



# The Governor General's Youth Forum

Feb. 13-17 2k2

A community is a group of people interacting with a common goal in mind who work towards it. A group is brought together because of a common goal.

*Team 7*

“As cities get bigger, communities suffer and become faceless. I was talking with someone from NWT last night about their “bonding” times, when the family goes hunting together, and it occurred to me that community is about people, about people belonging, about people accepting others, tolerating differences. We’ve gotten out of helping people first hand. Now we rely upon organizations (the food banks, shelters, governments) to give to others. We need to make these connections again.”

*Team 4*

Don’t be pessimistic. And don’t assume that someone doesn’t want to get involved. By not encouraging people who aren’t obviously interested you might be taking away someone’s opportunity to get involved. Stay positive.

*Team 2*

Set an example. To be a good leader, you have to continue to encourage others to get involved. Help people find their strong points. Show them that they are good at something.

*Team 3*

Every chance you get tell the people around you when you think they are being judgmental and biased. Be courageous. Speak out.

*Team 1*

We need to feel like guidance counselors are our friends. Open concept of teaching and learning. Let us have a say in how we are taught. Teachers should be mentors and facilitators of education.

*Team 6*

Your passion is contagious. No matter what happens, if you are passionate about something, people will follow. If you show what you are doing is successful, and how much you love it and how much fun you’re having then people won’t be able to ignore it and will be interested.

# What is community?

A link between two or more people that evolves and gets richer and richer and richer and...

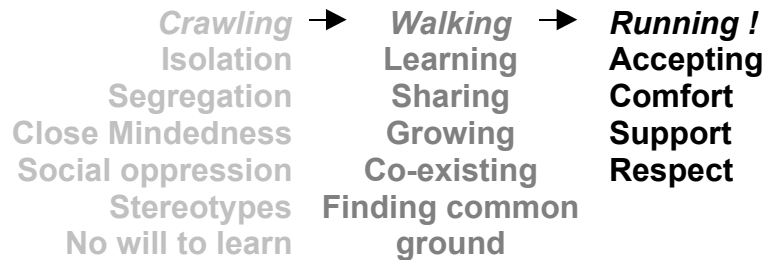
A community is composed of a group of people that link together because of a common thread or mutual pursuit.

A community is initiated by the mere existence of people in a geographical area. It will, however, cease to exist if lacking any sort of interaction and is therefore perpetuated by the relationships you build, by the ways in which you are involved, and the knowledge that you gain.

A community is a group of people who realize their differences and can work together to make their goals come true; it is a responsibility to share your talent, knowledge and strength, and the feeling of happiness and joy you get when you help others.

Community is relationships, acceptance, experiences, need, leadership, pride, similarities and differences, freedom within structure, and attitude

## THE EVOLUTION OF A COMMUNITY



Layers: group within groups      the search for understanding

Building relationships      Sharing experiences      **A Sense of**

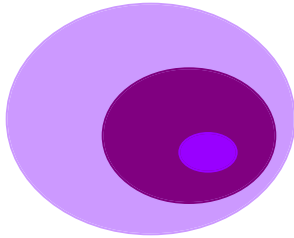
**responsibility**      **A Sense of belonging**      Interdependence

Geography      Hope      **Acceptance**      Determination      Interaction

Attachment to people and the place      you are part of the group you identify

yourself with      **constantly changing**

## Different types of communities



Family  
Religion  
Neighbourhood  
City/village  
Province  
Country  
World  
Rural  
Urban  
Gender

Based on...

Language  
Age  
Class  
Geography  
Culture  
Interest  
Politics  
Friends  
School  
Province  
Global

Interest  
Sports teams  
Clubs

*Anything that makes us different and brings people together is a community*

“It varies and the definition is relative”  
*Veronique, Team 1*

“Community ties vary depending on the location. Some people don’t relate to the broader community but to a smaller one”  
*Charles, Team 1*

## The Challenges

In some communities youth cannot volunteer because they have to work.

"I am trapped by small community, trapped by image and reputation within a small community. Not a lot to do in my community... Birth control not readily available and that leads to high STD rates and many young mothers."

Youth are not allowed to get involved like they want to get involved. Often they we are not given the opportunity to get involved.

Youth not interested in volunteering because they are given meaningless jobs.

"Why should youth be giving back to the community when the community doesn't give anything to them? Youth are stereotyped as bullies, thieves, lazy, rough." Knowledge from elders necessary but ignored; not what we're told or is shown to be important.

Social classes. Language can be a barrier.

Lack of participation.

People who are not open-minded impede community building: Prejudice is a cancer.

