 13, Sean joined his sister at Kamp Kanawana and never looked back. He became a leader-in-training (LIT) and later a junior counselor, counselor, and a naturalist. In addition to working at various camps, Sean gained experience running an environmental education company and was at one time an employee of the Montreal Biodome. He admits that camping has had a huge impact on his life.

YMCA Kamp Kanawana is the second oldest residential camp in Canada and the oldest camp in Quebec. It was founded on the principles of sharing, togetherness, and appreciation for the natural environment. Today it continues to help young people to know themselves and to know each other, while giving them the confidence to make choices in life and to succeed in their endeavours. The camp motto is Non Nobis Solum (Not for ourselves alone).

1) Generally speaking, how is the YMCA a model for youth engagement?

This is something we're looking at closely now. The Forty Assets, which is a whole approach to working with youth, is something that we want to bring in as a philosophy. It looks at the different aspects of youth and the kind of tools we can give them to become leaders in the community. The Montreal Y in particular has a bit of work to do, but there are people actively engaged in doing that. Our longest standing tradition with kids is actually Kanawana, which started 111 years ago. The philosophy we have at camp is giving young people a chance to discover the talents that they have, and the chance to have real responsibility. I have 17 year olds coming to me, ready to give me their right arm so they can work for camp, because we really create a wonderful sense of community and a sense of wanting to give back for all the things that they have received.

2) In your opinion, why do young people attend summer camp?

I think initially, when they come for the first time, it's often the parents who are twisting their arms! But when they arrive at camp they realize that they can exist in a simpler place where people can just be people. Given the contemporary culture for youth right now, there are so many messages: you've got to dress this way, you've got to look this way. Camp allows them to leave all of those things behind; they get to be who they are, they can drop all the trappings of contemporary society. They realize that the world is bigger than getting a Gucci or a Tommy Hilfiger, and that's a great part of the strength of Kanawana. Young people end up feeling a part of something that's important.

3) How does Kamp Kanawana promote youth involvement and leadership?

First, we have a program called the Rangers for 15 year old campers which is a specific leadership program. It's an outdoor experience where they get to discover their limits and do things they never thought they could do, helping them build a sense of self-confidence. Then we also have a two month leadership training program which starts off with a two week canoe trip where each person has to lead the others for a day. They are also trained in group work, children's needs, and how to be a good leader, with lots of debriefing so the learning process is actually a conscious one. We do the same sorts of things in our staff training. So the youth that work for us are really



given a chance to shine. I mean, what could be a greater responsibility than caring for children?

4) How are the YMCA's core values lived out day-to-day at camp?

The ones you always hear about are Body, Mind and Spirit. The first is fairly straight forward – they're out there doing physical things, learning physical skills. I think the camp setting really gives people an opportunity to know themselves physically in a way that they might not get a



chance to otherwise. In terms of the mind, there are the challenges we give them organizationally, and to come up with creative programs; but I think it's the spirit that really makes camp such a special place. There is something very magical about camp. And because our approach is really to put responsibility in our staff – and the younger staff too, not just the older “senior” staff – there's an aspect of caring and of really wanting to give back. Of course the YMCA started off as a Christian organization, but we're a non-denominational camp.

5) What do young people learn from working with one another as a team?

By the time you're 14 years old they say you've seen 300,000 advertisements and commercials. Can you imagine if that time was spent just being with people, helping one another, and doing things together. I think what we do at camp is take them away from all those expectations and allow them to just focus on one another and basic human relationships. This creates a real sense of family, and they take those camp values back with them to city life. I've had campers come to me years later and say, “My experience at Kanawana gave me the confidence to go out and start such and such a project – like a recycling program at my school, for example – and now I volunteer and I'm much more active.” We plant a lot of seeds at Kanawana and you just never know when or how they're going to germinate.

6) How important do you think it is for youth to be involved in some sort of organized activity?

Every child is different and every child has different needs, but overall I think it's extremely important. Today we live in these isolated pods with little sense of community.

What organization does is give you a sense of the whole and of something which is bigger than yourself, which in our culture and our society is something that we desperately need. I wish every child could have a Kanawana, or a Kanawana-like, experience.

7) Does Kamp Kanawana provide the opportunity to engage with international partners?

Ever since I've been involved with Kanawana, we've made an effort to bring in staff from other countries because we feel that it's an incredibly enriching experience for everyone. As of this year we've started a partnership with the YMCA of Mexico City to bring up some Mexican staff to work with us this summer. Our hope is to also have some of our staff go down there and get a sense of that environment, which is another great opportunity for our young people to open up and see another world.

8) How optimistic are you for the future of today's generation of teenagers and young adults?

Are there needs at the moment for youth? Absolutely. That said, there are so many unsung heroes out there – organizations that are doing wonderful things for young people by helping them develop a sense of values. There are times when I read the papers during the year and get a negative feeling, and then I get up to camp and I'll see folks who just blossom and bloom. There are great people doing great things, and they're young. It gives me a great sense of hope – in fact, if I didn't have hope, I probably would not be doing what I'm doing. Organizations like camp help young people realize that they can make a difference.

Interviewed by Allison Anderson
Editor, Association for Canadian Studies





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REMEMBERING CANADA: How we recall and represent the past

Annual Conference of the
Association for Canadian Studies

Montreal, 11-13 November 2004

In November, the annual conference of the Association for Canadian Studies will explore diverse aspects of Canada's collective memory. Coinciding with the commemorations of Remembrance Week, this gathering of academics, researchers, policy-makers and other interested individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds and disciplines will focus on the acquisition, transmission and retention of knowledge of Canada's history and heritage.

For more information,
please visit our website at
www.acs-aec.ca.

À LA MÉMOIRE DU CANADA : souvenirs et représentations du passé

Conférence annuelle de
l'Association d'études canadiennes

Montréal, 11 – 13 novembre 2004

À l'occasion de sa conférence annuelle de 2004, l'Association d'études canadiennes se propose d'examiner les différents aspects de la mémoire collective canadienne. Cet événement coïncidera avec *La semaine du souvenir* et réunira professeurs, chercheurs, décideurs politiques et autres individus provenant de divers domaines et disciplines. Les conférenciers se pencheront sur les sujets de l'acquisition, la transmission et la conservation de l'histoire et du patrimoine canadien.

Pour plus d'informations,
veuillez consulter notre site Web au
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KATIMAVIK:

Designing the Future for Youth

ABSTRACT

Executive Director Jean-Guy Bigeau explains the Katimavik philosophy and reports on the organization's future projects and partnerships. He describes the many significant advantages for Canadian men and women, as well as for the Canadian economy. Katimavik is Canada's leading national youth volunteer-service program.

Since 1977, Katimavik has provided Canadian youth with the opportunity to challenge and further themselves through volunteer work in communities across Canada. The program has continuously evolved to respond to the needs of our young people, guiding them towards new and exciting experiences on their road to self-discovery.

For nine months, participants live in groups of 11 with francophones and anglophones originating from all regions of Canada, supervised by a Project Leader. In total, each group lives and works in three communities across Canada for three months at a time. The program incorporates five strategic learning programs: leadership, second language, cultural discovery, environmental protection and adoption of a healthy lifestyle.

Katimavik offers young Canadian men and women aged 17 to 21 the opportunity to acquire valuable personal and professional skills through "service learning," a socio-educational program based on volunteer work for community organizations, where participants make a significant contribution by sharing their talents and knowledge. In turn, the communities which host Katimavik projects benefit from the participants' contributions by improving the quantity and quality of services offered to the members of their community. Recent work projects include the restoration of an old mine into a historical site, assisting with public relations for a museum, contributing to the start-up of a polar bear conservancy, helping teachers in a classroom, building trails and organizing fundraising activities for a food bank.

In the past year, we have signed two major partnerships that will enhance Katimavik's mission: to foster the development of Canadian youth through volunteer service. The first is a work partnership agreement with Parks Canada for the 2004-2005 program year, which will see participants working in six national parks across Canada. The second is an agreement with Malaspina University-College in Nanaimo, British Columbia, to recognize the program for academic credit. Starting with the 2003-2004 program year, participants who complete Katimavik receive three credits from the school's Recreation Management department. This agreement is a major achievement for Katimavik, in that it represents the first post-secondary institution with which our organization has established an official partnership. We are working on putting in place similar partnerships with other universities across Canada, and we hope to have finalized several by the end of this year. Robert Giroux, former president of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), has recently joined the Katimavik Board of Directors and is lending his support on this initiative.

We are also working on a proposal to establish a National Youth Service Policy. It would solidify the partnership between Katimavik and the federal government, help to strengthen the capacity of the volunteer-based community organizations that we work with and would promote civic responsibility amongst our youth. National youth service embraces service learning, an essential component of the Katimavik program.

Katimavik is a positive and constructive experience for Canadian youth. Participants share their education and talents with community organizations, contributing to services that benefit the community and its members. In return, they further their skills through their volunteer work, interaction with the members of their host community, learning activities and group life. They gain an increased knowledge of themselves, their strengths and capabilities, and discover the many cultures that make up Canadian society.

As well as being a positive experience for youth, the program contributes to the Canadian economy. According to a study conducted by the firm Étude Économique Conseil in 2002, for every dollar invested in the Katimavik program \$1.49 is returned to Canadian society. In the 2003-2004 program year, 517,318 hours of volunteer efforts by Katimavik participants were achieved in 75 host communities across Canada, in collaboration with over 470 community organizations, valued at \$7,100,000. Many of the projects or services offered by the community organizations Katimavik partners with would not have been realized without the volunteer efforts made by Katimavik participants.

JEAN-GUY BIGEAU
Jean-Guy Bigeau is Executive Director
of Katimavik.

KATIMAVIK:

Bâtir l'avenir des jeunes

RÉSUMÉ

Le directeur général Jean-Guy Bigeau explique la philosophie Katimavik et nous présente les nouveautés quant aux futurs projets et partenariats. Il décrit les nombreux avantages pour les jeunes Canadiennes et Canadiens, ainsi que pour l'économie et la société en général. Katimavik est le programme jeunesse national de service volontaire le plus important du Canada.

Depuis 1977, Katimavik a donné aux jeunes Canadiennes et Canadiens la chance de se surpasser grâce au travail bénévole au sein de communautés partout au Canada. Le programme a évolué constamment pour répondre aux besoins de nos jeunes, les guidant vers des expériences nouvelles et excitantes sur la voie de la découverte d'eux-mêmes.

Pendant neuf mois, les participants vivent en groupe de onze personnes avec des francophones et des anglophones en provenance de toutes les régions du Canada, et sont supervisés par un agent de projet. Au total, chaque groupe vit et travaille dans trois communautés au Canada pour une période de trois mois à la fois. Le programme comprend cinq domaines d'apprentissage stratégique : le leadership, la langue officielle seconde, la découverte de nouveaux horizons culturels, la protection de l'environnement et l'adoption d'un mode de vie sain.

