



Supporting positive change.

YouthScape is based on the belief that young people can make important contributions to building resilient, inclusive, adaptable and healthy communities. Our society does not always support and recognize these contributions, especially from youth who are marginalized and excluded culturally or economically. By encouraging young people to develop their talents, learn new skills, and become engaged contributors, we can support positive change and make our communities stronger.

In the first phase of **YouthScape**, five communities from across Canada were selected to develop projects designed to create change and encourage active participation and meaningful engagement by young people. Congratulations to Halifax Regional Municipality, Rivière des Prairies (Montreal), Thunder Bay, Saskatoon, and Calgary for their hard work through the proposal and selection processes!

Read on to find out what is happening with this exciting new initiative...

YouthScape
community based. youth paced.

Fall 2007

2 Building bridges.
Changing attitudes.
The International
Institute for Child Rights

2 Learning Symposium

COMMUNITY STORIES

3 Mapping the community :
Rivière des Prairies

4 Working differently with
marginalized youth :
Saskatoon

4 Building a strong steering
committee : Halifax

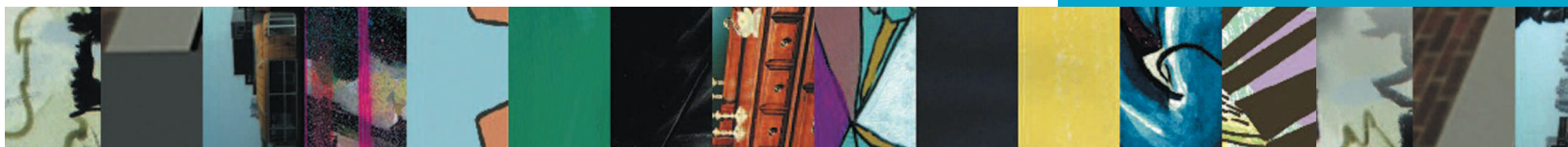
5 What makes you scream :
Calgary

5 Circle of partners :
Thunder Bay

YOUTHSCAPE IN ACTION

6 Research informed action
Critical Reflection
Advocacy
Communication

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YouthScape is convened by the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD). It is funded and supported by the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, the United Way of Calgary and Area, the National YouthScape Advisory and community stakeholders in Halifax Regional Municipality, Rivière des Prairies, Thunder Bay, Saskatoon and Calgary.

YouthScape

Working together to create a national movement to strengthen youth engagement and build resilient communities. Embracing bold visions for change!

Get involved!

Visit our online community website: <http://projects.takingitglobal.org/iicrd>

NATIONAL CONVENER

Building bridges. Changing attitudes. The Role of the International Institute for Child Rights

The International Institute for Child Rights and Development is honored to be the convening agency for the YouthScape initiative.

Since 1994 we have worked strategically with children, communities, practitioners and government systems to develop research, education, and capacity-building tools. Our goal is to re-instill and recreate dignity, hope and possibility for children as participating members of the human family. We apply a "Bottom Up-Top Down" developmental approach that builds on the strengths of children, families and individual communities within their unique socio-cultural contexts, in order to take child rights from legal ratification to reality.

Our role, as YouthScape convener, is to help participating communities achieve sustainable changes, create a culture of learning, and produce a body of knowledge that will help change Canada's local, provincial and federal government policies and practices. If we are successful, community members and decision makers in Canada will begin to see young people not as sources of problems but as clusters of assets. To do this, we focus on building meaningful, respectful partnerships between youth and adults; creating youth development opportunities; advocating for children, youth and their families; and fostering a policy environment that reinforces Canada's commitment to children and youth.

Philip Cook, Executive Director, IICRD
Michele Cook, YouthScape Project Manager
>> www.iicrd.org

COMING UP AT YOUTHSCAPE

Learning Symposium : November 6-10, 2007

This November, Project Beluga in Rivière des Prairies (Montreal) will host the first ever **YouthScape Learning Symposium**. Community participants young and old, National YouthScape Advisory members, funders, conveners, as well other model youth leaders will join us for a week of learning together. All participating YouthScape communities have helped shape the symposium to further build on our individual and collective strengths.

Planned Learning Themes :

- Youth-led organizing
- Youth inclusion in adult-based organizations
- Decision making structures
- Using grants to stimulate engagement ...and more!

Objectives :

- Consolidate and strengthen the YouthScape community at the national level
- Share lessons learned between communities
- Reflect on our process and facilitate new learning
- Build relationships
- Learn from each other and other organizations doing similar work
- Strengthen our work with youth from diverse communities, and

have fun!