Lack of self-confidence, motivation and conviction

Age difference. Some adults do not take younger people seriously.

Lack of funding and means to get involved especially in small communities

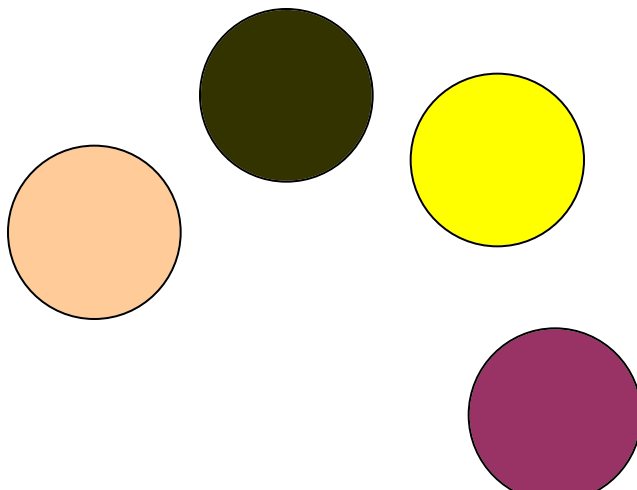
*Why aren't adults involved anymore?*

*Why are they not open-minded?*

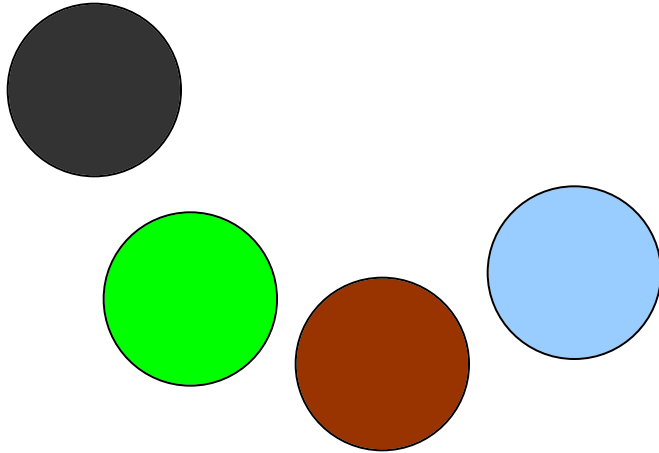
*What do they need to change?*

We take it for granted that others will fight our fight

Lack of vote / say discourages young people from trying to make a difference.



- Apathy
- Close-mindedness
- Fear
- Ignorance
- Discrimination
- Stereotypes
- Rural exodus
- Negative influence of parents
- Lack of encouragement
- Intimidation
- Pride
- Prejudice
- Ethnocentrism
- Ignorance
- Discrimination
- Egocentrism
- Ageism
- Racism
- Social class
- Discrimination
- Past
- Sexism



## 5 Main Challenges

1.

Generation gap: Ageism – Difficult to work with some adults and / or within Systems that are not youth friendly (Class discrimination)

Getting young people to work together for others: some think that getting involved in the community is “not cool”

2.

3.

Pressure to get a good job / Expectations (Society, Personal, Parental, Educational): Time Management: “addiction to perfection” important to know your limits and to stay healthy

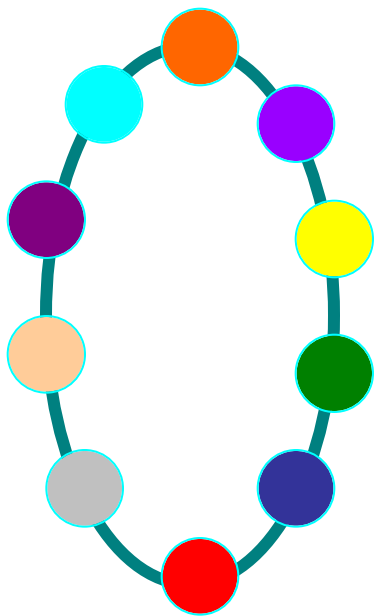
Lack... of resources, of support, of confidence, time, leadership, interest, effort, understanding, information, recognition, flexibility, opportunity, participation, open-mindedness, etc...

4.

5.

Isolation: Working alone, or in a community where you’ve no support or help from anyone.

## The Solutions



Break the ice. Be in places where people are different

Make the first step when you are with people you don't know.

Education is the key.

Be open minded in order for you to realize that your prejudice become unfounded or at least make some efforts. Become aware.

Put the priorities in the right places. The federal and provincial governments should stop fighting and maybe the provincial government should have more power to better answer the needs of the community.