Katimavik propose aux jeunes Canadiennes et Canadiens âgés de 17 à 21 ans un programme qui leur permet d'acquérir des compétences personnelles et professionnelles. Il s'agit d'un concept socio-éducatif qui repose sur l'apprentissage par le volontariat dans le cadre de projets communautaires auxquels les participants apportent une contribution considérable en partageant leurs talents et leurs connaissances. En retour, les communautés d'accueil des projets Katimavik bénéficient de la contribution des participants en améliorant la quantité et la qualité des services offerts aux membres de leur communauté. Des projets de travail récents incluent la restauration d'une vieille mine en un site historique, la participation aux activités de relations publiques d'un musée, le soutien à la mise sur pied d'un projet de conservation des ours polaires, l'aide aux professeurs dans des salles de classe, la construction de sentiers et l'organisation d'activités de collecte de fonds pour une banque alimentaire.

Au cours de la dernière année, nous avons signé deux partenariats majeurs qui mettront en valeur la mission de Katimavik, soit de favoriser le développement des jeunes Canadiennes et Canadiens par le service volontaire. Le premier est une entente de partenariat de travail avec Parcs Canada pour le programme de l'année 2003-2004 qui permettra aux participants de travailler dans six parcs nationaux à travers le Canada. Le second est une entente avec le Collège-Université Malaspina à Nanaimo en Colombie-Britannique qui reconnaît la valeur éducationnelle du programme Katimavik en accordant des crédits académiques aux participants. Ainsi, les participants qui compléteront le programme Katimavik recevront trois crédits du département de Gestion des loisirs du Collège-Université Malaspina. Cette entente est un accomplissement majeur pour Katimavik puisqu'elle représente la première institution postsecondaire avec qui notre organisme a établi un partenariat officiel. Nous travaillons à établir des partenariats similaires avec d'autres universités partout au Canada et nous espérons en conclure plusieurs d'ici la fin de 2004. Robert Giroux, ancien président de l'Association des universités et collèges du Canada (AUCC) a récemment joint le conseil d'administration de Katimavik et nous offre son soutien pour cette initiative.

Nous travaillons également sur une proposition d'établir une politique de service jeunesse national. Cette politique solidifierait le partenariat entre Katimavik et le gouvernement fédéral, aiderait à renforcer la capacité des organismes communautaires fondés sur le volontariat avec lesquels nous travaillons et permettrait de promouvoir la responsabilité civique parmi notre jeunesse. Le service jeunesse national englobe le concept d'apprentissage par le volontariat, une composante essentielle du programme Katimavik.

Katimavik est une expérience positive et constructive pour la jeunesse canadienne. Les participants partagent leur éducation et leurs talents avec les organismes communautaires, contribuant ainsi aux services dont la communauté et ses membres bénéficient. En retour, les participants améliorent leurs

JEAN-GUY BIGEAU
Jean-Guy Bigeau est directeur général
de Katimavik.

compétences par le travail bénévole, l'interaction avec les membres de leur communauté d'accueil, les activités d'apprentissage et la vie de groupe. Ils acquièrent une connaissance accrue d'eux-mêmes, de leurs forces et de leurs capacités et découvrent les nombreuses cultures qui forment la société canadienne.

En plus d'être une expérience positive pour les jeunes, le programme contribue à l'économie canadienne. Selon une étude conduite par la firme Étude Économique Conseil en 2002, pour chaque dollar investi dans le programme Katimavik, 1,49 \$ retournent à la société canadienne. Durant l'année 2003-2004 du programme, les participants ont effectué 517 318 heures de travail bénévole dans 75 communautés d'accueil partout au Canada en collaboration avec plus de 470 organismes communautaires. Ces heures de travail sont évaluées à 7 100 000 \$. De nombreux projets ou services offerts par les organismes communautaires avec lesquels Katimavik entretient des partenariats n'auraient pas été réalisés sans les efforts volontaires faits par les participants Katimavik.

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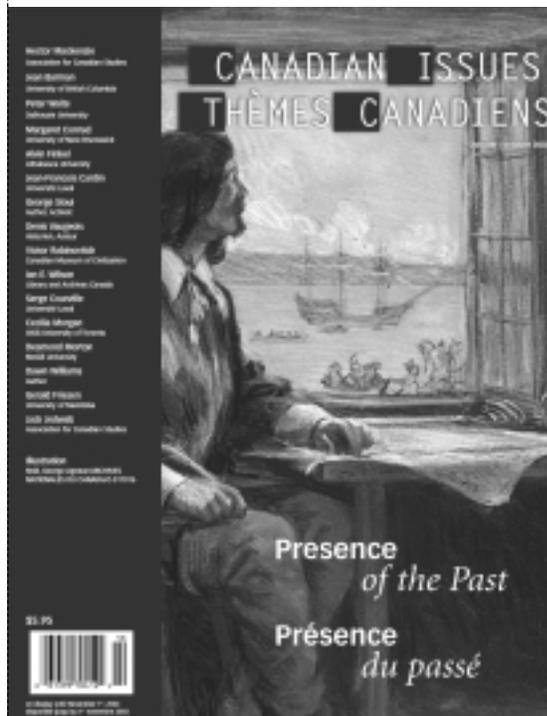
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CANADIAN ISSUES
THÈMES CANADIENS

An examination of Canada for the thinking person
 Une analyse du Canada pour la personne informée



TÉMOIGNAGE

RÉSUMÉ

En 1977, Jacques Hébert a fondé Katimavik. Dans ce témoignage, Julien Ayoub partage avec nous les détails de ce qu'il appelle « l'expérience de sa vie. »

Deux ans après avoir participé à Katimavik, je peux affirmer sans aucun doute que ce programme a complètement transformé ma vie. Quelle expérience extraordinaire! J'avais 21 ans à l'époque et je sentais le besoin de prendre un « break » de mes études universitaires et de faire quelque chose de différent, de me ressourcer et d'en apprendre un peu plus sur mon pays, un pays dont je connaissais à peine. Après avoir reçu ma lettre d'acceptation, et d'avoir convaincu mes parents du bien-fondé de Katimavik, c'est le début d'une incroyable aventure à travers le Canada.

Mon séjour commence à Ponteix, petit village très chaleureux de 500 personnes, en Saskatchewan, où les gens se connaissent tous. Pour quelqu'un comme moi qui vient d'une grande ville comme Montréal, c'est assez spécial de se retrouver dans un village où les gens ont un mode de vie très différent au tien. Je n'oublierai jamais la première journée, où j'ai rencontré les jeunes de mon groupe, en provenance de partout au pays, avec qui j'allais passer les prochains sept mois. Je m'étais dit dans ma tête que j'espère bien pouvoir m'entendre avec eux, sinon, les sept mois seront très longs! Et bien, une chance, tout s'est bien passé. On est devenu rapidement comme une petite famille, et les jeunes étaient tous comme moi, enthousiastes et motivés face au programme.

Durant mon séjour en Saskatchewan, j'ai travaillé dans un foyer pour personnes âgées, où j'organisais des activités sociales de toutes sortes: danses, bingos, sorties en plein-air... Les gens du foyer m'ont littéralement accueilli les bras grands ouverts. Pendant les fins de semaine, avec mon groupe, on organisait plein d'activités et des visites touristiques un peu partout dans la province, avec le budget que le programme nous allouait. J'ai même eu la chance d'aller à Banff pour un week-end et d'admirer ces fameuses Rocheuses dont tout le monde en parle. Oui, c'est quelque chose de spectaculaire, et c'est une toute autre histoire de les voir en personne que dans un livre.

Ensuite, nous avons séjourné à Tweed, en Ontario, où j'ai travaillé dans une école primaire et côtoyé des professeurs et des élèves très sympathiques. Je me promenais de classe en classe afin de donner un coup de main aux professeurs et d'assister les élèves plus en difficulté. Je me suis grandement attaché aux jeunes et ce fut très difficile de quitter Tweed. Avec mon groupe, on en a profité également pour visiter les nombreux parcs et attraits touristiques de l'Ontario.

Par la suite, comme dernière rotation, nous sommes allés à Dalhousie, au Nouveau-Brunswick, village très chaleureux au bord de l'eau. J'ai travaillé dans un centre de soins de longue durée et j'assistais les infirmières dans des tâches très variées et enrichissantes. Ce fut une expérience très valorisante, et je sentais que mon aide était grandement apprécié. Les fins de semaine, on profitait de la saison estivale pour faire du camping, des randonnées pédestres, aller à la plage et visiter des villes comme Moncton et St-Jean. Pour le congé de la fête du Canada, trois personnes de mon groupe et moi sommes allés à Charlottetown, sur l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard. Les gens ont entièrement raison lorsqu'ils disent que c'est une province charmante avec plein de beaux paysages naturels.

Comme vous pouvez le constater, j'ai découvert mon pays grâce à Katimavik. C'est un pays spectaculaire, d'un océan à l'autre, dans lequel vivent une multitude de communautés, toutes aussi fascinantes et diversifiées les unes des autres. Cela m'a ouvert l'esprit et m'a permis de comprendre la réalité sociale et culturelle dans laquelle vivent les Canadiens d'une province à l'autre. Je suis fier d'être citoyen canadien et j'en suis très reconnaissant envers mes parents, ayant immigré ici il y a déjà plus de 30 ans. Aussi, le fait de vivre en groupe m'a permis d'accepter les différences, d'être plus tolérant envers les autres et de réaliser que ce n'est pas tout le monde qui pense comme moi ou qui partage les mêmes valeurs, les mêmes croyances. Nous étions onze

JULIEN AYOUB
Julien Ayoub a participé à Katimavik
il y a deux ans.

personne dans le groupe, avec onze personnalités différentes, et nous avons réussi à créer un environnement de fraternité, de respect et d'entraide. J'ai appris beaucoup sur moi-même et sur la vie en générale grâce à Katimavik. Je profite maintenant des choses simples de la vie, choses qu'on a tendance à oublier, à sous-estimer, aux dépens du bien-être matériel, de la technologie, du superficiel. Faire du bénévolat, donner de son temps à quelqu'un (un enfant, un malade, une personne âgée) sans nécessairement recevoir quelque chose en retour, c'est merveilleux. Le sentiment d'avoir accompli quelque chose de positif, d'avoir apporté un sourire, de la joie dans la vie de quelqu'un qui en a besoin vaut tout l'or du monde. Monsieur Hébert, vous avez transformé ma vie, et celle de milliers d'autres jeunes ayant participé à Katimavik. Un gros merci du plus profond du cœur.

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TESTIMONIAL

ABSTRACT

A Katimavik participant in 1999, Leesa Dean shares her extraordinary experience in this insightful and touching testimonial. Katimavik means “meeting place” in Inuktitut, the language of the Inuit people.

The Katimavik program is much easier to explain to others *before* actually living the experience. In the months preceding Katimavik I was able to express what I would be doing and where I would be going in as little as one sentence: “I’m going off to travel and learn French and to meet other young people” being a popular description. I could tell others about my anticipated experiences while passing on the street or between bus stops, but once I actually became a participant, conversations about Katimavik become much longer and required more commitment. Even now, five years after my participation in the program, those who are interested in hearing about my time with Katimavik must be willing to endure several cups of coffee, hours of listening to my stories, and the viewing of approximately seven hundred photographs. Katimavik is no longer a static summary of information pamphlets, but rather a series of life-changing experiences, epiphanies, and realizations that I enjoy sharing with anyone who has the time and desire to listen.

