



The Students
Commission
Centre of Excellence for
Youth Engagement



#Canada We Want

February 28-March 5, 2018

Introduction

Students Commission’s programming is designed with purpose and intention. Why? Because research shows that programs that are designed and executed with intention have greater impact. You have the freedom to listen intently to your participants and respond, because knowing your voice matters, that you are empowered to make decisions and be responsible for them fosters Autonomy and Competence. These are critical factors for thriving for you and your participants. However, Registration, Greeting, Settling In, and Opening Ceremonies begin with a third critical factor, perhaps the most important, Relatedness. Our first goal is that everyone feels welcomed and connected. That begins with smiles, gentle questions for the shy and laughter and warmth. From the beginning, focus on Relatedness; the people are our purpose, creating a community.

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Day 1: Opening Ceremony

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

1. Objectives

- To welcome participants warmly and build community,
- To ground the event in ceremony and values,
- To create a common vision of communicating their ideas to decision-makers,
- To create a common vision of creating change through their community action projects.
- To exercise choice (autonomy) to focus on a theme for the week.



2. Activities

- Elders Circle
- Large group community building
- Overview of the goals
- The **four pillars: Respect, Listen, Understand, Communicate™**
- Team Theme pitch

3. Background Research to Support Activity

- Engagement is generated when one has a purpose outside of the self, an opportunity to contribute meaningful to others (CEYE Engagement). That's the opportunity that #Canada We Want provides, so it's motivating to see the big picture, the opportunity.
- Confidence and autonomy are generated by knowing the path ahead, the end goal and the steps to get there with the freedom to determine the how (ARC).
- Shared values help establish a common safe space (4 Pillars, key feature of positive settings for youth development, TRC).



4. Likely Challenges and Problem Solving

What gets said or imparted in the first sessions of a program in terms of detail/content is not likely to be remembered, particularly by the hard-to-engage. Their walls are up, and rightly so — stages of change and social determinants of health. What will be remembered is the feeling they leave with, engendered by such simple things as “everyone was smiling” or “laughing”, “I felt welcomed and heard”, “I feel like this might be okay”... “I connected with someone.” Too often we focus on the head (cognitive) first. Expect to have to continually repeat and embed the same content, the details and purpose. Plan on integrating these key points naturally into following sessions. Capturing the heart in these early sessions leads to engaging the head, and the feet follow. (Head, heart, feet, and spirit aspects of youth engagement, and outcomes of ARC).

First Team Sessions: Community Building

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

1. Objectives

- To initiate engagement,
- To build a community and a safe(r) space,
- To ensure everyone on the team knows each other's names,
- To build connections (relatedness) with each other,
- To acquire skills to make connections beyond your team.



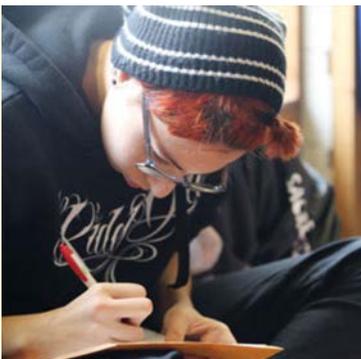
2. Activities

- Icebreakers and community building activities (See Resources, eg Partner Interviews)
- Group guideline brainstorm

Community building activities are about having fun and feeling more comfortable together. Feeling connected to at least one other person in the group can make a difference in whether a young person will keep coming back or not. Group guidelines that are developed collaboratively give youth the opportunity to shape the space for their needs and based on their values. The guidelines work best if they are revisited, applied and refined regularly. Guidelines apply to youth and adults equally. Engage everyone in generating ongoing refinements through the process as situations arise to maintain the expectations of the space. One approach is to brainstorm and transcribe guidelines on a large piece of paper so that there is room for additions over time, and put it up in the room. Leave time for young people to discuss, challenge, and decide on the guidelines they agree to.

3. Background Research to Support Activity

- Community building activities and developing guidelines support relatedness by providing highly structured ways to socialize in a new group (ARC), and build safe(r) space through inclusive practices and responsive guidelines (ARC/CEYE qualities of positive youth engagement settings/YDM principles)



4. Likely Challenges and Problem Solving

Some may feel more reluctant than others to connect. Small dyads or triads can be less intimidating at the start. Prepare more than one community builder. Safety and comfort are not always aligned; young people's beliefs about the world may be challenged in the process, which can lead to a sense of discomfort. In this context, maintaining a safe space means a space where youth can be uncomfortable, but always know that they are valued, accepted and not judged. Stopping and labeling (and normalizing) this discomfort and returning to group guidelines and values can help ground these moments. Ongoing feedback from young people about safety will ensure that as the group evolves and new needs are identified, they can be addressed in the space.

Day 2: Engage on the Theme with Others

Thursday, March 1, 2018

1. Objectives

- Large Group Plenary: to revisit core values of 4 Pillars,
- Large Group Plenary: to share the Big Picture purpose of contributing to a Youth Policy for Canada
- Small Teams: to engage deeply with your theme, share experiences, discover knowledge, discuss (HHFS, YDM process tools, Knowledge in Action).



2. Activities

- Dream tree
- Small groups discussion

Make a visual **“Dream tree”**: ask youth to individually write at least 3 hopes for the future of their community on sticky notes, which become the fruit of the tree. Youth can put them up on the tree, group them as they see connections to make fruit “bunches”. This visual can be developed further throughout the process.

Facilitate deep **discussion** in small groups for youth to share what brought them to this issue group, about the hopes they added to the tree, and why they are important to them and to their community. This is an opportunity to share their knowledge (head), experience (heart, feet), and connection (spirit) to the issue, from their perspectives. Encourage youth to add to the tree as the discussion continues, adding leaves to the tree - moving back and forth between discussion (head, heart) and more hands-on creativity (feet).

