

For more information about any of our services please call (416) 597-8297,  
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**The Students Commission of Canada supports its charitable activities by generating revenue through providing consulting, advisory and implementation services to a wide range of clients, including federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments; local, regional and national youth serving organizations and networks; public health units and schools; tribal councils and indigenous youth serving organizations; police services; correctional services and various recreational and sports deliverers.**

**Rooted in our Four Pillars Respect, Listen, Understand Communicate™, our services are informed by research generated through our work as the lead of Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement and more than 20 years of active practice of youth engagement. Validated frameworks and models, updated literature reviews and ongoing program evaluation guide our consulting activities in a full continuum of strategic advice, customized research, program development and implementation, to evaluation and follow-up. Our services include:**

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## **Conferences, Forums, Symposiums and Gatherings**

The Students Commission was born out from a recommendation by youth at a national youth conference held in Toronto in 1991. From that initial event, the Students Commission has developed a process with a series of manuals and tools for holding conferences and gatherings that bring together youth, as well as youth, young adults and adult allies, creating 'a-ha' moments that shift thinking. Our team can provide full event management or work with your team and fill in only the gaps you need.

### *Full Event Management:*

Our team can work with you and your organization to plan, develop, execute and evaluate your entire event. One of our strengths in youth and youth focused event planning and management is being able to quickly, efficiently and effectively bring together all those needed to ensure the success of your program.

### *Consultation:*

Having brought together thousands of young people from across Canada and internationally to more than 150 events, the Students Commission's expertise will help provide your organization's planning team with insights, ideas, and potential tools to ensure your youth or youth/adult gathering is a success. We can assist you in developing an event plan, creating a process or program that will meet your needs. Our Consultation team includes Students Commission leadership, young leaders, and youth who can meet, review and provide either one time or ongoing consultation for your event.

### *Youth Recruitment:*

We can provide support as you recruit participants for your event. With the Student Commission Hubs (Eastern: Fredericton; Central: Toronto; Western: Saskatoon) and additional offices and partners in places such as Victoria, Kainai First Nation, Edmonton, Flying Dust First Nation, Regina, Winnipeg, Ottawa, Kingston, Merrickville, Thunder Bay, Kitchener-Waterloo and Halifax we can use our networks to ensure young people know about your opportunity. Our expertise is in recruiting diverse youth participants. Our team can help develop a communication strategy you can use to promote the event to youth and young adults, using social media to recruit youth and link youth and adults from our partners across Canada to help broaden your reach.

### *Event Logistics and Management:*

We have developed software to help manage events of any size that is easy to use both on the front end (by those registering) and the back end (those managing the event). This software

includes online registration (and can accommodate paper based registration), tools to manage communication with participants including our related forms (permission, medical, media release) that can be adapted for your event, medical needs of participants, and travel logistics. This software can develop and manage groups or teams, workshop participants, and rooming lists. Our team can arrange travel (including ground transportation) and provide staffing to greet and guide your participants to your site. We have long standing relationships with various venues across Canada that have proven successful for youth or youth/adult events, and our team can support the negotiation and planning for accommodation, meeting rooms, and meals.

### *Event Facilitation:*

We can provide trained and supported youth, young adult, and adult facilitators to lead large or small group discussions to support your process. These facilitators can lead a range of additional activities, including community building activities and off-site tours or meetings, as well as provide night time and behavioural support to your participants.

### *Event Evaluation:*

In collaboration with youth and young adults, our team of researchers can tailor our event evaluation tools for your needs, including daily evaluations, workshop evaluations, an overall event evaluation, impact evaluation, and / or process evaluations. For more about our evaluation work visit: [Current Surveys](#) and [Research Tools](#).

## **Issue, Policy, Program Advice from Diverse Youth**

After 20 years of Students Commission programing we have a strong network of youth, young adults, and organizational partners across Canada. We are known for successfully bringing together diverse groups of youth and having them learn, share, and build together. We have seen and studied the impacts of gathering youth from varied backgrounds, cultures, languages, lived experiences and having them develop new understandings and communicating with each other, learning and sharing in order to create change in all young people's lives.

Many of the young people we have sustained relationships with (providing new opportunities for input) come from communities commonly marginalized or under-engaged such as youth of colour, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit youth, GLBT youth, newcomer youth, northern and rural youth, language minority youth, youth in care, and street involved youth. Our strong partnerships with organizations who serve these and other underserved youth allow us a reach from coast to coast to coast when seeking youth input. This is complemented by youth who are identified as leaders, who are already active and currently engaged in various activities, and who came from diverse backgrounds.