In an effort to revert to the short summary for a moment, I have to say that Katimavik was everything I’d hoped it would be. I learned French, found a career path, discovered the joys of cooking, learned practical skills like how to build bicycles and beds and play guitar, travelled from east to west across Canada... and the list goes on. Katimavik left me thoroughly satisfied, standing on two feet and ready to take on whatever the future had in store for me. Although I fully appreciate the tangible skills I learned in the program, I also underwent an important social transformation during my participation that became crucial to my personal development and helped me adopt a more positive attitude towards Canada as a whole. I also gained a better understanding of different lifestyles and values existing within the Canadian population. This type of development may not have been possible for me had I not left the comfortable cocoon of my familiar hometown and the somewhat homogenous lifestyle I had adopted there.

In order to better demonstrate this personal transformation, allow me to paint a picture of my pre-Katimavik existence. Although I had done some travelling prior to the program, certain aspects of Canadian culture remained elusive to me. I grew up in a small town in the interior of BC with a French population easily counted on two hands, and I still remember my first encounter with Francophone culture. When I was in grade 7 a boy named Benoît from Quebec was placed in our class, which was equivalent to throwing the poor boy into a pool of sharks. As a collective population, we couldn’t pronounce his name and didn’t understand his culture, so instead of learning about it, our defence mechanism against change was to make fun of him mercilessly. We were taught by some how to swear in French (at Benoît), and the word “frog” was used several times a day. I do not mention this because I think it funny, but rather to raise awareness of attitudes of intolerance and closed-mindedness that sometimes lurk in the shadows of our multi-cultural country.

To add to my misunderstanding of the French culture, students were forced to take French in school and I quickly discovered that the French language and I were thoroughly incompatible. I failed tests, wore the dunce cap, and eventually lost interest in learning the language altogether... until I found a pamphlet about Katimavik in my high school counselling office during my grade 12 year. At that point I re-examined my discontent with the French language and decided perhaps I would be able to learn effectively if I could learn it in a more immersive way than in the classroom of a unilingual town, some 4,000 km from the nearest major French population. Once I learned of my acceptance to Katimavik, I made it my personal goal to improve enough in French to be able to have a fluent and witty conversation with my grade 10 French teacher upon my return from the program (which I managed to do when I ran into him on the street the following summer).

Opportunities to learn French were plentiful in the program. First of all, it was necessary to learn French in order to communicate with my group members. Each Katimavik group has three

LEESA DEAN
Leesa Dean works in the Participants Office
at Katimavik, Montreal.

participants from Quebec, and although many Francophone participants have some knowledge of English before the program, others do not speak English at all. One of my group members spoke about as much English as I spoke French (very, very little) and to my surprise, we were very comfortable around each other and found alternative ways of communicating if we couldn't find the necessary words in our second language. And once I found the words, I allowed myself to feel quite learned and cosmopolitan, being able to speak a new language. I definitely felt cool, and as my French vocabulary grew, so did my self-confidence.

The real French experience began for me on December 10, 1999 when our group arrived in Val d'Irene, Quebec. I was equipped with only a French dictionary and a few funny phrases the French participants in my group had helped me to learn during our first 9 weeks of the program in Hamilton. I was proud to be able to ask where the bathroom was, tell the boys they were handsome, tell people I was feeling either well or sick, and if I concentrated hard I could order a poutine perfectly. I imagined this would be enough to get me started, and I suppose you have to start somewhere. What I didn't realize was that I was about to become a resident of a village of less than 100 people, 100% Francophone, the village commerce consisting of a ski lodge, a hotel and three main streets.

During our first week, I found out I would be working with a woman named Michele who did not speak any English. No one else would be working at with us; it would just be me and Michele, together all day. I was terrified. I smiled at her weakly, shook her hand, and tried to mentally prepare myself for the ordeal... or adventure? Although I was sure she would be frustrated at my lack of French and maybe even dislike me the same way I disliked Benoît so long ago in my grade 7 class, all my panicking was unfounded. What started with Michele and I and a dictionary gradually developed into a wonderful friendship. We spent the first few weeks pointing to objects and pronouncing their names slowly while I carried around a notebook full of scribbled words and elementary sketches. Without even recognizing the learning process that took place, I one day found myself sitting across from Michele without my crucial notebook, chatting away. Everything she said made sense, and more importantly, she understood me, too.

Later on, before our group moved to our third Katimavik project in Courtenay, BC, Michele gave me a small gift and said to me in near perfect English, "Leesa, I am going to miss working with you. I'm very thankful for your help and I am so proud of you for learning so much French!" I almost choked on my juice when she said it, realizing that my so-called unilingual friend was not so unilingual after all, but in the end it was for my own good, so I forgave her quickly and marvelled at the patience she'd had with me. So there you have it: if a small town

Anglophone girl from BC can learn French, I am convinced anyone can do it. I conquered French (at least in my mind I did) and managed to unravel certain stereotypes I'd had of French culture before participating in the program.

Another stereotype I was confronted with in Katimavik was the "Newfie myth." For many people where I come from, Newfoundland is none other than a looming mass of land, almost as distant as Japan, full of people with funny accents that fish and eat seafood all day. The Newfie jokes don't help this image either, and with BC as far as it is from Newfoundland, we had no proof to tell us otherwise. Luckily for me, one of the participants in my group was from Newfoundland and was able to undo this and a few other stereotypes in one fell swoop. First of all, Dale taught me that it is ridiculous to assume that the entire population of a province eats the same and has the same lifestyle. It seems simple now, but sometimes you need to meet someone like Dale to understand. Dale was also part native and fully gay, which were two things I had been completely unexposed to growing up. There was an underlying homophobic sentiment in my hometown, and there was also a distinct segregation between the white kids in town and the native kids who mostly stayed on the reserve 20 km away. In a Katimavik household, you quickly learn that different lifestyles and cultures are beautiful, and you learn to share and appreciate them.

I sometimes marvel at the efficiency we managed to establish as ten people under one roof! Although it may seem strange, I often miss sharing a bedroom, clothes, responsibility, and a life with so many others. The livingroom at my apartment feels oddly empty if it is not full of people, music, projects, and random occurrences. During the program, I learned how to take care of myself and others. I learned that no task is too big when you have a support network like your fellow Katimavikers who will applaud you when you excel and stand by you when you do not. I learned how it feels to laugh uncontrollably until your sides hurt and you can barely breathe, which although it sounds painful, is an extremely fulfilling experience. Most importantly, the concept of trust and faith replaced my tendency to assume the worst and watch the world around me with suspicion.

My first encounter with trust and faith occurred during the third week of the program when Dale took me out for a walk behind the school, sat me down on the steps and told me he was gay. It was the first time in his entire life that he had uttered the words out loud, and when I saw the years of silence and confusion come tumbling out of his mouth in those two words, and I couldn't believe he trusted me enough to tell me. I remember thinking about all the times in high school that I, along with practically everyone else, had harassed certain people we suspected to be gay, and it was a swift and disturbing reality check for

During the program, I learned how to take care of myself and others. I learned that no task is too big when you have a support network like your fellow Katimavikers who will applaud you when you excel and stand by you when you do not.

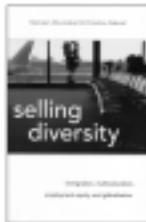
me. Dale peeked over at me and asked if we were still going to be friends and I laughed, kept holding his hand, and wondered how he could even ask the question? I then promptly dragged him off the steps and took him out for a celebration milkshake. At that moment, I finally understood the importance of being open-minded, for if I hadn't been, I might have lost one of the best friends I'd ever had.

That was one of the most valuable parts of Katimavik for me: watching each individual in our group have the freedom to express him or herself in any way possible without feeling ashamed, self-conscious or alienated. Before Katimavik I was terrified of making mistakes and felt the best way to avoid it was to avoid taking responsibility. During the program, I was able to realize that I didn't want to spend the rest of my life at the end of someone else's line, following listlessly along. With the support of understanding project leaders, patient work sponsors, and encouraging participants, I began taking control of my life and learned that leadership is an important skill to develop in the pursuit of the future you want, as opposed to the future you only wish you could have. I can only speculate about what I might be doing right now if I had never participated in the program, but one thing is for sure: I am proud of who I am and the things I have accomplished so far. Interestingly enough, most of my biggest accomplishments can somehow be traced to what I learned in Katimavik.

Katimavik is different for everyone. Each participant's experience is very much dependent on their group members,

work placements, project locations, and other factors. Perhaps I was lucky to fall into a perfectly compatible group, travel to three wonderful locations I had never been to, and perhaps it was just luck that all three of my project leaders were incredibly insightful, wise, and strong individuals. I have met many Katimavik employees and past and current participants of the program in the last five years, and it never ceases to amaze me how some things never change. I can exchange stories about group life and disastrous cooking with someone who participated in the program some 20 years before me, and they will understand exactly what I am talking about and probably have a similar story. And no matter how much time has passed since my experience of being a participant, a conversation with others about Katimavik is always full of excitement and laughter, and it will always end with a knowing look between the conversing parties, an unspoken manifest of reminiscence. There is something very special about Katimavik that has become permanent for me. Yes, it is a wonderful memory, but it is also a reminder that we have choices to make in life, and these choices shape our lives and determine who we are. Katimavik was one of the best choices I ever made.

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YOUTH, ICTS AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

ABSTRACT

Youth are often portrayed as least resistant towards the adoption of information and communication technologies (ICTs). This article presents the findings of a survey on patterns of students' use of ICTs, and their perceptions of the role of ICTs in enhancing participation in civic activities, especially as it relates to their involvement in (and input on) higher education policies and university life.

The emergence of a vast body of research on 'digital democracy' (and variants such as e-government, teledemocracy, cyberdemocracy, etc.) points to an interest about the effects of information and communication technologies (ICTs) on civic participation (Hacker & van Dijk, 2000). While the potential of the Internet for transforming politics, the nature of government, and overall civic participation has yet to be demonstrated, many government functions have already begun to move to the web. Canadian government information, for instance, is increasingly being offered in electronic form as part of the large E-government initiative, which aims at making Canada the world leader in terms of connecting citizens to their government electronically via computer or wireless connections. Electronic voting (e-voting) has been adopted in the US and elsewhere, and experiments with Internet voting (i-voting) have been undertaken, with notable examples in the 2000 Arizona Democratic Primary and several i-voting pilots in local British elections in 2002. In Canada, Barrie (Ontario) became the first Canadian municipality to move to an electronic voting system, in 1997. Increasingly, new venues for civic and political participation are appearing, in which participation necessitates access to ICTs and the ability (or willingness) to use them (Muir & Oppenheim, 2002).

Background

Since a majority of youth fall within the specific age group and category of users often portrayed as technological 'haves' (i.e. least resistant towards the adoption of ICTs) but also those at risk for low political participation levels, this population was targeted for this exploratory survey. The aim of the study was to assess the general computing literacy of this user group and its perceptions about the usefulness of digital technologies, such as Internet voting, as a means to improve civic participation (both at the campus level and in society at large). The key research questions investigated include: 1) how familiar were students with technology, and what were their use patterns; 2) whether personal communication technologies, such as the Internet, enhance or diminish social community and participation in university life; 3) the barriers to access (infrastructure, skills, etc.); 4) the links that exist between online and offline activities (e.g., which of these activities are deemed most fruitful by students, and for what purposes? and does one encourage more participation than the other?).

