

Young People, Climate Change, and Resilience: Navigating an Uncertain Future

An International Conference / Gathering

Concept Note

July, 2017

Challenge

There may be no greater threat facing today's children and youth, and future generations of children, than climate (UNICEF 2015). Across the globe, the risks and impacts of climate change and associated natural disasters continue to grow, while the need for collective action becomes all the more urgent. We are already seeing evidence that worsening natural challenges such as droughts and floods, and increasing vector born diseases, will lead to secondary human challenges such as widespread migration and civil and political conflict. It is being suggested that human beings have entered the *anthropocene*, an epoch that began when human activities started to have a significant global impact on Earth's geology and ecosystems. At a time when the human family has begun to pose a terminal threat to our own and only home, the global biosphere, our central challenge will be to "mine" our own humanity to uncover the best of our collective wisdom and resilience.

To address these highly complex, multi-systemic challenges and re-imagine possible solutions, we need flexible perspectives, creative approaches, and innovative, collaborative mindsets (Cutter, 2013; Enders & Remig, 2015; Loayza & Otker-Robe, 2013; Snowden et. al. 2007; World Bank, 2010).

Young people, aged 10 – 24, represent 25% percent of the world's population (Population Reference Bureau, 2013), the largest cohort of young people in our collective history. This generation represents a largely untapped resource to address these global challenges and build more resilient futures (UN, 2015). Although historically overlooked and perceived as both vulnerable in the face of disasters and climate change (Mitchell, Tanner & Haynes, 2009), and a threat in the context of human insecurity (FRIDE, 2015, UNICEF 2015), young people are both willing and able to contribute to establishing more resilient communities (Peek, 2008). Furthermore, youth are less habitual problem-solvers, more willing to take risks, early adopters of technology and innovation, and have a creative, vibrant energy that can be harnessed for social change. To address the current realities of climate change and disasters, and the uncertain future that awaits young people, requires active and collaborative engagement with young people.

Young people cannot solve the issues of climate change on their own, however. Our collective goal must be to harness the creative activism of young people with the best of multilateral human rights, sustainable development, disaster and climate change agendas, and the ancestral Indigenous wisdom of harmonious co-habitation with our planet. For example, the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)** has received near universal ratification and has made progress in shaping business practices to meet children's unique development needs, and these lessons should inform the implementation of the recently launched Sustainable Development Goals. Secondly,

youth are actively involved in finding creative, forward looking solutions to climate change, despite the limitations in meaningfully operationalizing multilateral State Party action plans on Climate Change agreements. Finally, Indigenous peoples social and ecological wisdom offers an opportunity to “learn our way back” to rediscover our human strengths in co-existing with complex natural ecosystems.

These three strategic threads offer an “Organizational DNA” to reset our human endeavors in order to better align the human family with a rapidly changing planet.

Innovation

The International Institute for Child Rights and Development (www.iicrd.org) and the Resilience by Design: Innovation Lab, both affiliated with Royal Roads University, will host an international Gathering entitled ***Young People, Climate Change, and Resilience – Navigating an Uncertain Future*** (late 2018 or other dates to be determined).

This Gathering will bring together representatives from these three strategic sectors: **Young people, adult allies including Elders** (leaders from the fields of human rights, sustainable development, disaster risk reduction and climate change - academics, scientists, policy influencers, practitioners, private sector partners, and philanthropists), and **Indigenous leaders**. These representatives will gather from across the globe to:

- Understand how children and young people (across the life span) are increasingly affected by the risks impacts of disaster and climate change
- Identify creative, innovative, and evidence-informed prototypes/solutions
- Align these efforts with traditional Indigenous social and ecological knowledge and practice
- Find strategic entry points to inform the global human rights, sustainable development, disaster risk reduction and climate change agendas
- Explore emergent, solution oriented adaptive systems interventions
- Pose emerging questions warranting future research and creative exploration.

Approach

The thrust of the Conference/Gathering is **knowledge to action**. Hence, while there may be some traditional academic presentations, the primary focus will be on sharing knowledge through non-traditional academic means using the Social Lab Innovation format. Deep learning techniques such Art of Hosting Meaningful Conversations, creative story-telling, art, video, theatre, and experiential activities will be applied.

Participants will be invited to start this process in the 18 months leading up to the Gathering, to intentionally collaborate and co-create, and generate creative, innovative, and evidence-informed prototypes/solutions. This process will be facilitated through on line discourse and the hosting of pre-Gathering planning meetings.

Creative Action

Outputs from the event will include:

- Strategic policy briefs
- Youth manifesto
- Interdisciplinary academic papers
- Accredited capacity building opportunities for youth leaders
- Strengthened inter-sectoral networks for “bottom up” community lead change

To capture the outputs of the Conference/Gathering, a documentary film-maker will work with participants – young people and adult allies to create a series of cinema-ready short documentaries (3-5 minutes each). These shorts will be used to share the experience, advocate, and generate additional resources and support. We will also create an edited book where chapters are co-written by young people and an adult ally.

Potential Dates and Location

Late 2018 (or future dates to be determined), Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

Preliminary List of Partners and/or Advisors

- International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD), Canada
- Resiliency by Design Innovation Lab, Royal Roads University, Canada
- Mike McKenzie, Swepmec First Nation Youth; Ruth Hanson, Voices of Future Generations; and additional youth and Indigenous leaders
- Bill White, Snuneymuxw Elder, and additional Elders including Bill Myers, Dr. Paloma Pavel, Carl Anthony, Nancy Myers, and Larry Green (Canada & US)
- Centre for Global Studies, University of Victoria (Martin Bunton)
- Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions, University of Victoria (Sybil Seitzinger)
- Ryerson University, School of Child and Youth Care, Canada (Tara Collins)
- Concordia University, Applied Human Sciences (Natasha Blanchet-Cohen)
- Resilience Research Centre, Dalhousie University (Michael Ungar)
- University of California at Davis, Centre for Regional Change (Nancy Erbstein)
- Chiang Mai University, Mekong Social Research Centre, Thailand
- Global Child Forum (Fiona Rotberg, hosted by the King and Queen of Sweden)
- Shaking the Movers Youth, Landon Pearson Centre for Children’s Rights
- Our Children’s Trust – Youth-led environmental justice (Andrea Rogers)
- Right to Play (Brijpal Patel)
- African Child Policy Forum (Ethiopia), Arigatou Foundation, IKEA Foundation, UNICEF and World Vision
- IICRD Team Members: Philip Cook, Zorah Staar, Katie Shaw-Raudoy, Simon Jackson, Laura Lee, Sabrina Bonfonti, and Laura Wright

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