



## The Students Commission Highlights of Activities 2001



### Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement

The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, a program of the Students Commission, worked throughout the year with its partners to develop and begin several studies of young people across the country. Specifically, how participation and involvement can improve their health and development. Youth who had experienced risk in a variety of environments were trained and supported in research techniques in order to become participating members of all parts of the Centre's research. The Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement project also trained and worked with young people across the country to develop and initiate Participatory Action Research Projects, including mapping youth health services and instituting substance abuse prevention programs, and studying youth programs and organizations in order to make them more effective for disadvantaged youth.

The Centre of Excellence also brought together and developed a network of partners, each with their own networks, focussed on improving the understanding and application of youth engagement to improve the lives and development of young people, particularly those experiencing difficulty.

As part of the Centre's work, various resources were created to communicate its findings; guidelines and training resources were created and presentations were made at workshops, conferences and symposiums.

### Annual Summer Youth Program – Creating Change 2001

140 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 discrimination, violence and education 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, and to craft a report and present their findings to adults from various government and non-profit organizations in Ottawa, Ontario.

Throughout the year, youth were supported and mentored to carry out these solutions through projects. Mentoring occurred through on-line 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.

Youth were supported to volunteer in various organizations in their home communities and to create various youth-driven projects.

### **Civicus World Assembly; CIVICUS Youth Engagement project**

The Students Commission trained and supported a youth team at a major international conference (CIVICUS) in Vancouver, British Columbia, in order to give young people an opportunity to take part in meaningful dialogue with adults, record the event, and report back to other young people across Canada on the activities at the event.

### **The Sixth Messenger (career planning tool for youth)**

Working with famous cartoonist Ben Wicks, we trained and supported young people experiencing difficulty and anxiety related to career and educational planning to develop a resource that would be an effective career planning tool for young people experiencing similar issues. The team of youth also worked with professional career development experts and teachers. Youth were trained and supported to create one half of the text and illustrations, Ben Wicks did the other half.



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

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. We solicit youth facing specific challenges such as poverty, racism, physical and learning disabilities, and poor academic records. Youth were trained in research, writing, editing, layout, design, teamwork, business and organizational skills. Various educational resources were produced from the program, including an online training website for other co-op students and volunteers.

### **Destination 2020 (career planning tool for youth)**

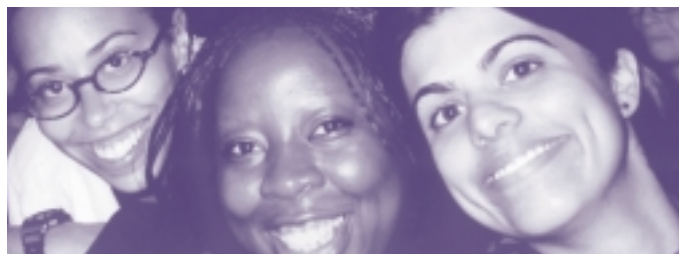
Youth were trained to research and write about various occupations and skills used in those occupations. They tested formats of a print publication, interactive website and workshop exercises working with publishing professionals and teachers. The result was an educational resource for youth organizations and schools designed in partnership with young people, to assist youth in discovering what skills they have and how skills are key to finding an ideal job in their future.

### **Youth Forum of the Americas**

Working in partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, we created, organized and managed a youth component for the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City. We brought together more than 300 young people from across the Americas to examine issues of youth needs related to poverty, education, health, violence, impact of globalization, obstacles and barriers to full participation in society. Youth were working in English, French and Spanish throughout the conference and prepared a youth report to be submitted through the Department of Foreign Affairs at the Summit the following month. We also supported a youth delegate presenting at the Summit, as well as a youth team documenting the youth protesters at the Summit, looking at the reasons for engagement from both perspectives.

### **Young Women Connects**

The Students Commission supported young women, primarily of colour, to examine issues of racism, poverty and gender which affected them. They attended Canadian and international events to learn about policy and how to



effect policy around these issues, and to build a network of young women interested in these issues. They produced several educational resources out of the activities, including a print magazine, a workshop guide, and a website.



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