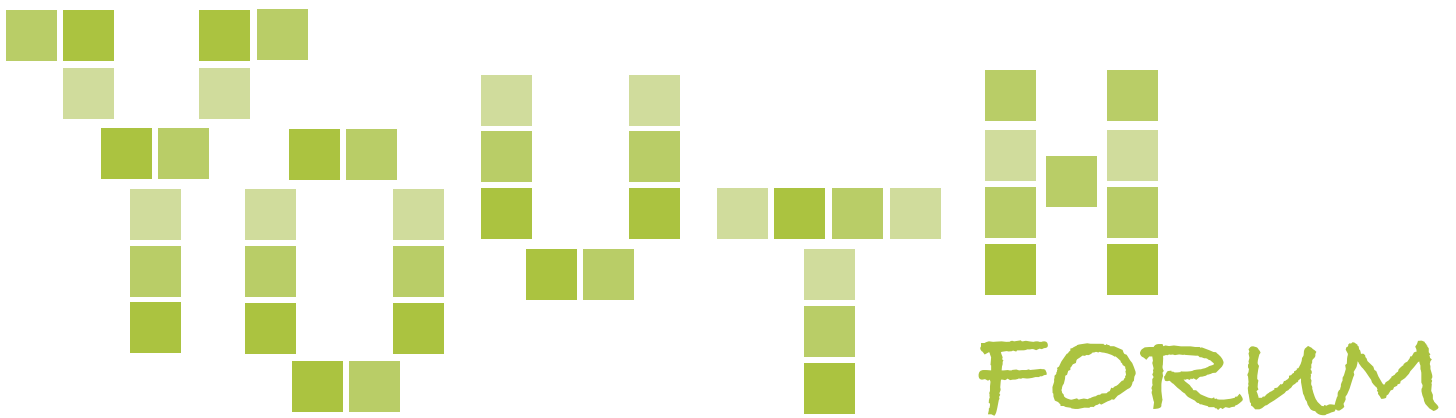


2009



CANADIAN COMMISSION FOR UNESCO'S
NATIONAL YOUTH CONSULTATION REPORT



CANADIAN COMMISSION FOR UNESCO
COMMISSION CANADIENNE POUR L'UNESCO

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The Commission strongly believes in the importance of engaging youth in finding answers to the current global challenges. As actors of today, and not only of tomorrow, youth are an essential force and we must recognize the value of their active participation in all spheres of our society.

I wish to personally thank the Provincial Youth Advisory Group (YAG) Coordinators who led the organization of the provincial consultations across Canada: Lisa Baroldi, Xing Chiu, Isabelle LeVert-Chiasson, Angie Mapara, Kalin McCluskey, Mirco Plante, Leanna Platt, and Jonathan Yee. Their work and commitment have made these consultations not only possible but also successful.

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We trust this report will inspire others and that the ideas it contains will be well reflected at the 6th UNESCO Youth Forum in Paris, France.

David A. Walden
Secretary-General



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In preparation for the 6th UNESCO Youth Forum, to be held in Paris (France) from October 1 to 3, 2009 and with the assistance of its Provincial Youth Advisory Group (YAG) Coordinators, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (hereinafter the Commission) organized seven provincial youth consultations in Nova Scotia, Québec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia and in the Yukon Territory. An online consultation questionnaire was also made available to allow Canadians who were not able to attend the consultations to provide input.

An estimated one hundred and thirty young Canadians aged 16 to 32, representing a broad range of experience and a number of youth organizations from Canada, were selected to contribute their experiences, identify common concerns and contribute to the work of the Commission. Participants shared their vision and innovative ideas on this year's Forum's main theme: "Investing out of the Crisis: Towards a Partnership between UNESCO and Youth Organizations" as well as on five sub-themes corresponding to UNESCO's sectors.

During each provincial consultation, the participants collectively deliberated on the actions that UNESCO and the Commission should encourage to promote youth-driven visionary programmes and strategies that address current global issues that affect us all.

The present report thus encapsulates the many perspectives of Canadian youth who participated in this year's consultation process. When confronted with the main theme of the Forum and asked how Canadian youth could help, most were eager to voice their opinions and appreciative of the opportunity to do so. Hence, youth across Canada shared their views on what they think to be their role in helping their community, their province, their country and sometimes, the rest of the world, to "invest out of the crisis". The various principles – including tolerance, collaboration, active participation, citizen engagement, synergy, respect and empathy – serve as the basis to most of their recommendations, in the present report.



Since the 1990s, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO has remained highly involved with and for youth (15-30 years old). Youth represent essential partners in building more just and peaceful societies throughout the world. For this reason, the Commission ensures that youth fully participate, not only in the activities of the Commission, but in those of UNESCO and in all other forums of civil society as well.

The Commission currently has youth sitting on its three sectoral Commissions (Education; Culture, Communication and Information; Natural and Social Sciences), and on its Executive Committee. The Commission also works with its Youth Advisory Group (YAG) as with a vast network of youth and youth organizations that help guide the actions of youth engagement at the Commission.