3. Background Research to Support Activity

- Establishes autonomy by starting from personal interests and experiences.
- Develops relatedness with community (ARC model).
- Contributes to a safe(r) space where their contributions are valued and accepted (4 pillars, features for positive development).
- Engages the head, heart, feet and spirit (definition of full engagement).
- Develops competence in teamwork, learning and communicating ideas to others in various ways that accommodate differing needs of team members



4. Likely Challenges and Problem Solving

Some young people may be insulated from social issues due to privilege and therefore may have trouble identifying the issues or may have an outsider’s perspective that may not resonate for those being affected the most. Others may be facing multiple barriers and have a deep understanding of social issues that affect them, but may feel hopeless about change. Make space for a diversity of experiences and perspectives by asking questions: Does anyone have a different perspective on this? Does anyone have a different experience? This may be a useful place to employ Stop and Label to make these inclusion objectives and practices explicit. Use activities that elicit multiple perspectives, but do not single out minority voices. For example, invite youth to write on note cards and place them in a pile or in a wiffle ball. Notes can be picked up randomly and read aloud by others so it is not clear who contributed what’s being read.

Day 3: Enlarge the Discussion, Shape Action

Friday, March 2, 2018

1. Objectives

- Large Group Plenary: to introduce core value of Truth and Reconciliation: Turtle Island and Canada's story,
- To build a stronger sense of common purpose among all teams
- Large Group Plenary: to gather input from all teams (become a U-Reporter with UNICEF)
- Small Teams: to move to planning and action, to decide on the actions
- To gather knowledge and perspectives from others so that youth can speak from a wider range of voices



2. Activities

- Data party!
- Consult other youth and adults

A **data party** is a way to creatively learn from existing research. Post on the wall visuals such as graphs, quotes, and key findings from relevant previous research on the issue (e.g., Sharing the Stories data). In pairs or small groups, youth walk around and look at data, make notes or discuss what surprised them, what was interesting or important, what they want to learn more about, what was similar/different from their experiences, and how this knowledge contributes to the issues they identified initially. Report back to the group and discuss: What surprised us? What resonated? What is the most important thing we learned? What is the most interesting thing we learned? What do we think others should know? What should we spend more time learning? Are there questions that we should ask the larger group, our friends at home, our networks?

3. Background Research to Support Activity

- Develops relatedness between young people's personal experiences and their communit(ies). Develops autonomy in group decision-making (ARC model).
- Focuses on root causes and addressing inequalities rather than judgment of individuals' responses (harm reduction and social determinants of health/system YE)
- Youth use the 4 pillars to engage a broader constituency.
- Seeking to gather voices of young people who are not present, and who may not typically have the opportunity to provide input puts the YDM principles into action: representative, inclusive and participatory.



4. Likely Challenges and Problem Solving

- Some people get very attached to their ideas and feel a need that everyone do/think the same thing. This can disrupt the group harmony. Return to emphasizing the common values and goals emerging from the conference and your team. Talk about how there are often different roads to get to the same destination. Allow subsections of your group to develop those different roads. Use Fist to Five to talking about supporting and 18 wheels. Trucks have 18 different independent wheels with their own identities, but they travel to the same destination. Focus on the destination; move into action in wheel clusters.

Day 4: Decide and Execute Action

Saturday, March 3, 2018

1. Objectives

- Large Group Plenary: To shape our work in the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation
- Small teams: To decide how to decide in a respectful, inclusive way
- Small teams: To decide and create recommendations for decision makers
- Small teams: To decide and create communication products
- Small teams: To decide and create the start of year-long projects to achieve Team ideas



2. Activities

- Explore root causes related to your theme
- Select and use decision making tools to identify key recommendations and community actions
- Draft key messages and recommendations for decision-makers
- Draft outlines of community youth service projects that participants can do at home around your theme

Explore root causes of issues to understand them and consider what recommendations and/or community actions can make the intended change. Returning to the original Dream Tree, begin to build the rest. The impact(s) for the community are the fruit of the tree. On the branches, identify the specific outcomes to grow the “fruit”. On the trunk identify the resources needed to get there. Identify the root causes on the roots, and the values and principles to ground the policy recommendations and community plans as the soil

Interactive decision-making tools can be useful for the process. Dotmocracy is useful for identifying priorities. Each young person is given a certain number of dots (for example 5) to vote on the list of ideas/recommendations they think are most important. They can place all 5 beside an idea or spread their votes out. By placing their dots beside the recommendations they choose, they can have a visual representation of the clustering of their interests. Once they’ve narrowed down the ideas to 2 or 3, other decision-making processes can be used (see Appendix D).

Begin drafting policy recommendations and local community action project plans. Using the Dream tree as a skeleton, split into smaller groups to tackle the who, what, where, when, why, and how to reach each priority outcome.

3. Background Research to Support Activity

- Develops relatedness between young people’s personal experiences and their communit(ies) and autonomy in group decision-making (ARC model).
- Centering young people in decision-making is an important feature of positive development settings and leads to more positive engagement experiences and outcomes.
- Focuses on root causes and addressing inequalities rather than judgment of individuals’ responses (harm reduction, social determinants of health).
- Brings YDM principles to life: representative, inclusive, participatory.





4. Likely Challenges and Problem Solving

Typically, some people will get very frustrated with all the talking around deciding how to decide, rather than doing. Interactive **decision-making tools** can be useful for the process. Dotmocracy is useful for identifying priorities. Each young person is given a certain number of dots (for example 5) to vote on the list of ideas/recommendations they think are most important. They can place all 5 beside one idea or spread their votes out. By placing their dots beside the recommendations they choose, they can have a visual representation of the clustering of their interests. Once they've narrowed down the ideas to 2 or 3, other decision-making processes can be used (See Resources).