### *Young Decision Makers Network*

Governments, organizations, and systems want to know what young people feel and what they are thinking on current issues facing children and youth. Increasingly recognized as an important component of youth engagement, having young decision makers assist as programs, policies, and legislation are developed, reviewed, and implemented can help ensure your work is relevant, effective, and meets the needs of children and youth in Canada.

Young Decision Makers (YDM) is both a model of decision making as well as a body of youth, young adults, and adult allies from across the country working collaboratively to ensure that youth voice is heard in formal and informal decision making bodies (governments, systems and organizations).

At its core, YDM is comprised of two core elements:

- The YDM Model – a process by which youth, young adults and adult allies ensure that the youth voice is heard during the decision making process. For more about the YDM Model visit: [How YDM Supports Organizations](#) and
- The YDM Network – a network of youth, young adults, adult allies and their respective organizations to whom the youth of the YDM network can go to identify, study, and discuss issues and make decisions that will inform policy makers.

The YDM network is made up of three different groups of people:

- Youth (young people aged seventeen and under), whose role it is to be the catalyst for the YDM project;
- Young Adults (people who are eighteen and over and self-identify as young adults; whose role it is to support the youth based on their experiences, while being close enough in age to maintain elements of the youth perspective; and
- Adult Allies (people who choose to identify with this term), whose role it is to support the youth and the young adults as well as to help provide supportive links throughout the various stages of the YDM process.

Together, these various members of the YDM network respond to needs both within an organization, community, or geographically (regionally or nationally), always with the goal of ensuring that youth voice is heard in decision-making. You can call on the YDM Network to study an issue you may want to learn more and get youth input into. Using the YDM Network allows you to have youth take part in meaningful discussions and dialogue and make decisions that can help shape your programs while increasing the relevance of policies and procedures. At regional, provincial, or national levels the YDM Network has interested participants ready to come together to address issues as they arise.

The YDM Network is like having your very own fully supported youth advisory committee to consult and engage. From daylong activities to longer term and social media based engagement

projects, the YDM Network can provide you feedback, direction, and ideas fuelled by those in the know.

Interested in joining the YDM Network? YDM is FREE and open to those who believe that youth need to be involved at all levels when decisions are made that affect them. This means youth (ages 17 and under), young adults, adult allies, and organizations can be AND are a part of YDM! By joining you'll stay informed of opportunities to participate and help make decisions! Click here: <http://ydm.engagementcentre.ca/join/> .

### *Community, Regional and National Partnerships*

The Students Commission was founded in partnerships: the impetus of our birth was the coming together of a number of youth leaders, publishers, educators, and service club volunteers who knew that young people in Canada required space to use their voices. Long before funding mandated partnerships, The Students Commission has worked collaboratively with countless sectors on various projects. Our vision of partnership is one where all win: partner organizations, children, youth, and ourselves. We strongly respect the reciprocal nature of partnerships and value what we both share with and receive from others. Our capacity to develop meaningful partnerships can be seen in our relationships with our existing partners and their youth. This process of coming together, learning from each other, and moving each other forward has allowed us to share opportunities and knowledge in a respectful process.

Our work has allowed us to develop partnership projects in communities from coast (Victoria, BC) to coast (Arctic Bay, NU) to coast (St. John's NF) and in every province and territory. Our Summer Youth Employment Program provides us the opportunity to reach out to thousands of children and youth all over Canada each year. Speaking to the strength of our partnerships is the number of summer partners who participate each summer. Some communities have been involved for more than ten years, submitting joint proposals and leading the employment program.

Having a strong network of partners at the local level allows us to provide genuine national scope when gathering input from young people and bring the voices of local youth and their issues to the national level.

If you want input from young people and youth serving organizations, the Students Commission has the capacity to provide access to our network and facilitate opportunities for our partner organizations to work alongside you.

## **Positive Youth Development Program Creation**

When issues arise, funding becomes available, or your organization decides to develop a new program to serve youth and young adults, The Students Commission can provide support as you create a positive youth development program. We have existing programs available that can be tailored to meet your needs or we can help you determine a new strategy that can be executed into a program. Either as an official partner or in a contractual relationship, The Students Commission can assist you with adapting our existing programming to fit your needs or developing new initiatives.

### *Influence in Action:*

Influence in Action evidence-based program addressing substance use and positive decision making of youth by training youth who are identified as peer influencers, by their peers. With the information and skills from the training, these youth influence the decision-making of their peers through informal conversations. This program is an excellent opportunity for influential students from different social groups in your school or organization to learn new life skills and gain new knowledge and methods of communicating with their peers. It is an amazing opportunity for the greater student body to be positively influenced in their decision-making. This program is based on a randomized control trial in Wales that reduced smoking rates across school populations by 4%. We have completed a pilot phase of this project nationally and currently are completing a report on this pilot. Early reporting suggests that the program was very well received by schools and organizations in various settings. For more information visit the [Influence in Action website](#).