The study was conducted in February and March 2002 at a major Canadian university (Hall & Caidi, 2003). Because it was exploratory in nature, the sample was non-representative of the overall population of the university. It consisted of 100 students who volunteered to fill out a nine-page questionnaire containing both multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions. The questionnaire examined 1) the students' experience with computers (skills and training; access to and familiarity with various hardwares and softwares; current use of computers and the Internet); and 2) their computer usage for civic life (i.e. their motivations for using computers and accessing the Internet, their current experience with political activities via technological means, their perceptions of Internet voting, their involvement in campus life, etc.).

Findings

The findings show that the sample population approximated the characteristics of the larger student body at this university in terms of gender, age and possibly ethnic background. Forty percent of the respondents reported having a native language other than English. Under 'ethnic background', the largest subgroup had roots in the Indian Subcontinent (India and Pakistan).

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In terms of computer literacy, 100% of respondents in the sample surveyed used computers, with 98% using them daily. Overall, respondents had high rates of access to computers: 91% of respondents had access to a computer at home, using it for an average time of 3 hours per day (with one student reported using the home computer for 10 hours per day). Among those who owned a computer, a majority owned PC compatible desktops running MS Windows. Access at the university was also significant: an overwhelming 99% reported having access to computers at the university, using them for an average of 2 hours per day. Interestingly, 32% of students asked to comment on the statement: 'everyone at the university had the same opportunity to use technology' disagreed or somewhat disagreed with it. This perception of an inequity of access is interesting in that it does not seem to corroborate the findings.

The average time spent using computers was just under 6 hours per day. However, a group of 'super-users' emerged: 19 of the respondents reported using computers for a total of 10 or more hours per day, up to a maximum of 15 hours per day. As expected, the use of e-mail was very high, with 95% of respondents using it daily and the remaining 5% using it a couple of times per week. Taken altogether, these numbers appear to indicate a higher than average amount of time spent using computers by this sample as compared with the overall Canadian population; figures for 2000 show that the majority of Canadians who had Internet access spent an average of 1-7 hours per week on the net at home (61%), and that, of those who spent time on the Internet at work in the previous week, 61% spent an average time of 1-7 hours per week on the net at work (Dryburgh, 2002). Perhaps not surprisingly, given their unusually high use figures, 16% of students surveyed reported seeking medical attention due to physical pain or discomfort from using a computer. Physical problems cited included, shoulder, back, wrist and eyestrain, tearing, headaches, repetitive strain injuries, eye sensitivity, and blurred eyesight.

The three most common venues for acquiring computer skills and training were: high school (66%), university (58%) and friends (47%). There seems to be a rise in the number of classes taken by respondents in the age group '26-30 year-olds' as compared to the 'under 25' group, with the numbers dropping in the 'over 31' age group. The latter group was also more than twice as likely as the 'younger' groups to be self-taught. Moreover, we found that male respondents (42%) were more than twice as likely as female respondents (16%) to have taught themselves. Respondents of Asian heritage had the highest

average number of classes taken, at just over 8 courses, followed by Caucasian respondents (just under 6 courses).

The section of the survey that dealt with patterns of use of ICTs by students showed that four of the most common purposes for using the Internet by our sample population included: information gathering and research (98%), library resources (90%), news (87%) and travel information (81%). When asked about their primary use of the Internet, 53% of students listed the establishment of friendships and social contacts, and 50% listed planning group activities. The computer was listed as the primary mode of communication with colleagues and friends by 40% of the sample. Moreover, 36% reported using chat groups and online bulletin boards. When asked about the ways in which they were getting information on campus life, 66% gave e-mail lists as their primary source, and 63% listed the Internet. The Internet was also used by 37% of the students to get involved in professional organizations. Another 53% reported that their primary use of the Internet was to establish professional contacts or interchanges. Finally, 89% supported the use of class e-mail lists for discussion and posting course-related papers.

Overall, the majority of students agreed with the statement that computers were indispensable to their personal, academic, and professional lives. We found that the pattern of use varied slightly based on gender: female respondents were more likely than their male counterparts to cite communication with friends or colleagues (including professional contact) as a primary use of the Internet. Males were more likely to cite entertainment as a primary use (including sharing or expressing opinions and non-work purposes). Other uses of the Internet among male respondents included: reading the news, games and entertainment, downloading applications, as well as shopping, chat, bulletin boards, learning about professional organizations, and website maintenance. Female respondents, on the other hand,

were more likely to use it for class work, travel information, research and information gathering, and library searches. Asian respondents and those self-identified as 'other' were also almost twice as likely to use the Internet to get involved in professional organizations (as mentioned above, the largest subgroup in the 'other' category had roots in the Indian Subcontinent, notably India and Pakistan). Moreover, the Internet was used for checking the news by 100% of Middle Eastern and 'other' respondents. It seems likely that this stems from the presence on the Internet of international viewpoints and coverage.

The section of the survey that dealt with students' perceptions and/or habits of ICT use for civic involvement

We found that the pattern of use varied slightly based on gender: female respondents were more likely than their male counterparts to cite communication with friends or colleagues (including professional contact) as a primary use of the Internet. Males were more likely to cite entertainment as a primary use (including sharing or expressing opinions and non-work purposes).

(participation, deliberation and decision-making) elicited the following results: 84% believe computers can enhance the participation of students in campus life, however, 76% feel that using a computer to participate in campus life affects the way a person thinks and makes decisions differently than if a person met with others and went to gatherings. Students defined 'participation' in campus life in terms of: 'getting involved in one (or more) student groups' (76%); 'getting information on various issues of relevance to student life' (69%); 'voting for student representatives' (55%); 'serving on councils and committees' (51%); 'organizing or attending protests' (34%); 'knowing where all the good parties are' (31%).

These responses seem to indicate that information gathering and overall awareness about campus events was as important as more active participation, leadership and decision-making. The use of online means of participation in campus life and in civic activities elicited mixed answers. Some respondents referred to computers almost as extension of their bodies (as one respondent mentioned: "It [the computer] is part of me"); others made mention of the "increased psychological distance" associated with computer-mediated participation, which they viewed as an aid to free expression or as necessary to a more reasoned deliberation ("Using a computer gives a person more time to contribute more developed, well thought out ideas because of time factors and nervousness caused by human interaction"). On the other hand, others felt that "it's hard to duplicate human interaction" and that "nothing can ever replace social interaction; facial expression, vocal intonation and gestures influence people's opinions." One respondent explains: "Internet is good for getting information, but face-to-face is best for getting things done." Another shared her idea of participation: "A computer allows you to participate without really [being] actively participative. My idea of participation involves more than clicking a few buttons on a mouse."

When asked about their experience and feelings about Internet voting, students had equally mixed feelings: despite concerns about security, privacy, and equity of access, a majority of students supported Internet voting at the campus, city and federal levels (47% of students surveyed expressed having already used Internet voting). The 58 respondents who raised concerns about potential disadvantages of Internet voting mentioned security as a major problem. They noted fraud, threat of hackers, loss of privacy, tracking of the votes and coercion as potential risks. Most importantly, the data suggest that students' support for Internet voting is affected by the nature of the elections: the support for online voting seems to correlate inversely with the importance in scale of the election. While 88% of students expressed that they would vote for a student representative online, the numbers decrease when it comes to voting for a mayoral candidate (57%) or for an MP (55%) via online means.

Perhaps the discrepancy between perceived security risks and the willingness to use the technology all the same can be partially explained by the huge importance ascribed to *convenience*. Written response questions showed 'convenience' to be the most often cited advantage of online voting, followed by efficiency in savings of time and expense

for administering the vote, the voting process itself ('less hassle', 'busy lifestyle'), and the ease in tallying the results. However, concerns around equity of access were acknowledged by many, with various references made to 'the poor', the 'elderly' and 'those who are not comfortable' or 'familiar' with technology.

Conclusion

While there is not enough evidence to say whether the sample surveyed would be less resistant to online voting if serious guarantees were made by Internet voting companies about security and privacy issues, we can assume that this would be the case indeed, based on the overall patterns of use of ICTs by students both in their personal, academic and professional lives. Overall, our survey revealed a sample population that was both ethically aware and technologically savvy. As our research progressed, it became evident that many of the students had ceased to see interaction with ICTs as isolated from their 'real' lives, but rather, they had begun to incorporate information technology into almost every aspect of their lives. Since a considerable amount of the respondents' time each day is spent using computers, it would appear natural that those interested in political participation would use the affordances of ICTs to that end, and to a large extent, the students appear to be doing just that.

Notes

- ¹ The author wishes to acknowledge Stephanie Hall for her assistance in this research project.

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LEARNING TO BE A FULL CANADIAN CITIZEN:

Youth, Elections and Ignorance

ABSTRACT

There is growing concern over the near absence of youth engagement in the democratic process today. In this article, Dr. Cook shares the results of a study based on Student Vote 2004, a civics project that encouraged both elementary and secondary students to learn about government in conjunction with the recent federal election. Results show that teachers welcomed new curriculum materials on a topic about which young Canadians lack even basic understanding.

The discouragingly low percentage of Canadians who chose to vote in the just-past federal election campaign – the lowest at 60.5% since Canada’s first federal election held 137 years ago – has preoccupied political observers throughout the summer. Even more worrisome, however, is the rate by voter age: in the 2004 election, 80% of those aged 58 to 67 voted, 66% of those between 38 and 47, while only 22% of 18 to 20 year-olds did so.¹ Clearly, the civic disengagement of newly-minted voters, those fresh from mandated civics courses in high school, is greatest of any group in the population. Yet behind this specific anxiety related to voter turn-out is a considerable educational literature which explores the roots of youth apathy to broader questions of civic commitment and involvement,² especially as these relate to the teaching of social studies and history,³ the difficulties of engaging students’ interest in formal civics instruction,⁴ and the far-ranging implications for civic culture of youths’ disinterest, and even their rejection of the accepted norms for demonstrating “good citizenship.”⁵

There is little consolation in recognizing that ours is not the only country in the world with the problem of voter apathy. The United States was able to entice only 51%⁶ of its citizens into the voting booth, for example, and there is considerable evidence to suggest that young people in America are no more enthusiastic or trusting of the political process than their Canadian cousins.⁷ In the United States, as in this country, a range of extra-curricular and in-school programs have been initiated to encourage students’ active involvement in the democratic process through community activities with a civic foundation, with the additional aim of developing the necessary skills to be able to appreciate and value the democratic experiment. Most of these projects have been mounted by unusually committed teachers with a significant investment in social activism, and with a track record of knowledge and connections throughout their communities. Too rarely are the projects aimed at the general population, both students and teachers, who might well be actively sceptical of the process they are investigating rather than virtuously supportive.

The project to encourage civic engagement discussed here was initiated by an independent, small group of Toronto-based young people not far outside that 18 to 20 year-old category. Their idea was simple and workable: provide teachers with the materials to carry out a parallel election during an official election campaign, but with the difference that students would be the electors. They presented their proposal to many potential sponsors before garnering enough support to make the idea a reality. In fact, finding adequate funding has taken enormous amounts of their time throughout the life of the project.

The first experiment was in the October 2003 Ontario election, during which the team was supported by Elections Canada and other sponsors. This project provided polling supplies for a class- or school-wide election. The team also developed a curriculum package for teachers to support the voting activity with in-class instruction. The run-away success of the Ontario provincial project made a similar initiative during the 2004 federal election possible. The curriculum package attached to the federal election project, entitled Student Vote 2004, was a considerably more elaborate teaching kit with modules for students in elementary school to grade 6, and a secondary school package featuring lessons and resources on leadership styles, the political spectrum, suggestions for involving local candidates in the classroom and much else. Both the elementary and secondary modules provided constituency maps and posters from Elections Canada for display and teaching support.