Day 5: Prep for 4th Pillar Time

Sunday, March 4, 2018

1. Objectives

- To test, challenge and improve recommendations with a broader group of youth
- To strategically align recommendations, messages, products across different themes
- To finalize community youth service project action plans and evaluations
- To finalize communication products
- Celebrate their achievements and newly acquired skills in a Closing Ceremony



2. Activities

- Present draft recommendations and community action plans with the larger group
- Feedback circle
- Integrate feedback to finalize recommendations and community action plans
- Develop evaluation for community action plans
- In various sub groups according to their interest, develop and produce concrete products to communicate their ideas (videos, workshops, project plans, presentations for Monday and for when they return home)
- **Finalize presentations and products** for Monday

3. Background Research to Support Activity

- Reporting back to a broader community of youth can improve the responsiveness of the recommendations to their needs. This step ensures accountability to a broader constituency (YDM principles, Knowledge in Action)
- Refining and integrating recommendations, producing concrete products increases their efficacy, and competence which in turn sustains youth engagement and encourages future engagement (effective youth engagement practice, key feature of positive settings for youth development), ARC
- Increases relatedness and trust amongst a larger group of youth about their recommendations (ARC), and a sense of contributing outside of the self (Engagement, Community Service)





4. Likely Challenges and Problem Solving

For some youth their ideas and the products they want to produce will exceed the time available and the resources available (eg available video editing). Support them to keep what's to be produced for Monday as simple, clean and effective as possible. Remind them that there is all year to expand and perfect the idea and products. These become the tools for community service year-round.

For other youth, they will be exhausted by the process and beginning to disconnect from their team to focus on new friends that they have made. The agenda at this time supports encouraging these youth to contribute in different concrete ways to the community effort, potentially outside of the team process or as a subgroup of the team process, perhaps connecting "officially" with their friends to achieve something that connects to various team themes or is simply a value to the community (writing warm fuzzies, assisting an Elder, gathering photos of all participants.)

Day 6: 4th Pillar Time, Big Time

Monday, March 5, 2018

1. Objectives

- To share recommendations with decision makers and the media
- To have fun, celebrate
- To experience something new
- To support youth to execute their influence
- To demonstrate youth's capacity and commitment to contribute to the Canada They Want, giving outside of themselves
- To demonstrate the competence, capacity and insights of youth



2. Activities

- Pack, put your best face forward, travel to Toronto
- **Deliver presentations**, interact with decision makers
- Fun activity seeing part of Toronto, in partnership with RBC
- Depart for train, bus or plane

3. Background Research to Support Activity

- Young people who make the policy presentation are representing a larger constituency of youth, bringing more than just their own voices to the table (YDM principles: representative, inclusive, accountable, participatory)
- Bringing youth voices to their intended audiences is a critical step in the YDM cycle that supports their autonomy and efficacy (ARC, effective practice and feature of positive development settings). The next step in the cycle is to ensure that youth are informed about how their recommendations and contributions were used or not, and if not, the reasons why not (YDM principle: accountability).





4. Likely Challenges and Problem Solving

None. Trust the Process, Trust Youth, has worked its magic.

Well, perhaps some logistics re the size of the Canada We Want and early or late planes and snow, wind and rain. And traffic.

A Tour of the Research Behind our Program

There are critical factors for youth thriving and program success, critical factors for effective youth engagement, and critical processes for youth engagement in research and decision-making.

Principles of good programming include

1. Be intentional about your work and day-to-day activities with a focus on long-term outcomes, not short-term. The activity or activity output is a flexible means to the outcome for the participant and for yourself.
2. Be flexible about your program activities. Listen intently to your participants and respond: openly, honestly, transparently.
3. Support participants' leadership and decisions; trust the process of experiential learning and change, because you have anchored it securely in the values of the Four Pillars, a harm reduction approach, a shared value of inclusiveness, active engagement and systems thinking about the social determinants of health.

Experiential Learning

At the Students Commission we are dedicated to learning through doing, reflecting and improving as we go. We access resources and the expertise and experience of others as part of the doing.

The ARC Model (Autonomy, Relatedness and Competence)

A review of the literature¹ on programs revealed three critical factors that support young people to thrive: Autonomy, Relatedness and Competence. Embedding activities and processes that help develop these factors into the design of a youth service initiative will strengthen the results of the project, both for the youth involved and for the community.

Autonomy: Young people having input, voice, or agency in determining their own choices and acting upon personal interests, values, and goals.

Relatedness: Young people having a sense of belonging and connection to others.

Competence: Young people having skills to effectively achieve desired goals.



The YMCA of Greater Toronto, United Way Toronto and the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth partnered with The Students Commission to conduct a review of current research literature 2002 to 2013, *Youth Who Thrive*. See [Youth Who Thrive.ca](http://YouthWhoThrive.ca) for powerpoints, workshops, a literature review and a video summary.

Thriving Defined

Thriving during adolescence is assisted by being physically healthy and developing the capacity to learn, the capacity to feel good about one's self, and the capacity to behave well socially and societally. The academic categories for these capacities are often described as cognitive/learning, emotional/psychological, and behavioural/social. Many youth organizations translate these terms into easy-to-remember words like head, heart, feet or hands. At the Students Commission, we add Spirit for two reasons. Our research has shown that Engagement occurs when activities include something for their heads (learning), hearts (feeling) and feet (doing), and they feel connected to something outside and greater than the self. Another reason for the inclusion of spirit was the recommendation of several of our Indigenous partners, who felt the spiritual component was missing. We agreed.

Head, Heart, Feet and Spirit



Engagement supports thriving and occurs when an activity contains head, heart, feet and spirit, defined as connection and contribution outside of the self.