The youth consultations, in preparation for the UNESCO Youth Forum, constitute one of the Commission's initiatives wherein young Canadians are invited to share their vision regarding UNESCO youth strategies in each of its sectors of activities. Members of the Commission's Youth Advisory Group recognized the need to include a wider representation of young Canadians in the consultation process, hence this year's wider-reaching pan-Canadian consultations. The Canadian approach is innovative as Canada was among the first countries to implement a youth consultation process in preparation for the Youth Forum, in 2003. Since, the recommendations that arise from the consultations serve as a basis for the formulation of Canada's position at the Youth Forum, held in Paris every two years prior to the UNESCO General Conference.

It is since 1999 that the UNESCO Youth Forum has united, at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, youth delegates from Member States and NGOs around the world. The delegates debate and develop the proposals for action, which are subsequently submitted in a final report to the UNESCO General Conference. Given that the General Conference is the supreme decisional body of the Organization, the UNESCO Youth Forum therefore constitutes a unique occasion for youth to participate actively in the work of the UNESCO General Conference and to have input on some issues being discussed therein.

This year's main theme of the Canadian consultations corresponds to one of the three ministerial roundtables that will be held during the 35th UNESCO General Conference, namely: "Investing out of the Crisis through action in social domains (Education, the Sciences, Culture and Communication)" This will allow participants in the 6th UNESCO Youth Forum to contribute to the work of the roundtable.

The 6th UNESCO Youth Forum represents a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between youth and worldwide decision-makers and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO is proud to enable the participation of young Canadians in this worthwhile event.



OBJECTIVES

The objective of the Youth consultations was to recommend, both to UNESCO and the Commission, youth-driven solutions to challenge the current global economic crisis.

These youth-led recommendations will be further studied by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and will serve, among other things, to develop Canada's position at the 2009 Youth Forum and provide a framework to the work of the two youth delegates representing Canada at the Forum, Anne Lemieux and Xing Chiu. The present recommendations are also meant to guide the activities of youth at the Commission in Canada in the upcoming two years.

The results will be shared with the members of the Canadian delegation to the 35th UNESCO General Conference, including those participating in the ministerial roundtables on behalf of Canada, and with all the Commission's members and partners.



METHODOLOGY

In June 2009, Provincial Youth Advisory Group (YAG) Coordinators¹ were selected in eight provinces. This permitted a decentralization of the role of the Commission's Programme Officer for Youth and facilitated the organization of provincial consultations throughout the country. Under the supervision of the Commission's Programme Officer, the Coordinators recruited participants within their own provincial networks and other YAG members' networks. Coordinators were responsible for confirming the participation of all participants in their province as well as for related- logistics.

With the assistance of one of its YAG members (Wojciech Gryc), the Commission developed a basic webpage containing relevant documents related to the Youth Forum's theme. Coordinators and participants were able to consult these documents ahead of time in order to prepare for the consultation process.

Provincial Coordinators then gathered the data from their respective consultations and provided a concise report to the Commission.

If certain invited participants were not able to attend the consultation in person, they were able to provide online input by filling out a questionnaire linked to this year's Youth Forum theme.

In addition, there were two other "side" consultations that enabled the Commission to collect additional view points from youth across Canada. A brief workshop and consultation process was held in the context of l'École d'été of the *Institut du Nouveau Monde*² in Montréal, Québec. Another similar workshop was held in the context of the Global Youth Assembly³ in Edmonton, Alberta. An estimated 40 additional participants took part in these two workshops.

The provincial reports were summarized into one general draft document. The Commission then invited the two selected delegates to this year's Youth Forum as well as two Provincial Coordinators from different parts of Canada to meet in Ottawa and take part in a Drafting Committee for the present report. During two full days, and with the assistance of the Programme Officer for Youth, the four committee members deliberated and selected those recommendations that most represent the views of young Canadians across the country.

1 The Coordinators are all members of the Commission's Youth Advisory Group themselves and work on a voluntary basis.

2 A non partisan organization whose mission is to promote citizen participation and the renewal of ideas in Québec.

3 The Global Youth Assembly (GYA) is about bringing youth between the ages of 16-28 together from diverse geographical and personal backgrounds to learn from each other and become part of a movement to advance peace and human rights.



MAIN THEME

INVESTING OUT OF THE CRISIS: TOWARDS A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN UNESCO AND YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

CONTEXT: THE CRISIS ACCORDING TO YOUNG CANADIANS

*"It seems that there is an unnecessary emphasis on growth; build more, buy more, consume more. BUT we are growing beyond what is sustainable."
(British Columbia consultation participant)*

Canadian youth in general strongly felt that while the current financial crisis does accentuate or introduce other societal problems, it simultaneously generates opportunities to re-evaluate, to learn and to grow. There was general agreement that most leaders of wealthier nations are reinvesting in an inadequate model rather than striving for change, for example, by offering quality information and support for cultural activities so as to spawn new ideas and new models.

Many observed that relying on money rather than on social awareness may be the source of all problems. In accordance with this viewpoint, Canadian youth on average, agreed that apathy, complacency, selfishness and greed are mind-sets that prevent us from breaking out of the current vicious cycle. Out of the crisis arises great hope for profound change, but this hope may fade if the solutions aim only to perpetuate the current model.