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I first became aware of the project through teachers in my local area, and by a former teacher education student in the B.Ed program where I teach. This young teacher was now a member of the Student Vote 2004 team. I was intrigued by several features of this project. First, as noted, the widespread popularity of the student vote exercise reached more teachers and students than any other civics project of which I am aware. The simplicity and obvious relevance of the students' parallel vote lent it a veracity, at least for teachers, which was almost unique in my 32 years' experience in education. Teachers who chose the pared-down version could opt to take their students through the voting process and nothing else; others could make the vote the culminating activity of an intensive civics and community education program. Secondly, the project offered the chance to explore the degree of importance of teachers' and students' knowledge as it related to "satisfaction" with the project, and with the voting process itself.

It has been argued that one explanation for youth apathy is ignorance about the Canadian parliamentary and electoral system. Others assert that youth disengagement is due more to dissatisfaction with political choices, than with lack of information.⁸ I wondered how knowledge fit into the pattern of disavowal of the political process for these teachers and students, and how useful the curriculum package had been for them as a source of information and prod for civic engagement. Using names of educators provided by the Student Vote 2004 team, all of whom had indicated an interest in participating in educational or media analysis of the project, an e-mail was sent to all educators involved in the Student Parallel Vote activity. Approximately 850 educators were contacted for this purpose. Of this group, 112 educators completed a first pre-parallel election questionnaire and returned it to my research assistant via email. Forty-two educators completed a second questionnaire, completed after the voting exercise and instruction, also by e-mail. From the group of 42 teachers, a representative sample of 10 was interviewed by telephone. These discussions were meant to explore in more detail the teachers' use of the curriculum package, teachers' views of students' learning as a result of the instruction received, and the degree to which teachers could demonstrate students' learning and engagement in issues relating to the federal election.

The small size of the rate of teachers' returns requires some explanation. Throughout the spring of 2004, an election call was anticipated at several junctures. Educators began signing up for the Student Vote 2004 project early in the winter on the assumption that classroom activities throughout the late winter and spring would be supportive of, and help to interpret, the campaign process underway in that period. For a variety of reasons, the election call was delayed, and as the term proceeded, classroom time was taken up with other topics and review for final examinations. Many teachers abandoned their earlier plans to make the Student Vote 2004 project a central feature of their instruction and activity program, writing to our team and those directing the project with their apologies. Hence, the group which participated in

this research represents a particularly committed cadre of teachers who persisted in the instructional process despite the unfavourable timing of a late-June election. It is an open question as to how representative it is of the larger teaching force which originally expressed interest in the project, and which might well have participated only in the parallel student election, rather than in the instructional component as well. It is also probable that while some of the original group of 850 teachers did make some room for the in-class instruction, they felt that there was insufficient time for them to complete even the first questionnaire.

Recognizing the distinct limitations of the small sample of teachers surveyed and interviewed, some trends were clear:

- The vast majority of educators involving themselves in this assessment project were actively involved in classroom instruction, two-thirds of whom had the responsibility of teaching civics either as the stand-alone half course in Ontario, or as part of a social studies or history course elsewhere in Canada. The majority indicated that their interest was primarily to involve students in an important democratic function, but also to add to their knowledge of the Canadian parliamentary system, which is frequently confused by students with the American system as a result of the regular television diet consumed by most adolescents.

- Almost half of the teachers participating in this assessment would be classified as novice teachers, new to the profession, and sometimes new as well to the subject content relating to the election and democratic process. These teachers expressed great interest in learning more about the area in order to further interest their students.

- The Student Vote 2004 project was used most commonly with students between grades 7 and 12 rather than in the elementary grades. Teachers in the lower grades reported that concepts related to parliamentary democracy were "hard" for students to understand. In all cases, students were exposed to the shadow election process and this was often on a school-wide basis, rather than as a classroom unit. However, of the participating educators, almost half spent a week or more on formal instruction in support of the parallel vote. More than half of the teachers in this group reported devoting 20% or more of this time to the curriculum resource.

- The time constraints imposed by the late election call meant that many teachers shelved their plans to use sizable portions of the curriculum package. Many seemed to combine elements from

separate lesson plans to address particular areas of interest by their students, or to address local issues. The time of year during which the lessons were being taught also discouraged much consideration of difficult topics, or ones which were thought to be “dry.”

- Teachers relied mainly on conventional classroom products such as tests or written assignments when they attempted to assess students’ learning of the concepts behind the Canadian election system. However, because of the time of year, most teachers reported that the tests and examinations were already set before the Student Vote 2004 program was implemented. Hence, very little evidence of students’ learning or engagement resulted from teachers’ use of these curricula.

These trends allow for some modest generalizations, both regarding this curriculum package, and others of its type. Level of satisfaction by the participating educators with the project as a whole was reportedly high; however, given the responses, it is not possible to distinguish between satisfaction with the parallel vote process and the formal curriculum. Certainly, while less than 1% of the educators admitted to using absolutely none of the curriculum package, there was a lesser commitment to the classroom resource materials simply because there were few classes left in the school year by the time the election call came. In addition, the pressure exerted by final examinations and the readying of the final marks meant that the few classes remaining were devoted to concerns other than these. Nevertheless, teachers reported satisfaction with the Instructional Resource’s information (as the secondary-level teaching modules were called), making particular mention of sections which defined terms, concepts and the stages of an election, the background of the parliamentary election process, parties and the gaining of the franchise, and the constituency maps.

The degree of teacher satisfaction appears to be correlated with several factors. Teachers with older students were considerably more satisfied and believed that students had benefited more from the experience than those teaching younger students. Teachers with a strong knowledge or interest base, including those with the responsibility for teaching civics, seemed more inclined to require students to engage in research of party platforms and local candidates’ positions, and produce reflective assignments for course value. Teachers noted as well that the entire program was more successful with

students who had already received instruction through a history or civics course. Perhaps this knowledge on the part of students permitted these teachers to spend more classroom time in debating questions, rather than simply imparting necessary information. It also suggests that such teachers were more interested in pursuing such questions beyond the mechanics of electioneering.

Despite teachers’ claims that many students enjoyed the program, especially older students closer to voting age and those who were sufficiently well informed to follow the election issues, teachers were not able to demonstrate their students’ increased civic engagement as a result of this program. Most teachers reported that students submitted research-based assignments or wrote tests based on the process they had experienced, but very few could offer evidence of engagement in the process outside of school, or evidence of attitudinal change.

It seems clear from both of the Student Vote projects, and particularly from the responses of the teachers involved in the latest initiative, that many teachers welcome supportive, interesting and flexible curriculum materials as they struggle to introduce young people to the mysteries of the Canadian electoral system. It is clear, too, that curriculum support offered too late in the school year

can rarely be effectively used. Despite the easy assertions that teachers can find anything they need on the Internet, a program like this one has enormous attraction for teachers, particularly conscientious ones. Teachers reported that students lack an understanding of our complex electoral system, and presumably as well, of the many issues not directly connected to the electoral process. Based on the responses to our questions, teachers also seem to feel that they themselves lack a full understanding of how the Canadian system operates, as well as the implications for our institutional and social life as a society.

Canadian youths might be as disaffected as they are ignorant, but their teachers believe that they need the information background contained in programs such as this one. Such projects as Student Vote 2004 deserve the support of the academic and governmental communities as one important component in the construction of responsible and knowledgeable Canadian citizens. Our track record to date indicates that we need all the help we can find!

Based on the responses to our questions, teachers also seem to feel that they themselves lack a full understanding of how the Canadian system operates, as well as the implications for our institutional and social life as a society.

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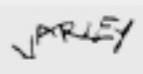


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YOUTH VOICES: ENGAGING YOUTH IN HEALTH PROMOTION USING MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES

ABSTRACT

Although youth participation is recognized as beneficial for youth and their communities alike, a major challenge is how to ensure that this participation is authentic and relevant. In 2000, the *Youth Voices* initiative was established by the TeenNet Research Program, University of Toronto, to develop models and processes for engaging youth in health promotion in their communities. Since its inception, over 100 youth and 11 community organizations in urban, small town and rural locations have participated in 13 *Youth Voices* groups. Currently, the work is being applied internationally in a global health initiative called *Global Youth Voices*. This article outlines our *Youth Voices* six phase EIPARS model and processes used to engage youth.

*“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure
It is our light not our darkness that most frightens us
And we ask ourselves ‘Who am I to be brilliant, talented, fabulous, gorgeous?’
And actually who are you not to be...”*

Marianna Williamson, *A Return to Love*

Tiffany, 19 years, records herself singing Marianna Williamson’s words. Quickly, her hand moves to the computer; she adjusts the levels of the base beat. This is her song. She created the melody, she created the beat, and the song is ready to record.

Between May and April 2004, over 700 young people, adults, service providers, service users and policy makers heard Tiffany and her youth group Peace Power rap, sing and converse about the challenges of being street-involved and strategies for making their community stronger. Tiffany and her group developed and performed their songs as part of an innovative initiative called *Youth Voices*. Based in the Department of Public Health Sciences, University of Toronto, *Youth Voices* is a project of the TeenNet research program (www.TeenNetProject.org) led by Dr. Harvey Skinner.¹ *Youth Voices* was established to develop processes and models for engaging youth in their communities. This article outlines *Youth Voices*’ six phase EIPARS (Engage, Identify, Plan, Research/Reflect/Reward, Sustain) model and process used to engage youth, and examples are given to demonstrate the impact of the initiative locally and internationally.

Beginnings

The *Youth Voices* project evolved from TeenNet’s research on using both low level (e.g. photography) and high level (e.g. Internet) technology to engage youth in health promotion.² An effective approach for engaging youth in issue identification is Photovoice. Developed by Wang et al.,³ Photovoice is a participatory approach where community members use photographs to communicate issues of concern to the broader community and policy makers. In 2000, TeenNet conducted an initial test of the Photovoice approach with 21 youth at two community health centers in Toronto. From these beginnings, TeenNet identified the potential to expand the Photovoice component to include a range of media technology.

At the same time, TeenNet identified the need to study and disseminate approaches for effective youth engagement. It has been recognized that to build healthy communities the involvement of youth in both identifying community issues and finding solutions to community concerns is vital.⁴ The challenge is how to ensure youth involvement that is authentic and sustainable. Through its work with youth and youth-serving agencies, the *Youth Voices* initiative has created a method called EIPARS that facilitates youth-driven processes and ownership using innovative multimedia approaches. This work is grounded in the literature and practice of Participatory Action Research (PAR),⁵ and inspired by youth media.⁶

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Andrea Ridgley, MSW, is the youth engagement and action project coordinator. Oonagh Maley, MSc, is project manager. Harvey Skinner, PhD, is principal investigator of the TeenNet Research Program based at the Department of Public Health Sciences, University of Toronto. Since 1995, TeenNet (www.TeenNetProject.org) has been a leader in research and knowledge exchange on integrating information technology and participatory action research for youth health promotion.

PAR has a long tradition of research that values the experience of individuals to determine their own goals, objectives and indicators of success. PAR has proven to be an effective catalyst for social change because of its ability to achieve results that are more relevant, engaging, accessible and culturally acceptable to the participating community. *Youth Voices* EIPARS is a modified PAR process where participants identify the strengths and weaknesses of their community and take action.