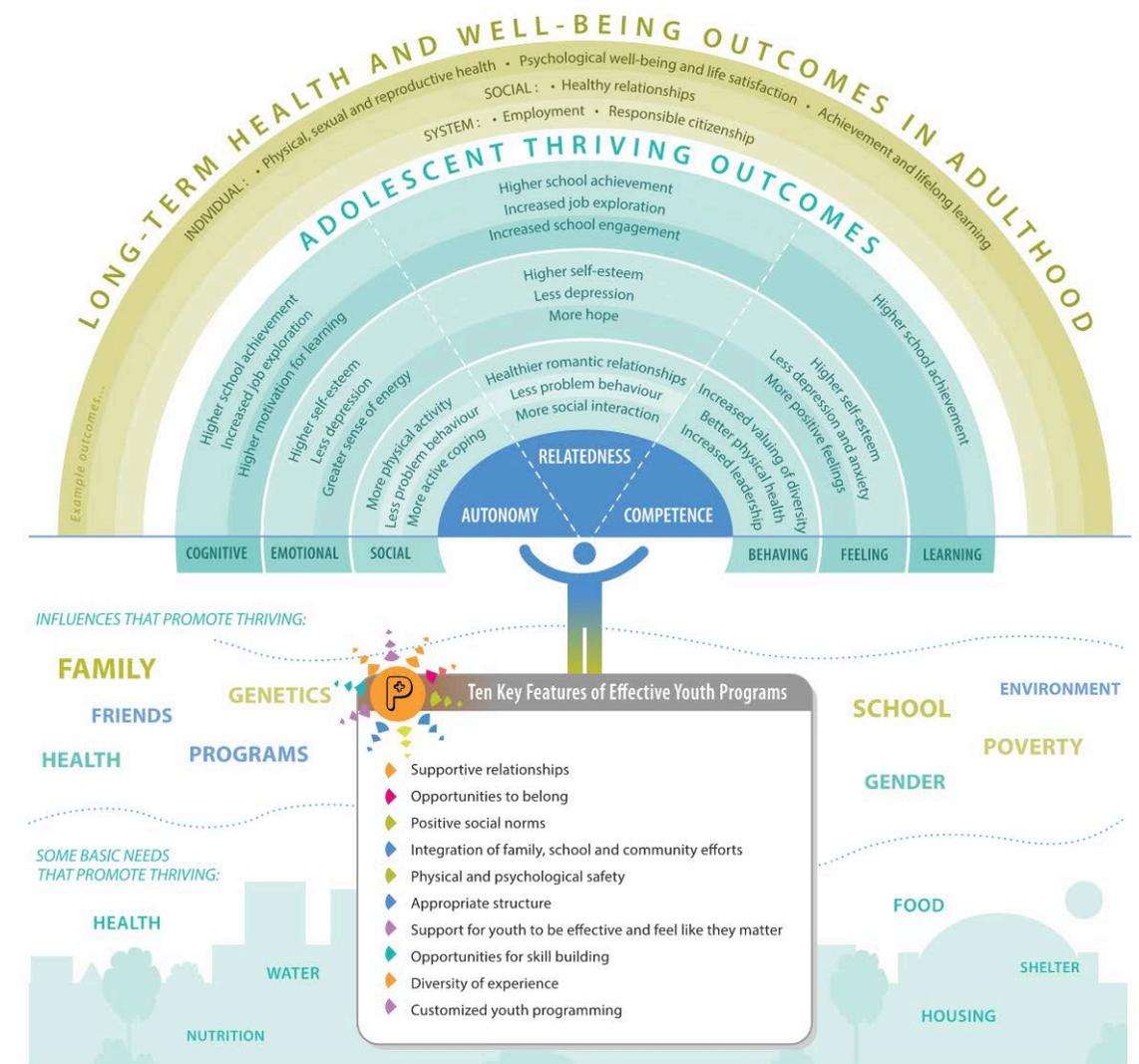
Head is learning, cognitive work that makes you think and learn.

Heart is feeling, an emotion that arises from the activity, that is good for your mental and psychological health.

Feet is doing, behaviours that are physical, that have you in action and achieving.

Spirit is connecting outside of yourself to something larger than yourself, to others, to a cause, to a spiritual, natural or universal force.

Youth Who Thrive



The top half of this graphic shows the results that research has shown flow from the development of autonomy, relatedness and competence. The central box describes the characteristics of effective programs that we strive to include and practice in what we do. This graphic is described at https://www.youtube.com/embed/03FpFh_8b_0

The full literature review plus tools related to the model are under the Tools tab at www.youthwhothrive.ca

Key Features of Positive Youth Development in Effective Programs

A review of the literature identified 10 key features of positive youth development that lead to positive outcomes in programs.

Build supportive relationships: Relationships with adult mentors are more effective when they are long-lasting and close. When youth have at least one caring adult in their lives, they demonstrate

fewer risk-associated behaviours, greater academic achievement, and higher self-esteem. Youth-adult partnerships characterized by collaboration and power-sharing are related to increased sense of group belonging.

Create opportunities to belong: It is important that all young people feel that they belong regardless of their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, abilities, and socio-economic background. This feature includes providing young people with opportunities for social inclusion, engagement, and integration. Building cultural identity, promoting cultural pride, and recognizing the impacts of racism can be important for young people to have a sense of belonging and navigate transitions throughout adolescence and early adulthood.

Develop positive social norms: Youth benefit from regular access to positive values through peer role models, adult mentors, and group-developed rules or guidelines. Positive social norms provide a foundation for relatedness and self-determination (autonomy). When designing programs, developers need to intentionally create environments with positive values that build competence to respond to social justice and ethical issues, such as empathy. Comprehensive programs are more successful in fostering moral development than programs that focus solely on one aspect of young people's lives. Programs with high staff/participant ratios and programs that meet often are best positioned to serve youth participants.

Integrate family, school, and community efforts: The key to this feature is collaboration across the social settings in which youth are engaged: school, extra-curricular activities, peer groups, family, neighbourhoods, and community organizations. Social environments that work together to create meaningful experiences and decrease risk behaviour support positive youth development. Young people benefit when their efforts and values in one context have connections to another. Pooling resources and coordinating priorities across social circles can foster programming that focuses on the needs of a particular neighbourhood.

Ensure physical and psychological safety: For youth to get the most out of their participation, it is essential that they feel safe at all times. Intentionally building social and emotional competences may contribute to creating this sense of safety. For example, youth can collaborate to develop and decide upon shared group guidelines. Actively reflecting and inquiring about their own behaviour improves personal development, psychological well-being, and interactions with others. When youth feel safe, they will be more likely to learn and participate freely.

Provide appropriate structure: Appropriate structure includes creating an environment that has clear boundaries, expectations, and adult support/supervision as required. This feature involves providing a consistent environment to ensure participants not only feel safe within the environment, but also comfortable returning to it. Programs with unstructured time combined with a lack of skill-building opportunities and low adult involvement tend to lack positive social relations and lead to negative outcomes. However, it is important to consider the role of the specific youth involved, the social context, and unstructured time, to understand its potential advantages and disadvantages. When designing programs, ensure supports, such as adult involvement and established positive social norms, are in place for "unstructured" components.