In line with the above, some participants raised concerns that certain solutions to the crisis may be "quick fixes". Youth from certain provinces, notably from the Yukon, underlined that some communities may not have the capacity to absorb large amounts of stimulus-ready money. They raised some of the following questions: "Are we assessing new projects properly?" "Could it be mortgaging our future?" In addition, many resulting employment opportunities are typically being filled by men. (i.e. construction-type employment)

Participants in the consultations felt that national and provincial policies are often void of the youth voice. It was highlighted that young people's ideas and opinions are time and again only considered in a superficial manner. In fact, the inclusion of youth in decisions at all political levels should be valued and perceived as a forward-thinking way to build our society whilst considering future generations. Similarly, providing a larger space for youth within policy-based discussions should be seen as a long-term approach to the betterment of society as opposed to the current, more popular, short-term approach.





While many appreciated the fact that some government entities are striving to create additional opportunities for Canadian youth voices to be heard, it was broadly agreed that there remains a disconnection between current leaders and Canadian youth.

The issue of youth unemployment and youth poverty was popular in certain Canadian regions. Some participants underlined the need for increased government accountability in supporting the creation of youth employment and social services programmes.

"Canada (and indeed, the entire world) depends on scientific and industrial progress to thrive. With less money being put forward to support young people, this crisis becomes a long term one, as stunted or slowed development is a cascading, cumulative problem." (Online consultation participant)



Photo credit: Ronan MacParland

Participants of consultation in Ontario



Sustainability was also considered a “hot topic” among Canadian youth. The majority of participants were generally well-informed on themes linked to sustainable development. The fact that richer nations are placing mounting pressure on the planet’s natural resources was a popular viewpoint. Some participants went as far as to specify the difference between sustainable development and sustainable living, the later being perceived as a lifestyle that aims to consider one’s own consumption patterns in the bigger realm of the planet’s limited natural resources.

“Elders say hard times are coming. In Old Crow we had to hunt, pack water, wood. It is about preparing ourselves if mother earth decides she is going to cleanse herself just like our body cleanses itself from viruses and sickness.”
(Yukon consultation participant)

Some raised concerns that the current financial crisis had caused a shift in awareness and priorities. A number of nations may have become unevenly focused on the financial crisis while forgetting that other issues such as environmental degradation and climate change are partly rooted in the global crisis itself.

“If people don’t have food to eat, they won’t be thinking about education and “hunger creates wars”. (Ontario consultation participant)



Photo credit: Leanna Platt

Participants of consultation in British Columbia



Photo credit: Ronan MacParland

Participants of consultation in Ontario





Moreover, Canadian youth were concerned by growing social inequalities between developing countries and richer nations. As a result, poorer populations are more adversely affected by the crisis, and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)⁴ are threatened, as are other international commitments. Some underlined that the financial crisis could be used as an alibi for political disengagement in response to a difficult period during which leaders can be tempted to look for solutions within their own boundaries instead of outside.

Finally, many young people throughout Canada were keen on highlighting the positive effects of the global financial crisis. Participants pointed to the fact that the crisis compels people to come together between generations, socially, locally and even internationally (through meetings, conferences and discussions). Some youth felt that the crisis causes many to question the prevailing economic model. Others viewed the crisis as an opportunity to incite the average person to decrease one's own consumption and encourage one to recycle more, to rethink, and reuse.

The 2009 Canadian youth consultations were rich in discussions and characterized by the willingness of young Canadians to come forth and share their views on the world today. The following main recommendations are the summarized results of these discussions. In light of the many thoughts, opinions and perspectives shared, three main recommendations were carefully selected to answer this year's UNESCO Youth Forum main theme: "Investing out of the Crisis: Towards a Partnership between UNESCO and Youth Organizations".



Photo credit: Yasmine Charara

Participants at the consultation held in the context of l'École d'été at Institut du Nouveau Monde in Montréal, Québec

4 The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and all the world's leading development institutions. See: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml>



MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

PROMOTING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

“People need to understand the importance of engaging youth, not just to achieve strategic plans for five years, but to develop a plan for the future, from us to the next generations.” (British Columbia consultation participant)

The recommendations below are based on the general idea that youth engagement and participation in all levels of decision-making processes are vital to the development of sustainable societies throughout the world, such as stated in the Report of the UNESCO General Conference Youth Forum 2007. Canadian youth in the 2009 consultations felt this was particularly relevant in view of this year’s main theme.

In addition, it was suggested that the role of ethics in the framework of global responses to the present-day financial crisis is misperceived and insufficiently considered. Participants reiterated the fact that the very foundation of UNESCO’s Constitution gives it an ethical function⁵. Member States and UNESCO partners should reinforce its efforts to address current global challenges through an “ethical framework formulated by drawing on universal values and moral principles to provide standards that guide action in a given domain⁶”. Canadian youth viewed ethical issues as inherent to sustainable development as it provides a space for reflection and raising questions. Ethics enables us to better understand the reasons behind our actions thus favoring the adoption of certain beneficial behaviors that foster the development of sustainable societies in the context of the global crisis.

