



The Students
Commission
Centre of Excellence for
Youth Engagement



THE JUSTICE SYSTEM WE WANT

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Canada's Criminal Justice System (CJS) is flawed; its practices are inequitable and unfair, often demonstrating bias, discrimination and racism. Youth believe that with the input of diverse Canadians we can reimagine and rebuild a justice system that serves all Canadians, and ensures fair and equitable treatment regardless of our diverse experiences and identities.

The Justice System We Want theme team discussed: sentencing and responses to crime, overrepresentation of indigenous peoples and people with mental health issues in Canada's CJS, as well as restorative justice and supports for victims of crime.



This tree has all of the dreams we have for Canada in the next 150 years. These include things like peace and a fair justice system.

SUMMARY

In recent months, it has become clear to many Canadians that Canada's Criminal Justice System (CJS) is not a fair and unbiased system, and that some people are facing disadvantages within the system. At the #CanadaWeWant Conference, youth discussed how to improve our justice system and create the justice system we want.

Personal Circumstances and Context

We believe that the CJS should take into account the offenders' circumstances and lived experience, as well as the context of the crime when sentencing offenders. Sentencing can take many forms; the offender must be held accountable for their action, but also be provided opportunities for healing and rehabilitation.

Addressing Root Causes via Programs and Partnerships

The CJS must focus on addressing root issues of crime, like poverty, mental health and cognitive functioning issues, and trauma, to decrease the number of Indigenous people and people with mental health issues in the CJS. The CJS currently cannot support all of these individuals and need to work with other systems and organizations to do so.

Healing and Closure

For the sake of both offender and victim, it is important that the CJS focus on healing and closure. This may involve using alternative approaches to justice, like restorative justice, that focus on re-building relationships and community.



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#CANADA WE WANT

The change we want to see:

Canada's Criminal Justice Systems is fair and just **for all**; it does not make racist or discriminatory decisions based on bias and stereotypes. Instead, the CJS focuses on addressing root issues of crimes, supporting offenders and victims, and strives towards healing and closure.

In order to make these changes, we need youth to advocate for them. Youth, therefore, need to be more educated about the CJS, including their rights, navigating the system, practices within the system, like diversion and alternative courts and sentencing. We need accessible resources to help others learn about the CJS as well.

The way we want to get there (Activities):

Start Justice Councils at high schools or host regular workshops at local youth centres and community centres.

The way we want to get there (Activities):

Raise awareness about justice-related services as well as alternative courts and sentences, like restorative Justice, through campaigns and educational materials.

The way we want to get there (Activities):

Be Justice Ambassadors—tell our peers and friends about what we learned and the resources we created. Build connections with elders, adult allies, community leaders to get the word out!

What we need to get there:

Community buy-in: school supports, support from our elders and other adult allies, space and other in-kind resources from community and youth centres, engagement with police and other CJS professionals.

Support from the Students Commission and Justice Canada to create resources and tools, and to bring us together in conversations.

The way we want to get there:

Engaging our communities in making change, this includes our neighbourhoods, our schools, our governments and councils, and local organizations that care about the same things we do.

Create educational resources and share them on social media and in workshops. Encourage other young people to take action in their own communities.

What are the values and principles that ground our recommendations?

Everyone deserves fair treatment.

We need to be educated about our options in the CJS so we can select the option that is best for victims and offenders.

Offenders need to be held accountable, but they also need to be supported to improve their lives and themselves to stop cycles of re-offending.

When at all possible, the goal of justice should be to heal, to rehabilitate, to create closure, and to re-build connections between offender, victim, and community.