Support youth to be effective and feel valued: The goal of youth programming should extend beyond attendance. Participation must include active engagement to result in positive developmental benefits. Young people need to feel that they matter, that their ideas matter, and that they have the capacity to make a difference. It is important for youth to see the results of their decision-making. The academic literature uses the words efficacy and mattering for these concepts.

Provide opportunities for skill building: Young people benefit from opportunities to learn and practice new and meaningful skills. Tasks that do not fit a young person's interests or are not challenging enough, are not meaningful. Mastering increasingly challenging tasks builds confidence and competence and leads to positive development. Programs that empower youth and foster meaningful skill-building usually include multiple sessions per week, individualized feedback, and appropriately challenging tasks.

Ensure diversity of experience: Programs that best support youth development include breadth and depth of programming. Breadth (variety of participation) is more significant in some cases than frequency. Participation in multiple programs protects youth from the shortcomings of any individual program, providing more opportunities to increase autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Further, intentionally involving a diversity of perspectives and experiences within a program is a promising practice. When youth experience a new challenge or context that is different from their norm, they become more prepared for the transition to adulthood.

Customize youth programming: Youth programming should be as broad as possible (macro), while addressing the unique needs of its population (micro). This balance is achieved by coordinating and collaborating with all program partners, including youth. Programs can effectively meet the unique needs of specific youth by engaging them in program planning and decision-making. Youth input into program and organizational decision-making increases autonomy, relatedness and competence. Youth input is also a unique contributor to successful development and positive outcomes.

Social Determinants of Health

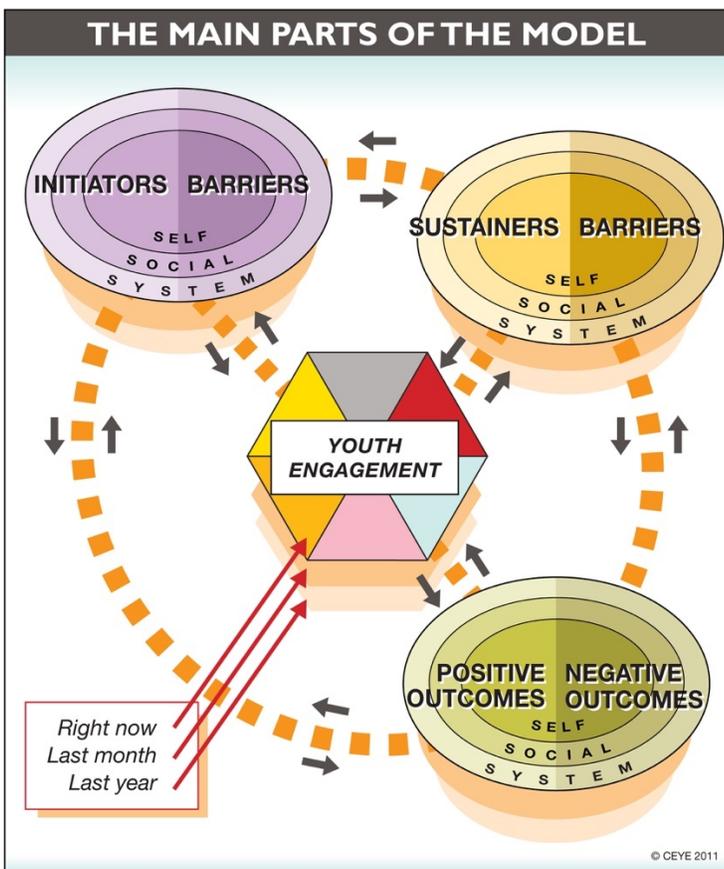
The bottom half of the Thriving Graphic surrounding the Program Box is the environment in which youth programs operate. Programs interact with this environment and all the players in it. Designing and running a youth program effectively means being aware of the way this environment affects youth in our programs.

The strongest determinants of adolescent health are structural factors in society such as income inequality and access to education; however, effective youth programs can contribute to positive outcomes for youth, who in turn positively impact their communities. Thriving can be seen through school success, leadership, helping others, maintenance of physical health, delay of gratification, valuing diversity, and overcoming adversity. These short- and medium-term outcomes are often used as indicators of health and thriving.



Thriving in adolescence generally leads to long-term health and well-being in adulthood. Young people who thrive during adolescence are more likely to feel psychologically and physically healthy, contribute to their communities, achieve success in education and employment, maintain strong relationships, and be satisfied with their lives as adults.

CEYE Youth Engagement Model



The Centre of Excellence’s Youth Engagement Model looks at four components in the engagement process over time: initiators for engagement, sustainers of engagement, the qualities of the engagement (above) and the outcomes from the engagement.

Initiators (and barriers): Those things that initiate and hinder a young person from becoming engaged in an activity, organization or process (they need volunteer hours to graduate, their friend brought them, they want to make a difference in their community, they don’t have money for transportation, etc.)