Central to the *Youth Voices* EIPARS process is media technology. *Youth Voices* recognizes the tremendous importance of and opportunities gained from using technology with youth. For an entire generation technology has been a part of the world in which they live. Using cell phones, text messaging, e-mails and on-line chats, technology has become essential to the way youth connect and communicate. For many youth, media technology is also their chosen method of self-expression, be it personal websites and blogs or using design programs to publish their own 'zines. According to the manager of a youth centre: "Youth [are] really attracted to technology, and music is the one constant in their lives." Examples of the technologies used by *Youth Voices* participants include the Internet, photography, video, and software for music production, desktop publishing, and web authoring.

Youth Voices Six-Phase EIPARS Model

EIPARS outlines the phases by which each *Youth Voices* group progresses: Engage, Identify, Plan, Research/Reflect/Reward, Sustain. With the support of a facilitator, media technologies are used to Engage youth in the project, and allow them to express themselves through creative approaches such as art, video, music and photography. Through this work, youth Identify issues of importance to them. The group then creates a Plan for addressing one or more of the issues they have identified, and mobilizes to Act. Central to this process is a need to continually Reflect and do Research on how the project is doing, Reward the participants and finds ways to Sustain the group's work.

Figure 1 depicts the EIPARS process as a step-by-step cycle. Often there can be a lot of movement back and forth between stages as the group matures, becomes comfortable

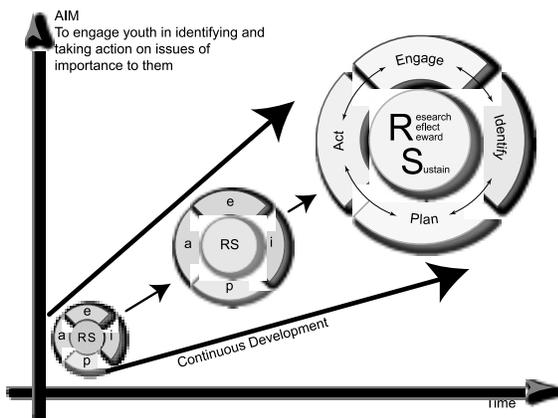


Figure 1. Illustration of how the six-phase EIPARS model can be linked in successive rapid cycle change initiatives for continuous improvement.

with one other, and gains experience in identifying and discussing issues and potential actions. Over the life of any one group, the youth may complete multiple cycles of the EIPARS process. And as Figure 1 shows, the impact of each successive cycle deepens as the youths' skills and confidence grow and develop as they learn from each other and the group as a whole.

Youth Voices in Action

Each *Youth Voices* project was completed by 5-10 youth (average age 12-15 years). Action projects (www.globalyouthvoices.org/youth_action.html) have included: a slide-show presentation on violence and "toughness"; an article series with *Young People's Press* and a 'zine on stereotypes towards street-involved youth; a Popular Theatre play on tobacco and decision making; a workshop and website about globalization and the tobacco industry (www.smokefreeworld.org); and a website for young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender newcomers to Canada (www.RocktheBoat.ca). One *Youth Voices* participant captured the impact of our approach to youth engagement:

"I really liked it when we took the pictures & put in our own words beside the pictures and went through them all and got to discuss them. It really opened up big discussions. It kind of made us all realize that everyone had their own opinions, but yet, we were still all on the same track..."

The power of *Youth Voices* is exemplified in two projects conducted in partnership with Beat the Street. Beat the Street is a learning centre in downtown Toronto for youth who are at-risk, street involved or homeless. The centre has a long history of using creative arts to engage and work with youth. In the first project, participating youth were given cameras to document the strengths and concerns of their community. The group also decided to widen their perspective by surveying non-youth on perceptions of street-involved young people. They targeted pedestrians in downtown Toronto. The *Youth Voices* participants were surprised at the responses they received. For example, they found many community members thought "education and training" or "employment" to be the main street-youth issues. The youth disagreed, feeling that "affordable housing" is the most pressing issue because it is difficult to stay in school or get a job without a place to live. The youth were also surprised at many of the negative words respondents associated with street youth such as "drugs," "petty crime" and "dirty".

Primarily because of this feedback, the youth decided to focus on challenging the negative stereotypes towards street youth by telling their stories. In particular, they focused on the impact of discrimination, housing, and society's views of street youth. Their photography and written pieces were published, on-line, by *Young People's Press* and combined into a 'zine for distribution. The 'zine is posted on *Youth Voices'* website (www.globalyouthvoices.org), and distributed to places where youth hang out and to youth serving agencies in Ontario.

In the second year of the *Youth Voices* collaboration with Beat the Street, a new group of young people participated

in a dynamic and challenging project. The group, named Peace Power, used music production software to create songs and music about topics they identified as important to them. The participants quickly identified they wanted to do “outreach” to other street involved youth and adults who work with them, as their main action. Outreach consisted of creating a multimedia performance of their ideas, opinions and inspirations. The group viewed their performances as not only having their voices heard but also as a learning exchange for them. Using forum theatre techniques⁷ they posed questions to their audiences around the themes of personal choice, community and self respect, while communicating a three-fold positive message of *Chase your dreams, Develop yourself, and Widen your perspective*. The Peace Power group completed 15 performances, presenting to over 700 youth and adults in a variety of settings, culminating in the 6th Blue Metropolis Montreal International Literary Festival in April 2004.

What We’ve Found

Research was conducted throughout each *Youth Voices* project. Surveys, interviews, and focus groups were used to evaluate the EIPARS process, and the role and effectiveness of technology in promoting youth engagement and ownership and how it contributes to social action and community health promotion. Audience feedback forms were also created to measure the impact of several of the youth action projects.

The EIPARS process has shown to be a very powerful tool in engaging and working with youth. In particular, on an individual and group level, the EIPARS process supported participants in exploring who they are and who they want to be, and in believing that their thoughts and opinions matter. One participant stated this succinctly: *“Kids need to hear what others kids have been through.”*

Our analyses indicate that the EIPARS process facilitates feelings of authentic participation in the youth group and a sense of ownership of its projects. The youth developed new understandings about their place and potential power within their communities. They had the desire to educate and assist others to understand their issues, not just for their personal gain or the strength of the group, but also for the gain of their communities. The impact on personal growth and confidence from presenting a project to an audience is exemplified by the feedback from one youth:

“... feeling like make a difference going out there and talking to people. Makes me feel good because something people listen, take in what I’m saying. Trying to make a difference makes me feel good.”

The use of media technology was found to stimulate and motivate youth to take part in the *Youth Voices* process. In particular, the youth identified the type of technology being used was a primary draw for them joining the project. The use of technology also facilitated a sense of ownership. Once the youth learned the technology, they had a sense of control over how it would be used in the projects. For the Peace Power group this meant controlling how their music would be produced (created, mixed, and recorded).

The participating youth also felt the media technology they used was an effective means for self-expression and communication with their identified audiences. For the Peace Power group, using the medium of music was very important to them for this meant that they could communicate their thoughts and feelings in a way that they felt would be heard. The music and technology also allowed them to disseminate in spaces where street-involved *Youth Voices* are not often heard. The participants stated that using media technology also helped them build their skills using computers and computer software.

Challenges

Through the experience of the different projects, TeenNet has captured a number of key learnings about the challenges of linking youth engagement and action projects with media technology:

a) Context & transparency: Youth engagement happens within a context of funder and organizational requirements, the skills and interest of the participating youth and the skills and abilities of the group facilitators. Each of these factors impacts on the ability of an organization and the participating youth and adults to create a project that is completely youth driven. Critical to ensuring authentic youth participation within these contexts is a commitment to open and transparent dialogue.

b) Sustainability: An important goal of many youth engagement projects is for the youth participation and projects to be sustainable. However,

groups will follow their own natural course. For some projects, the youth will continue to participate and grow within the process for extended periods of time. TeenNet has run one youth group for three years with the same 7 youth. Other youth groups, like Peace Power, run their course in a matter of months. We suggest reframing sustainability to also focus on the ability of agencies to create and maintain authentic opportunities for youth.

c) Media Technology: There is inherent in media technology projects a tension between what is affordable and what is available. Being able to create a balance often depends on knowing a particular technology: knowing

The use of media technology was found to stimulate and motivate youth to take part in the Youth Voices process. In particular, the youth identified the type of technology being used was a primary draw for them joining the project. The use of technology also facilitated a sense of ownership. Once the youth learned the technology, they had a sense of control over how it would be used in the projects.

how to select the best options and develop creative approaches with limited budgets. This requirement would seem to require *Youth Voices*' facilitators that can both work with youth and the chosen media technology. In fact, most of youth stated that having a supportive facilitator was most important, as long as the facilitator was open to learning from the youth and/or getting outside assistance regarding the technology.

Learnings from the 13 *Youth Voices* projects have been used by TeenNet to develop a Youth Voices Guide. The Guide is targeted at agencies and groups that want to develop strong youth involvement in community action projects and who want to work more effectively with technology. It is meant to be a stand-alone resource that will be both helpful and open enough to be tailored to an organization's specific context and resources. In addition, to further support agencies in youth involvement, TeenNet has developed an Organizational Change Guide for staff, volunteers and Board Members of Youth Centres who want to make structural changes to better support youth initiated projects.⁸ Both guides will be available on the TeenNet website:

www.TeenNetProject.org.

Going Global: The Future of Youth Voices

Recently, TeenNet has begun developing international partnerships to explore use of the *Youth Voices* EIPARS model in a global context termed *Global Youth Voices*. One such project in the Middle East is engaging Bedouin youth in community health promotion, conducted in collaboration with the Canada International Scientific Exchange Program, *CEISPO* (www.cisepo.ca).

In March-May 2004, 20 grade nine Bedouin youth (half boys, half girls) were part of *Youth Voices* groups in two communities: 1) Tuba, northern Israel 2) Segev Shalom in the Negev, southern Israel. These youth completed the Engage and Identify phases of the EIPARS process, where youth in each setting identified personal and community health issues. Their photo-essays were then uploaded to the *Youth Voices* website: <http://www.globalyouthvoices.org/middle-east/greetings-en.html>.

A key finding was that similar issues were identified in each community, such as: smoking, violence, sports, and animal abuse. In addition, unique issues were identified for each community: suicide at Tuba and industrial pollution at Segev Shalom. Youth from each community were then brought to Tel Aviv University for a joint session discussing issues and action steps. For example, the youth at Segev Shalom want to carry out a smoking prevention/education program at their high school in the fall of 2004. Building on this initial work, future cross-border studies will be carried out with Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian youth.

It is clear, wherever they are in the world, youth embrace opportunities to be authentically involved in the decisions that affect them and their communities. TeenNet believes the work of *Youth Voices* will stimulate participatory community development, and in particular, enable agencies to foster more active involvement of youth. The rewards for youth at a personal level are clearly expressed by one TeenNet youth participant:

"It makes me as a teen feel good that people care about what teens think and what they have to say. Most of the time we are overlooked. Not many teens get the chance to actually be heard... thank you."