“Youth will have a great impact on changing those people that are set in their ways. The culture of questioning the norm - may be particular to our generation.” (Yukon consultation participant)

5 The UNESCO constitution can be found at : http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15244&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

6 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001800/180013e.pdf>





I. FOSTERING INTERGENERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

“Youth are good at creating strategies and implementing them, but how can we get other generations on board?” (Yukon consultation participant)

Based on the premise that youth can gain a great deal of knowledge from partnering with members of older generations and that, in turn, adults can benefit from certain youth-specific skills sets, we strongly encourage UNESCO and Member States to consider the creation of wide-ranging opportunities for intergenerational partnerships. These partnerships are based on the idea of a mentorship but are distinct in that they encourage the flow of exchanges and teachings in both directions, from adult to youth and from youth to adult. UNESCO should create a model of such intergenerational partnership opportunities and advocate its successes and lessons learnt to Member States and other organizations. Member States should also support the development of such programmes within their own governmental structures while offering parallel assistance to those who wish to enter the workforce. We strongly urge UNESCO to advocate for the recognition that youth are beneficial to all types of workplaces.



Photo credit: Isabelle Levert-Chiasson

Participants of consultation in Nova Scotia



II. INCREASING VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH DIALOGUE

Based on the above-mentioned principle that ethical issues are inherent to sustainable development and that dialogue and reflection are binding to the adoption of social actions to help “invest out of the crisis”, we firmly encourage UNESCO, through its National Commissions and national partners, to continue promoting – as it was done with the recent regional youth forums - youth gatherings and create more opportunities for youth dialogue. A two-pronged approach is recommended:

Firstly, we suggest that the Canadian UNESCO Youth Advisory Group model and other similar national models be closely examined and clearly documented, with support from the UNESCO Secretariat. Successful models should be shared with other National Commissions to help ensure that youth in all Member States are included in UNESCO’s programmes at local level. Such groups enable youth to gather on a regular basis and discuss issues pertaining to UNESCO’s mandated areas. They also have liaison, advisory and participation functions that help meet the National Commission’s mandate.

Secondly, recognizing the mounting importance of information and communication technologies, including the use of social networking tools to promote the free flow of ideas and universal access to information⁷, Canadian youth recommend the creation of a significant UNESCO-supported virtual tool to encourage inter-cultural youth dialogue and the sharing of different experiences throughout the world. UNESCO’s efforts to provide an online discussion forum in preparation for the 2009 Youth Forum should be commended. A virtual tool for wider-usage should be based on its lessons learnt so as to avoid any duplication of efforts. Such a tool could include an index of youth-driven projects throughout the world, financial and informational resources including access to experts in different fields, links to affiliated UNESCO organizations, documented best practices and guidelines to initiate local and international projects and an easily accessible discussion forum. Participants underlined the importance of a coherent and user-friendly website to encourage its widespread use. Finally, the existing Open training platform⁸ of the Communication and Information sector should be reinforced. The platform would strongly benefit from the addition of a “Youth” category.

III. ADAPTING SCHOOL CURRICULUMS TO THE REALITIES OF TODAY

“Education sometimes teaches stereotypical or romanticized ideas of cultures. We are often taught elements of cultures and the world that are not “real.” For example: all first nations’ people live in igloos and wear feathers. This is not a reality, and education needs to reflect reality.”
(British Columbia consultation participant)

7 Based on the principle objectives of the Information and Communication Sector at UNESCO.
See: http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=1509&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

8 See: <http://opentraining.unesco-ci.org/cgi-bin/page.cgi?d=1>



Canadian Youth strongly feel that education, and particularly education for sustainable development, should be considered as one of the main prescriptive pillars to “invest out of the crisis” and that Member States should prioritize funding for related educational programmes. As such, we commend UNESCO’s efforts in the context of the United Nations Decade for Education on Sustainable Development (DESD). The DESD was widely acclaimed by youth and is perceived as a considerable step in the right direction. Nonetheless, we encourage UNESCO’s Member States to adapt school curriculums at all levels to present-day realities. We urge UNESCO to promote inter-disciplinary classes and learning, and encourage Member States, in partnership with the relevant education authorities, to consider the addition of new crisis-related concepts into existing courses. We also recommend the inclusion of courses on ethics, and on social, political, economic and environmental issues, in a global context, and at all educational levels.

We commend the UNESCO LINKS Programme which strives to strengthen knowledge transmission between elders and youth, and explore pathways to balance community-based knowledge with global knowledge in formal and non-formal education⁹. We recommend the unwavering support and recognition of the value of local and traditional knowledge in all of UNESCO’s mandated sectors. We particularly encourage National Commissions to promote the value of traditional teachings in the context of education for sustainable development and increase access to related information through different international days (i.e. International Day of the World’s Indigenous People, World Environment Day, etc.), support to field-based and promotional activities and workshops.