Marc Langlois, Developmental Evaluation
Jen Wheeler, YouthScape Project Assistant

Mapping the community : Speak what you see

In June 2007, approximately 30 young people aged 13 to 19 became researchers and detectives in Rivière des Prairies. In teams, they examined:

- Resources for youth
- Concerns about the environment
- Employment for youth
- Neighbourhood perceptions and concerns about youth

As young researchers, they designed surveys and carried out interviews with Rivière des Prairies residents aged 15-25, to learn about their needs and views about these four issues. Using geographic information systems and photography, they then mapped the situation, identifying possible action areas.

Engaging both youth and adults in these activities was a challenge, but it also provided opportunities for huge learning. The challenge for the adult coordination team was to provide space for young people to act as leaders in project management. For the young people, the challenge was to design maps that met the adults' standards of rigor and credibility.

In each team, young people were invited to choose a leader. These new team leaders responded well to the responsibility they had been given, demonstrating coordination skills and serving as role models for their team. Every day, they met with supportive adults to share their work plans. Over the summer, the teams changed as new members joined and others left. The number of team members, and the age and gender balance of each team influenced relationships and learning. Older team members were challenged to tolerate "less mature behaviours", while younger members were challenged by the complexity of the mapping processes.

Throughout the mapping project, we encouraged diversity within the teams to create a microcosm of our larger community. Since the Rivière des Prairies community naturally groups around cultural affinities and there is little mingling between groups, we expected conflicts between the participants. To our surprise, the young people did not replicate the divisions that exist in our wider community. When we asked about visible differences between team members, one young person replied, "When we work together, there is no difference! We are made the same, we want the same results. The adults build walls, we don't!"

In November, the young people involved in this project will present their findings to community leaders. It will be a strategic moment for them – an opportunity to set an example for the decision-makers of Rivière des Prairies about how young people can help develop workable solutions and create a common plan of action. Our teams are eager to have their voices heard and are preparing with great motivation and creativity!



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Working differently with marginalized youth



Kids who are labeled as 'marginalized' have skills! They have learned many skills through survival, which a cushioned kid will not have.

YouthScape Saskatoon is working on better ways to work with marginalized young people. Dr. Natasha Blanchet-Cohen asked Tala Tootoosis, YouthScape coordinator, how we can look at these young people in a different way. Here's what Tala said:

"When youth don't show up or are late or can't come, it's a way of communicating to us that they need help. Our youth today are living in very different worlds with very different issues. In Saskatoon we need to think, 'what are the First Nations values and how can we strengthen these values?'"

A kid who has sold drugs, been on the streets has communication skills, math skills, negotiation skills--a kid who has sold drugs everyone listens to them. They are very smart. They are not poor kids; they have an unbelievable knowledge of life. It is not about what you should be, and telling them how they fit in. As a recovering addict, I've been told that I have to "start all over again" which is not empowering. We need to focus on the positive skills developed in bad situations instead of band aid solutions."

Tala Tootoosis, YouthScape coordinator at Communities for Children in Saskatoon. >> www.communitiesforchildren.net

Saskatoon

Building a strong steering committee



The diversity of our steering committee is one of its chief strengths.

Our first task for the Halifax Regional Municipality YouthScape project has been to lay a foundation for the work ahead. For us, this has meant facing challenges, finding solutions and developing a strong team that will help strengthen our community.

One priority has been to build a strong steering committee, informing them about and engaging them in the project. We have noticed a difference at each meeting, as committee members become familiar with the goals and possibilities of the project, and as they welcome new members into their circle with warmth and open minds.

The diversity of our steering committee is one of its chief strengths. It is made up of wonderful individuals from a diversity of cultures, backgrounds and experiences, who come from all corners of the Halifax Regional Municipality, to share their ideas, opinions, vision.

The young people on our committee have really stepped up, and are already asking to organize and lead our meetings. As they become more comfortable with the committee's people and information, we know they will become more involved in discussions and bring exciting new perspectives to the table.

As our steering committee moves forward together as a team, it will begin to explore in greater depth new ideas, methods and strategies. We have seen this group in action, and know that we're in for a year of fun, action - and lots of laughs!

Sabrina Poirier, Coordinator, YouthScape Halifax Regional Municipality >> www.heartwood.ns.ca

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Calgary

What makes you scream...?

As we launched YouthScape Calgary, we posed the question ‘What makes you scream?’ to the youth and adults in our own office building. We knew there were some tensions between young people and adults who used the building, and we wanted to create a space to discuss the issues from both perspectives.