Acknowledgments

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FROM THE FAR SIDE OF THE MOUNTAINS:

Youth Engaged as Volunteers in British Columbia

ABSTRACT

Colleen Kelly provides meaningful insight into the world of youth volunteers. She maintains that young people will always be looking to get involved, but that today's generation is seeking concrete action as well as inclusion in decision-making in a forum where young voices are heard and their ideas realized. Community organizations must therefore find more effective ways of empowering youth by giving them greater responsibility and supporting youth-led initiatives.

No matter what age range we use to define youth, I must admit I am a long way from it. So it is with some trepidation that I embark on an article about youth engaged as volunteers in British Columbia. Over the years I have learned the value of students talking to students about volunteering. Even twenty years ago, when I was presenting information about volunteering to schools, a class would listen very carefully to a sincere and caring young person – while I learned that I was only the ‘mother figure’ telling them to do something. So we knew it was critical to ensure youth were developing youth programs that worked for them. It is not about adults trying to engage young people. In the area of youth volunteerism, the messenger is at least twice as important as the message!

A good place to start is with one young person telling the story of another who had influenced her to volunteer:

To me, volunteering is giving with heart, and being selfless with your time, energy or money. There is no greater example to me of leadership and the volunteer spirit, or a good person, than my friend, Laurel Hogg.

To name a few of the contributions Laurel has given to her school and community, she has organized our school's multicultural week, volunteered for the Special Olympics, actively participated on the Kamloops Foundation Youth Advisory Council, and served her school as a Leadership Representative and Student Council Executive Member.

There are many things I could say about Laurel, but what I most value about her, is all she has taught me about what it means to volunteer. I have seen in Laurel a person I would like to be: a generous, compassionate, modest and respected person. There is a contentment within her that has come from helping others, a drive and ambition to continue to reach out to do more, and a realization of the need for her work, and the true effects of her contributions on others.

Laurel has tirelessly raised money for causes she believes in, given hours of her time to those with special needs in and outside of school, and raised awareness of the needs for cultural diversity. I am proud of her as an exceptional person, and prouder that she is my friend, teaching me the values of volunteering.

Natalie Lidster

Submission to ‘Volunteers Grow Community’ Story Contest, April 2004
For the Canada Volunteerism Initiative in British Columbia

Benefits of volunteering

We know that those who volunteer when they are young are likely to continue volunteering throughout their lives (Steve McCurley and Rick Lynch, *Volunteer Management: Mobilizing all the Resources of the Community*, 1996). Therefore, it makes sense for coordinators of volunteer programs to involve young people. Youth involvement can be the key to growing a volunteer program. Volunteering contributes to young peoples’ confidence, strengthens their skills and improves their job opportunities (Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, *What influences youth to volunteer?* 2001). With these benefits in mind, youth involvement in volunteering may be the key to growing a strong Canada.

COLLEEN KELLY

Colleen Kelly is the current Executive Director, Volunteer Vancouver. During the International Year of Volunteers (IYV) 2001, Colleen co-chaired the National Volunteer Initiative, one of the Joint Tables that was part of the Voluntary Sector Initiative. This Table developed a legacy for IYV, the Canada Volunteerism Initiative, which Volunteer Vancouver hosts in BC.

The not-for-profit landscape

According to a study conducted by D-Code (*Citizen RE:Generation: Understanding Active Citizen Engagement Among Canada's Information Age Generations*, 2003) Canada's Information Age Generation (15-34) is looking for new ways to get involved. Volunteering in its traditional and formal definition is not enough. Youth are interested in creating the solutions for root causes, not applying band-aids to their effects. 'Youth Engagement' is a buzz term in many not-for-profits and volunteering is certainly part of engagement; however, not in the traditional 'white-gloves-and-ladies-who-lunch' sense of the term. There has to be more value in the word *volunteer* to really engage the young people of this new millennium.

It is challenging to effectively engage youth. There is a significant difference between invitation and inclusion – between 'talking the talk' and 'walking the walk.' There are a multitude of youth focused organizations, associations, committees and coalitions that exist and compete for funds, attention and purpose. It is encouraging to see these organizations exist as their own youth-focused entities. But is this really the best strategy?

Isn't it really about inclusion rather than separateness? At the launch of the International Year of the Older Person at the United Nations in New York, many speakers addressed separating 'older persons' and that not including all generations in the discussions of 'older persons' was a huge error. Then, at a break, an octogenarian questioned our presence as young people. She didn't understand what we were doing there. Does this also have to be the common strategy for developing the engagement of youth? Separate? Different? Or inclusive? Part of the whole?

Are main-stream-age organizations ready, willing and able to consider youth more than a target market and incorporate their ideas, opinions and action to the future of our country? What do they need to do to get ready? How does Canadian society motivate youth to become involved in their communities? How do we make our organizations, our government, our decision-making practices open to ideas and direction generated by youth?

I suggest organizations are excited about the *idea* of incorporating youth in their programs and services to better serve the community. There is a significant difference between inviting youth to the table, and listening and incorporating their ideas and perspectives. It can be challenging for not-for-profits to create environments and opportunities for positive youth engagement. If the answers to the questions in the previous paragraph confirm that youth involvement is worth our time and energy, we ought to more closely examine the 'how' of engaging young people as volunteers.

A role for volunteer centres

If a volunteer centre has a youth volunteer program, it often consists of making presentations to students about the value of volunteering. While this is admirable, it is not effective if there are not organizations that can involve them as volunteers. So the 'how' of engaging youth could mean a different role for volunteer centres. Volunteer Centres could work with organizations to focus on the strengths in the existing volunteer program, and help them find ways to be flexible to incorporate additional and different practices that work for youth. For the most part, positive youth engagement requires adults, who are used to being in control, to let go and step outside of their comfort zone. I believe there is a role for a volunteer centre to work with organizations to involve young people; to help the adults in the organization be flexible and 'let go' while also managing the risk.

One strategy to facilitate this change is through promotion. For the past seventeen years Volunteer Vancouver's Annual Awards Dinner has recognized two young people for their commitment to community through the Leaders of Tomorrow award category. These young people initiate their own fundraising events, sit on Boards of Directors, start diversity clubs in their schools, lobby politicians on behalf of groups who often cannot, and provide incredible energy in the community.

Mandatory volunteering

At a volunteer centre we consider this frequently used phrase the ultimate oxymoron. In British Columbia, a young person's first exposure to community involvement may not be their decision. There is a requirement for high school students to complete a minimum of 30 hours (up to 150 hours in some programs) of community service work experience for high school graduation. This requirement

is imposed both on the youth and on the organizations where they will carry out their volunteer work.

During the International Year of Volunteers, 2001, I had the privilege of listening to individuals across Canada offer their ideas on ways we could encourage volunteer involvement. Most believed the community service requirement for high school graduation (also mandatory in Ontario) is a good thing. And it *can* be! The trick is for the young person to find a meaningful volunteer opportunity that is about building their self-esteem, learning something new and really contributing to the community where they live. The challenge is for community organizations to involve these young people for a short period of time and ensure a good experience that still really furthers the mission of the organization. This is not an easy task.

A story of positive youth engagement

Almost 7 years ago, the Vancouver Foundation launched its Youth in Philanthropy program to engage

'Youth Engagement' is a buzz term in many not-for-profits and volunteering is certainly part of engagement; however, not in the traditional 'white-gloves-and-ladies-who-lunch' sense of the term. There has to be more value in the word *volunteer* to really engage the young people of this new millennium.

young people in philanthropy, volunteerism and community development. *Students Who Care*, a program run through the Victoria Foundation, helps to build future leaders that understand their community and the value of volunteerism. Participants learn critical thinking and leadership skills and are encouraged to question their own values. The program taps into the energy, insight and skills of youth and gives them the *ability to create change* (*Victoria Foundation Youth in Philanthropy Program brochure*). It was difficult for the Foundation to give that kind of control to the youth group. The Foundation actually encouraged the youth council to make recommendations to provide funding to community groups. That is a very different way for Community Foundations to do business. And guess what? The youth councils make great decisions – as do other advisory councils comprised of collective expertise from the community.

In addition to the Victoria Foundation program, the Vancouver Foundation's own Youth Philanthropy Council is dedicated to supporting youth oriented programs through grants and volunteerism. This Youth Council has awarded over half a million dollars to youth projects over the past 5 years.

There are currently 18 Youth Advisory Councils across the province with more in various stages of development. Their areas of focus (for which they receive training) include: grant making, fund development, and leadership. There is something unique about this particular youth program; it gives young people both the tools and the power to create change. They distribute real dollars in order to make a real difference. With the support of Community Foundations of Canada, Youth in Philanthropy has now spread across the country, and over 40 community foundations are now actively engaging young people in strengthening communities and improving quality of life.

There are many examples that illustrate how young people are involved in their community as volunteers. They are self-directed when it comes to living what they believe. There are many youth organizations in British Columbia that engage young people and truly focus on youth working with youth. Some other examples of these organizations are:

- Check Your Head
- Spirit Bear Youth Coalition
- Katimavik
- BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres Youth Council
- Leaders of Tomorrow, Vancouver Board of Trade

Semper questionis

Young people will always be searching to be engaged in a meaningful way, even as my generation was back in the 60s. Every generation finds a way that works for them – and the good news is that all Canadians benefit from the young people who look for ways to be involved in their community.

In British Columbia, youth engagement is often about the environment. It is often about HIV/AIDS prevention. It is often about drama in many new and different forms. Volunteering is part of this engagement and certainly the community benefits. Although I cannot call myself a youth,

I am privileged to work and play and live with many young people who are engaged in the search. They are making this province and country a pretty cool (or is it 'hot?') place to be in 2004.

Websites of Interest

- Volunteer Vancouver – www.volunteervancouver.ca
- Vancouver Foundation – www.vancouverfoundation.bc.ca
- Community Foundations of Canada – www.community-fdn.ca
- Check Your Head – www.checkyourhead.org
- Spirit Bear Youth Coalition – www.spiritbearyouth.org
- Katimavik – www.katimavik.org
- BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres Youth Council – www.bc-payc.com
- Leaders of Tomorrow – www.leadersoftomorrow.bc.ca

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ENCOUNTERS WITH CANADA

ABSTRACT

Founded in 1982, Encounters with Canada encourages cultural awareness and national pride among Canadian youth. This article describes the program and speaks to the positive impact it has had on the lives of its many former participants.

It's Sunday night and 130 high school students from every province and territory in Canada have gathered in the cafeteria at the Terry Fox Canadian Youth Centre in Ottawa to play a few icebreaker games and get to know one another.

For many this is their first time away from home, their first time to Ottawa, and their first time out of their home province. They are participating in the Encounters with Canada (EWC) program, a weeklong youth forum that brings young Canadians together to learn about each other, their country and themselves. As the games begin the group giggles nervously, carefully watching each other to see what to do.

"When the students first arrive, they are nervous and shy," explains Linda Brunet, Director General of EWC. "But by the end of the week everything has changed. They have all new friends, and they're having so much fun they don't want to go home!"

As a program of the Canadian Unity Council, a non-profit organization based in Ottawa, EWC aims to teach youth about Canada through visits to Canadian institutions, guest speakers, workshops and, most importantly, through their interactions with each other.

"We have a wonderful program here with lots of activities," explains Madame Brunet. "But what really sticks with the youth are the people they meet and the friendships they make. That's where they really learn about all the different regions of Canada."