Photo credit: Jimmy Ung

Participants of consultation in Québec

⁹ See: http://portal.unesco.org/science/en/ev.php-URL_ID=1945&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html



SUB-THEMES OF THE FORUM

NATURAL SCIENCES: “SCIENCE FOR A GREEN ECONOMY: VALUING YOUTH PERSPECTIVES AND ACTIONS”

“Politically there are boundaries, but environmental effects do not have these and they have the power to affect us here.” (Yukon consultation participant)

In keeping with the context of the global economic crisis, the topic of a “green economy” was particularly important to the majority of participants of the consultations. Issues such as climate change, degradation of natural resources, global warming, carbon-based economies, lack of water preservation and nuclear waste were brought to the discussion table. Participants also raised concerns pertaining to the current trend of “green washing” defined as companies who dishonestly advertise their products and policies as being environmentally friendly. Others raised apprehensions regarding companies and infrastructures that are known polluters and wondered whether governments were increasingly allowing oversights justified by the financial crisis.

Participants also pointed to the fact that although existing scientific knowledge could potentially be used to face the environmental crisis, converting this scientific research into action seems to often block at policy level. Environmental policies worldwide should be based on the recommendations of scientific research.

In contrast, Canadian youth reported the witnessing of a mounting “cultural green movement” and highlighted the fact that UNESCO, Member States, and partner organizations should acknowledge this momentum through increased partnerships with youth and by continuing to advocate for science as fundamental to the development of a successful green economy. It was generally agreed that how we decide to exploit and foster this cultural green movement will decide the future of the planet for generations to come.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I. INCREASING ENVIRONMENT-BASED INTER-DISCIPLINARY EDUCATION

As briefly mentioned in the main recommendations of this report, Canadian youth strongly feel that environmental issues are still not sufficiently addressed in school curriculums within Canada and in other countries. As a forerunner in education around the world, UNESCO, through its Member States, should encourage the integration of environmental-based notions in school curriculums at all levels. In addition, UNESCO should prioritize inter-disciplinary learning and develop related guidance tools for the use of schools, teachers, NGOs and those involved in informal teaching as well. For example, we suggest that UNESCO Member States integrate environmental concepts and issues in economics, history and even arts-based courses. Other youth-targeted training kits, such as the UNESCO/UNEP YouthXchange training kit on responsible consumption, should be developed and widely disseminated with the help of National Commissions and field offices. We also recommend that comprehensive workshops be developed in conjunction with these tools and training kits.





II. FOSTERING CHILD AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN MAB PROGRAMME

Young Canadians recognize the important role of UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB). We strongly believe that education of one's relationship with the environment should begin at the earliest age and as such, urge UNESCO to foster increased child and youth participation in the management and development of biosphere reserves around the world. UNESCO should also reinforce its efforts to sustain youth involvement in the promotion and preservation of World Heritage Sites both from a cultural and from an environmental perspective.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION: "INVESTING IN SOCIAL NETWORKING TOOLS"

In light of the growing enthusiasm for social networking tools, certain participants raised caution and pointed to the fact that, although useful, such tools must be seen as only one type of information and communication technologies (ICT) that sits within a broader framework of the development of the Internet. While social networking is an interesting concept, youth believe UNESCO must work to promote the use of technology in all of its sub-themes, and ensure that the ICTs that are beneficial in our daily lives are not utilized in a detrimental manner. They also believe that UNESCO can act as a unique player within this sphere, and more importantly, provide some innovative ideas through involvement of young people throughout the world and other stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION

I. DISSEMINATING INFORMATION ON THE SAFE USAGE OF THE INTERNET

Young Canadians recognize the unlimited potential of Information and Communication Technologies in their lives and in the lives of others. However, we are also well-aware that the usage of the internet may pose certain risks to its users, particularly to its misinformed users. Issues such as access to private information, cyber bullying, internet pedophilia, scamming, and lack of media and consumer awareness, are increasingly prevalent in our societies. We believe that in the context of the global economic crisis and of the corresponding increase in the number of vulnerable people around the world, these issues will grow in importance. Given that UNESCO is a worldwide leader in terms of promoting access to ICTs for all, we believe that it holds a responsibility, along with Member States and other relevant UN Agencies and Programmes, to contribute to the protection of internet users throughout the world. In light of this, and through partnerships with knowledgeable organizations, we strongly urge UNESCO to develop and widely promote a comprehensive and easily accessible learning tool to educate children, youth, parents and teachers on the safe usage of the internet, including social networking tools.





CULTURE: “ROLE OF CULTURE IN PROMOTING YOUTH-CENTERED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”

“Having sustainable development integrate itself among young people’s culture could create a mass movement that could be passed down through generations.” (Saskatchewan consultation participant)

Canadian youth generally agreed that youth organizations have an important role to play in promoting culture as a tool for sustainable development. Such organizations hold an advantageous position to act as the bridge between other youth, UNESCO and NGOs. They can also raise awareness among youth concerning the present crisis and highlight the importance of investing in their communities.

Some participants feared that the economic crisis would aggravate cultural impoverishment throughout the world. For many, culture is synonymous to identity. It is how they are known and recognized by others. Similarly, young Canadians in general are eager for more inter-cultural dialogue opportunities. They feel that dialogue fosters greater understanding, tolerance, respect, empathy, learning, synergy, leadership, engagement, democracy-related values, and, ultimately, peace.

In the end, participants pointed to the fact that there are communication barriers between different cultural groups in Canada. It was suggested that inter-cultural skills to better interact between diversified groups were urgently needed and inherent to very principles of sustainable development. Youth believe that understanding and appreciating one another’s cultures does help us live together and build a more inclusive society based on common civic values. This idea is particularly applicable to aboriginal and First Nations cultures in Canada and throughout the world.