### *Project PEACE:*

Internationally recognized as an effective crime prevention strategy, The PEACE Project involves Toronto youth, the Toronto Police Service, community agencies and schools in efforts to reduce the negative impact guns and gangs have on all our lives. Working together, youth and police have developed videos, programs and workshops that address violence. We can work with your organization or Police Service to develop a similar youth engagement response in your community to guns, gangs and violence. For more information visit [www.projectpeace.ca](http://www.projectpeace.ca).

### *Don't Believe The HYPE:*

This is a school based youth engagement program led by a young adult facilitator that demonstrates positive role modeling while students learn more about hip hop. The students deconstruct how this genre of music – this culture - is used internationally to address social issues such as poverty, racism, and oppression. There is a skill development component in the elements of hip hop (dance, music, and writing) that is delivered throughout the program. Youth are challenged to look beyond the headlines and sensationalism of what they hear, see, and read about hip hop and to reach past the HYPE. For more information visit the [Don't Believe the Hype website](#).

### *Gender Specific Programming:*

Research shows that there are gender differences in learning and the Students Commission has developed gender specific programming for twenty years, recognizing the difference in needs, processes, and styles of programming. These include Challenge the Assumptions, Young Women Connect, the Young Men's Guyde, Project Not-So-Much and Project Not-So-Many. Skilled at recruiting, engaging, and sustaining the engagement of youth in these projects, we can assist you as you adapt one of our existing programs or develop your own gender specific programming.

*"I am one of the members of Project Not-So-Much. This project started in November of 2003, and we have been here at the Students Commission ever since. The whole idea behind this project was to bring a group of young men together to hang out and express their opinions, on issues that they were facing in their communities, families and just life in general.*

*I don't want you to get it twisted; we didn't show up just wanting to talk about our problems. There was something that drew us in: money, food and tokens for the subway here in Toronto - things that everyone loves. Believe it or not though, that's not what kept us here - it was the fact that we are making a difference in both are ourselves and in others." Youth Participant*

## **Customized Youth Engagement Research and Analysis**

The Students Commission is the lead of the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement (CEYE). The CEYE includes researchers from Brock University, St. Mary's University, St. Thomas University and Wilfrid Laurier University and with ongoing partnerships with researchers at Queen's University, the University of Victoria, Simon Fraser University and other universities across Canada. This is complemented by our NGO partners including Youth Launch / Nutana Integrated School-linked Services, Youth Net / Réseau Ado (YN/RA) The Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO), Town Youth Participation Strategies/Youth Centres Canada, City of Vancouver Youth Outreach Team and YOUCAN. Initially named the Centre of Excellence by the Government of Canada in 2000, we continue to respond to, develop, and execute research and learnings, knowledge transfer frameworks, and evaluations for governments, systems and NGO's.

### ***Research:***

Research *with* youth, young adults, and community based organizations is very different than research *on* youth, young adults and community based organizations. Our team can provide you a solid partner in your own research program or initiative, training and capacity building around youth and young adult engagement in research or conduct a full research program / study for you. For more information visit [Youth-Adult Partnership Tools](#) and our [CEYE website](#).

### ***Participatory Action Research (PAR):***



PAR is an opportunity to engage youth, young adults, and adult allies in identifying issues of importance, gathering information, and drafting reports / recommendations that are most relevant to them. The "research" aspects of PAR is different in that it avoids the "We'll take information from you and report" approach that often comes from more traditional research undertaken by academia or systems. PAR recognizes that the experts are not only those from existing research structures, who often would go to a community, study youth and leave with their information to write papers, reports and develop recommendations, never to be seen again by the youth or young adults. Using PAR means that the "research" is done by youth and young adults, for youth and young adults. We can support you as you develop a PAR project that brings youth and young adults together to address specific issues identified by them and develop results that are directly applied to the problems at hand. For an example of the CEYE PAR process please view our [Word On The Street report](#).

### *Organization / Program / Project Scans:*

Are you looking to develop a new program or learn more about similar programming nationally and internationally? We can deliver to you a full scan of organizations, programs or projects from around the globe that meet your needs. These scans are developed in concert with you to ensure the information you require is the information you receive. To help make informed decisions you can count on The Students Commission to deliver you accurate, relevant, useful, and useable data. Delivered in a design that is easy to read, this resource will be a tool that can be used by all of your staff.