Every chance you get, tell people around you when you think they are being judgmental and biased. Be courageous. Speak out.

Start taking action locally or small and then you will be able to open up on a larger scale.

You don't necessarily need a whole community of adults to accomplish youth goals, you simply need one adult who is in a position to help you

Question authority, but the question must be framed properly. It's important to ask questions with respect and without attacking the person you are talking to

"I think that there is no generation graduating that is as well prepared for life as this one. I think you are far more skilled (in your education), more worldly, and your thoughts go much deeper than others in the past. You have had broader experiences than we have, and my hope is things will change. There are many problems which we have left behind for you. It is important to find a new path and in order to do that you must understand the old one."

Use the media for your volunteer cause when it is appropriate

Showing people how your volunteer ideas will work and give back to the community.

Never give up!

Passion is contagious

Take a stand. Learn to say no. Know your limits.

Talk to your school authorities. Push your way through

Ask for help; remember you can't take on everything.

Raise awareness by either telling someone that what you heard from them is not right.

Set an example. To be a good leader, you have to continue to encourage others to get involved. Help people find their strong points. Show them that they are good at something.

Don't be pessimistic. And don't assume that someone doesn't want to get involved. By not encouraging people who aren't obviously interested you might be taking away someone's opportunity to get involved. Stay positive.

Ignore propaganda.

Organize campaigns by being bold to attract people's attention. Send invitations to the prominent members of your community, that way you will attract attention.

Don't be afraid to approach your MP or any governmental institution. Start at the bottom and work your way up.

Getting people involved at a young age. They will learn to have more appreciation for the community. Pair the young people off with older people and they are able to get more passionate about it.

Get a group of dedicated people and others people will follow.

Be a role model.

Teacher involvement

Have more events annually or monthly. Just make it a tradition

Get in touch with MLA for community, then MP, and that concern can keep going to the government until the concern is done with

Redefine what is cool. Make it cool to get involved, to participate, to help.

Community is working for greater for good, for others, for the future.

#### **Generation gap**

- Get involved in activities that have adults and breakdown the barriers: Separating us from them is not going to help are cause and we need to bridge the gap
- Youth do have a voice and we do need to be involved
- It is easier to make the connection with adults when youth are helping adults and working with them as equals.
- Many programs where you just go and talk to the older people and just talk to them. They are happy for a week if you talk to them for ten minutes and they start to realize that youth aren't all hooligans.

#### **Time**

- We could get courses in high school on how to manage our time
- Alternative schooling so that you can take different classes at different times and are more flexible.
- Parents are always telling kids to get a job and it is difficult to get a job and do school; parents need to be more understanding and supportive.
- Working on a farm, driving a tractor for 8 hours a day, makes you really work for your money and know where it's coming from and what it's worth.

#### **Culture**

- Cultural Fairs in her hometown to see how others work and they do. Everyone from the community comes and shows their culture and it shows (educates) adults and kids how other people live. They get people to see the connections between their culture and others.
- A good thing in a community is to get people to feel that they are part of something bring them together
- Youth are willing to go to an old people home and talk to them but old people don't come to talk about their life experiences (wars, the "old days") with

#### **Isolation**

- It may be useful to find people that share the same views in order to strengthen the amplitude of the voice, the more the merrier; Individuals fear speaking out about their towns due to the fact that they might be rejected; Solidarity; some individuals on their own will not express their ideas because they lack solidarity; speak out, and support others who do
- Find the origin of the problem before addressing it, find the basics of the problem and the specifics
- Communities often separate themselves according to the past; don't let the past stand in the way of the future
- The solution is basically time because most things need time. Most people do not accept things when they are first presented because they are new ideas. They need time in order to accept and understand the new change.
- The media can change some problems, or challenges. You can use the media to



### Schools

- Shared responsibility to create a safe environment and hear everyone
- Prepare people to respect the issue; warm up your audience; set the climate
- Ethics – be respectful and sensitive of what you say
- Have opportunity to have input; be recognized for our opinions
- Be seen as equals; listened to and respected
- Increased power to affect change
- Equal participation
- Intention and interpretation

### Structure

- Conventional structures mute the voice of youth: We to be empowered
- Challenge the established system & question authority
- SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY!!!!
- Learn to frame the question; find the angle that works and matters to the people in authority.
- Make a scene if necessary
- Be persistent
- Know the rules before you can break them
- Educate others and make it their responsibility to care.
- Change the structure if it's not working
- "Don't hate the media, be the media"  
Jello Biafra



photograph by MCpl Joanne Stoeckl