RECOMMENDATION

I. PROMOTING YOUTH-RELATED CROSS-CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES IN CANADA AND INTERNATIONALLY

Based on the above premise that inter-cultural dialogue is an intrinsic part of sustainable development, we believe that UNESCO, in partnership with National Commissions and other partners, should foster and promote youth-related cross-cultural programmes within Member States and on an international level (i.e. AFS Intercultural Programmes¹¹). We particularly encourage UNESCO and National Commissions to support existing exchange programmes that aim to raise awareness of indigenous and traditional cultures (i.e. Canadian Roots programme¹²) and circulate relevant information among youth throughout the world.

11 See the AFS intercultural programmes at http://www.afs.org/afs_or/link/3034.

12 See the Canadian Roots Programme at <http://www.canadianroots.ca/>.



EDUCATION: “HOW TO MAKE EDUCATION MORE RELEVANT IN TODAY’S WORLD?”

Education was most often highlighted as the principle answer to the global economic crisis. Young Canadians generally agreed that the average provincial education curriculum does not sufficiently prepare young people for the challenges they may face in a globalized world. Most participants felt that a broader educational system is needed in the sense that course topics should be thought within a wider scope and international context.

Youth also underlined the fact that the crisis is depriving certain vulnerable groups of educational opportunities. Some youth, particularly those living in disadvantaged areas, are becoming ever more focused on short-term ways to increase their financial resources instead of considering longer-term options such as school.

Finally, many highlighted the importance of traditional forms of indigenous teachings. Canadian youth felt that these types of education too often go unrecognized. They urge Member States to recognize the value in local and traditional knowledge, particularly in the context of the global crisis and the need for increased awareness in sustainable living. These notions should be given greater importance in our school curriculums.

RECOMMENDATION

I. PRIORITIZING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

“Information can be shared at a much more rapid speed than ever before. However, this also means we have information overload and must be able to decipher from real to fake news.” (Nova Scotia consultation participant)



Photo credit: Friederike Johnigk

Participants of consultation in Québec





In relation to the above-mentioned need for a “world view” education and taking into account that youth are increasingly bombarded with all types of negative and positive information and images, we strongly believe that UNESCO should strengthen its support to the development and promotion of additional tools to help foster critical thinking in formal and non-formal educational settings. We recognize that such skills are presently included in “life skills” under Goal 3 of the Education for All global commitment¹³, but remain convinced that critical thinking skills should be adopted as a priority in the context of the global financial crisis. Critical thinking skills, as defined in the inter-agency initiative for Focusing Resources on Effective School Health (FRESH)¹⁴, should involve the analysis of peer and media influences, of different attitudes, values, social norms and beliefs and factors affecting these, and the identification of relevant information and information sources. This recommendation is in line with the above-mentioned proposition that the role of ethics, in the context of the global financial crisis, remains undervalued.



Photo credit: Leanna Platt

Participants of consultation in British Columbia



Photo credit: Jimmy Ung

Participants of consultation in Québec

SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES: “UNESCO SHS GLOBAL STRATEGY ON YOUTH”

“Let’s unite humanity by facilitating access to communication tools, by promoting dialogue and facilitating intercultural exchanges, by sharing knowledge, by eliminating discrimination and by developing new communication tools.” (Québec consultation participant)

13 UNESCO leads the Education for All (EFA) movement, aiming to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015. See: <http://www.unesco.org/en/efa-international-coordination/the-efa-movement/>

14 See the FRESH programme at http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=34993&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html





When discussing UNESCO's Social and Human Sciences Global Strategy on Youth, Canadian youth highlighted links between the current global crisis and the undermining of human rights, particularly within vulnerable groups in Canada and throughout the world. Youth feel that the present economic downturn may detract certain governments from fulfilling their responsibilities in the upholding and promoting of human rights. They pointed to different resulting consequences including affordability of water, food, and housing and access to health care and education. They also noted that the world could soon witness a resurgence of oppressive governments in response to the crisis and to the cutbacks in international resources and humanitarian assistance.

Finally, they pointed to the fact that youth and women in Canada and abroad, are often the first to suffer from unemployment, and that increases in related social problems such as urban migration and urban poverty, labor exploitation, unsafe cross-boarder migration and human trafficking are expected to rise.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I. INCREASING YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL COALITION OF CITIES AGAINST RACISM INITIATIVE

In light of the global economic crisis and of its resulting harmful consequences related to social intolerance, we reiterate our support of the International Coalition of Cities against Racism initiative. We recommend that the National Commissions and national organizations of municipalities strengthen their support for the widespread promotion of this Coalition and of its objectives and encourage local groups to identify with them. We also urge UNESCO, through its National Commissions and lead-cities, to encourage and support the work of municipalities interested in developing and sustaining youth involvement in the activities of the Coalition through the sharing of good practices, exchange programmes, informative workshops in schools, and creative methods for awareness raising.