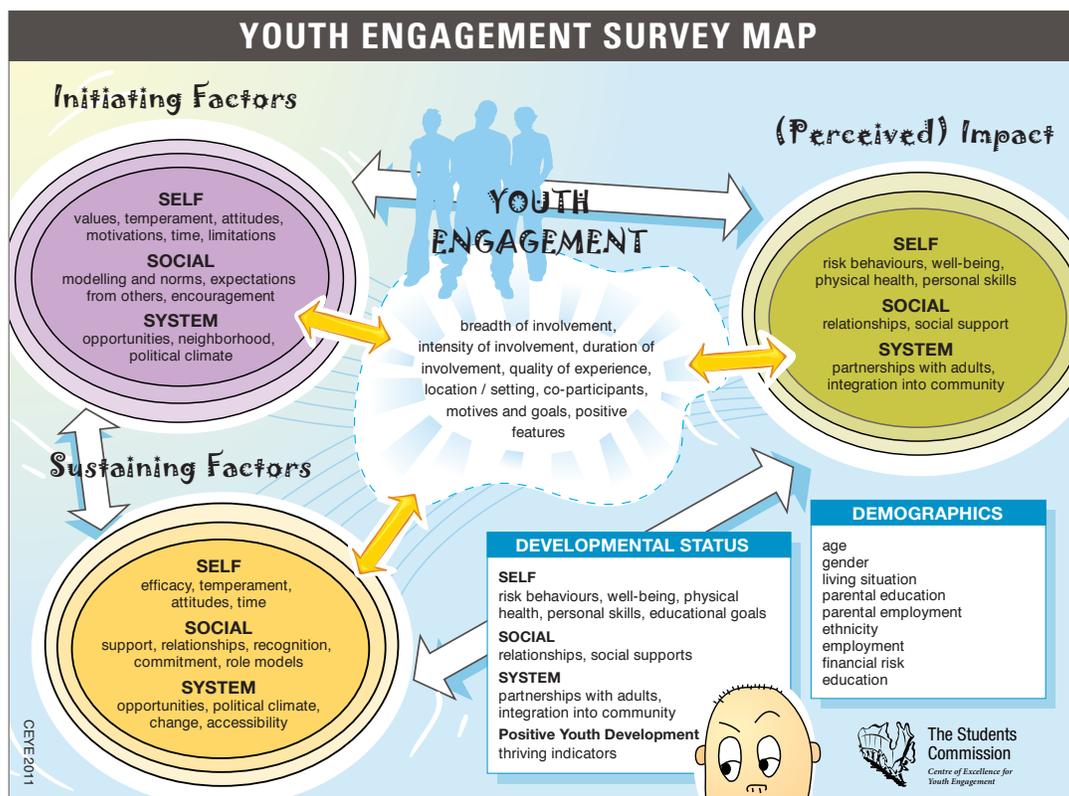
Qualities of Youth Engagement: How an activity, program, or process is carried out; the key features of positive youth development have been outlined in the previous ARC section.

Sustainers (and barriers): Those things that keep young people engaged over a period of time, or cause them to disengage. For instance: follow-up activities and projects, adults reporting back to young people on the impact of their ideas, spaces and social networking for maintaining relationships.

Outcomes (positive and negative): The impacts on young people, adults, programs, organizations and the community as a result of the engagement process. Examples include: a decrease in risk-associated behaviours, more effective youth policies, better relationships between youth and adults.

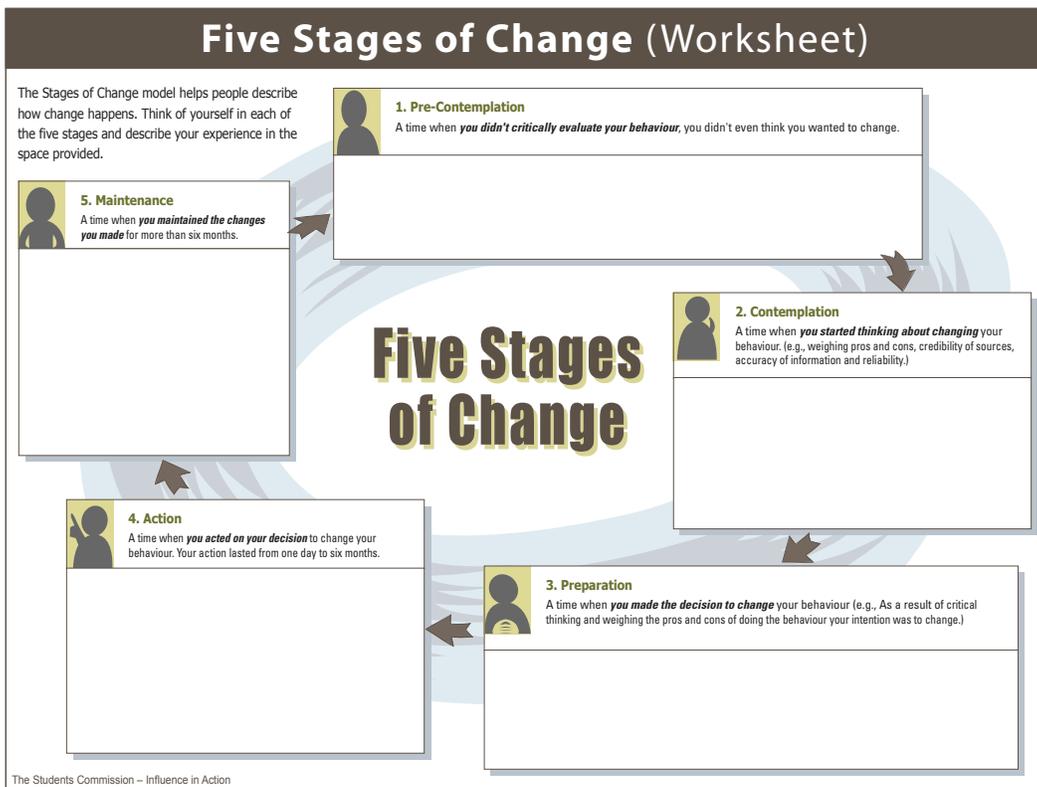
The youth engagement process occurs at three levels:

- Individual or “self” level: for example, a young person’s values, temperament, interest, etc.
- Social level: for example, the influence of friends, peers, family, teachers, community, etc.
- System level: for example, opportunities or policies in schools, organizations, government etc.



Five Stages of Change and Harm Reduction (Influence in Action)

To effectively engage young people, it is essential to meet them where they are, at their present level of change. The five stages of change model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 2005) describes a cyclical process:



Keeping these stages of change in mind reminds us that as young people are trying new things and building new positive behaviours, it takes time, and can be a cyclical, staggered process. Harm reduction principles support this graduated change, and offer possibilities to provide support and minimize harm at any of these stages. A harm reduction approach also understands behaviours from a broader perspective that acknowledges the powerful influence of social determinants of health.

Truth and Reconciliation

At its very first conference in 1991, youth delegates of the Students Commission called for the recognition of Canada's founding peoples and expressed the desire that all youth living in Canada have the opportunity to get to learn about each other, understand each other and work together. Since then, the



Students Commission has brought together youth from all parts of Canada to meet this call. We are committed as an organization to support the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and spread awareness of its Calls to Action.