### *Targeted Literature Reviews and Summaries:*

To support your program development, fund development or training programs the Students Commission can develop Targeted Literature Reviews and Summaries. This knowledge on children and youth and engagement related issues can help support your existing and new work. By looking at current and relevant data generated internationally, these reviews will help you ensure your programs are having the greatest impact on those you serve.

### *Young Decision Makers Model:*

Research is about learning and understanding. A newer component of the Students Commission research process is the YDM Model. Supported by other youth serving agencies, youth, and young adults, we have been part of a new model that recognizes the learning that takes place during the research process – the YDM Model. Learning and sharing occurs between all three groups of participants (youth, young adults, and adult allies), back and forth, in a respectful manner. Each individual, regardless of age or experience, has both something to learn and something to share by being involved.

After your organization or its members have identified an issue, the YDM Model follows with five stages: Studying the Issue, Discussing the Issue, Decision Making, Informing Policy Makers and Action. If you are looking for an innovative way to conduct research within your organization, the YDM Model, led by our trained facilitators, is it. We can guide your group through the YDM process (depending on size) between one and seven days. The Model can be

trained to those within your organization so you can lead the process yourselves in repeated activities. Click here: <http://ydm.engagementcentre.ca> for more information.

## **Strategic Youth Policy Development**

Strong policies result in strong programs. The Students Commission has helped many organizations and systems such as Girl Guides of Canada, Chiefs of Ontario, YMCA of Greater Toronto, YMCA Canada, the City of Vancouver, the City of Mississauga, Kid's Help Phone and various federal, provincial and territorial governments across Canada as they develop youth and youth engagement strategies, policies, or frameworks.

Our team of researchers and programmers work collaboratively with you to determine how to develop effective, current, and relevant policies that are meaningful and will impact youth and your organization positively.

Working with youth and young leaders, senior management and volunteers within your organization we can develop a process that is engaging and inclusive to ensure that the all stakeholders have the opportunity to influence the final policy. Our expertise in developing and leading focus groups, online and in-person surveys, consultations, interviews, PAR projects, Photovoice, and social media tools helps ensure a wide scope of input is generated and buy in occurs from all levels of your organization.

Our researchers scan similar processes, explore the latest data, and support the generation of tools to ensure that there is a clear relationship between formal and informal learning for your organization.

We can support the development and execution of youth or youth/adult steering committees or working groups who help move your process forward internally.

Lastly we can conduct an ongoing evaluation of the process so you can learn and share, should you wish, with others the knowledge generated and highlight the success of the process and the final product; new youth and/or youth engagement policies.

## **Supporting Youth in Engagement Activities**

### *Advisory Boards:*

The Students Commission can assist your organization as you develop an advisory board, committee, or group to steer a project, program, or organization. A full service offered by the Students Commission, from youth recruitment to evaluation, our team has the expertise to ensure that the group is inclusive and reflects those who use your program; they are supported, trained and able to participate fully. We can support local, regional or national groups, including any face to face or overnight meetings (where we can facilitate logistics, support/supervision, facilitation) necessary. Our team of facilitators can work alongside your staff and volunteers to

provide knowledge sharing and shared responsibilities if desired. Using various tools (social media, video and telephone conferencing, in person meetings) we can provide a group that builds a strong relationships with each other and your organization, provides relevant feedback, advice and ideas and helps advise the project, program or organization.

### *Youth Consultations:*

Using the YDM Model and other interactive processes, The Students Commission can recruit, facilitate, and provide a report on youth and young adults' feedback on the topic required. Our facilitators begin by learning themselves about the topic at hand, develop an interactive agenda and process, and lead the group through the consultation in order to provide you with the most up to date data from youth and young adults. Consultations can be local, regional, or national and can be conducted in person, online, or over video or teleconference.

## **Program / Project Evaluation**

The Students Commission offers formative evaluation of youth engagement projects and programs. As the lead organization of the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, the Students Commission delivers a team of program experts and academic researchers, tested tools and measures that focus on youth engagement process and outcomes, and innovative processes to engage youth and organizations in evaluation. Throughout the process, ongoing reports and results are fed back to improve the program on an ongoing basis. The Students Commission offers evaluation processes over short-term projects as well as over long-term programs. The Students Commission has conducted program evaluations with various organizations at the local, regional and national organizations including the City of Mississauga, YMCA, the Girl Guides of Canada, Kids Help Phone.

## **Youth Engagement Capacity Building**

### *Key Note Addresses:*

For your conferences, symposiums, trainings, fundraisers, or other special events The Students Commission can provide recognized leaders in youth engagement as key note speakers for your event. These addresses can have experienced youth join the speaker for a full complement of experience for your event.