II. DEVELOPING YOUTH-FRIENDLY DOCUMENTS

To facilitate the implementation of social education UNESCO should reinforce its efforts in developing youth-friendly documents and toolkits that popularize the information contained in its various publications. The publications "All different, all unique: Young people and UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity", "10 Keys to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression" and "World Heritage in Young Hands" are excellent examples of how technical instruments or programmes can be translated to understandable words and actions. These instruments should also include concrete ideas to translate principles and priorities into action.

UNESCO YOUTH FORUM - TOWARDS A LONG TERM APPROACH

This year's edition of the Youth Forum will include a crosscutting theme on the formal establishment of its structures for future years. In light of the specific nature of this theme, the Commission determined that a limited consultation among those most concerned would be more appropriate. As such, the members of the drafting committee for the present report were consulted on possible "best practices" for the planning of the next Youth Forum editions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. Participants wondered if a clear follow up process could be instituted in order to ensure that final recommendations of the Forum are carried out in Member States. Youth delegates and National Commissions would have two years, until the next Forum, to work towards the implementation of certain recommendations in their communities.
- II. It was recommended that an International youth planning committee, composed of former Youth Forum delegates, be established to assist in the coordination of the next edition. Doing so would ensure that views from different regions of the world are considered in the planning of the event, rendering the Youth Forum an absolute international event.
- III. Participants appreciated this year's addition of the online discussion forum (an idea that arose from the previous UNESCO Youth Forum) meant to disseminate information on chosen themes and enable youth delegates to prepare before the actual gathering. Although they consider this tool useful, it was suggested that the format was not sufficiently user-friendly and that it should include a thread through which participants could directly respond to one another instead of sending an email response to all registered users. It was also recommended that the forum include a thread on "Frequently Asked Questions" in preparation for the event, similar to the document prepared for Member States' delegates before the UNESCO General Conference.
- IV. Participants suggested setting up video streams of important sessions during the forum in order for other people who are not attending, to "virtually" take part in the event. They also felt that it would be important to find engaging methods of feeding back Forum-related information to youth throughout the world.
- V. Youth pointed to the fact that clear actions should be determined to render the Youth Forum an "eco-friendly" event. A guideline to this effect could be developed and distributed to delegates prior to the gathering.
- VI. It was generally agreed that National Commissions and consultation participants would benefit from receiving information related to the theme of the Forum, at least three full months in advance. This would help ensure better preparation to the consultation processes.



GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

"We have been raised to understand that we can do and be anything that we want, that there are no barriers, so we operate with that understanding and don't believe that we "can't" do anything." (Alberta Consultation participant)

Youth and youth organizations possess several advantages. Typically, they are creative and energetic. Youth are frequently connected to broad networks of similar-minded people and are thus able to mobilize human, if not financial, resources. Youth and youth organizations are often motivated by dissatisfaction with the status quo and have a desire to shape the world in which they will become professionals, parents and citizens. Accordingly, youth organizations and their members are instrumental in instigating and driving change in the present and the future.

Canadian youth consulted for the purpose of this report defined themselves as being collaborators and multi-taskers and pointed to the fact that innovation is part of their daily lives. For the most part, they feel completely at ease with technologies and the resulting fast pace of life. They will demand instant information and will provide instant feedback. They are accustomed to interactive experiences and use virtual tools to make new friends and connections and stay informed and engaged in local and worldwide issues.



Photo credit: Roman MacParland

Participants of consultation in Ontario



Collectively, they agreed that the current Canadian education system should include courses that aim to help challenge current and future international crises. Canadian youth have a powerful appetite for further involvement in society's various spheres of decision-making processes. They seek meaningful collaboration and they are ready to actively contribute to worthwhile causes. They are not only looking for answers, but would like to participate in coming up with the answers, particularly when they can identify with them. Consequently, they urge members of older generations to assist them in bridging the generation gap.

Many Canadian youth operate with the belief that "anything is possible". They acknowledge the many barriers in overcoming current global challenges. But they also believe that the competition-based approach to solving worldwide issues is archaic and that today, the only way forward is based on collaboration. They define themselves as being "creative, critical, and collaborative individuals" and feel that this should be reflected and recognized in all partnerships with youth and youth organizations.

*"Youth and youth organizations are working with the people who will inherit the long-term effects of the current economic crisis, environmental problems, and other issues associated with the world today. Youth organizations are working closely with the people who will be (and in some cases, already are) at the forefront of solving the long-term problems stemming from the current crisis. As such, they are preparing young people to deal with these issues by providing leadership training, technical resources, and human capital. They are key in overcoming the crisis both today and tomorrow."
(Online consultation participant)*



YOUTH PARTICIPANTS AND RELATED YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

**All Participants attended consultations on their own behalf and their views did not necessarily reflect those of their related organizations

Nova Scotia Consultation Participants	Related Youth Organization
Trevor Cervelli	- Genuine Progress Index Atlantic Youth Programme
Dalhia Colman	- Genuine Progress Index Atlantic Youth Programme
Leslie Corbay	- Sierra Youth Coalition, Ontario Public Interest Research Group
Ross Heimpel	- HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development
Lily Nagy-MacArthur	- HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development
Avery Nagy-MacArthrun	- HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development
Sophie Rouselle	- HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development
William Sandeson	- HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development