What was making the young people scream? They said, “we want to be heard”, “we know what we need” and “we are like a puzzle piece, all unique yet still we connect”. And the adults? They said: “we want them to stop sitting on our cars in the parking lot”, “they are scaring the people that enter the building because they hang in big groups by the front door” and “youth are trouble.” It was obvious immediately that there was a communication gap between these two groups.

Because both youth- and adult-serving agencies use our building, our young people proposed a project that would bring everyone together to create a welcoming mural near the entrance of the building. Teams of youth and adults were formed to design and paint a unique, collaborative art piece.

Working together on the mural is fostering communication between young people and adults as they create something that will be owned by everyone. It is helping to rebuild bridges within our community through common action, enhancing trust, and creating a more harmonious coexistence!

Kim Morrison, Coordinator, YouthScape Calgary >> www.cyfc.ca

Circle of partners

With some fanfare, we are happy to introduce our newly formed ‘Circle of Partners’, formerly known as our YouthScape steering committee! Although few in number, these partners represent the voices of a broad spectrum of neighborhood youth, residents, organizations, agencies and stakeholders who are most directly involved in our project. Our hope is that this shift towards a more fluid, unconventional structure, operation and method will propel our project forward effectively and with the flexibility to modify membership and absorb new ideas!

The first collective focus of our Circle of Partners will be developing and enhancing youth spaces of empowerment. Initial project tasks are aimed at improving the social, mental and physical spaces that affect marginalized youth in our neighborhood and in particular the need for a space where youth can gather, listen and be heard. As such, we are building a strong relationship with the students and staff at the independent Aboriginal high school. This school provides secondary education for local Aboriginal youth and youth from distant reserve locations. This ‘Project of Place’ represents a partnership between our greatest community assets: youth, school staff, and area leaders who are focused on building capacity in all YouthScape priority areas.

We know that one of the bigger challenges we face, will be to foster a positive, inclusive and adventuresome environment that encourages all participants to make meaningful contributions while still allowing them to learn valuable lessons when they ‘fall down’ – as we all do from time to time!

Beth Boon, Coordinator, YouthScape Thunder Bay >> www.unitedway-tbay.on.ca



This project has turned out to be much much more than a work of art!

Fostering a positive, inclusive and adventuresome environment



THUNDER BAY
5

YouthScape

is creating systemic change through...



The YouthScape approach to meaningful engagement of youth, in particular marginalized and diverse youth, is to:

Create places & spaces for youth voices to influence decision-making.

Be relevant to youth's lives and cultures.

Learn through doing.

Have fun!

Jorge E. Salazar,

YouthScape Community Youth Developer



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Research informed action :

While examining the pathways each participating community has undertaken to build resilient communities, we have been using research methods (led by Dr. Natasha Blanchet-Cohen) that can help to promote self-discovery in individuals, build community and serve as catalysts for social change. Through Social Analysis Systems tools, for instance, communities of stakeholders are becoming involved in defining, designing and implementing new approaches to engaging with young people.

Drawing on methods from case studies, grounded theory and action research, YouthScape research is laying the foundations of understanding:

- How to create resiliency in communities with youth
- The impact of making communities more resilient with youth
- What support communities require to navigate across transformations that require constant innovation and re-envisioning

This research will be used to foster community understanding and action, and to advocate for policy and broad-based systems change that better integrates marginalized youth as key change agents in community building.

Critical reflection :

Developmental Evaluation (DE) is a practice developed for use in highly emergent and complex environments with the potential for new learning and innovation high. DE encourages integration at all levels of program development - planning, action and reflection. The Developmental Evaluators (led by Marc Langlois) is encouraging the YS community teams to pause at critical moments, to reflect on how the program 'ingredients' are blending and if the organizers putting the 'meal' on the table are understanding each other. DE is not only capturing the way the particular 'flavors marry', but also contributing to a far more enjoyable and successful 'cooking experience'.

Advocacy :

The Advocacy Subcommittee has been hatching plans to share the YouthScape experience, messages, learnings, resources, outcomes and expertise with the rest of the world. We are designing strategies to carry our message into other networks and realms of youth engagement, and to truly contribute to a national/international youth movement that supports larger systems change.

Communication :

Can you guess what this small but mighty Communications Subcommittee has been doing? Yep, that's right – improving our communication! We have been developing and testing different strategies, tools and ideas that will improve our internal communication and knowledge management. Our committee members come from both coasts and Montreal. We would love to have representation from across the country, so if you would like to be included, just let us know ...new members are always welcome!