MENTAL HEALTH

FEBRUARY 2018

At the #CanadaWeWant Conference we asked participants to rate on a scale of 1-10 how much mental illness impacts their lives. The average response was 8.8. Youth in Canada feel that mental health and wellness is just as important as physical health. Although we recognize that leaders in some of our communities are changing how we treat mental health, Canada as a whole still has a great deal to accomplish before we can support youth mental health needs across the country.

Our recommendations take into account Canada's diversity and the diversity of experience with respect to mental health. Many Indigenous communities are in a state of mental health crisis; accessing mental health care in rural communities is different than for those living in cities. There is a lack of consistent education about mental illness, and Canada needs to address the national suicide crisis among young people, especially those in Indigenous communities.

The Mental Health Theme team agreed on 10 recommendations that we believe will improve young people's mental health and wellness moving forward.

Mental Health and Wellness Theme Group 2018

SUMMARY

Mental health affects us all; mental illness impacts many. Youth at the Canada We Want Conference recognized this reality. They also recognized the importance of exploring and addressing our own mental health. The Mental Health and Wellness Theme Team knows that the Canada We Want is one in which every young person has equitable access to mental health services and care, and every young person is educated about mental illness to reduce stigma.

#CANADA WE WANT

The change we want to see:

We would like to see a mental health care system in Canada that equals the physical health & wellness system. This will facilitate access to care and reduce stigma surrounding mental health. Our mental health care system needs to transition from being a reactive system that only responds to the needs of youth in crisis, to a proactive and pre-emptive system that prioritizes mental care and is based on both autonomy and community.

The way we want to get there (Activities):

The Canadian healthcare system will invest equally in mental health and physical health and wellness care. This can happen through mental health first aid training and mobile mental health crisis response units.

The way we want to get there (Activities):

Indigenous communities will have the proper support required to address their needs, including supports addressing intergenerational trauma and disproportionate suicide and mental illness rates.

The way we want to get there (Activities):

Canada will train young people in school systems so they are equipped to assist their peers in addressing mental illness and recognize early signs of suicide.

What we need to get there (Resources):

We will need government to fund mental health supports adequately, and concentrate these supports where need is greatest.

The way we want to get there (Resources):

The provincial and territorial Ministries of Education will need to cooperate and partner with the federal government so supports and trainings can be integrated into curriculum and delivered in schools.

What are the values and the principles to ground our recommendations?

The current youth mental health system in Canada is outdated. *New and innovative* practices are required to support a new generation's expanding needs.

What are the values and the principles to ground our recommendations?

Indigenous young people experience disproportionate rates of mental illness and suicide on and off reserve. The current system provided to Indigenous youth is failing, often culturally irrelevant and outdated. I think this should be reframed.

Mental Health and Wellness – The Students Commission of Canada