



## The Students Commission Highlights of Activities 2002

### Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement

Working in partnership with our core partners, the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement project continued with various research studies, examining the impact of youth engagement on young people, their families, schools and communities. Extensive work was done on a thorough literature and resource review, the release of a National Program Scan and more than fifteen presentations at conferences and meetings sharing the knowledge culled to date. We consulted with a wide number of organizations, providing advice and guidelines on how to improve their engagement of young people. We produced newsletters, brochures, articles and continually updated an extensive website of resources and information. Throughout all the work, youth were trained and supported in how to do research and generate information on issues that affected them, which other youth could use to improve their lives. For example, recently immigrated youth from Latin America mapped the health, counselling and recreation services available to them in Lower Mainland Vancouver and produced a map and chart for display in schools and organizations. Aboriginal youth researched youth needs in their communities, offered workshops in schools, produced recommendations for Tribal Council, and ran an anti-drinking and driving campaign in the community.

We supported and trained youth to develop workshops from the work of the Centre and present with adults at various events such as the Regeneration Conference in Nova Scotia, the Early Childhood Development Symposium in Montreal, a United Nations Education Program Children's Conference in Vancouver, and on to an international conference in Johannesburg, South Africa

### Smoke Free Spaces



In partnership with Health Canada, we brought together young people from across Canada to take part in a national meeting examining issues related to tobacco use, second hand smoke and smoking cessation. Young people were trained and supported to run the meeting, to talk with government officials, and take action around the issues of tobacco to improve the health of themselves and other young people. Government officials were provided with guidelines, program ideas and support about how to effectively engage young people in the work.

### Governor Generals Youth Forum

Working with the office of Her Excellency, the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada, the Students Commission hosted a national youth forum for young people to examine volunteerism, community building and what role they can play in this process. They produced a report for the Governor General and participated in a CBC Town Hall special with the Governor General.



## High School Co-op Program (Toronto/Ottawa/Alliston)

Working in partnership with various school boards, the Co-op program provides young people the opportunity to gain valuable work experience and build on their existing skills and assets. Youth were trained in research, writing, editing, layout, design, teamwork, business and organizational, skills. Various educational resources were produced from the program, including an on-line magazine and several videos.

## Sixth Messenger Workshops for youth and evaluation

The Sixth Messenger project expanded, with young people trained and supported to develop and deliver an interactive workshop based upon the print resource. They also developed evaluation tools and questionnaires, and began interviewing people about the effectiveness of the resource. Workshops were given in schools and youth organizations.

## Destination 2020 Workshops for youth and evaluation

Utilizing the tool created the year before, these workshops were again delivered by youth to youth in schools, child welfare centres, and young offender centres. They are delivered to assist young people in identifying what choices they have in regards to employment and career issues. Evaluation interviews were also conducted.

## Pilot Program to Foster Student Engagement in School Life

This project created and maintained an online resource bank as well as provided phone and personal support to schools who had undertaken to look at student engagement in their schools, who was getting involved and who wasn't, and how to improve engagement for disengaged students. The project was funded by the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, and its School Engagement project. Meaningful student engagement is about students and teachers working together as equals, making decisions as partners, and improving the school community together.



## The Young Men's Guyde and Workshops

Young men, many experiencing different kinds of risks, such as homelessness, dropping out of school, discrimination and substance abuse were supported to run a project where young men in Canada identified their needs, identified the lack of processes for them to talk about and deal with issues, and created some effective methods for young men to discuss and address problems such as abuse, maltreatment, peer pressure and violence. Building upon focus groups and sharing circles which they held across the country, these young men then turned the discussions into a humorous yet serious tool, (a magazine) with a workshop outline to assist with further discussions amongst young men in Canada. A research report was written on the process.

## The Blood Tribe Youth Engagement Project

In partnership with Kainai Children's Services, young people in the community were trained and supported to create participatory action research projects and social justice projects which engaged young people from the community. The youth began work on a feasibility study to examine the impact a Youth Council would have and an aggressive anti-drinking and driving campaign.

## The Students Commission Summer and Year Round Staff Program: remedial youth support and employment

In hiring marginalized young people across Canada to work for the summer and throughout the year, the Students Commission provides opportunities to those young people traditionally excluded from summer

employment programs. In the summer of 2002, we brought together more than 20 young people for a week of training and with strong support throughout the summer, we provided youth the chance to build skills, confidence and create new opportunities for themselves.

### **Young Women Connects**

Young Women continued to be trained and supported to give workshops to others using this resource.



### **Annual Summer Youth Program; All my Relations**

150 young people from across Canada, between the ages of 14 – 18, recruited from safe houses, children's aid services, reserves, street organizations and schools examined issues related to Healthy Relationships and Sexuality for seven days. Prior to, and during the event, youth were trained to facilitate and run the program. Youth were trained to run discussion groups, identify issues to create real and meaningful solutions to problems, to craft a report and present their findings to adults from various government and non-profit organizations in Ottawa, Ontario. A mini-conference was held at the end with invited adults to review the findings and demonstrate effective youth-adult methods of discussion around relationships and sexuality.

Throughout the year, youth were supported and mentored to follow through with projects related to what they had learned. This included giving workshops, producing articles and newsletters, and attending other conferences and advisory meetings as youth volunteers to adults and organizations looking to improve their communication with youth. Youth were supported to volunteer in various organizations in their home communities and to create various youth-driven projects.

Mentoring occurred through online support and meetings, face to face workshops, and telephone conversations. Support was also given through these contacts for dealing with personal and life issues such as staying in school, substance abuse, immigration difficulties, legal problems, and employment or financial difficulties.