### *Workshops:*

The Students Commission offers a series of interactive workshops geared to youth, adults, or youth and adults on youth engagement activities, learnings, projects, and processes. These

workshops (including Youth Engagement 101, Adult Allies, Youth As Influencers, Young Decision Making) can be delivered in a standalone process (ranging in time from 45 minutes – full or multi day sessions) or linked to a Key Note Address or other presentation at your events. Our workshops are often led by youth, young adults, and adults working together and will be paired to best meet the needs of the audience or your organization.

### *Presentations:*

Searching deeper than our Workshops, Students Commission Presentations are more instructive and less interactive, though still reflecting knowledge generated from our twenty years of experience on what participants want and need for a fulfilling and meaningful experience. Using touch pad instant polling and sharing knowledge about youth and youth engagement related issues, our presentations are geared to youth, adults, or mixed audiences. Our presentations are often led by youth, young adults, and adults working together and will be paired to best meet the needs of the audience or your organization.

### *Trainings:*

How do we develop a youth engagement strategy? How can we use the YDM Model within our organization? How do we deliver gender specific programming? How do we best engage more diverse youth and be inclusive in our programming? If you have asked these questions we can help provide the answers that fit your organization. Our trainings, either one time or ongoing, can help your organization become a strong leader in respectful and meaningful youth engagement. Led by our skilled and knowledgeable trainers, these sessions will provide the ideas, the research, and the knowledge that supports them and tools you can use to move the youth engagement agenda forward in your organization.

The Students Commission's workshops and trainings can offer a range of components, which we combine together and tailor for both youth and/or adult audiences depending on requests. Below is a snapshot of the possible workshops, presentations or trainings we can offer your organization.

**A Framework for Youth Engagement:** Introduction to the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement's conceptual framework of youth engagement, and how to use it as a tool for planning and continuous evaluation. The framework includes initiating factors, sustaining factors, qualities of engagement, as well as outcomes. Each of these are explored at the individual, social, and systemic levels over time. This component can include strategic planning for developing new, or improving existing youth engagement opportunities, with a hands-on activity to practice using the framework.

**Recent Trends from Youth Engagement Literature:** Current and emerging research results around youth engagement, with a focus on how the research translates to policy and practice.

**Engaging Youth in Programs:**

Components of the recent youth engagement literature and youth engagement framework are included to provide a basis for program development and identification of effective practices. Deconstruction of existing youth engaging programs provide examples of effective practices with a focus on action planning. This component includes youth engagement in various settings, including events and conferences as well as effective models, policies, and practices to create safe, fun, and meaningful experiences for youth. As with all of our work, we give special attention to engaging diverse youth, particularly youth that are typically disengaged.

**Adult Ally Training:** An activity-based workshop for adult allies to build on their skills at working with youth. The workshop format models youth engaging practices. Activities focus on self-reflection, values, exploring new skills, and assessing strengths. This workshop is complemented by a full training manual with extra activities and worksheets available online. Activities from this training are ideal to integrate in various youth engagement workshops and during initial processes of youth-adult partnerships.

**Youth Sexuality Workshop:** An activity-based workshop for adult allies and youth to build their comfort level to work together in areas related to youth sexuality. Sexuality is defined holistically as a term that encompasses all aspects of youth health and well-being, from physical and psychological to identity and spiritual development. Activities focus on self-reflection, values, exploring new skills, and assessing strengths. This workshop is complemented by a full training manual with extra activities and worksheets available online.

**Youth Engagement in Research and Evaluation:** Support and training designed to build capacity to engage youth in research, including Participatory Action Research projects, evaluation research, as well as more traditional academic research. Areas to explore include: innovative research methodologies (e.g. community mapping, web-based research, photovoice, theatre), processes to engage youth in some or all stages of research from design to evaluation, skills and support to facilitate youth in research. Training can be tailored for youth to build interview and focus group facilitation skills, develop survey and interview tools, etc.

**Youth Facilitation Training:** This training is intended to explore facilitation principles and to practice youth facilitation skills. Youth and/or adults learn about engaging ways to facilitate group discussions and processes, including icebreakers and activities, as

well as building group ownership. This training includes resource materials (e.g. facilitation manual) and can be tailored for particular purposes (e.g. focus group facilitation, facilitation of discussion groups or programs related to difficult subject matter, etc).

**Project PEACE:** Geared to community agencies and schools in efforts to reduce the negative impact guns and gangs have on all our lives, this evaluated program is an interactive workshop led by experiential young leaders. This workshop helps guide young people through a process where they learn about decision making and the impacts of our decisions.