Michael White is a retired high school teacher from Bathurst, New Brunswick. In the past eight years, he has volunteered as a "monitor" with the EWC program a total of 16 times. Monitors come to the program for one or two week stints. Acting like homeroom teachers, they lead activities, accompany students on trips, chaperone dormitories at night and act as general guides for the youth involved.

According to Mr. White, one of the program's unique strengths is that it allows young people to get first-hand experience learning about Canada.

"They get to meet young people their own age from across the country and experience first hand the stories and lives that each one of them has," he says. "In many cases it allows them to mature and experience what being away from home is like. They also get to experience our great country's political and cultural landscape, meeting our leaders and seeing where and how we are governed."

The first two days of the program are all about Canadian institutions. Participants visit Parliament and the Senate. They watch question period from the press gallery of the House of Commons, and meet with their Members of Parliament. They also get a tour of Ottawa, and visit at least one of the national museums located in the capital.

The rest of the week is focused on one of 11 different career sub-themes, such as Arts and Culture, Science and Technology, Law, RCMP and Medicine and Health. But, no matter what kind of career interests participants may have, the trip to Parliament Hill remains an important event.



JENNIFER MCCARTHY
Jennifer McCarthy works as Resources Coordinator
for Encounters with Canada.

“The most intriguing aspect of the program for me was visiting parliament and watching question period,” says Zoiey Cobb, a 19 year-old political science student at Memorial University in Newfoundland, who came to EWC in October 2001. “The experience actually made me want to learn more about our political process.”

Many students have that same experience, says Ken Purvis, another EWC monitor and regional coordinator for recruitment for the Thompson-Okanagan region of BC.

“The day in and around Parliament is like a crash course on how Parliament works. You come away from that day having been in rooms that parliamentarians use, hallways they walk, rooms they work in, and actually listening to Pages, MPs and Senators speak,” he says. “Just standing by the eternal flame, looking back at the Peace Tower... you don’t forget that feeling.”

Aside from the political aspects of Canada, participants also get a healthy introduction to Canadian diversity and the importance of cultural awareness and acceptance in Canada. Every Wednesday night participants dress up in costumes and perform in a type of variety show called Canada 360°. The event allows students to present the uniqueness of their own region of Canada to the others through skits, songs and general silliness. On a more serious note, the week includes guided discussions on multiculturalism in Canada, and the challenges of linguistic duality sponsored by Exchanges Canada and Canadian Heritage.

“Without a doubt, the importance of both of Canada’s official languages and Canada’s cultural diversity become obvious,” says Mr. Purvis. “For those that are bilingual, they have lots of opportunities to practice those skills. The talent show, the provincial skits and conversations with other participants... all give them a sense of the importance of embracing diversity.”

And perhaps this is part of how EWC has become such a resounding success. Founded in 1982, the program has seen more than 65,000 young people come through its doors in the past 22 years. While program themes and activities have changed, the effect it has on its participants remains the same.

“The week that I was there, it had a political theme culminating in a mock parliament,” explains Scott Spencer, a mechanical engineer from Nelson, BC who participated in the program in 1985. “I was elected Premier of Manitoba and had to learn a great deal about Western Canada. Having grown up in egocentric Ontario, it was my first exposure to the issues facing the rest of the country. As an adult I have made a conscious decision to raise my children in the west so that they get a more balanced view of Canada and the world.”

Mr. Spencer also says EWC was his first attempt to seriously use his second language. The people he met from Quebec and the eastern provinces inspired him to pursue bilingualism. He now speaks five different languages as a result of his travels and hard work, and his experience isn’t that unusual.

“Many anglophone students say that as a result of their experience here, they have a better understanding and a more positive desire to learn a second language,” explains monitor Michael White. “As well, many francophone

participants say they better understand the anglophone students and appreciate the efforts they make to speak French. They also say that they didn’t experience any of the negative attitudes they were led to believe existed between the two language groups.”

There is no doubt that the personal relationships and interaction participants share during their week in Ottawa encourage and reinforce their appreciation of Canada and all its peoples.

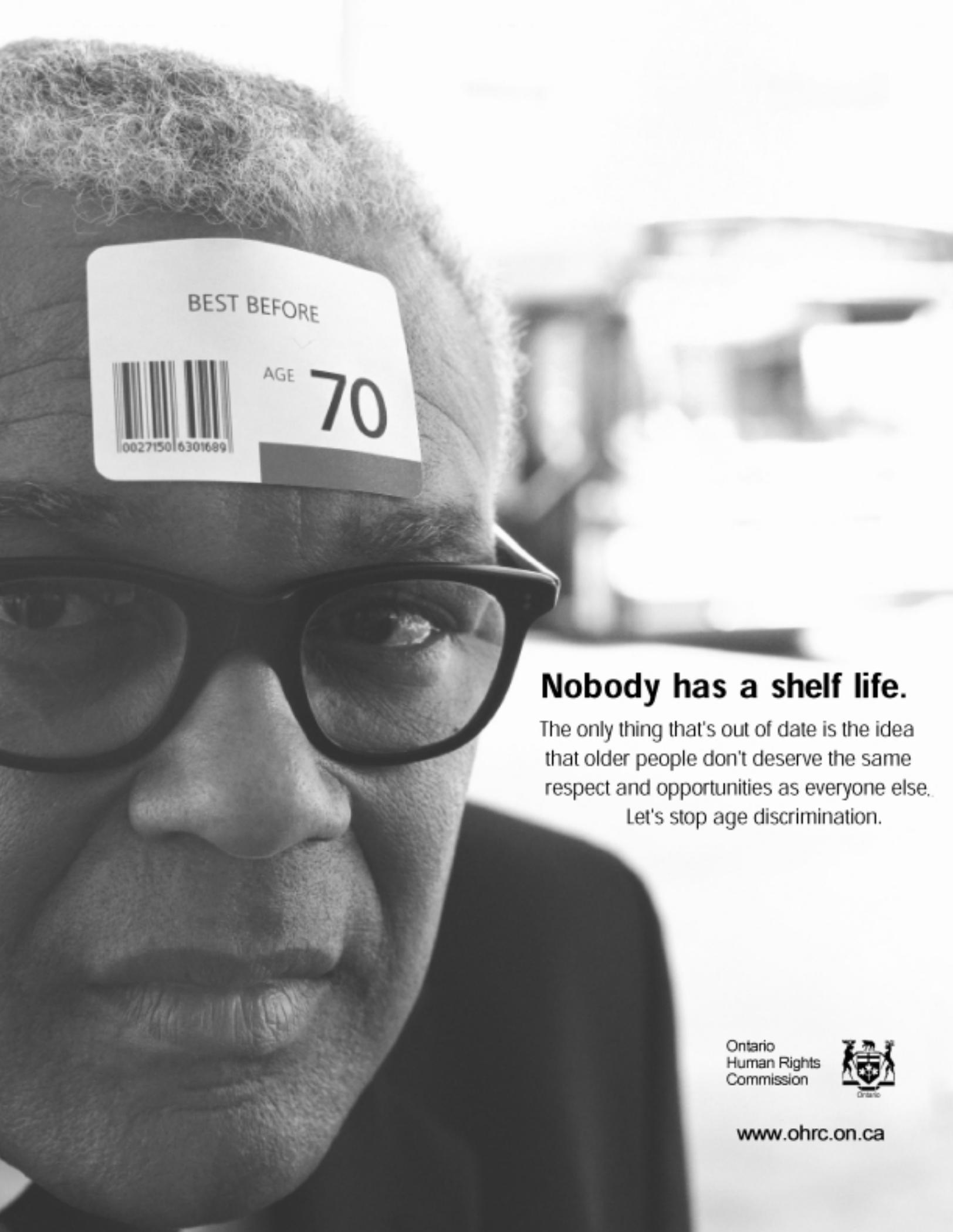
“What I remember most about Encounters is the friendships,” says Ryan Pyne, a 19 year-old university student at Mount Allison University in Sackville, NB. “We had an amazing time together and developed life long memories. I realized how similar we, as teenagers, were no matter what region of the country we came from, in terms of goals, dreams and simply wanting to have a great time and obtain a greater appreciation of Canada.”

According to Director General Linda Brunet, this is exactly what the program aims to do.

“We want young people to learn about Canada and everything our beautiful country has to offer, so we provide them with lots of opportunities to see and do things they wouldn’t otherwise have the opportunity to do,” says Mme. Brunet. “But, the best way for them to learn is to meet people from all across the country and share their stories. They discover Canada through each other, and that’s what really stays with them.”

At 4:30am on Saturday morning, the EWC participants gather in the foyer to say good-bye to the first group of students catching their early plane ride home. After an entire week together in Ottawa, they say good-bye with hugs, e-mail exchanges, promises of meetings and many, many tears. The warmth and friendship exhibited is a huge contrast to the shy, timid group that met in the cafeteria just seven days ago.

“What I remember most about it is the people. I made the most incredibly diverse group of friends from all over the nation. We laughed and cried. Some I have seen since I left. Some I just remember from their pictures,” says 21-year old Shannon Comeau of Charlottetown, PEI. “Even though we were all from different lifestyles, provinces and sometimes spoke different languages, we made an incredible bond through this program. I felt that my most important lesson was that Canadians are all the same type of fun, caring, patriotic people, and for that I was proud to be Canadian.”



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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

As a young person, I always took great satisfaction from getting involved. Whether it was singing in my high school choir, preparing a slideshow for graduation, working as a summer camp counselor, or volunteering at the local pool, I found the benefits of ‘keeping busy’ to be many. Not only does time fly when you’re having fun, but extracurriculars help keep you focused during a stage in life when it can be easy to lose your way. These activities gave me a sense of direction and purpose, and more often than not led to solid, meaningful friendships.

Yet despite all of these endeavours, to this day there is nothing I have enjoyed more than participating in exchange programs (or hosting visitors from other countries). My experience with this sort of thing began at the age of 13 when I volunteered to have a young girl from Japan stay with my family for a period of five days. We had such a wonderful time that we all cried when she had to leave! A year later, I traveled to France with a group from my grade nine class where we were billeted for three weeks; this time, the students we stayed with returned to Canada, making it a true ‘exchange.’ For many years after that, my parents doled out stamp after stamp for letters sent overseas, and I always came home from school with great anticipation, hoping to hear from either Ayako or Sophie. Our correspondence provided me not just with news about my friends’ personal lives and families, but with insight into other cultures and different ways of seeing the world.

Then, while away at university, I applied to the federal government’s Official Languages Summer Bursary Program. I was accepted and spent five weeks in beautiful Chicoutimi, Quebec. This program offers both classroom instruction and the chance to live with a local family in your other official language, which in my case is French. I can’t tell you how much I learned about my own country in those 35 days (and how much I still crave my host mother’s home cooking!). Much like the young people who participate in the *Katimavik* and *Encounters with Canada* programs described in this issue, I met students my age from all ten provinces – from British Columbia to Newfoundland. I think we all came away from the experience feeling a real connection with each other, and with the spectacular natural environment in Quebec as well.

Youth engagement is a very important process and an even more important tool. It will help us to encourage the next generation to take responsibility and pride in the future of our country. Through involvement in social, political and economic activity, young Canadians will not only get to know Canada better, but themselves also. This is vital to the development of active and caring citizens. Each of the authors published in this issue is contributing in some way to youth engagement. I would like to thank them for their interest and congratulate them on a job well done.

Allison Anderson

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