For the full Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report see:
<http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=890> (English)

Here are some key excerpts from the Truth and Reconciliation Report that are important for all Students Commissioners to know:

For over a century, the central goals of Canada's Aboriginal policy were to eliminate Aboriginal governments; ignore Aboriginal rights; terminate the Treaties; and, through a process of assimilation, cause Aboriginal peoples to cease to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities in Canada. The establishment and operation of residential schools were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as "cultural genocide." (Introduction of the TRC report, first paragraph)

For non-Aboriginal Canadians who came to bear witness to Survivors' life stories (during the TRC hearings), the experience was powerful. One woman said simply, "By listening to your story, my story can change. By listening to your story, I can change."

In its 2012 Interim Report, the TRC recommended that federal, provincial, and territorial governments, and all parties to the Settlement Agreement, undertake to meet and explore the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as a framework for reconciliation in Canada. We remain convinced that the United Nations Declaration provides the necessary principles, norms, and standards for reconciliation to flourish in twenty-first-century Canada. A reconciliation framework is one in which Canada's political and legal systems, educational and religious institutions, the corporate sector and civic society function in ways that are consistent with the principles set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Canada has endorsed.

Together, Canadians must do more than just talk about reconciliation; we must learn how to practise reconciliation in our everyday lives—within ourselves and our families, and in our communities, governments, places of worship, schools, and workplaces. To do so constructively, Canadians must remain committed to the ongoing work of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships. For many Survivors and their families, this commitment is foremost about healing themselves, their communities, and nations, in ways that revitalize individuals as well as Indigenous cultures, languages, spirituality, laws, and governance systems. For governments, building a respectful relationship involves dismantling a centuries-old political and bureaucratic culture in which, all too often, policies and programs are still based on failed notions of assimilation. For churches, demonstrating long-term commitment requires atoning for actions within the residential schools, respecting Indigenous spirituality, and supporting Indigenous peoples' struggles for justice and equity. Schools must teach history in ways that foster mutual respect, empathy, and engagement.

All Canadian children and youth deserve to know Canada's honest history, including what happened in the residential schools, and to appreciate the rich history and knowledge of Indigenous nations who continue to make such a strong contribution to Canada, including our very name and collective identity as a country. For Canadians from all walks of life, reconciliation offers a new way of living together. (Introduction, Page 21-22.)

Canada's residential school system for Aboriginal children was an education system in name only for much of its existence. These residential schools were created for the purpose of separating Aboriginal children from their families, in order to minimize and weaken family ties and cultural

linkages, and to indoctrinate children into a new culture—the culture of the legally dominant Euro-Christian Canadian society, led by Canada’s first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. The schools were in existence for well over 100 years, and many successive generations of children from the same communities and families endured the experience of them. That experience was hidden for most of Canada’s history, until Survivors of the system were finally able to find the strength, courage, and support to bring their experiences to light in several thousand court cases that ultimately led to the largest class-action lawsuit in Canada’s history. (Preface, Page V,VI)

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada was a commission like no other in Canada. Constituted and created by the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which settled the class actions, the Commission spent six years travelling to all parts of Canada to hear from the Aboriginal people who had been taken from their families as children, forcibly if necessary, and placed for much of their childhoods in residential schools. This volume (TRC Report) is a summary of the discussion and findings contained in the Commission’s final multi-volume report. The Final Report discusses what the Commission did and how it went about its work, as well as what it heard, read, and concluded about the schools and afterwards, based on all the evidence available to it. This summary must be read in conjunction with the Final Report. The Commission heard from more than 6,000 witnesses, most of whom survived the experience of living in the schools as students. The stories of that experience are sometimes difficult to accept as something that could have happened in a country such as Canada, which has long prided itself on being a bastion of democracy, peace, and kindness throughout the world.

Children were abused, physically and sexually, and they died in the schools in numbers that would not have been tolerated in any school system anywhere in the country, or in the world. But, shaming and pointing out wrongdoing were not the purpose of the Commission’s mandate. Ultimately, the Commission’s focus on truth determination was intended to lay the foundation for the important question of reconciliation.

Now that we know about residential schools and their legacy, what do we do about it? Getting to the truth was hard, but getting to reconciliation will be harder. It requires that the paternalistic and racist foundations of the residential school system be rejected as the basis for an ongoing relationship. Reconciliation requires that a new vision, based on a commitment to mutual respect, be developed. It also requires an understanding that the most harmful impacts of residential schools have been the loss of pride and self-respect of Aboriginal people, and the lack of respect that non-Aboriginal people have been raised to have for their Aboriginal neighbours.

Reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem; it is a Canadian one. Virtually all aspects of Canadian society may need to be reconsidered. This summary (of the TRC Report) is intended to be the initial reference point in that important discussion. Reconciliation will take some time.