Québec Consultation Participants	Related Youth Organization
Amy Bernier-Desmarais	
Hadj Brahim Bennacer	
Martine Boyer	- Forum jeunesse de l'Île de Montréal
Jessica Bourbonnière	- Oxfam Québec
Sofia Brault	



Justine Castonguay-Payant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- TakingITGlobal (TIG)- Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Andréanne Castonguay	
Yasmine Charara	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Oxfam Québec- Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Anne-Louise Chauvette	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA)
Ilyes El Ouarzardi	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Taking IT Global- AIESEC- Impact Entrepreneurship Group
Chloé de Wolf	
Gabrielle Jacobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Amnistie internationale
Sophia Kaméni	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Forum jeunesse Longueuil
Olivia Kamgain	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Droits et Démocratie- Campus Féministe (Université de Montréal)- Radio centre-ville
Josée Lalumière	
Joël Larouche	
Marie Larouche	
Anne Lemieux	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Jenny Ingrid Lebounga Vouma	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Forum jeunesse Laval- Unicef Québec
Geneviève Nadeau	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Laura Nhem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Forum Jeunesse Laval
Alix Niteka	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Oxfam Québec
Myriam Ouellet	





Mirco Plante	- Teacher at Collège Montmorency - Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Raphaëlle Prince	- Teacher at Cégep Limoilou - Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Zachary Rosentzveig	- The Human Promise
Catherine Salvas	
Martine Simard	- Cari St-Laurent
Sandra Simbert	
Rafaëlle Sinave	- Commission jeunesse Oxfam Québec
Marily Tassaroli	- Jeunes ambassadeurs francophonie
Minh-Tam Tran	- YOUths ! - Conseil permanent de la jeunesse
Jimmy Ung	- Forum Jeunesse Laval - Oxfam Québec - Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Pierre-Luc Vézina	- Jeunes entreprises Québec

Ontario Consultation Participants	Related Youth Organization
Jesse Beatson	- World University Services Canada
Xing Chiu	- Canada EH! - Student Vote - Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Efe Igor	- Volume II



Ronan MacParland	- Right2Speak - Canadian Roots - Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Kate Murzin	- AIDS Committee Toronto - Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Mahmood Mustafa	- Mass LBP
Chris Royle	- Get Out Hikes
Jennifer Siu	- Médecins sans frontières
Stephanie Ramage	
Nucci Walsh	- Youth Challenge International
Leonardo Zuniga	- Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group - Youth Action Network

Saskatchewan Consultation Participants	Related Youth Organization
Kyle Addison	- University of Regina Students' Union
Mauricio Jinenez	- University of Regina
Sean McConnachie	- Libertas, University of Regina
Ryan Philips	- John Howard Society
Kim Wilson	- Duke of Edinburgh Award
Jonathan Yee	- Economic Student Association, University of Regina - Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group





Alberta Consultation Participants	Related Youth Organization
Lisa Baroldi	- John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights - Rights and Democracy Network - Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Alex Daraseng	- Students Against Global Apathy
Keita Hill	- Edmonton Youth Council - Young Environmental Leaders of Alberta
Jennifer Nafziger	- Engineers without Borders Canada - Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Lyndia Peters	- Edmonton Youth Council - Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Savanna Regnier	- John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights
Rabia Sheik	- John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights (Youth Action Project, Ignite Change Now! Team)
Mandy Siu	- John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights

British Columbia Consultation Participants	Related Youth Organization
Kaleb Corbin	
Sade Haggarty	- Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association (KAYA)
Amy Haysom	- Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Ana Maria Kresina	- Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Jennifer Kuhl	- UNICEF Speaker's Bureau - Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Angie Mapara	- Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group



Kelsey Peters	
Leanna Platt	- Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Ahmad Thobani	
Ricky Tu	- Vancouver Foundation – Youth Vital Signs
Kirsten Wood	- Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association (KAYA)

Yukon Consultation Participants	Related Youth Organization
Lia Johnson	- Yukon Government (department of Energy, Mines, and Resources)
Lacia Kinnear	- Northern Climate ExChange
Anne Middler	- Yukon Conservation Society
Jessica Thiessen	- University of Victoria

As well as 14 other participants who are associated with the following Yukon based organizations:
- The Victoria Faulkner Woman's Centre
- Raven Recycling
- Arctic Council Youth Ambassador
- Northern Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centers Regional Desk
- Association of Yukon Communities
- Yukon Human Rights Commission
- Special Olympics Team Volunteers
- Yukon Youth Outside (the box)



Online Consultation Participants	Related Youth Organization
Sophia Boutilier	- Aga Khan Foundation - Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Marylynn Coté	- Students Helping Students
Wojciech Griech	- Five Minutes to Midnight - Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Marie-Ève Jean	- Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group - UNICEF Québec
Emmanuelle Marceau	- Association pour la recherche au collégial - Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Alice Miro	- Emerging Environmental Leaders Forum - Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Katherine Taneille Johnson	- Student Mentorship Association Regarding Technology and Science - Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Theon Te Koeti	- Canadian Forces Language School - Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group
Farah Wikarski	- Canadian Commission for UNESCO's Youth Advisory Group