Calls to Action

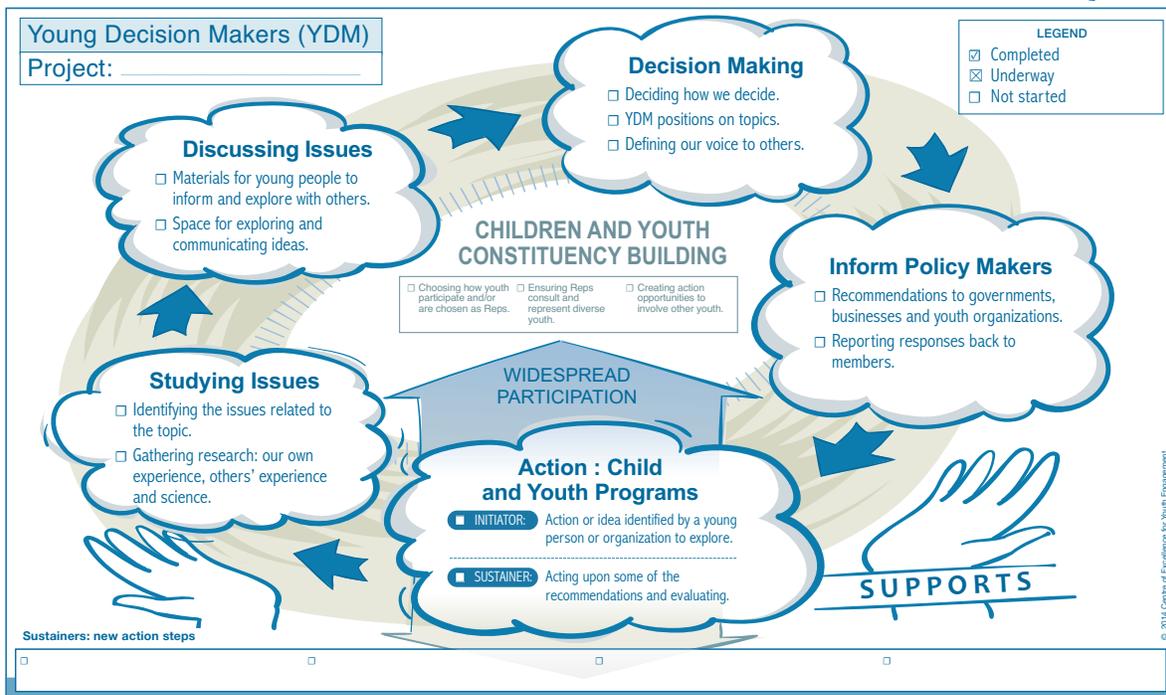
http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

66. We call upon the federal government to establish multiyear funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation, and establish a national network to share information and best practices.

43. We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation.

The Young Decision Makers Model

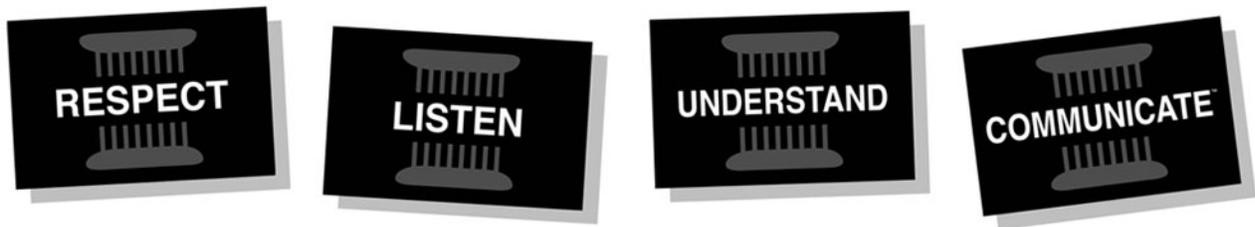
The Young Decision Makers Project Model



The Young Decisions Makers (YDM) model is a constituency-building framework that supports young people and adult allies to generate concrete action-oriented recommendations to influence positive change on individual, social and system levels.

YDM begins with **action**: young people in partnership come together to take action on a particular issue. They then move into **studying the issue**: they explore the issues related to the topic, they gather research on their own experience, the experience of others and from science. Once they've studied the issue, they begin to **discuss the issue** with one another. This discussion focuses on what they are learning and exploring. After a thorough discussion, they begin to **decide their position on the issue**. They decide how to decide and then formulate the recommendations for action on the issue that they will take to decision-makers and policy-makers. Recommendations can include developing a project plan to implement the actions and/or some of the actions they recommend. Once the decisions have been made, they move into figuring out the best way to **inform decision-makers, which may include their peers** who are being recruited to work on a service project together, and any authorities who might need to approve, support, fund their ideas (for example Y Project Manager). The cycle continues as more and more young people become involved in taking action on the issue.

Four Pillars



Respect

The Students Commission of Canada begins with respect. First, respect for young people, their idealism, their hope and their capacity to improve the world. Second, respect for the gift that each person carries within. We believe that by creating conditions of respect, we enhance the capacity of people to work together and improve their lives and the lives of others. Respect means respect for diversity and an effort to strive for diversity of people and experiences and expertise in all of what we do. Respect means actively seeking and valuing the gifts and experiences of all those with whom we work and live. Respect means reciprocity – that each person is an equal partner in our work. Respect means youth and adults working collaboratively as equals. Respect means that we have “commissioned” youth to carry out their hopes and dreams for a better world, and that as an organization we will facilitate, support, and assist them to our best capacity.

Listen

With respect as our foundation, we learn to listen. We listen not just with our ears, but with our heads, hearts and all our senses. We listen actively, intensely, not just to words, but to silences, to deeds, to experiences. We listen to the spoken word, the written word, the image. We listen to learn, to gather information, to enhance our capacity to give and to receive. We listen to youth as experts, and we gather other information, other voices to ensure diversity. We listen because we are curious, because as people and as an organization we are constantly growing and changing through the input of others.

We listen to truly understand who others are.

Understand

From listening comes understanding. To understand is to go beyond listening, to process what we have heard, to reflect upon the new knowledge and gifts given to us. Understanding creates new knowledge, new skills. If we truly understand who others are, and who we are, we can work together as equals, valuing differences and building upon similarities and common goals. We understand the problems each of us faces, and the aspirations each of us has. Understanding creates the conditions for working effectively together.

Communicate

If people really understand each other, then they can communicate — our fourth pillar. When people truly communicate, the obstacles fall away. Communication is the first action and creates the process for developing and taking all the actions we need to take, as individuals and as an organization to achieve our goals and dreams. With communication, we create action plans and implement them with practical projects that make a positive difference. With communication, we

continue to reaffirm the respect and trust we have for each other and create the relationships with others who can help us achieve our goals.

A Final Note About Models

Each of these models is cyclical. Different stages may take more or less time, may overlap with one another, and/or your group may go back to a previous stage at any point as needed. These models are meant to ground your process in best practice. Applying these models in curriculum will mean that your process is likely to achieve positive outcomes. Your process is also developmental: that is, you will learn by doing so don't be overly rigid in how you apply these models. Simply as you work with young people to develop their recommendations and community action projects, keep these models in mind.